

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

January 29, 2021

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on January 29, 2021. As a result of the state of emergency declared by Governor Northam due to COVID-19, the Advisory Committee conducted this meeting by electronic communication means without a quorum of the Committee physically assembled at one location. However, a quorum was present virtually.

Members Present

Regina Baker  
Kim Barbarji  
Randy Bonds  
Robin Foster  
Shardell Gerald  
Shannon Hartung  
Judge Jerrauld Jones  
Sandy Karison  
Malcolm King  
Jennifer Newman  
Pat Popp  
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair  
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Molly Dellinger-Wray  
Allison Gilbreath  
Giselle Pelaez

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)  
Laurel Marks (DCJS)  
Melissa O'Neill (DCJS)  
McKenna Whitmore (Intern, DCJS)  
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

Guests

Martha Crockett, Graduate Student  
Elizabeth Lee, Virginia DSS  
Lora Smith, Virginia DSS  
Katharine Hunter, Virginia DBHDS  
Liv Wolfenden, Graduate Student

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:09 AM. A verbal roll call was taken.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the October 30, 2020 meeting. Ashley Thompson noted she was listed as both present and absent. She was not in attendance and asked for the minutes to be amended as such. Ashley Thompson made a motion to approve the October 30, 2020 minutes. Pat Popp provided a second. Motion was approved by verbal roll call vote.

**III. Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Filings**

Committee members are required to complete Financial Disclosure filings annually. The Ethics Council emailed committee members directly with instructions for completing the filing of forms. The deadline is February 2, 2021. Members are also required to complete Conflict of Interest Act Training. The timeframe for completing the training has shifted slightly and members will be notified when the training is required to be completed.

**IV. CASA Program Update** - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. Melissa O'Neill provided information on recently confirmed dates for the National CASA/GAL Highly Effective Standards Review Process (HESRP). The HESRP will be conducted on April 29 and 30, 2021. This will allow for the reviewers to attend the April CASA/CJA Advisory Committee meeting. Select members of the committee will be included for stakeholder interviews along with local CASA program representatives. The purpose of the HESRP is to evaluate DCJS compliance with NCASA/GAL Association standards for state organizations.

**V. Children's Justice Act Program Update** - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Children's Justice Act Program. Jenna Foster highlighted areas of interest.

***Child Death Investigation Protocol Training:*** Justice 3D is planning a Child Death Training and has asked if the newly developed protocol can be incorporated into the content that is currently available. The first training to include the protocol will be held at the Central Virginia Police Academy on March 10-12. This is not a DCJS sponsored event. However, we will provide copies (binders) of the protocol for use during the training.

***Other Trainings:*** CJA is partnering with the Center for School and Campus Safety at DCJS to host Mental Health trainings for law enforcement and child welfare workers. The first training will be held virtually on April 21, 2021. CJA is also seeking input from several external partners to host training on substance use/abuse, community resources, community collaborations, and self-care. These topics were noted as priority areas from a survey they went to all domestic and sexual violence children's programs to assess current needs.

**VI. Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel**

***In-Home Implementation*** - Elizabeth Lee, Virginia Department of Social Services, Assistant Division Director of Protection and Prevention Programs, provided an overview of the department's In-Home Services initiatives. The initiative takes into account the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) results and the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The model will incorporate In-Home best practices using Structured Decision Making with the goal of partnering with families and utilizing relatives to offer resources to prevent children from coming into foster care. The model will focus on evidence based practices. Updated guidance will be available in the spring.

***Foster Care Update*** - Lora Smith, Virginia Department of Social Services, Foster Care Manager, provided an update on services to older youth. The Department is working on a federal funding initiative to support older youth during COVID. Funding is available to support education and independent living services. The Department developed a workgroup of stakeholders for outreach to older youth in care.

***Citizen Review Panel*** - Shannon Hartung, Child Protective Services Program Manager, Virginia Department of Social Services, provided an overview of the Department of Social Services response during the pandemic. Committee members were notified of the launch of the Mandated Reporter website. This site allows for accessible and streamlined reporting of suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect for mandated reporters.

Members were previously provided with information on the role of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP). Ms. Hartung provided additional information on the development of recommendations and the timeframe required for submission to the Department. Judge Sotelo led the committee in a discussion of ideas for potential recommendations for 2021. Staff will use this conversation for development of recommendations for consideration at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

VII. **Legislative Review**

Committee members discussed bills of interest related to child abuse and neglect introduced during the 2021 Virginia General Assembly session.

VIII. **New Business**

Shardell Gerald shared information about Unite us VA, a newly developed resource designed to link families with service providers. Ms. Gerald will provide information to the committee on this new resource.

Robin Foster shared information regarding a specialized training offered by VCU through Project ECHO.

IX. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 12:06 PM.

Next meeting dates:

April 30, 2021

July 30, 2021