

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

MEETING MINUTES

April 18, 2008

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on Friday, April 18, 2008, at the Richmond Police Training Academy in Richmond.

Members Present

Shawn Schwertfeger
Nan McKenney
Darby Lowe
Mindy Loiselle
Ruth Ann Cutright
Sharon England
A. Michael Hall

Members Not Present

Lauren Caudill
Terica Hodge
Claudette Overton
Michelle Clayton

Staff Present

Laurel Marks
Melissa O'Neill
Hope Hodgson
Denise Hampton
Roz Trent

Staff Not Present

- I. **Call to Order** – Mike Hall called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the January meeting were reviewed. Mike Hall moved to approve the minutes. Mindy Loiselle and Sharon England seconded the motion. The committee unanimously approved the minutes.
- III. **Nominating Committee** – Mike Hall asked Ruth Anne Cutright to serve with him on the nominating committee and she agreed. The committee also agreed to this nomination. Nominations will be made for chair and vice-chair.
- IV. **CJA Program Update** – Laurel Marks announced that Holly Oehrlein resigned as the Children's Justice Act Program Coordinator. Approval to hire for this position has been received and the job will be posted soon. Hope Hodgson,

CASA/CJA Program Assistant will be assisting with many of the CJA tasks during the transition. The CJA grant application is due is due May 30th.

Legislation Update – Two bills passed regarding mandatory reporters to include EMS Personnel and Animal Control officers. The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) mandatory reporter bill did not pass. Sharon England reported that she testified regarding the GAL mandatory reporter bill. This bill was carried over to 2009.

Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse Conference - The Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse conference will take place in May and October. The agenda is available on the DCJS website and an overview of the topics and scheduled presenters was discussed.

Finding Words Virginia – The program is going through a transition nationally and the Committee was provided an update on the details of these changes. The current training dates are scheduled for July 21st - 25th and Sept. 15th – 19th.

John Reid Child Abuse Conference – Committee members were provided with evaluations from the conference. Participants' overall evaluations of the conference were favorable.

- V. Three Year Plan Approval** – The Committee was asked to approve the Three Year Plan that was distributed for review prior to the meeting. Mike Hall asked for a motion to adopt the document as the official plan. Nan McKenney motioned and Sharon England seconded. There was no further discussion and the committee unanimously approved the adoption of the plan as it was presented.

VI. CASA Program Update

Regulatory Revisions The Committee was updated on the progress of the regulatory revision. The problems with Regulatory Information System (RIS) have been resolved and the final version of the regulations has been completed.

COMET Standardization The VA COMET implementation continues to progress. The DCJS Reporting Tool was updated and distributed. All programs are using VA COMET and the latest version of the Reporting Tool. The Outcome Reports are continuing to be problematic. However, programs are attempting to run these reports and making necessary adjustments.

DCJS CASA Grants The CASA program grants application has been distributed and grants will be due on May 9th. The state appropriation was maintained at the current level (\$1,615,000).

State CASA Conference – DCJS is awaiting approval for the conference. The tentative dates are November 7th and 8th at the Williamsburg Marriott Hotel.

Case Studies Training – DCJS worked in collaboration with local CASA programs in the Tidewater area to facilitate offering the “Case Studies: Working it out together” in-service training curriculum to each programs’ interested volunteers. The curriculum allows participants to work in small groups to process case studies and devise court recommendations that are focused on the best interest of the child. The training is designed to reinforce the basic foundation of the CASA work including: culturally appropriate advocacy, collaborating professionally with colleagues, adhering to minimum sufficient level of care standards and child focused outcomes.

The training has been offered twice to Tidewater area programs. Another training is planned for the Metro Richmond CASA programs in August. Additional sites throughout the state are being explored for replication. Evaluations from the Tidewater training events were excellent.

National CASA Conference – This conference will take place June 8 – 10, 2008 in Washington DC. DCJS will participate as a member of the site planning committee and will specifically assist to coordinate volunteers for the conference.

Forgotten Children Event – May 19th – 23rd – National CASA is planning an event to be held the week of May 19 – 23 on the National Mall in Washington D.C. to bring attention to the plight of America’s foster children and the hope that CASA volunteers bring to their lives. The Northern Virginia CASA programs will be directly involved in this event, however, other programs from Virginia are invited to attend, participate or volunteer if interested.

Virginia CASA Programs 2006-07 Annual Report – The Committee was provided copies of the 2006-07 Annual Report for the CASA Programs.

- VII. Citizen’s Review Panel, Nan McKenney, Virginia Dept. of Social Services –** The Committee was provided with an update on the CPS regulatory revision. The regulations are currently under review in the Secretary’s office.

The Department now has available, in conjunction with VCU VISSTA, an online training for mandated reporters of child abuse/neglect. This online course will allow those individuals (over the age of 18) to become mandated reports if they desire. The training became available in February.

The Differential Response report was published in February. The Executive Summary was distributed to Committee members and discussed.

The Committee was provided with a copy of the Evaluation of the Differential Response System report and a copy of the Annual Report on Child Deaths due to Abuse or Neglect in Virginia during Fiscal Year 2007. Both reports were discussed.

VIII. Legislation Update – reported above

IX. New Business –

Committee Vacancies Discussion took place regarding Committee vacancies and suggestions for finding replacements. Current vacancies that need to be filled include: Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem, Local CASA Volunteer, Disability Representative, Parent Advocate, Judiciary Representative.

TPR Cases Pending Before Appeals Court Mike Hall reported on TPR Cases pending before court of appeals in Wythe County. It was suggested to let Lelia Hopper know this information because (at one point) they were actually doing a study on this process.

Funding Cuts for Localities Localities with DCJS grants could face potential cuts in funding due to the current state budget. Circuit courts, law enforcement, CA's offices, Virginia Juvenile Crime Control Act could potentially face loss of funding.

X. Adjourn – There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 P.M.