



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL
Children and Domestic Violence Committee
Draft Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2018 1:30 PM

Division of Family Services – University Plaza Large Conference Room

The DVCC Children and Domestic Violence Committee met on March 5, 2018, at 1:30 PM at the Division of Family Services in New Castle County. In attendance were Natasha Smith (DVCC Staff), Michele Ostafy (Child Inc.), Trenee Parker (DFS), Cheryl Stallman (JP Court), Jennifer Oppel (Peoples Place), Colleen Woodall (DFS), Erin O'Connor (SAFE/Peoples Place), Taneka Purnell-Tingle (SAFE/Peoples Place), Karin Volker (DOJ), Bridget Walters (Child Inc.), Maureen Monagle (DVCC Staff), Kelli Crosta (DVCC Intern), Regina Johnson (DPBHS), Josette Manning (DSCYF), Nancy McGee (SAND), Abby Smith (Member of the Public), Tiaana Vaughn (Member of the Public). Present for the meeting via phone were Ellie Torres (Family Court), Claire DeMatteis (Family Court) and Jennifer Ranji (Family Court).

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

Introductions: Introductions were made by those in attendance.

Minutes from December 4, 2017: Minutes were approved as written.

Old Business

Divorced and Separating Parent Education Course

Regina Johnson (DPBHS) provided a summary of the Separating and Divorcing Parent Education Course program as well as a summary of the online parenting courses discussed at previous meetings.

Michelle Ostafy (Child Inc.) shared her experience working with the Separating and Divorcing Parent Education Course as well as some concerns she had about moving the parenting course to an online platform. Michelle shared that the in person classes provide an opportunity to teach experientially in ways that cannot be done in an online format. Michelle also shared that the in person class allows for parents to connect as well as receive or find out about additional support or services that the online parenting course may not provide. Michelle also shared some of her concerns about possible barriers for the online program such as literacy issues for class participants.

Secretary Manning shared research from a study that found that both the in person and online parenting course formats had similar levels of effectiveness. Secretary Manning expressed that the intent was not to do away with the in person parent education courses but to add the option of the online parent education course in the hopes of reaching more people.

Judge Ranji (Family Court) shared that through the Family Court Enhancement Project a review of case files found that a significant number of custody petitions were dismissed because the Petitioner did not complete the parent education course. Family Court was able to have the rule changed in order for Family Court Judges to hear custody petitions even if the Petitioner did not take the parent education course. This rule change allows Family Court to hear more custody petitions including those that include a history of domestic violence.

Nancy McGee (SAND) asked if the research included any information on recidivism in Family Court or if there was any way to find out if someone completed the parenting course would they be more or less likely to file any other petitions. Ellie Torres (Family Court) stated that the research only looked at the effectiveness of online parenting courses versus in person parenting courses, not recidivism. Ellie also stated that the online option is another way to reach a large number of people with the parent education course content. Erin O'Connor (SAFE/Peoples Place) stated that transportation is an issue especially in Sussex County. Erin shared that the online parenting course option could remove the barrier for someone wanting to attend the course but doesn't have the means to get to the class.

Regina (DPBHS) stated that her office will have a Separating and Divorcing Parent Education provider meeting to discuss the possibility of having online courses available in conjunction with the in person course. Judge Ranji asked if it would be helpful if we looked at one of the online parenting courses in more detail or to do some kind of study or pilot of the online parenting course.

Secretary Manning suggested that a sample of the online parenting course or presentation be shared at the next meeting.

Family Court Enhancement Project

Claire DeMatteis (Family Court) shared that the project is working on helping self-represented litigants with information in a variety of forms. This includes 7 infographics that have been approved by OVW and distributed to Family Court resource centers as well as the creation of a PFA packet that is near final approval from OVW. Also, the PFA Script has been recorded by a Commissioner in each county and the PowerPoint slides to accompany the script are in the final stages of editing. The infographics and packets will be translated into Spanish. Claire will look into the possibility of having the forms translated into Creole and French.

Judge Ranji shared that she is leading a workgroup is working on a process in which a Judge who is assigned a custody petition is made aware if a PFA petition is filed and the Judge has the option to hear the PFA.

Next Steps – Safe and Together Model

Colleen Woodall (DFS) discussed the upcoming 3 Day Safe and Together training taking place in April. The first two days will include the Domestic Violence Liaisons and their DV Agency Supervisors and the last day will include the Domestic Violence Liaisons, DV Agency Supervisors and DFS Points of contact from both the treatment and investigation units. Natasha Smith (DVCC) is awaiting a draft report from the Safe & Together Institute taken from the interviews conducted as well as the paperwork review.

Perpetrator of Domestic Violence and Rebuttable Presumption

At the December 2017 meeting, Ellie shared a draft that included expanding the list of offenses for the definition of a perpetrator of domestic violence. The offenses include adding 3rd Degree Assault, Terroristic Threatening, Coercion, Offensive Touching and Harassment convictions with an active PFA, and Probation for Domestic Violence. The draft does not change the language stating who the victim has to be. Ellie has not received any feedback from the Judges as of yet, Judge Ranji will raise this issue at the Judges meeting scheduled for Thursday.

Secretary Manning shared that Mariann Kenville-Moore (DCADV) sent a draft of the benchcard via email to the committee. Secretary Manning stated that this could be used as a quick reference tool for Judges regarding information on Separating and Divorcing Parents Education. Secretary Manning asked that the committee review the benchcard and provide feedback. Someone suggested that perhaps language can be added stating that there is a sliding scale or that scholarships are possible. This issue will be tabled until the next meeting date.

New Business

No New Business

Announcements

Next Meeting Dates:

Monday, August 27, 2018 at 10am at Dover Location (To Be Determined)

Monday, December 3, 2018 at 10am at University Plaza Conference Room