

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Children and Domestic Violence Committee Meeting

October 8, 2015

The Children and Domestic Violence Committee met on October 8, 2015 at 10 a.m. at the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families in New Castle County. Attending the meeting were Secretary Jennifer Ranji (DSCYF), Karen Records (DHSS), Addie Asay (Family Court), Linda Shannon (DFS), Rosalie Morales (OCA), Jennifer Donahue (DSCYF), Marcey Rezac (Peoples Place), Jane Galli (Child Inc.), Mariann Kenville-Moore (DCADV), Dr. Vicky Kelly (DFS), Cari Chapman (DOJ), Sonya Tull (Child Inc.), Ellie Torres (DVCC), Natasha Smith (DVCC).

Called to Order: Secretary Ranji called the meeting to order.

Introductions: Introductions were made by attendees.

Minutes from June 1, 2015: Approved as written.

Old Business

Family Court Enhancement Project

Addie Asay (Family Court) provided an update to the committee on the progress of the Family Court Enhancement Project (FCEP). She stated that Tara Andrews is no longer the FCEP Coordinator because she has taken a position in the private sector. Interviews will take place to fill the FCEP Coordinator position within the next few weeks. Addie went on to state that the Differentiation Subcommittee will focus on a 1st level practice impact review over the next few weeks. This subcommittee will look at all the tools available to Judicial Officers when a Custody or PFA petition enters the Family Court system.

Mariann Kenville-Moore (DCADV) gave an update on the Access to Justice Subcommittee. She stated that conducting walk-thrus in Family Court in all three counties was an eye-opening experience. The group noted a number of issues during this exercise that could be improved for litigants. Things such as the proximity of victims to offenders, lack of information sharing, non-uniform training for advocates across the state and not bringing a cell phone into the Court house were just some of the issues noted. Addie states that the project would be seeking an extension for another year, taking the project to Fall of 2017.

Follow up – Pending Action Plans from September 24, 2014 Planning Day

Secretary Ranji provided a hand out that DFS uses when providing training on Structured Decision Making (SDM). Dr. Vicky Kelly gave a SDM Presentation at the Joint CPAC and CDNDSC meeting in the Spring of 2015. Dr. Kelly expressed that the department was not comfortable with giving agencies criteria for navigating the SDM process and would prefer that if child abuse is suspected, a call should be made to the hotline. Some advocates raised a question about what should be done if they don't have all the information that the hotline workers ask for when they call the hotline. Dr. Kelly stated that having

the child's name, address and school are things that would aid them in investigating cases. If all the information is not available it is recommended that a call should still be made to have a record of the incident. Secretary Ranji suggested that if there is a group that would benefit from a Structured Decision Making training to please let her office know.

Next Steps – Safe and Together Model

A few external partners and DFS Administrators met with David Mandel in September 2015. In the morning, David Mandel gave an overview of the Safe and Together Model. In the afternoon, David Mandel met with DFS Supervisors and Administrators to discuss how the Safe and Together Model could be implemented in Delaware. Secretary Ranji and Dr. Kelly plan to discuss further details of how this Model could be implemented in the upcoming weeks after David Mandel is done traveling around the country. Dr. Kelly discussed that those present at the meeting were receptive to the Safe and Together Model. She stated that there a number of things that would need to be considered if this model would be implemented in Delaware. Dr. Kelly went on to state that one concern is whether or not the Domestic Violence cases should be contracted to an agency outside of DFS versus state employees.

Definition of a Perpetrator of Domestic Violence and Rebuttable Presumption

Those present at the meeting reviewed Title 13 Chapter 7A from the Delaware statute. Dana Harrington Conner, Esq. (Widener Law School) was scheduled to attend the meeting however was unable to attend. Those present at the meeting discussed that the definition of a perpetrator of domestic violence is narrow and what could be done to expand the definition. Those present discussed what it means to successfully complete a program evaluation and counseling. It was also discussed whether or not additional crimes should be added to the statute and if a perpetrator should be added to the child abuse registry. Secretary Ranji asked if Addie Asay (Family Court) would be able to poll Family Court Judges to see how often rebuttable presumption comes up in custody cases. Natasha Smith (DVCC) will reach out to Dana Harrington Conner, Esq. regarding her input on this statute.

CDNDSC Recommendation

The CDNDSC recommended that the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's (DVCC) Children and Domestic Violence Committee consider revisiting the discussion about reporting cases of domestic violence involving emotional harm to a child. Specifically, there is a concern about reporters having difficulty identifying either the child's diagnosed mental health condition or behaviors that signify severe psychological harm in these cases. Anne Pedrick (CDRC) was not present at the Children and DV committee meeting however she was able to provide that the CDNDSC Recommendation was from an old case prior to the statute change of including sight and sound. Anne stated the recommendation was added to the final CAPTA report and we should contact her if she had any additional questions. Dr. Kelly discussed that the Safe and Together model would not be implemented on the hotline and that all cases coming through the hotline are screened for Domestic Violence and substance abuse. A suggestion was made to possibly add information about emotional maltreatment to the domestic violence slides in the OCA mandatory reporting training.

Children and Domestic Violence Committee Goals and Focus

Natasha Smith (DVCC) discussed adding a goal/focus to the DVCC website. Natasha suggested the following:

The Children and Domestic Violence Committee brings together representatives from the Department of Services of Children, Youth and their Families (DSCYF), the General Assembly, Family Court, the Department of Justice, law enforcement, advocates and community partners to examine services and system gaps for children experiencing domestic violence.

Those present agreed to add the above mentioned statement for the DVCC Children and DV committee page.

New Business

Children and Domestic Violence Brochure

The updated Children and DV brochure was passed around at the meeting. If anyone has any changes they can submit them to Natasha Smith (DVCC). Natasha will also send the brochure electronically.

Next Meeting Date: TBD