

Maine Justice for Children Task Force
November 1, 2019 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Multipurpose Room- Capital Judicial Center
NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Hon. Leigh Saufley, Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court; Hon. Ellen Gorman, Associate Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court; Hon. Susan Sparaco, Chief Judge of the District Court; Hon. Eric Mehnert, Tribal Judge, Penobscot Nation; Hon. Jarrod Crockett, Probate Judge; Caroline Jova, Esq., Family Division Manager, Betsy Boardman, Esq., Child Protective and Juvenile Process Specialist; Representative Colleen Madigan; Cassie Rodgers, Esq., GAL; Debra Dunlap, Regional Director, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children; Jamie Brooks, Parent Partner; Dr. Todd Landry, Director of the Office of Child and Family Services; Nora Sosnoff, Esq., Assistant Attorney General; Michael Kearney, Esq., Assistant Attorney General; Page Nichols, Department of Education; Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director of Child and Welfare Services; John Pelletier, Esq., Executive Director, MCILS; Mike Sauschuck, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety; Liam Shaw, Maine Enhanced Parenting Project Coordinator; Regina Phillips, Cross Cultural Community Services; Clint Boothby, Parent Attorney; Colin O'Neill, Department of Corrections; Randy Liberty, Commissioner Department of Corrections; Bette Hoxie, Foster Parent; Christine Alberi, Ombudsman for Child Welfare Services; Francine Garland Stark, Executive Director, MCEDV; Debra Baeder, Chief Forensic Psychologist, State Forensic Service; Elizabeth Ward Saxl, Executive Director, MECASA.

- I. Welcome:** Hon. Leigh Saufley, Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court
 1. Purpose of the Task Force
 2. Advisement on prohibition against discussing active cases, continuum of care, and Long Creek Youth Development Center.

- II. Minutes from August 2, 2019 are approved**

- III. Introduction of Attendees**

- IV. Updates**
 - 1. Judicial Branch: Hon. Susan Sparaco, Chief Judge of the District Court**
 - New Chief Judge: Hon. Susan Sparaco.
 - New Deputy Chief Judge: Hon. Jed French.
 - Continuing Education Subcommittee (CES) met in September to begin discussions about the judicial branch's 2020 child protective conference. The dates for the conference will be April 2nd and 3rd.
 - Current PC filings: as of September 30, 2019, there has been a 23% statewide increase as compared to the same time last year.
 - Judicial Branch's response to the increase in filings:
 - Tracking filings to allow for appropriate scheduling of judicial officers.
 - Increase in CASA guardians ad litem statewide.

- New guardian ad litem course will be offered at the University of Maine School of Law in 2020. This course will satisfy the core training requirement to become a rostered guardian ad litem.

2. Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS): Dr. Todd Landry, Director

- November is National Adoption Month.
- Currently, there are 2,190 children in DHHS custody.
- Data dashboard is currently available on the OCFS website providing information on child welfare, early childhood education, and behavioral health. This is updated every month.
- OCFS has taken the 170 different recommendations from various reports and created a priority list for implementation (handout provided).
- Memo distributed about a pilot project implementing e-discovery.
- Maine has received a federal kinship navigator grant.

3. Office of the Maine Attorney General, Child Protective Division: Nora Sosnoff, Assistant Attorney General, Division Chief

- There has been an increase in threats and personalized intimidation toward AAGs and DHHS caseworkers.
- Many stakeholder groups are being convened to discuss child welfare issues and the AAGs are glad to be at the table.
- Discussion about incarcerated parents of children in the child welfare system. Approximately 7% of children in the child welfare system have an incarcerated parent. Contact between the parent and child is not being discouraged by AAGs and some relationships have been formed between the AAGs and prisons.

4. Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (MCILS): John Pelletier, Executive Director

- Extended representation for juveniles in Long Creek Youth Development Center (LYDC) has been authorized. Historically, once the juvenile was committed to LYDC, the lawyers representation of that juvenile ended. New practice will be to have continued representation of the juvenile while committed.
- Juveniles who live a significant distance from LYDC will have local counsel assigned to them to work with appointed counsel in the juvenile's hometown.
- Both extended representation and local counsel will be paid for with existing resources within MCILS.

V. Strategic Plan Updates

1. Proposed Task Force Initiatives:

- **Reunification Plans:** Bobbi Johnson and Mike Kearney have been working on streamlining and simplifying the reunification plan provided to parents and the court.
 - Current draft is similar to previously used reunification plans.

- One concern is that the plan lacks the ability to see who will do what and when.
 - Consideration was given to having two plans—one for the court to review with the parent and one for DHHS caseworkers to maintain with more detail.
 - A suggestion was made to have an attachment to the reunification plan that outlined action items that need to be accomplished in the next two months.
- **Task Force Information Sharing:** The Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel (MCWAP) website will be converted to house all three citizen review panels required under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) required panels. The first meeting to discuss this will be on November 14th. Content of the website will be developed after the initial meeting.
 - **Resource Navigator Pilot Project:** First workgroup meeting was held at the end of October.
 - The first item that needs to be addressed is funding. The workgroup is researching options.
 - The Task Force would like to have a trained resource navigator present at the courthouse to provide services to anyone presenting the need for resources while in court.
 - Workgroup Membership: Deputy Chief Judge French, Debra Dunlap, Jamie Brooks, Shawna Lund, Gayle Erdheim, Page Nichols, Bobbi Johnson, Liam Shaw, Betsy Boardman, and Caroline Jova.
 - **MaineCare Billing:** Presentation by Dean (waiting on Dean's full name and title) from DHHS concerning payment of mental health professionals, specifically for collateral meetings and court events, involved with child welfare cases.

VI. **Next meeting:** February 14, 2019, 10:00am to 12:00pm, Capital Judicial Center (multipurpose room).

Attachments:

- DHHS Priorities
- Memo re: e-discovery
- DHHS presentation on MaineCare billing.