

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

MEETING MINUTES

July 18, 2008

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

Members Present

Shawn Schwertfeger
Rita Katzman for Nan McKenney
Darby Lowe
Ruth Ann Cutright
A. Michael Hall

Members Not Present

Lauren Caudill
Terica Hodge
Claudette Overton
Michelle Clayton
Mindy Loiselle

Staff Present

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

Staff Not Present

- I. **Call to Order** – Mike Hall called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Minutes from the April meeting were reviewed. Mindy Loiselle's name was listed twice under member's present. Mike Hall made a motion to approve the minutes with this correction. Shawn Schwertfeger seconded. The committee unanimously approved the minutes.
- III. **Nominating Committee** – Ruth Anne Cutright reported that Lauren Caudill has accepted the nomination to serve as the Vice-Chair for the next year. Mike Hall has agreed to serve as the Chair. Mike Hall asked if there were any other nominations and there being none, Ruth Anne Cutright motioned that the Committee accept the slate of officers as presented. Shawn Schwertfeger seconded. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.
- IV. **CJA Program Update** –

Recruitment of CJA Coordinator – Laurel Marks reported that DCJS is actively recruiting for the CJA Coordinator position and plans to conduct interviews in early August.

CJA Grantees Meeting – The annual grantees meeting is scheduled for August 5th & 6th in Washington D.C. Melissa O'Neill will be attending to represent DCJS and Mike Hall will attend if scheduling permits.

CJA Grant Application – The CJA Grant application was completed and submitted in May.

Finding Words – The July session was cancelled due to the inadequate number of appropriate applications received. The applicants will be permitted to reapply for the Finding Words session scheduled for September 15-19, 2008.

Child Advocacy Center Anatomical Dolls – Each Child Advocacy Center, or location providing forensic interviews to children who may have been abused and/or neglected, was contacted to determine their need for “Teach-a-bodies” anatomical dolls. DCJS distributed or will distribute an average of two sets to each location identifying a need.

Professional Development Training Scholarships – In 2008 DCJS provided funding to assist six individuals to attend “The National Children’s Advocacy Center’s 24th Symposium on Child Abuse”, in Huntsville, Alabama during March, three individuals to attend the “Child Sexual Abuse Forensic Interview Training,” through CornerHouse, in Bristol, Virginia during May and one individual to attend the “Crimes Against Children Conference” in Dallas, Texas during August.

Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse Conference – The Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse conference took place in May. Evaluations were distributed to the Committee. The overall feedback on the conference was positive and evaluations tended to be similar to those in the past. The same agenda will be offered again in October. It was noted that one of the speakers covering legal issues focused on North Carolina laws and that it would be helpful to revise the presentation to reflect Virginia law or to incorporate a legal representative from Virginia into the presentation.

V. CASA Program Update

Regulatory Revisions – The Committee was updated on the progress of the regulatory revision. The regulations have gone through all of the Final administrative reviews including the Governor’s review and have been approved. DCJS is working on preparation of the Final Package for submission to the Registrar for publication. The Advisory Committee will be notified when this occurs for the final 30 day comment period.

COMET Standardization – The VA COMET implementation continues to progress. The programs do not appear to be having difficulties with obtaining the statistical information; however, the outcome reports do seem to be problematic for several localities. The DCJS COMET programmer will be setting up individual technical assistance sessions with each CASA office to work on the outcome reports in the next month. The plan is to obtain a statewide report from these sessions with accurate data.

DCJS CASA Grants – The CASA program grants awards have been distributed.

State CASA Conference – DCJS received approval for the conference which will be held 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 program’s 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. A training is planned for the Metro Richmond CASA programs August 2nd and there are 87 participants already registered. Additional sites throughout the state are being explored for replication.

National CASA Conference – This conference took place June 8 – 10, 2008 in Washington DC and the feedback from participants indicated it was one of the best conferences in recent years.

NCASAA/NCJFCJ partnership – The National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges will be holding its National Conference in Norfolk July 27 – 30. NCASAA has purchased an exhibit table and requested assistance from DCJS to help coordinate staff coverage during the exhibit hours. The Tidewater area CASA program staff agreed to staff the table along with DCJS for the duration of the event.

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

CPS Regulations – The regulations are still awaiting Governor’s approval for publication. There is concern that the emergency regulations that are in effect have a year time line which is about to expire. There is some uncertainty

regarding what occurs if the emergency regulations expire and the regulatory process has not been completed.

Annual Report – The Department of Social Services submitted the yearly program report on child welfare, foster care and adoption. Information is included in this report on the Citizen Review Panel.

Updated Policy Manuals – The Department of Social Services revised the policy manuals to include reformatting with links to the code. The new manual includes two new sections on handling child fatalities and substance exposed infants. Committee members were provided with a link to the new manual.

Grants – The Child Advocacy Center grants contracts are currently being processed. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant contracts have not been processed due to the lack of allocation of funds from the federal government. There is an anticipated 17% cut in these funds.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) – The CFSR will take place in Virginia in one year. DSS is planning for this review now. A team of reviewers will come to review three localities and look at 7 systemic factors along with outcome measures. Currently, DSS is conducting focus groups as part of the preparation. The CASA network will participate as one of the focus groups and the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee agreed to participate during the October meeting as well.

Child Fatality Report – There were 64 child deaths last year and 29 of those deaths were “founded” abuse and neglect cases. This year, there were 83 deaths reported.

VII. Schedule Next Year Meeting Dates – all at 10:00

October 3, 2008
January 23, 2009
April 3, 2009
July 24, 2009

VIII. New Business –

By-laws – The Committee By-laws need to be updated. DCJS staff members will prepare a draft of proposed changes and present to the Committee at the next meeting. Mike Hall suggested including the additional duties of the Citizen Review Panel.

IX. Adjourn – There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 12:08 P.M.