

Children's Services Committee

Location: WebEx Address: [Click to Join WebEx Meeting](#)
Call in number: 415-655-0003 Access Code: 616 179 513
Date: Tuesday, 7/28/2020
Time: 1:00 P.M. CDT

Staff Present: Richard Kennedy, Exec. Dir., Craig Hargrow, Dep. Exec. Dir., Jennifer Drake-Croft, Laritha Fentress, Jennifer Jones, Sumita Keller, Jill Murphy, Melissa McGee, Gerald Papica, Steve Petty, Bill Latimer, Kylie Burns

Staff Absent: Cory Bradfield

Commission Members: Amy Jones, Chair, Jennifer Harlan, Mackenzie Johnston, Wendy Shea, Kelly Drummond, Mackenzie Johnson, Steven Neely, Glenda Terry

Commission Members Absent: Ella Bentley, Hailey Brooks, Rob Mortensen, Glenda Terry

Guests: None

1) **Call to Order – Amy Jones, Chair**

After ascertaining there was a quorum, Jones called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Jones identified all members present for the WebEx meeting.

2) **Staff Updates**

Ombudsman Program

Papica reported that twenty-nine referrals were received from April 1 to June 30. For the same time period, 44 referrals were received in 2019 and 24 referrals were received in 2018. Although the referrals for the reporting period were slightly higher than two years ago, COVID-19 has caused some decline beginning in mid-March. From April to June, 65 cases were closed. At the end of June, 20 cases remained open or active within the program. Papica participated via Webex in Second Look Commission meetings on 04/14 and 06/09. Papica attended the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) via Zoom on 05/18 and 06/22. Reviewing cases of children started early in the morning to accommodate the increased number of cases that needed to be reviewed. Papica also reported the USOA conference planning committee has approved the 2021 annual conference in New Hampshire. He stated that talks are also underway to provide online New Ombudsman training for this year 2020 with 20 individuals from various offices indicating interest.

Building Strong Brains Tennessee

As Drake-Croft reported previously, due to challenges with COVID-19 the Building Strong Brains Conference Content Committee decided to move forward with an online Lunch and Learn Series throughout the summer. To date, four lunch and learns have been conducted attracting approximately 350 participants at the live events and an average of 150 views on YouTube. The series will continue through the end of September. In addition, a representative from the TN Department of Health is partnering with Drake-Croft to form BSB TN “learning communities” focusing on the various Lunch and Learn topic areas. Kennedy and Drake-Croft worked with a team at DCS and ETSU to make revisions on the BSB TN article for submission to the *American Psychologist*. We hope the article will be accepted into a special issue focused on addressing ACEs. Keller, Drake-Croft, and Newland have been partnering with DCS to develop a BSB TN website. The website is nearing completion and will be live in mid-September.

Youth Transitions Advisory Council

Petty reported that the Youth Transitions Advisory Council met in conjunction with the Council on Children’s Mental Health as is our custom for the past several years. The meeting was well-attended. There was a brief update from the Office of Independent Living. There has been a slight increase in the number of youths being served by Extension of Foster Care services. The Young Adult Leadership Council sponsored by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Office of Children, Youth and Young Adults presented for the remainder of the meeting. The Young Adults provided feedback to the Councils about having difficult conversations and then had a difficult conversation about the challenge of accessing treatment and support as young people of color. The next meeting of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council will be Thursday August 6, 2020 via WebEx. If you would like more information contact Steve Petty, Steve.Petty@tn.gov

Council on Children’s Mental Health (CCMH) and Systems of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT)

McGee reported that the June 18th CCMH meeting was a joint meeting with Youth Transitions Advisory Council which was delivered virtually via WebEx. Meeting notes can be found in YTAC’s report. During this time, the CCMH Director McGee provided a session on secondary traumatic stress (STS) as part of a SOCAT sponsored “Webapalooza,” providing a full day of content, co-led a Building Strong Brains virtual training through the regional coordinators, provided an STS training for the Dickson

County Safe Baby Court, and continues to participate in various interdisciplinary teams, such as the Children's Justice Task Force and the CJTF Treatment Committee, and the TDMHSAS Policy and Planning meeting.

System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT)

McGee reported that Fentress remains in her position as the Middle Tennessee SOCAT Divisional Coordinator, while Jill Murphy's last day with TCCY was May 29th. Fentress continues to provide support in her division, as well as across the state as available. She also provided a presentation in the SOCAT Webapalooza and the Dickson County Safe Baby Court training, moderated a Family Support Specialist panel for Children's Mental Health Awareness training and continues to monitor regional meetings as they return.

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) submitted a proposal to the Department of Human Services for use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to support one year of SOCAT services. The proposal was approved as currently funded through the final year of the federal grant allowing sites to continue services through at least September 2021.

Unfortunately, TDMHSAS recently received feedback regarding the submission for a new federal grant to support continued expansion of system of care statewide (known as the System of Care Across Tennessee Network (SOCATN) and furthering implementation and use of high-fidelity wraparound services was not funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). With this information, TDMHSAS submitted a revised budget request to DHS to re-appropriate funding to minimize ancillary services and increase clinical services through providers. DHS has also requested a three-year budget proposal for continuing SOCAT services. McGee also reported that Fentress's position will be covered for another year under this funding stream.

Home Visiting Leadership Alliance (HVLA)

Keller reported that due to COVID-19 the HVLA continues to meet virtually via WebEx. The HVLA met on June 23, 2020 and heard presentations from partners at the Department of Health. JW Randolph presented on COVID-19 Strategies in Tennessee. Monique Anthony from the Office of Minority Health and Disparity Elimination presented on Health Disparities in Tennessee and highlighted the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in Tennessee. We also learned about the new name and new look for Nurture the Next, formerly Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee.

The next HVLA meeting is scheduled for September and will most likely be held virtually. Keller learned from our partners at the Department of Health that the expansion of home visiting to all 95 counties supported by the Department of Human Services' TANF funds is close to being confirmed. This funding is a significant investment in EBHV and will make the services available across the entire state.

Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council

Keller reported that the last general meeting was held via WebEx on May 13th and featured a panel of Early Childhood Education leaders discussing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The next meeting will be held in September, date TBD. The TNYCWC Newsletter continues to be issued monthly. The newsletter features upcoming webinars, job postings, issue spotlights, and profiles of participating agencies.

Keller stated the Steering Team met on July 7th. The meeting focused on setting the agenda for the September meeting. It was the final meeting of two Steering Team members, Mary Rolando and Belva Weathersby, both of whom are retiring in July. They will be replaced by other representatives from the TN Department of Children's Services and the TN Department of Education, respectively.

Tennessee has been selected by the national Early Childhood Nonprofit ZERO TO THREE (ZTT) to receive a technical assistance grant (with associated funding) as part of their *Building Strong Foundations for Families* project. TCCY, and the TNYCWC specifically, is the lead agency for the state on the project. The TNYCWC Director led a core team of early childhood stakeholders in its successful application for the funds, which will ensure sustainability of the council for two more years. The goal of the project is to support up to ten states in building and strengthening comprehensive policies, programs and systems that ensure families with infants and toddlers have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. The project dovetails well with the current goals of the TNYCWC.

Second Look Commission

Hargrow reported that the Second Look Commission (SLC) met virtually on June 9, 2020. During the quarterly meeting, the SLC members checked in with each other during the introductions to make sure the members were doing well during the pandemic. Hargrow updated the members regarding the sunset audit. Hargrow stated he is still waiting on follow up contact from the auditors. SLC members briefly discussed the format of the annual report and how the focus might change based on current circumstances.

During the investigatory meeting, SLC members made the following preliminary findings and recommendations:

1. Overall, DCS continues to improve its documentation;
2. DCS representatives provided good case work and coordination with other agencies and entities;
3. Relatives continue to fail to report child abuse;
4. Child abuse prevention training for Housing Authority employees may be beneficial;
5. There continues to be opportunity to thoroughly review previous history and appropriately use it in current investigations;
6. Looking for parents who do not want to be found can tax resources; and
7. Conflicting medical reports can make it difficult for DCS and other child abuse prevention stakeholders to protect the alleged victims.

3) **Approval of May Children's Services Minutes (ACTION)**

Jones asked for a motion to approve the Children's Services minutes from the May Commission Meeting.

Drummond moved to approve the minutes from May 2020.

Neely seconded. Unanimously Approved.

4) **Additional Items or Comments**

Jones discussed concerns with online learning due to COVID-19 and increases in possible abuse/neglect.

Kennedy sent a link to the first child well-being task force. He noted that the task force did not include commissioners from child-serving state departments. The task force did ask Commissioners from child-serving state departments, Stephen Smith with TennCare and Kennedy to review the report. The report was released last Thursday. Kennedy stated this was not an all-encompassing report, but there is mention of increased child abuse and children staying home during this time. Katie Houghtlin, Director of the task force, will be joining the full commission meeting and will be presenting on the report in addition to recommendations and concerns.

Jones mentioned a local agency in her area wishing to apply for a TCCY grant and wondered if it could be hand delivered since the agency won't have time to mail it. Hargrow asked Jones to contact Taylor or Whitfield to see if they can receive it in person.

5) **Motion to Adjourn**

Drummond moved to adjourn the meeting. Neely seconded and all approved.

Prepared by: Jennifer Drake-Croft