

Final

Pursuant to § 2.2-3707.1 of the Code of Virginia this DRAFT of the minutes of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Children's Justice Act (CJA) Advisory Committee is available to the public. The public is cautioned that the information is provided in DRAFT form and is subject to change by the Advisory Committee prior to becoming final. Once the minutes have been finalized, they will be marked "FINAL" and made available to the public.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE AND CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT PROGRAMS

MEETING MINUTES

April 16, 2010

Members Present:

Darby Lowe
Shawn Schwertfeger
Mary Wilson for Rita Katzman
Viola Vaughan-Eden
Ruth Ann Cutright
Donna Gilles
Lauren Caudill
Cliff Harrison

Guest:

Robin Foster

Members Absent:

Michelle Clayton
Ron Brown
Claudette Overton
Judge Stephen Rideout

Staff Present:

Eileen Guertler
Tamisha Peanort
Hope Hodgson
Laurel Marks

Staff Absent:

Melissa O'Neill

- I. **Call to Order** – Darby Lowe, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05am.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – It was noted that the date needed correction to say 2010. Lauren Caudill moved to adopt and approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and approved.
- III. **Legislative Update** – An update was provided on the three bills that the committee voiced a position on. Two bills that passed and were supported addressed distribution of information on shaken baby syndrome (HB411) and increasing access to independent living services for persons 18 to 21 years of age (SB415). The third bill (HB718), which was opposed by the committee, addressed reducing the number of children in foster care. Hope Hodgson will provide the committee with a final update regarding any amendments.
- IV. **CJA Program Update** – Laurel Marks introduced Tamisha Peanort as the new CJA Coordinator. She explained that now that our CJA Coordinator is in place, we want to step back briefly from doing business as usual in order to perform an assessment of needs of stakeholders to make sure we're doing what is most beneficial to the field.

An updated report on the use of closed-circuit television in Virginia is being prepared.

V. **CASA Program Update**

Criminal Background Checks project: A draft guidance document has been sent to the Virginia State Police for final approval of the process required for CASA programs to obtain criminal background checks in accordance with state regulations and National CASA standards. This is the second draft of the document. DCJS is awaiting the final response in order to disseminate to local programs. A training session has been scheduled for Monday, May 3, 2010 on the topic of Background Checks and Screening of Potential CASA volunteers. Captain Thomas Turner, VSP and Betty Whittaker, VA DSS Central Registry are scheduled to present.

Regulatory Monitoring: Regulatory monitoring is taking place in this last quarter of the fiscal year. Seven programs are scheduled for monitoring.

VA COMET Initiative: The development of a revised version of COMET and DCJS Reporting Tool is taking place. Beta testing of the revised version will take place in the next few weeks in two local programs. The new version combines the VA COMET database and the Reporting Tool into one software package. Further, Darwin Webb (DCJS Programmer) has imported upgrades from the recently released NCASAA COMET Version 5 into the new VA COMET version.

Budget Reductions: CASA programs sustained an overall 27% reduction in funding for FY11 and FY12. DCJS incorporated this cut into the existing formula and requested comment from local programs. Fifteen programs provided comment to DCJS on the proposed formula.

DCJS Grants: DCJS has prepared the FY11 CASA Grant Applications and plans for distribution in the next week. Grants will be due on May 25th.

Statewide CASA Conference and Training: DCJS plans to offer the biennial CASA Conference and Training event in the fall of 2010. A venue and date has not been secured. Advisory Committee members are invited to attend as a guest of DCJS.

NCASAA State Grant: The NCASAA State Organization Grant was completed and submitted in March. DCJS is awaiting approval of the request.

- VI. Citizen's Review Panel** – Mary Wilson, for Rita Katzman, Virginia Department of Social Services, provided a review on the purpose of the Citizen Review Panel and presented information on FY09 child fatality report. Virginia Code requires child protective services to receive fatality reports as part of their investigation track so a finding can be made. The reports are sent to one of five regional specialists and the information goes into an annual report. Virginia fell below the national average in child fatalities. Seventy-two child deaths were investigated and 34 reports were founded due to abuse/neglect. The full report is available on-line at the Virginia Department of Social Services website. It was also noted that the budget for the Healthy Families program was reduced to 3.4 million.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. VDSS and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia are sponsoring the child abuse prevention conference “Now is the Time. . . Children Can't Wait” on Thursday, April 22, 2010 at the Holiday Inn Koger Conference Center.

- VII. Forensic Medical Workgroup (FMWG) Report** - Much of the work done by the Forensic Medical Workgroup coincides with the goals of the CASA/CJA Committee. Dr. Robin Foster presented on the history of the Forensic Medical Workgroup. When the group began there was no funding for forensic medical exams for abused and neglected children. The group advocated for and achieved support to pass legislation that provided funding to pay for the exams and worked with hospitals in four regions of the state to provide the exams. Funding an eye exam for a shaken baby was given as an example. The group is developing a document titled “Centers of Excellence” to provide guidance to Commonwealth's Attorneys regarding qualifications that they should seek in the professionals they designate to provide services to abused children. Other work done by the group included designing a poster to provide information regarding response to child abuse and neglect for medical providers and first responders and creating a PowerPoint presentation that will be provided to medical professionals to assist them in responding appropriately to child abuse and neglect. These two products are not yet completed, but the hope is to finalize them at the next meeting of the FMWG. Also addressed was concern over a deficit in representation of medical providers with training in child abuse and neglect in various areas of the state. The few experts in the state review cases retrospectively and this is not the best approach when the goal is protecting the child. There is a need to identify and train medical providers. The need to train other professionals on child abuse and neglect was addressed and a video that the group assisted in creating was mentioned. Dr. Foster also informed that the group is working on a project to provide City and County Attorneys with a how-to resource on preparing and prosecuting child abuse and neglect.

- VI. Three-Year Plan Update Planning Exercise** - Tamisha Peanort requested that committee members share their historical involvement with the committee and share information on what they think are the needs in the field. The group shared their thoughts.

VII. Appointment of Nominations Committee.

Two members are needed for the July election of Chair and Vice Chair. Those presently in place can be elected to a second term that begins in September, or new persons can be appointed. The July meeting will be chaired by the present Chair. A request was made for volunteers for the nominations committee. The nominations committee can develop its slate of officers via phone or email in advance of the next meeting, then will present its slate to the committee for a vote in July. Cliff Harrison and Shawn Scwhertfeger agreed to serve as the nominations committee.

VIII. New Business. None.

IX. Adjourn. 12:24pm