

# Final

## COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES

April 1, 2011

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on Friday, April 1, 2011, at the Richmond Police Training Academy in Richmond, Virginia.

#### Members Present

Donna Gilles  
Ruth Anne Cutright  
Rita Katzman  
Viola Vaughan-Eden

#### Members Not Present

Lauren Caudill  
Michelle Clayton  
Darby Lowe  
Shawn Schwertfeger

#### Staff Present

Laurel Marks  
Melissa O'Neill

- I. **Call to Order** – In the absence of both the Chairperson and the vice-Chairperson, Melissa O'Neill called the meeting to order at 10:15 AM.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Donna Gilles moved to accept the minutes. Rita Katzman seconded the motion. With no objections, the minutes were unanimously approved
- III. **Legislative Update** – Committee members were provided with an update of legislation introduced during the General Assembly session. A discussion took place on those bills that were of interest to the Committee. Committee members were asked to provide feedback on the redistricting of the circuit and district courts. Committee members expressed concern that the proposed consolidation of courts as suggested in HB1990 would bring additional pressure on the existing service delivery system. This change would also diminish the "one judge/one child" philosophy of best practice courts. Additionally, the current system of

appointing judges often results in appointments of judges with little or no family court experience. Committee members expressed concern that redistricting would require additional training needs. The Committee expressed concern for additional burdens being placed on the courts with redistricting plans. These additional burdens could have a negative impact on the courts ability to meet federally mandated timeframes tied to federal funding. Finally, the Committee recommends consideration of implementation the “family court” where the juvenile court is a court of record.

#### IV. **CJA Program Update –**

- New Hire for CJA Coordinator Position - The CJA Coordinator interviews have concluded. DCJS anticipates the hiring process will take place within the next few weeks and the new coordinator should be in attendance at the next committee meeting.
- Three Year Plan Review and Approval - The Committee reviewed and offered comments and revisions to the Three Year Plan in anticipation of the upcoming CJA Grant Application. The plan was disseminated prior to the meeting. Rita Katzman made a motion to approve the plan with the discussed changes and Donna Gilles seconded the motion. With no further discussion the motion was unanimously approved.
- Child First Moving to CACVA – Laurel Marks announced that DCJS is negotiating an agreement with the Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia to move the administration of the Child First training under their supervision. DCJS will work with CACVA to assist with the transition. Moving the oversight of Child First allows DCJS to focus on new projects.

#### V. **CASA Program Update** – The committee was provided with the following updates related to the CASA Program administration.

DCJS Satisfaction Survey Results – The Committee was briefed on the results of the NCASAA State Satisfaction survey results completed by local CASA programs. This survey evaluated Virginia CASA program satisfaction with the services provided by DCJS in its oversight and administration of the CASA programs statewide. While the overall rating indicates local programs are very satisfied with the services provided by DCJS, there were some instructive comments related to improvements to be made regarding training, regulatory monitoring and funding. These suggestions will be included in the CASA section of the Three Year Plan.

COMET – The COMET initiative continues to consume a considerable amount of staff time and resources. A detailed analysis of the reports in COMET has been completed and meetings are scheduled to meet with users to begin to determine which reports to retain in the software. Further, a detailed review of the outcome reports will be conducted to determine validity of the data.

Criminal Background Checks Grant - DCJS secured a \$35,000 grant from the Virginia Law Foundation to assist local CASA programs with the costs associated with obtaining FBI fingerprint criminal background checks on volunteers. A six month review of this grant indicated the programs were not accessing the full amount of the funding. Therefore, DCJS will be returning \$22,000 to the foundation to make these funds available to other worthy projects.

State Appropriation- The state appropriation included no additional reductions for the CASA program. DCJS is preparing the CASA grant applications for distribution.

NCASAA Conference Partnership with Court Improvement Program – The Court Improvement Program (CIP) offered to fund full time CASA program staff member’s attendance at the NCASAA conference held in Chicago. Approximately 45 Virginia CASA staff members attended the conference. CIP seeks to partner with CASA to provide substantive training to enhance the skills of the CASA network as it relates to the court system.

IV. **Citizen’s Review Panel** – Rita Katzman, Virginia Dept. of Social Services

The committee was provided with an overview of the Child Fatality report for 2010. The complete report can be accessed at the following link:

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/about/reports/children/cps/all\\_other/2010/fatalityreport\\_sfy10.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/about/reports/children/cps/all_other/2010/fatalityreport_sfy10.pdf)

V. **Appointment of Nominations Committee**

Ruth Anne Cutright agreed to serve as the nominations committee for the election of officers during the July meeting.

VI. **Upcoming Meeting Dates**

July 1, 2011

VIII. **New Business**

There was discussion regarding the July 1<sup>st</sup> meeting falling on the Friday before the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday weekend. DCJS staff will contact committee members to determine attendance.

IX. **Adjourn** - There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.