

Maine Justice for Children Task Force
September 13, 2022, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

MINUTES

In attendance: Chief Justice Stanfill, Justice Lawrence, Chief Judge Davis, Caroline Jova, Betsy Boardman, Melissa Martin, Kevin Zacks, Mary Bonauto, Ann Marie Lemire, Commissioner Randall Liberty, Clint Boothby, Bette Hoxie, Commissioner Mike Sauschuck, Nick Miles, Chris Bicknell, Liam Shaw, Cassie Rodgers, Noah Manning, Ariel Gannon, Xi Chen, Christine Alberi, Mary-Jo Robinson, Francine Garland Stark, Jill Ward, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Bobbi Johnson, Regina Phillips, Eleanor Maciag, Christopher Northrop, Travis Bryant, Esther Anne, Andrea Mancuso, Ahmen Cabral, Katharine Wiltuck, Dr. Todd Landry, Kayla Ringelheim, Krystal Williams, Abdulkerim Said, and Darren Defoe

Welcome (10:00 a.m.-10:05 a.m.) —Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

Review of March 2022 Minutes (10:05 a.m.-10:10 a.m.)

- Minutes unanimously approved.

Interagency Data Assessment Project (10:10 a.m.-10:40 a.m.) Race and Equity Committee
Update: Associate Justice Rick Lawrence & Public Consulting Group

- PCG provided an overview of assessment process, findings, and recommendations (See PowerPoint presentation).
- Krystal Williams – looking forward to reviewing report and reflecting on opportunities for next steps. Office of Population Health Equity may have a lot to learn from the ground Task Force has already walked.
- Next step: Once updated draft is released, the draft will be shared with the Task Force. Committee will set up another meeting to review the final draft. All members invited to send comments to PCG.

Updates (10:40 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Maine Supreme Judicial Court- Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

- Courts are struggling to hear cases timely. Time to disposition is increasing. MJB has submitted budget for more resources.
- Barbara Cardone has joined the MJB as the Director of Legal Affairs and Public Relations.
- An Organizational Update from the Judicial Branch – Chief Judge Brent Davis
 - Current new filings: As of September 9, 2022, there have been 687 original protective custody filings statewide. Last year for the same time period, there were 712 original protective custody filings. This represents a 4% decrease from last year.
 - CASA Update: The most recent CASA training was held this past August. 12 new volunteers were trained.

- Child Welfare Conference: The annual Maine Judicial Branch Child Welfare Conference will be held virtually on October 27th and 28th from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - The title of this year's conference is *The Effects of COVID-19 on the Child Welfare System and Trauma-Informed Practice*
 - The first day will focus on the effects of the pandemic, both positive and negative, that COVID-19 had on the child welfare system and how to better serve families in post-pandemic times. The keynote speaker is Adriane McLemore who is an individual with lived experience both as a child in foster care and as a kinship provider.
 - The second day will focus on trauma-informed care from the perspective of children and parents involved in the child welfare system, and stakeholders who engage in this work.
 - The conference has been approved for a total of 13 CLE credits including 1 ethics credit and 1.5 harassment and discrimination credits. CPE credits are pending.

- A Panel Update from the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel- Debra Dunlap, Co-Chair & Ahmen Cabral, Co-Chair
 - One of Maine's 3 citizen review panels (the two others are the Justice for Children Task Force and Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel). All meetings are open to the public and minutes are available on website.
 - Summary:
 - The MCWAP annual retreat is this Friday. At the retreat the panel will finalize the annual recommendations from MCWAP. Most of the recent work has been on planning retreat and bringing draft recommendations.
 - 4 system recommendations and 6 panel goals so far.

- An Organizational Update from the Office of Child and Family Services at DHHS -Dr. Todd A. Landry, Director & Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director
 - Working on implementation of new programs/models from legislative session –
 - Creation of new unit of standby staff (16 caseworkers; 3 supervisor) to handle afterhours and weekend reports and investigation. 10 of those 16 positions have been hired for caseworkers and all 3 supervisors have been hired. Working on statewide implementation for this fall.
 - Ongoing implementation of Safety Science model.
 - Quarterly meetings by HHS committee – Monday 9/19 is next meeting. OCFS will be presenting as well as the three citizen review panels. Link to be provided to the Task Force if people want to attend.
 - OCFS continues to experience workforce challenges. Continue to work diligently to meet statutory requirements and time frames.

- An Organizational Update from the Office of the Attorney General- Ariel Gannon, Assistant Attorney General, Chief of the Child Protective Division
 - AAG Elizabeth McCullum recently retired. A replacement has been hired who will be working in the Augusta DC.
 - The AAG's child protection office currently has:
 - 27 trial attorneys, 2,398 cases as of August.

- 1 appellate attorney, 10 briefs pending currently
 - 17 support staff
- Currently fully staffed, but have been dealing with challenges with workforce and navigating the ongoing pandemic.
- Division also serves on variety of workgroups and committees related to child welfare.
- Division provides training: foundations training for new caseworkers, CDS professional training, Maine Criminal Justice Academy.
- An Organizational Update from the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services Ellie Maciag, Deputy Executive Director
 - MCILS is down to 84 PC attorneys statewide. At last meeting, they had 100. Decline is ongoing.
 - MCILS has requested budget request to increase hourly rate to \$150 hoping that will help with retention and recruitment.
 - Status of “flying squad” hires – MCILS has run into a snag with HR regarding salaries. Thus, those positions have not yet been posted.
 - Chief Stanfill notes that the lack of attorneys makes scheduling of the cases difficult.

Strategic Plan Updates (11:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m.)

- Parent Curriculum Workgroup Update: Kelly Dell’Aquila, Jamie Brooks, and Karen Tompkins
 - Since beginning of year, they have hosted 11 trainings for parents. 22 parents. 31% attendance rate out of 71 registrations.
 - A couple of provider session trainings.
 - Funded through the end of the year. Wondering what to do about year two.
 - Biggest struggle has been getting the word out to parents to increase registration.
 - Outreach efforts to date: sessions with OCFS staff to get flyers to parents, network with providers across the state, courts sending flyers with scheduling notices, judges have been given information about program, MCILS has sent information to parent attorneys, annual MJB conference will also include one session about the curriculum.
 - If Task Force has ideas for spreading the word, please contact Kelly Dell’Aquila.
 - Suggestions from participants in meeting: Consider translating flyer and materials or translating a recording of the presentation.
- Continuing Education Subcommittee Update: Betsy Boardman
 - Upcoming annual MJB conference this October 27th and 28th. The conference will be virtual.
 - Topics: *The Effects of COVID-19 on the Child Welfare System and Trauma-Informed Practice*
 - Provided overview of agenda (see attached agenda for conference).
 - In-person conference spring 2023.

Miscellaneous (11:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

- Changes in Maine Law School Clinics:
 - In January 2023, the Law School will be starting a rural practice clinic housed in University of Fort Kent.
 - Transition from juvenile justice to youth justice – will now also provide services for emerging adults (unhoused 18-24 year olds).
- Next meeting of the Task Force: December 13 at 10 a.m.

ADJOURN (12:00 p.m.)