

## Children's Services Committee

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Location: **Microsoft Teams meeting**  
**Join on your computer or mobile app**

Date: Tuesday, 08/03/2021  
Time: 1:00 P.M. CDT

**Staff Present:** Richard Kennedy, Craig Hargrow, Cory Bradfield, Melissa McGee, Gerald Papica

**Staff Absent:** Steve Petty

**Commission Members:** Amy Jones, Chair, Randy Butler, Charmaine Kromer

**Commission Members Absent:**

**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 nineteen new program referrals were received for the months of May and June. For the same reporting period, this figure reflects the number of new referrals received in 2020 (15) and 2019 (20). As of 06/30/21, 31 cases remain active or open in the Ombudsman Program database. These figures broken down by age, gender, geography, source of complaint, and nature of complaint in infographics that were submitted to the Commission members.

Papica reported he attended Second Look Commission on June 8 via WebEx. He also participated in two Foster Care Review Board meetings, May 24 and June 29. He added the meetings have become very long partly due to the increased number of children entering foster care. Papica also reported he attended six Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and two DHS Daycare Licensing Board of Review on June 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Lastly, Papica reported the USOA has started monthly webinars in lieu of an annual

conference because of COVID 19. Papica reported he did not run for re-election on the USOA Board of Directors due to his upcoming retirement. He added, as mentioned during the last commission meeting, Dr. Papica is chairing a USOA Ad Hoc Committee on DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). The USOA has hired Vincent Strategies to assist with this project whose main goal is to incorporate DEI ideals and practices in the organization. Dr. Gregory Vincent and his team were hired to lead this project which began on June 7 and will end on December 10. To date, this undertaking was met with positive response from USOA members.

## **Building Strong Brains Tennessee**

Kennedy reported Jenn Drake-Croft's last day with TCCY was June 30, 2021, and that Sumita Keller, Director of Statewide Partnerships, resigned effective July 30, 2021.

### *Training for Trainers*

Kennedy reminded the Committee McGee took over the T4T responsibilities prior to Drake-Croft's departure. Kennedy and Hargrow are reconsidering the process for accepting trainers for the next round of T4Ts. Kennedy reported we are currently waiting on a contract from DCS for the BSB Innovation Grant funds for this fiscal year and are confident we will receive similar funding as in previous years. We are considering the application process for the T4Ts will identify dates once the funding is confirmed. We will also determine appropriateness of in-person vs virtual trainings. Kennedy also shared we have been contacted by a trauma-informed organization in Australia with a request to share our BSB T4T with them. We are in process of scheduling a Zoom call with them to further network and determine next steps.

### *Building Strong Brains – Innovation Grants*

Kennedy shared DCS received 25 proposals and a team comprising of representatives from DCS, TCCY, DOE, DMHSAS, TDH and OCJP met on 7/21/2021 to review the proposals. The team recommended six proposals from all across the state for funding. The recommended proposals are currently awaiting approval from the Commissioner of DCS as the funds flow through their agency.

### *Building Strong Brains – Collaboration*

Kennedy reported the members of the Coordinating Team, Public/Private Sector Steering groups continue to meet and have contributed to the Strategic Plan. The Commissioners were reconvened in June to review the strategic planning process products and identify ways to align Department priorities with the updated plan. The next step of the strategic planning process will be for Strategy & Leadership to meet

with the Coordinating Team. We expect to have an updated Strategic Plan by early fall.

### *Building Strong Brains – Department of Health*

Kennedy shared an update regarding the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funding. Kennedy, Drake-Croft and Keller met with team members of TDH to discuss how TCCY can support and participate in the work proposed by the Department using the ARP funds. Prior to the meeting, Kennedy met with Commissioner Piercey to determine a plan to create an effective use of ARP funding that would be in line with Building Strong Brains. TCCY developed a partnership plan with a request for \$28 million over 4.5 years. Kennedy reported we have not received any updates on the status of the proposal.

### **Youth Transitions Advisory Council**

Kennedy reported the Youth Transition Advisory Council met jointly with the Council on Children's Mental on June 17, 2021 via WebEx. There were updates from DCS Office of Independent Living, all four of the DCS Resource Centers were represented. The Councils heard from Youth Villages LifeSet, who performs case management for DCS transition age youth. A professor from Tennessee Tech discussed the high number of disconnected youth in Tennessee. Outreach and Support Program at MTSU gave information about working with DCS and homeless students during the pandemic. National Institute for Mental Illness (NAMI) gave a presentation on Erase the Stigma and Mental Health America of Middle Tennessee on Ending the Silence.

Kennedy continued, the Youth Transitions Advisory Council will meet virtually again, August 5, 2021. Updates will be provided by DCS Office of Independent Living and the MHSAS Office of Children, Youth and Young Adult Initiatives, and the Department of Health.

### **Council on Children's Mental Health (CCMH)**

McGee reported, June 16, 2021 was the joint meeting with the Youth Transitions Advisory Council with focus on youth and young adults. Presentations included TDMHSAS, DCS, MTSU, Mental Health America of the Mid South and NAMI TN. The next meeting is scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup> and will be a hybrid meeting with an in person option available. A strong possibility exists that the meeting will be entirely virtual.

CCMH had a sunset hearing before the joint Government Operations committee of the TN General Assembly and received a recommendation for a 6-year extension.

## **System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) Network**

McGee reported we continue to work on CCMH structure and support for a statewide system of care and are planning a CCMH Summit in early October depending on conditions.

## **Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council**

Bradfield reported the last general meeting of the Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council (TNYCWC) was held via WebEx on 06/29 and featured a presentation from the Director on the ZERO TO THREE *Building Strong Foundations for Families* project, followed by breakout sessions of the Policy and Data Action Teams. The meeting also included updates from TN Dept of Health Early Childhood Section and TN Dept of Human Services Office of Childcare Service. Bradfield reminded the Committee he continues to email a monthly newsletter. Bradfield reported the Steering Team continues to operate as the Core Team of the *Building Strong Foundations For Families* project. The Steering Team met on 04/22, 05/06, 06/03, and 07/08. The next meeting is scheduled for 08/05.

## **Zero to Three Technical Assistance Opportunity**

Bradfield shared the council's work with the ZTT on the *Building Strong Foundations for Families* (BSFF) project continues. The goal of the project is to support a cohort of 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 Director participated in a virtual meeting with the other state team leads on 05/27, and meets with ZTT consultants as necessary, in addition to the consultant's participation in the monthly Steering Team meetings. Bradfield, continued, as part of the BSFF project, the TNYCWC will host an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health I/ECMH) policy summit in late fall of 2021. The summit will familiarize policymakers with the basics of I/ECMH, the positive impact of I/ECMH-focused policies and programs and establish the TNYCWC and its partners as resources for I/ECMH policy expertise. The Director, in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Director of Statewide Partnerships, has gathered input from stakeholders within the TNYCWC, including the Policy Action Team, to create a policy agenda. Planning for the summit is underway.

Bradfield, continued, as the result of collaboration stemming from this project, the Director and other members of the TNYCWC are engaged a project with Building Strong Foundations for Families counterparts in KY. The project will explore issues surrounding

accessing maternal care in neighboring states when such care is unavailable locally, utilizing focus groups of consumers and providers. The teams from KY and TN have a biweekly standing meeting. Planning is underway for focus groups and key informant interviews to learn more about the experience of seeking treatment across borders.

## **Home Visiting Leadership Alliance (HVLA)**

Hargrow shared Keller is transitioning to a new position at a local Foundation, the Healing Trust. He reported Jerri Moore, the Southwest Regional Coordinator, has agreed to help support the work of the HVLA in the interim. Moore has a long and rich history in home visiting and early childhood programs and is well connected to the home visiting community.

Hargrow reported the Home Visiting Leadership Alliance (HVLA) met on June 1<sup>st</sup> and continues to meet virtually. The meeting included an update on the expansion of EBHV from partners at TDH. Petty also provided a legislative update to the group. The next meeting is scheduled for September 28, 2021.

## **Second Look Commission**

Hargrow reported the Second Look Commission (SLC) met virtually on June 8, 2021. During the open meeting, the SLC members checked-in with each other. Sarah Long, McNabb Center, Assistant Director of Family Treatment Services, provided a presentation on how substance abuse impacts youth. After the presentation, SLC members discussed having presentations from the provider community and the Department of Children's Services.

Hargrow continued, during the June 8 investigatory meeting, SLC members reviewed three cases and made preliminary findings, observations and recommendations which include the following:

- a. When a protective order is entered, child abuse prevention stakeholders need procedures to follow up to make sure parties are complying with the order or determine whether the order has been terminated. Additionally, violations of the orders need to be reported to the proper individuals;
- b. SLC members had questions regarding why one matter was unsubstantiated when the facts presented to the SLC seemed to indicate it should have been substantiated;
- c. When caregivers refuse services, child abuse prevention stakeholders need to consider requesting court ordered services, and this could

- potentially be a part of DCS training;
- d. The use of extension of foster care could help provide much needed services to abuse and neglected children who age out of custody;
  - e. Safety and stability need to be priorities when placing children with relatives and in foster care. Convenience should not override the best interest of the child;
  - f. In one case, the available documentation indicated a foster parent failed to report abuse of a foster child;
  - g. Clear rationale should be provided for removing one child a home and leaving other children in the same home;
  - h. Additional training and other resources need to be available for relative placements;
  - i. Appropriate mental health services need to be provided to abuse and neglected youth; and
  - ~~j. One of the cases very well documented.~~

The next meeting of the SLC will be held virtually on 08/10.

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.

***Kromer moved to approve the minutes from May 2021.***

***Butler seconded. Unanimously Approved.***

4) **Additional Items or Comments**

Kennedy reported that he and Hargrow are meeting with an organizational consultant in the wake of several departures of key TCCY staff. An update on any changes to the organization will be reported at the next Commission meeting.

5) **Motion to Adjourn**

***Kromer moved to adjourn the meeting. Butler seconded and all approved.***

Prepared by: Cory Bradfield