

Maine Justice For Children Task Force
June 13, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill, Justice Rick Lawrence, Judge Eric Mehnert, Cassie Rodgers, Bette Hoxie, Travis Bryant, Ariel Piers-Gamble, Xi Chen, Mark Moran, Randall Liberty, Jamison Rhoads-Doyle (OAG intern), Julian Richter, AnnMarie Lemire, Andrea Mancuso, Jamie Brooks, Chris Bicknell, Chris Northrop, Mary Bonauto, Sarah Branch, Todd Landry, Bobbi Johnson, Melissa Martin, Ahmen Cabral, Christine Thibeault, Dr. Amanda Brownell, Jim Billings, Caroline Jova, Betsy Boardman, and Joanna Davis.

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

Review and Approval of December 2022 Meeting Minutes: The minutes were sent around as part of the March 14th meeting that was canceled due to inclement weather.

- Minutes approved unanimously.
- Chief Justice Stanfill inquired of the Task Force members as to whether the Task Force would not meet when the State of Maine Offices are closed. Should inclement weather be an issue in the future, a determination will be made at that time.

Annual Report Presentations and Panel Updates: (10:05 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.)

- **Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel (MCWAP) Annual Report:** Deb Dunlap, MCWAP Co-Chair and Ahmen Cabral, MCWAP Co-Chair, Senior Policy Associate, Catherine Cutler Institute, University of Southern Maine
 - MCWAP is one of the citizen review panels in Maine.
 - MCWAP hold 10 meetings annually that are open to the public. All panel information is available on the [Maine Citizen Review Panel website](#).
 - 2022 Recommendations can be found in the [MCWAP Annual Report](#):
 - 2023 priorities: updating parent and provider surveys, developing lived experience training, reviewing use of contingency funding, and continuing to study family team meetings.
 - Discussion: What is the focus for the subcommittee on family team meetings? Will kinship caregivers be included in any exploration?
 - MCWAP will be looking at the family team model in depth and will develop a participant survey to study what is and is not working. The suggestion that kinship caregivers' perspective also be included in the survey will be brought back to MCWAP.
 - MCWAP report includes the Department's responses to the recommendations.
- **Maine Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel (CDSIRP) Annual Report:** Dr. Amanda Brownell, Child Abuse Pediatrician, Medical Director, Spurwink Center for Safe and Healthy Families CDSIRP Co-Chair and Mark Moran, LCSW, Social Services, Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, Coordinator, Pediatric Forensic Clinical
 - CDSIRP is one of the citizen review panels in Maine. Met 9 times in 2022. Three levels of review, including summary reports from OCFS. If any particular theme is identified, the

panel conducts a Level 2 review to examine a cluster of cases. Level 3 reviews focus on one case per meeting and hear from law enforcement. Panel receives education presentations, for example, on pediatric ingestions and the Safety Science Model, as well as quarterly HHS presentations.

- Data Trends:
 - Serious Injury Reports: Increased 23% in 2022. (Continuing upward multi-year trend)
 - Ingestion reports:
 - 40/90 reports in 2022 were marijuana, 7/90 fentanyl
 - Recommendation that Naloxone be available for kids in environments with narcotics present.
 - No comprehensive data collection/monitoring of total ingestions.
 - Unsafe sleep - potential return toward more traditional annual average. Maine had seen a 50% decline a few years ago, likely due to DHHS campaign to increase awareness as to safe sleep. Panel exploring similar efforts to reduce the annual average again.
 - Similar seasonal pattern injuries as in prior years (e.g., drowning, recreational vehicles, and window falls).
- Workforce:
 - Support establishing after-hours units statewide.
 - Systemic Observations-Multidisciplinary
 - Law enforcement - good coordination/relationships at high levels, more challenging dynamics locally
 - Medical care - importance of well child care visits
- [Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel Recommendation](#)
- Discussion:
 - Dr. Brownell noted that grant funding has been awarded to examine pediatric head injuries and hopes it will be a robust project.
- [Department's responses to the recommendations of CDSIRP](#) are in a separate document, not embedded in the report itself as is the case with the MCWAP report.

Updates (10:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.) Maine Supreme Judicial Court - Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

- Increase in pay for GALs - rate increase has been implemented to \$150/hour.
- There is a desire for more in-person PC proceedings, but dependent on funding and staff.
- **An Organizational Update from the Maine Judicial Branch - Chief Judge Brent Davis**
 - Filings: 3,287 pending PC cases. 462 new filings in 2023, which is a 7% increase from the same time period in 2022.
 - Maine CASA program:
 - Held training in March where nine new volunteers were trained. Law students also attended the training to complete the domestic violence training requirements.

- Widespread newspaper campaign advertising the August training. There has been great interest already.
 - Lunch-and-learn presentations continue and are going well.
 - Kaela Scott is currently attending the National CASA Conference with three volunteers.
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of the Attorney General** - Ariel Piers-Gamble, Assistant Attorney General, Chief of the Child Protective Division
 - Currently, there are 26 trial AAGs handling the 3,287 pending PC cases statewide. In 2022, one appellate attorney handled 80 appeals. There is a vacancy in Rumford/South Paris courts.
 - The OAG assisted OCFS in the passage of LD 474 (An Act to Improve Collaboration Between Mandatory Reporters and Law Enforcement in the Investigation of Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect); and took the lead in drafting LD 1970 (Maine ICWA—voted OTPA unanimously, includes emergency preamble).
 - The OAG continues to conduct training and host interns in the summer and externs in the fall and spring.
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of Child and Family Service at DHHS** - Dr. Todd Landry, Director & Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director
 - DHHS announced Child Safety and Family Wellbeing Plan and Dr. Landry shared a press release about the plan. The press release includes a link to the plan itself.
 - [Press Release](#) on Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan.
 - Premise of the plan is that children can be kept safer by making families stronger utilizing community support.
 - Since the last meeting, there was a quarterly meeting of the HHS Committee, and included representatives from all the Citizen Review Panels.
 - There are a number of bills and budget requests moving through the Legislative process. Dr. Landry hopes to present further on bills that are passed at the next meeting.
 - Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director, OCFS:
 - LD 474:
 - In response to collaborative safety review in 2021, a workgroup was convened that included OCFS, AAGs, hospitals, and law enforcement. This group helped produce LD 474 (An Act to Improve Collaboration Between Mandatory Reporters and Law Enforcement in the Investigation of Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect). It was signed by the Governor on June 8, 2023.
 - The law, contained in Title 22, now allows hospitals to share information with law enforcement when investigating an allegation of child abuse or neglect.
 - The law also provides immunity from civil actions for individuals reporting this information as part of the investigation or a criminal justice proceeding.
 - Substance Use Resources:

- OCFS has also been working on peer coaching and recovery support positions that would provide support for individuals currently involved with child welfare.
 - OCFS is also establishing substance use specialists in each region to act as resources to families (similar to the domestic violence support positions in each region). OCFS is hopeful that this will start in Fall 2023.
- **An Organizational Update from the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services, Jim Billings, Executive Director**
 - Attorney Billings started May 22nd
 - Toby Jandreau started May 30th as a Rural Defender.
 - Rural Defender unit is taking cases, with a focus on Aroostook County.
 - Considering hiring a social worker as an additional resource.

Strategic Plan Updates (11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

- **Race and Equity Committee Update:** Mary Bonauto & Regina Phillips
 - Betsy sent an email informing the Task Force that this Committee is pausing meetings for the summer. There is a team of individuals that are still moving forward on implementing more comprehensive data collection. There are a lot of issues to discuss as to what is included in data collected, as well as data storage and data sharing among agencies.
 - There was a bill passed in the last legislative session to require law enforcement to record demographic information of the people involved in traffic stops. Data will be based on the officer's perception of that person's demographics. Attorney General Frey has until January 1, 2024 to provide law enforcement guidance on implementation.
- **Parent Curriculum Workgroup Update:** Kelly Dell'Aquila, Jamie Brooks, and Karen Tompkins
 - 84 parents have attended the informational sessions (28 total session)
 - Community providers have also attended information sessions.
 - The Legislature has passed additional funding for the continuation of the program. The Committee is hopeful to create more in depth sessions with this funding. Also create a "train the trainer" curriculum to help better implement statewide with local agencies. Currently, there are three parents trained as facilitators.
- **Continuing Education Subcommittee:** Betsy Boardman
 - Held a two day conference at Sunday River on March 30th and 31st .
 - Title of the conference was, Let's Reconnect: A Lived-Experience Perspective of the Child Welfare System.
 - Attendance was approximately 300 people on Thursday and 250 people on Friday.
 - A total of approximately 2732 continuing education credits were awarded. That includes:
 - 1220 Continuing legal Education credits;
 - 592 Continuing Professional Education credits (for GALs);
 - 141 Domestic Violence Education credits;
 - 118 Harassment and Discrimination credits;
 - 81 Ethics credits;

- 243 Continuing Judicial Education credits; and
 - 340 Continuing Education units for DHHS case workers.
 - Next step is for the subcommittee to review conference evaluations and begin planning for the 2024 spring conference.
- **Discussion on Additional Strategic Plan Items**
 - MCWAP Recommendations:
 - Develop a subcommittee of this Task Force to explore and make recommendations for how to improve the retention and recruitment of parent attorneys and GALs.
 - Discussion:
 - There has been quite a bit of discussion on how to incorporate Maine Law's participation in informing prospective graduates of court-appointed work.
 - New developments at the law school
 - Judge Oram has been teaching the GAL course;
 - New child protection class being offered;
 - The Clinic has resumed parent attorney work in York County.
 - Further discussion should be had as to whether the child protection class could meet the MCILS minimum standards and whether student attorneys could expedite MCILS rostering if they did parent attorney work at the Clinic.
 - Individuals who are interested in being a part of the subcommittee should email Betsy, who will report back in September.

2023 Meeting Dates: March 14th (canceled due to weather), June 13th, September 12th, December 12th

ADJOURN (12:00 p.m.): Adjourned at 11:30 a.m.