



## **Application**

**FFY 2021 - 2022**

**Children's Justice Act Grant to States  
Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act**

**Submitted by**

**State of Connecticut  
Department of Children and Families  
505 Hudson Street  
Hartford, CT 06106**

**Vannessa L. Dorantes, Commissioner**

**Application**  
**FFY 2021 - 2022 Children’s Justice Grant**  
**State of Connecticut**

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## APPLICATION FOR FFY 2020-2021 CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT GRANT

APPLICANT AGENCY: State of Connecticut  
Department of Children and Families (DCF)  
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CFDA # 93.643

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### **Section I: Historical Context: Connecticut's Task Force Development**

The Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTFJAC, GTF, Task Force, or Governor's Task Force), first established in 1988, identified the need for greater coordination of agencies involved in the investigation, intervention, and prosecution of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse cases. The development of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) that provide critical coordination at the beginning stages of an investigation has provided a means of maximizing community resources that strengthen and improve interagency responses and interventions. The guiding principles and values that were established initially continue to guide the direction and focus of the Task Force.

### **Section II: Maintenance of a Task Force (Sections 107(b) (2) and 107 (c) (1))**

Since the development of the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children in 1988, there have been many changes in membership. The State Task Force continues to include members who represent the specified disciplines as required in Section 107 (c) (1), including the addition of two new members representing former adult victims of child abuse and/or neglect, and individuals experienced in working with homeless children and youths (as defined in Section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a)). Over the past year, the task force has ensured that required members are seated on the task force. The Task Force meets bi-monthly in January, March, April, July, September, and November. The Task Force held a special meeting in April 2021 to address the 2020-2021 Three-Year Assessment and vote on the recommendations. The 2021-2022 CJA priorities and proposed budget were presented at the April 2021 special meeting and approved during a

subsequent vote. Committees and workgroups convene as scheduled, focusing on the program needs while responding to evolving statewide needs.

The following individuals serve on the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children. Members have the option of designating a designee for their position on the task force: (See the Task Force Membership Listing at the end of biographies.)

### **Children's Protective Services**

Member: Vannessa L. Dorantes, LMSW, has worked for the State of CT's Department of Children and Families (DCF) since 1992 after receiving a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Teikyo Post University. She later earned a Master's degree in Social Work from the UCONN School of Social Work, where she majored in Casework and Community Organization. Within DCF, she has held just about every position in the Social Work job class series and represented DCF on the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTFJAC) for several years. In 2014, she was appointed as Regional Administrator to CT DCF's Region 5. Region 5 is the state's northwest corner that encompasses 43 diverse cities and towns. Dorantes also served as a tri-chair of DCF's Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup and has chronicled the Department's journey in two national webinar series.

In 2019, Dorantes proudly accepted Governor Ned Lamont's appointment and was confirmed as the state of Connecticut Dept of Children & Families' Commissioner. The Department's 3,200 staff members across 17 locations interface with 14,500 families on any given day. As Commissioner, Dorantes co-Chairs the CT Alcohol and Drug Policy Council (ADPC) and tri-chair of the Women and Girls Council - Health and Safety Subcommittee.

Designee: Tammy M. Sneed is the Program Director for the Office of Human Trafficking Services, Clinical & Community Consultation & Support Team for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Over the last 30-years, Tammy has focused her efforts on Female-Responsive Programming for adolescent girls, with a micro-focus on programming for girls in the legal system. She has developed and implemented a training model educating local and state police departments on working with adolescent girls focusing on trauma, resulting in significant arrest reductions. Over the last 12 years, Tammy has refined her focus on a national crisis, child trafficking. Tammy directs Connecticut's HART (Human Anti-trafficking Response Team) to focus on eradicating child trafficking in Connecticut. In addition, Tammy tri-chairs the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children, with oversight of the 17 Multidisciplinary Teams and 10 Children's Advocacy Centers across Connecticut charged with investigating and responding to cases of severe physical and sexual abuse of children, including child trafficking.

### **Division of Criminal Justice**

Member: Richard J. Colangelo, Jr. was sworn in as Chief State's Attorney on January 31, 2020. As Chief State's Attorney, he is the chief law enforcement officer of the State of Connecticut and administrative head of the Division of Criminal Justice, the independent agency in the executive branch of state government that is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of all criminal matters in Connecticut. A career prosecutor, Chief State's Attorney Colangelo joined the Division of Criminal Justice in March 1993 and served in various capacities until he was appointed State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Stamford/Norwalk on July 1, 2015. He has tried all types of major felony cases and has been intricately involved in criminal investigations and criminal justice education.

Chief State's Attorney Colangelo is a graduate of Norwalk State Technical College (A.S.M.E. 1986), the University of Connecticut (B.S.M.E. 1989), and the Quinnipiac School of Law (J.D. 1992). He has taught in the Connecticut community college system, the University of New Haven, and the National Computer Forensics Institute in Hoover, Alabama. Attorney Colangelo is Chairman of the State Board of Examiners for Psychologists,

Chairman of the Easton Police Commission, President of the Human Services Council Board of Directors in Norwalk, a member of the Boys and Girls Club of Redding-Easton Board of Directors, and a member of the Eyewitness Identification Task Force.

Designee: Kevin D. Lawlor is the Deputy Chief State's Attorney for the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice. Before he was appointed Deputy Chief, Attorney Lawlor was the Ansonia-Milford State's Attorney for twelve years. A prosecutor since 1995, he distinguished himself early in his career by working with the Milford Multi-Jurisdictional Team for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse and successfully convicted many of this District's most serious sex offenders. He also helped to create and supervise the Neighborhood Prosecution Program in the City of West Haven. The Neighborhood Prosecution Program was a federally funded initiative in West Haven which was designed to reduce teen crime and improve the quality of life for the citizens of West Haven. He is a Tri-Chair of the Governor's Task Force Justice for Abused Children, a founding member of the Division of the Criminal Justice Diversity Committee, Past President of the Division of Criminal Justice State's Attorney's Advisory Board, a former member of the Governing Council for the South Central Child Advocacy Center and he is the former President of the Board of Directors of Guardian Ad Litem Services, a Naugatuck Valley non-profit agency that attempts to improve the quality of life for the chronically mentally ill. He also volunteers to speak to area youth in coordination with the Milford Bar Association, the North Haven Board of Education, and other community organizations about criminal justice issues and the legal profession.

State's Attorney Lawlor is a graduate of East Haven High School, the University of Connecticut, and Quinnipiac University School of Law. He teaches several criminal justice courses in the Legal Studies Department at Quinnipiac University and has also taught graduate-level seminars in Evidence and Legal Aspects of Arson Investigation at the University of New Haven. He also serves as an MPTC certified instructor for the West Haven Police Department, the South Central Criminal Justice Administration, and the Milford Police Academy.

Attorney Lawlor is the 2006 recipient of the Connecticut Children's Alliance Certificate of Appreciation for his commitment to advocating through prosecution for the victims of child sexual abuse, the 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Greater Bridgeport N.A.A.C.P., a 2009 inductee of the East Haven High School Hall of Fame, the recipient of the 2013 New Haven Knights of St. Patrick Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award, the 2013 District Attorney Award from the University of New Haven, Henry C. Lee Institute of Forensic Science and the 2014 Irish Echo Law and Order 50 Award.

## **Connecticut Children's Alliance**

### **Child Advocacy Centers/Multidisciplinary Teams**

Member: Krystal Rich is the Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA), a statewide membership organization founded to provide support to Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) across Connecticut through education, training, and resources. The State Director of CCA serves as a Tri-Chair of the GTF. CCA's mission is to avail comprehensive statewide services to all child victims and their families through collaboration, systemic change, public awareness, and legislative advocacy. Currently, Ms. Rich chairs the NCAttrak Subcommittee and co-chairs the MDT Evaluation and the Finding Words Committees of GTF. Prior to coming to CCA, Krystal worked for the Sexual Assault Crisis Service in New Britain, one of CONNSACS's nine-member centers, where she provided crisis counseling and advocacy to survivors of sexual assault. Krystal holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Central Connecticut State University and a Master of Social Work from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work.

## **Judicial Branch, Superior Court for Juvenile Matters**

### **Civil/Criminal Court Judge** (Connecticut does not delineate between civil and criminal)

Member: The Honorable Patrick L. Carroll III practiced law in Fairfield, CT, for seventeen years before he was appointed a Judge of the Superior Court in 1996. Since his appointment, Judge Carroll has served in Norwalk,

Danbury, Waterbury, Milford, Derby, and Bridgeport, handling civil, family, housing, and criminal matters. He served for five years as Administrative Judge for the Judicial District of Danbury, and his most recent assignment on the bench was as the Presiding Judge for Criminal Matters in the Bridgeport, GA. Judge Carroll served as Deputy Chief Court Administrator of the Judicial Branch from September 1, 2007, through September 30, 2013. Chief Justice Rogers appointed Judge Carroll as Chief Court Administrator effective October 1, 2013.

Designee: Ms. Tasha M. Hunt is the Deputy Director of Juvenile Probation Services for the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division. She started her career with the Judicial Branch nearly 25 years ago as a Juvenile Probation Officer. In 2009, she was appointed to the Juvenile Probation Supervisor II position and rose through the ranks to become the Deputy Director.

Ms. Hunt is responsible for the management and operations of the eleven Juvenile Probation offices across Connecticut. She is committed to integrating evidence-based practices in probation offices to improve outcomes for court-involved youth. Ms. Hunt has played an integral role in Connecticut's reform of the juvenile justice system, which has led to progressive change and the state acquiring recognition as a national model. In addition to managing field offices, Ms. Hunt serves as the Commissioner of the Connecticut Interstate Compact for Juveniles, with oversight of the administration and management of the state's federally mandated supervision and transfer of juveniles on probation and parole who move across state lines or run away to another state. She also co-leads the Interstate Compact for Juveniles Ad Hoc Committee for Racial Justice.

Ms. Hunt has served on several statewide committees and task forces. Currently, she represents the agency on the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Incarceration Workgroup, Improving Outcomes for Youth Subcommittee, Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children, and local initiatives focused on youth homelessness and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Ms. Hunt earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology with a concentration in Criminology and Criminal Justice and a Master of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Southern Connecticut State University. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of New Haven in the Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences.

Member: The Honorable Bernadette Conway was appointed the Chief Administrative Judge for Juvenile Matters in September of 2013. Judge Conway has been a judge of the Superior Court since April of 1999. From 1999 to 2013, Judge Conway presided over criminal, juvenile, and family cases, primarily in New Haven. Before her appointment to the bench, Judge Conway was an assistant state's attorney in the Middlesex Judicial District.

Designee: Cynthia L. Cunningham, Esq. - Chief Clerk for Juvenile Matters in the Court Operations Division of the Judicial Branch since 2000; previously served as Clerk of the Juvenile Court in New Haven from June 1996 through December 1999. Currently acts as the primary liaison between the Juvenile Court and the Department and Children and Families.

### **Child Advocates/Attorneys for Children Office of the Child Advocate**

Member: Sarah Eagan has served as Connecticut's Child Advocate since September 2013. As Child Advocate, Sarah sets priority reviews for the Office of the Child Advocate and publishes information and recommendations to improve the safety and well-being of children. As the State's Child Advocate, Sarah has participated in drafting and seeking passage of statutory reforms on behalf of vulnerable children, including improving services for children with developmental disabilities, reducing reliance on restraint and seclusion of children, and improving the safety net for abused and neglected children in foster care. Before this appointment, Sarah served for several years as the Director of the Child Abuse Project at the Center for Children's Advocacy in Hartford, Connecticut.

During her years at the Center, Sarah provided legal representation to children and worked to ensure that abused, neglected or special-needs children receive the safety, emotional support, services, and education that they need and deserve.

Designee: Faith Vos Winkel, MSW, joined the Office of the Child Advocate in July 2001. Faith serves as the lead for the OCA on matters relating to child fatality review and prevention. She convenes the Connecticut Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) each month, which reviews all unexpected and unexplained child deaths. Faith is the Child Advocate's principal investigator on any in-depth child fatality investigation requested by the CFRP, the Governor, and the General Assembly or conducted at the Child Advocate's discretion. Child fatality reviews focus on the examination of systems and opportunities to improve policies and practices to prevent additional tragedies from occurring. Faith's focus on prevention includes providing training as well as participating in many statewide groups, including the Statewide Suicide Advisory Board, the Domestic Fatality Review Board, the Teen Safe Driving Partnership, Maternal Child Health Coalition, the Trafficking in Persons Council, the Department of Motor Vehicles Commissioners Teen Driving Advisory Committee, Prevent Child Abuse American-CT Chapter. Faith has also been involved in numerous child death review initiatives on a national level, including serving on the Advisory Committee to the National Center for the Prevention of Child Death Review. Prior to working at OCA, Faith worked at the State Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities for 15 years, advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. Faith holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut and a Master of Social Work from the University Of Connecticut School Of Social Work.

### **Office of the Chief Public Defender**

Member: Christine Perra Rapillo, Esq. is the Chief Public Defender for the State of Connecticut. Before assuming this position, Attorney Rapillo served as the Director of Juvenile Delinquency Defense and Child Protection and supervised the Hartford Juvenile Court Public Defender's Office for 11 years. Attorney Rapillo spent several years as a public defender in adult court, trying cases at all levels. Attorney Rapillo has also previously served on the GTF Executive Committee and the Committee on Child Representation, and numerous other state boards and councils in the area of juvenile justice and child protection.

Designee: Susan I. Hamilton, MSW, JD, is the Director of Juvenile Delinquency Defense and Child Protection. She administers the Juvenile Unit of the Office of Chief Public Defender, which provides attorneys for all children in child protection matters, indigent children in delinquency, and certain child custody cases, indigent parents in child protection matters, and counsel for parents in certain paternity and support enforcement actions. Before joining the Division of Public Defender Services, Attorney Hamilton served in various positions at the Department of Children and Families, including Commissioner from 2007-2011, and also represented parents and children in child protection and family cases while in private practice.

### **Office of the Attorney General**

Member: William Tong is the 25th Attorney General to serve Connecticut since the office was established in 1897. On January 9, 2019, he took office as the first Asian American elected at the statewide level in Connecticut.

Before he was elected Attorney General, Tong served for 12 years in Connecticut's General Assembly, representing the 147th District, including North Stamford and Darien. Most recently, Tong served as House Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. In this position, Tong was responsible for all legislation related to constitutional law, criminal law, civil rights, consumer protection, probate, judicial nominations, and the Judicial branch, and major areas of substantive law. During his service in the legislature, Tong led to the passage of landmark legislation, including the Connecticut Second Chance Act, Domestic Violence Restraining Order Act, Lost and Stolen Firearms Act, the Act Protecting Homeowner Rights, and the Act Protecting Schoolchildren.

A Connecticut native, Tong grew up in the Hartford area and attended schools in West Hartford. He graduated from Phillips Academy Andover, Brown University, and the University of Chicago Law School. He has practiced law for the last 18 years as a litigator in both state and federal courts, first at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, in New York City, and for the past 15 years at Finn Dixon & Herling LLP, in Stamford. Tong is the oldest of five children and grew up working side-by-side with his immigrant parents in their family's Chinese restaurant. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Stamford with their three children and too many pets to count.

Designee: Carolyn Signorelli is currently with the Child Protection Department of the Attorney General's Office, where she has prosecuted child abuse and neglect cases for a total of 18 years. Currently, Attorney Signorelli handles a varied caseload of child protection trials, defense work in state and federal court, and administrative and appellate matters. Attorney Signorelli was appointed in 2006 as Connecticut's first Chief Child Protection Attorney, where she spent five years creating a new agency devoted to improving legal representation for children and parents in child protection proceedings. Attorney Signorelli served on the ABA's National Committee to Improve Parent Representation from 2009 to 2011; the Executive Committee of the Children's Trust Fund from 2004 until 2013, the Chief Justice's Public Service & Trust Commission as Co-Chair of the Demographics Committee; the Families With Service Needs Advisory Board convened by the Legislature in July of 2006; the Judicial Department's Court Improvement Project Strategic Planning Task Force and Training Grant Workgroup. Attorney Signorelli is a member of the National Association of Counsel for Children and the Juvenile Law Society and teaches for the National Institute of Trial Advocacy. Attorney Signorelli received her B.A. from Vassar College in 1986 with General and Departmental Honors and was a Mary Siegreest Hinz Fellow at William & Mary School of Law, where she graduated in 1991.

### **Office of Victim Services**

Member: Linda Cimino has served as the Director of the Office of Victim Services (OVS) since January 2000. During her tenure, all of the written publications have been redesigned for consistency in look and text. Ms. Cimino serves on several statewide committees and task forces. Ms. Cimino served as an adjunct lecturer at the University of New Haven during the fall semesters of 2002-2005. Currently, Ms. Cimino teaches an undergraduate class at Capital Community College. For both institutions, she taught sections of Victimology. Before her tenure at OVS, Ms. Cimino was the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence for five years and served as the Executive Director of Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis from 1988 - 1995. Ms. Cimino's early career was spent at the New Haven YWCA in the capacities of Public Relations Coordinator and Associate Executive Director and as the Executive Director of the Suzuki Music School.

Designee: Koren Butler-Kurth has worked for the Office of Victim Services since 2002 and currently holds the position of Victim Services Supervisor. Ms. Butler-Kurth and her co-supervisor supervise thirty-four victim services advocates, who provide services to victims in Connecticut's criminal and civil courts, the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and OVS's central office. Before her work for the State of Connecticut, Koren worked as a victim services coordinator and bereavement counselor in Massachusetts, counseling victims and survivors and guiding them through criminal and civil court procedures. Koren holds a Master of Science in Management and Leadership from Western Governors University.

### **Office of the Victim Advocate**

Member: Natasha M. Pierre serves as the State Victim Advocate and acts as the ombudsman for victims of crime within the criminal justice system, and evaluates the delivery of state services to victims. Responsibilities also include recommending system-wide improvements to the General Assembly, working with private and public agencies to enforce the constitutional rights of victims, and filing appearances in court to advocate for victims.

Before being appointed as the State Victim Advocate, Attorney Pierre was the Policy & Legislative Director for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and an attorney at Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. and



Western Massachusetts Legal Services, Inc., where she practiced family and housing law. She earned a B.A. from the University of Connecticut with a major in Women's Studies and a dual degree in law and social work from the University of Connecticut's Schools of Law and Social Work. She was awarded the Connecticut Law Tribune's New Leaders of the Law Award and has had articles written about her in the *Hartford Courant* and the *Connecticut Law Tribune*. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., a public service sorority.

Designee: Hakima Bey-Coon received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Rutgers University and a Juris Doctor degree from Seton Hall Law School. After earning her law degree, Attorney Bey-Coon served a judicial clerkship under the Honorable Kevin G. Callahan, J.S.C., in the New Jersey Superior Court-Criminal Division. Over the next several years, Attorney Bey-Coon served as a staff attorney at Hudson County Legal Services in Jersey City, New Jersey, where she represented indigent clients in housing matters and as a Deputy Attorney General in the New Jersey Attorney General's Office where she prosecuted professional licensing cases. After serving several years in the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, Attorney Bey-Coon began practicing law at Maya & Associates, P.C. in Westport, Connecticut. After that, Attorney Bey-Coon joined the Office of the Victim Advocate in March 2006. Attorney Bey-Coon serves on the Training Committee of the Task Force. Attorney Bey-Coon is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, an international service organization.

### **Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**

Member: Josiah H. Brown is founding executive director of CASA of Southern Connecticut, part of the state and national CASA networks, through which volunteers are recruited, screened, trained, and supported as court-appointed special advocates for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Previously, he was the first associate director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute and previously chief of staff to the president of the New School in New York City. In earlier roles, Josiah was an aide to Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro and the director of a center at Columbia University. He worked for UConn Upward Bound and has volunteered with various urban youth organizations and public schools. A former president of Domestic Violence Services of Greater New Haven, he chairs the Literacy Coalition of Greater New Haven. He has a B.A. from Yale, and a master's in public policy from Harvard.

### **Advocate for Children with Disabilities**

Member: Mark Hedrick is the Senior Director of Oak Hill Centers at Oak Hill, the largest disability services agency in Connecticut. Mark is responsible for the administration, supervision, and development of Oak Hill's innovative arm, Oak Hill Centers, which includes several community-based programs that support people with disabilities across the lifespan, improving health and quality of life for thousands of individuals. Oak Hill's Center for Relationship and Sexuality Education leads the effort in Connecticut to raise awareness about the hidden sexual assault epidemic for people with intellectual disabilities.

### **Adult Survivor/Former Victim of Child Abuse and/or Neglect**

Member: Alison Johnson is a consultant to nonprofit coalitions in the areas of public policy, state budget analysis, and coalition building. Alison has been in private practice since 1997. She is experienced working with networks of leaders to help them move an agenda forward, including serving as the Chair of the National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA). From 1990-1997 she was the Director of the Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet, a collaborative of twenty of Connecticut's leading associations, coalitions, and statewide human service providers. She is a graduate of Wesleyan University. Alison is based in Middletown, Connecticut, where she served as a head Moderator for primary and general elections in the city.

Alison is a survivor of long-term child sexual abuse. She has served on the Victim/Survivor Advisory Council (VSAC) for the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence since its inception in 1995. In 2013, she worked with the Alliance as a consultant to design a curriculum for the training of law enforcement officers on sexual

assault. Alison was also the Project Manager for a federal US Department of Justice project on confidentiality for the Alliance from 2001- 2005. Alison has served on the Advisory Board of the Aetna Foundation Children's Center at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. She has also participated in conferences for Safety Net: The National Safe and Strategic Technology Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence and presented on health literacy.

### **Parent Representative**

Member: Nancy Nesbitt is the Executive Vice President & Managing Director at AccuBranch, LLC. AccuBranch, LLC works with banks and credit unions to analyze their customer base and provides extensive strategic planning for branch optimization. AccuBranch also handles the real estate work needed to execute these strategies.

As EVP and Managing Director, Nancy has extensive experience in commercial/retail real estate market research and analysis, site selection, contract negotiation, and project development. She managed the development of projects ranging from \$15M to over \$130M in several states for retailers such as McDonald's Restaurants, Shaw's Supermarkets, Safeway Supermarkets, and others. She also spent 13 years as a commercial banker, forming and growing a specialty unit for a \$30B bank. Nancy is trained in economic development and knows how to work with communities to obtain the necessary approvals for a given project. In addition, she was an Adjunct Professor of Marketing for several years at Central Connecticut State University.

Nancy has an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a Bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut, and a Commercial Real Estate Development and Management Certificate from Cornell University. Nancy currently serves on the New England's Knowledge Corridor Advisory Board and the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. She previously served on: the Connecticut Women's Council (Past President); the Advisory Board for the University of Connecticut's Program on Nonprofit Leadership and Strategic Networks; InternHere.com (Board President, 12 years); and the Board of Directors of Special Olympics Connecticut.

Member: Margaret M. Doherty, Executive Director of Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families (CAFAF). Ms. Doherty earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, a Master's degree in Non-Profit Business Administration, and a Juris Doctorate. Ms. Doherty was appointed Executive Director of the Connecticut Alliance of Foster & Adoptive Families in December 2012. As a foster and adoptive parent as well as in her professional capacity, Ms. Doherty and her staff provide education, training, support, and advocacy for foster, adoptive and relative caregivers throughout Connecticut. Ms. Doherty and her staff work collaboratively with the Department of Children and Families, child welfare professionals, and the community regarding issues of importance for the families who serve Connecticut's most vulnerable children. Foster, adoptive, and kinship parents require specialized training and support while they strive to nurture and care for the traumatized children entrusted to their care. As a member of the Governor's Task Force, she brings the needs of parents and children to other members of the task force. Ms. Doherty previously served as Chair of the task force's Training Committee.

### **Mental Health Professionals**

#### **State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

Member: Dr. Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon is currently the Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. She was appointed in March 2015 and previously held the positions of Deputy Commissioner, Senior Policy Advisor, and Director of the department's Office of Multicultural Healthcare Equity. In her role as Commissioner, Dr. Delphin-Rittmon has been committed to promoting recovery-

oriented, integrated, and culturally responsive services and systems that foster dignity, respect, and meaningful community inclusion.

Through her twenty-year career in the behavioral health field, Dr. Delphin-Rittmon has extensive experience in the areas of mental health, substance use, and prevention system design and administration and has received several awards for advancing policy in these areas. Most recently, she received the 2019 State Service Award from the National Association of State Drug and Alcohol Directors, 2019 The Art of Healing Mental Health Award from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the 2016 Mental Health Award for Excellence from the United Nations Committee on Mental Health.

In May 2014, Dr. Delphin-Rittmon completed a two-year White House appointment working as a Senior Advisor to the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While at SAMHSA, she worked on a range of policy initiatives addressing behavioral health equity, workforce development, and healthcare reform.

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon has served as an Associate Professor with the Yale School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry. She was also the Director of Cultural Competence and Health Disparities Research and Consultation with the Program for Recovery and Community Health. Her professional and research interests include strategic planning, behavioral health system design, evaluation and administration, and policy development geared towards promoting health equity, cultural competence, and recovery-oriented systems of care.

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon received her B.A. in Social Science from Hofstra University in 1989, her M.S. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Purdue University 1992 and 2001, respectively, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in clinical-community psychology at Yale University in 2002.

Designee: Stephanie Zanker-Rivera, M.S., L.P.C., is a Behavioral Health Clinical Manager with the Office of the Commissioner, Young Adult Services (YAS), Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). In this role, Ms. Zanker-Rivera is responsible for administrative and clinical oversight of several YAS programs across the state and also manages transitions of youth from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to Young Adult Services. Ms. Zanker-Rivera is also the Director of the Young Parents Program and oversees a team of Perinatal Support Specialists and Doulas who provide perinatal/birth support and prevention and parenting education for clients. Ms. Zanker-Rivera participates in several statewide committees, including the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART), Reaching Home: Prevention and Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Workgroups, Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Workgroup, DCF Region 5 Regional Advisory Council (RAC), the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTFJAC), Department of Public Health (DPH) Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Advisory Council, and is a Board Member of the Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health (CT-AIMH). Ms. Zanker-Rivera is a Certified Trainer in Introduction to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) for the Department of Children and Families and is also a member of the state's Disaster Behavioral Health Response Network (DBHRN) Team. In 2016, Ms. Zanker-Rivera completed the Yale School of Medicine Leadership Program in Behavioral Health, Women in Leadership. Before joining DMHAS, Ms. Zanker-Rivera worked for DCF as a Social Work Supervisor and then Program Manager.

### **Private Practice Clinicians**

Member: Eliza L. Borecka, M.A, M.S.W, L.C.S.W., is the clinical director of Specialized Treatment Services at The Sterling Center for Counseling, a private practice with offices in Cromwell and Shelton, Connecticut. She holds a Master's Degree from The University of Warsaw in Poland and an MSW from The University of Connecticut. As clinical director, she provides supervision to a staff of professionals providing treatment to children and adults. Eliza is utilizing her extensive training in the area of forensic interviewing to provide

psychosexual evaluations and risk assessments in cases of sexual abuse, and she has been called upon as an expert witness in cases related to trauma and sexual perpetration. She also provides evaluations and treatment for families and individuals addressing issues related to trauma, sexual abuse, and sexual perpetration.

Eliza volunteers for several State - and - community-based initiatives: She is a member of three Multidisciplinary Investigative Teams: Greater New Haven - Milford CAC, Middlesex County, and The Child Advocacy Center at the Center for Family Justice in Bridgeport, serving the families of Lower Fairfield County; Eliza is a clinical member of the Association for Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) and The Connecticut Association for Treatment of Sex Offenders where she is serving as treasurer and a member of The Board of Directors;

In 2015 Eliza participated in the collaborative Planning Team creating a Child Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program Framework at The Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Center (CONNSAC); Eliza is a trainer for the Center for Family Justice (formerly Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc.) on the topic: “Sexual Abuse and Sexual Abusers”; She is a member of the NCA National Collaborative Work Group on Youth with problematic Sexual Behaviors.

Eliza offers consultations and training on topics related to assessments and the treatment of sexually inappropriate behaviors. In 2015 and 2016, Eliza was invited as a guest lecturer to present on assessments of sexual abuse at the Teacher’s College at Columbia University in NYC, NY. In May 2019, Eliza presented two lectures at the international conference on “Security, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development” in Bialystok, Poland, held at the University in Bialystok. The presentation titles were: “Review of the Systemic Community Response to Childhood Sexual Abuse: From Disclosure to Sex Offender Registry - a Connecticut Model” and “Rated X: Everything You Can Learn About Sex Offenders in an Hour or Two.”

## **Health Professionals**

Member: Andrea G. Asnes, MD, MSW, is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Yale School of Medicine, the Director of the Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy, and Healing, and a board-certified Child Abuse Pediatrician. After receiving a master’s degree in social work from New York University, Dr. Asnes completed medical school and pediatric residency at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She then spent two years as a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at the University of Michigan before joining John Leventhal, MD, in 2005 on the faculty at Yale, where she has learned from and worked alongside him since. Dr. Asnes assumed leadership of the Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy, and Healing in 2019. She is a current member of the American Board of Pediatrics Child Abuse Subboard, has published over thirty peer-reviewed papers, chapters, and invited commentaries, and was a section editor for the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of Rudolph’s Pediatrics. Her scholarly interests include the support of frontline clinicians in the identification of abusive injury and the engagement of sexually abused children in trauma-focused mental health care. Dr. Asnes has a career-long interest in medical education. She currently serves as the Graduate Medical Education Director of Resident and Fellow Wellbeing at the Yale-New Haven Hospital and previously served as Pediatric Clerkship Director, Associate Director of the MD/Ph.D. program, and as Pediatric Residency Director at the Yale-New Haven Children’s Hospital.

## **Law Enforcement Representatives**

Member: Lieutenant Seth Mancini has been a member of the Connecticut State Police since 2000. During that time, he was assigned to patrol at Troop C – Tolland, Troop W – Bradley International Airport, Troop H – Hartford, and then to the Legal Affairs Unit in the Commissioner's Office. In 2008, he was promoted to Sergeant and worked as a supervisor in the Legal Affairs Unit, at Troop H – Hartford, and the Central District Major Crime Squad out of Troop I – Bethany. In 2015, he was promoted to Lieutenant and had served as the Commanding Officer of the Special Licensing and Firearms Unit, the Chief of Staff to the Colonel of the State Police, the Commanding Officer of the DESPP Labor Relations Unit, the Legislative Liaison for the agency to the Connecticut State Legislature, and the Commanding Officer of Troop B – North Canaan. He is currently the

Commanding Officer of Troop L - Litchfield. He has served as the DESPP Commissioner's designee on the Child Fatality Review Board since 2008 and served on the New Haven MDT while assigned to CDMC. He is also a licensed attorney, having received his J.D. from the University of Connecticut School of Law.

Member: Officer Christopher Robak has been a member of the Shelton Police Department since 2012. He has received numerous commendations for his work on cases and was awarded the MADD award in 2014. He was appointed as the Department's Youth Officer in October of 2016. During this time, he has investigated numerous sexual and physical abuse of children. He has also been active within the schools as well as the Boys and Girls Club in Shelton. He has been a member of the Shelton Youth Service Bureau since 2016 and serves on the Shelton Juvenile Review Board. He graduated from Fairfield University in 2003.

### **Individual Experienced in Work with Homeless Children and Youth:**

Member: Stacy Schleif works with youth experiencing homelessness who have aged out of DCF and are attempting to get back into care (or have already done so). She represents them at an individual level as they try to get state supports back into place. One such youth testified with Stacy before the Connecticut General Assembly during this past legislative session. The Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), where Stacy works, also works to center the voices of youth who have experienced homelessness by ensuring access to advocacy opportunities, including legislative and administrative advocacy. Two of CCA's innovative outreach methods are the Center's Mobile Legal Office, and before the pandemic, CCA's Teen Legal Action clinics at Harding High School in Bridgeport and Norwalk High School. The team at CCA works to remove barriers that prevent youth from completing school and address civil legal issues that are obstacles to long-term independence and success. CCA also chairs the Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Workgroup of Connecticut's Reaching Home Campaign, working with statewide partners to end youth homelessness in CT.

### **Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Member: Since April 2011, Karen Jarmoc has served as the Executive Director for Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), where she is chiefly responsible for guiding this state-wide organization which serves as the leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who assist them. During four years in the Connecticut General Assembly, Karen was tapped to lead various initiatives, including improving workplace safety for correctional employees. In 2008, Karen led the Correctional Staff Health and Safety Taskforce as its chair, resulting in creating a permanent Correctional Staff Health and Safety Subcommittee of the Executive Branch. In 2009, Karen was selected to co-chair Connecticut's Children in the Recession Task Force to assess the impact of the current recession on children. The committee led the General Assembly to pass legislation to create a comprehensive emergency response to assist children and families in tough economic recessionary periods. In 2009 and 2010, Karen was honored as a "Children's Champion" by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance for her work in early care and education. Presently Karen serves as co-chair of Connecticut's Family Violence Model Policy Governing Council, which evaluates policies and procedures used by law enforcement when responding to incidents of family violence, including violations of civil restraining orders and criminal protective orders. The Governing Council is responsible for annual reviews and updates of Connecticut's Statewide Model Policy on the Police Response to Crimes of Family Violence. Karen was also appointed to represent CCADV on the Connecticut Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission. She is also a member of the National Network Against Domestic Violence Policy Committee, the National Lethality Assessment Advisory Council, and the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence Prevention Council. Karen holds a bachelor's degree in communications and political science from Simmons College and a master's degree in public policy from Trinity College.

Ms. Jarmoc left the agency in December 2020. Steve Eppler-Epstein has served as the Interim President & CEO since December 2020.

Designee: Kelly Anelli is the Director of Member Organization Services at Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. For fifteen years, Kelly worked in the field of Early Childhood Education. Before coming to CCADV in 2015, Kelly was the director of a child development center where she was responsible for program oversight, NAEYC accreditation, state licensing, and operational policies related to standards outlined by the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and NAEYC. Kelly is also the Education and Training Lead for the Children’s Center on Family Violence and educational consultant for the State of Connecticut. Kelly has her bachelor’s degree in Child Development and Family Studies and a master’s degree in Human Services, focusing on Non-Profit Management. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Transformative Learning.

**CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS)**

Member: Beth Hamilton is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS), the statewide coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs. Beth has over 16 years of experience working to end violence throughout the state of Connecticut, including sexual violence, domestic violence, and violence against LGBTQ people and people with disabilities. Beth has been a leader in the development and implementation of statewide policies addressing and preventing sexual violence in Connecticut’s K-12 schools, on college campuses, and within Connecticut’s correctional system. Beth is responsible for the oversight of The Alliance’s programmatic, communications, and training divisions and manages The Alliance’s Legal Services Team and Post-Conviction Victim Services program, which houses 14 specialized victim advocates who work with the state’s Sex Offender Supervision Units in parole and probation. Beth previously worked at the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), Connecticut Women’s Education & Legal Fund (CWEALF), and directly serving victims of sexual and domestic violence. Beth is dedicated to preventing violence, creating opportunities for survivor-led advocacy, and building anti-oppression movements.

**State of Connecticut Department of Education**

Member: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona was appointed Commissioner of Education by Governor Ned Lamont in August 2019. Dr. Cardona comes to the State Department of Education with two decades of experience as a public school educator from the city of Meriden. He began his career as an elementary school teacher and then served as a school principal for ten years. Miguel transitioned to the central office to lead the work of performance and evaluation in the district. In 2013, he assumed the role of assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. Dr. Cardona served as the co-chairperson of the Connecticut Legislative Achievement Gap Task Force and co-chairperson of the Connecticut Birth to Grade Three Leaders Council. He also taught for four years as an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut in the Department of Educational Leadership.

Dr. Cardona attended Meriden Public Schools and graduated from Wilcox Technical High School. Miguel attended Central Connecticut State University for his bachelor’s degree and UConn, where he completed his master’s in bilingual/bicultural education, Administrator Preparation Program, doctorate in Education, and Executive Leadership Program (superintendent) certificate. A lifelong Meriden resident and product of its public schools, Miguel is very active in his community, having served on several non-profit charitable organization boards of directors. His greatest source of pride, however, is his family. Miguel and his beautiful wife, Marissa, are the proud parents of two children.

In 2021, Dr. Cardona was appointed to the U.S. Department of Education as Secretary of Education for the Biden/Harris administration. Charlene M. Russell-Tucker is currently serving as the Acting Commissioner of Education for the Connecticut State Department of Education and was appointed in March 2021.

## **Connecticut Children's Alliance**

Krystal Rich is the Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA). Biography listed above.

Designee: Jill Fitzsimons-Bula is the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) coordinator at the Klingberg Children's Advocacy Center in Hartford, CT, where she works closely with law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, forensic interviewers, victim advocates, medical and mental health professionals, and several other community-based agencies to provide a coordinated response to allegations of child abuse. Jill has over ten years of experience working with children's advocacy centers and MDT's and has served on the Gaps and Barriers workgroup and the Training Committee. Before her work within Connecticut, Jill has served as a child advocate for the 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program in Miami, Florida. Mrs. Bula holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Becker College in Worcester, Massachusetts, and a Master of Social Work, with a concentration in policy practice, from the University of Connecticut School of Social work.

## **Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center**

Member: Anthony DeVincenzo, MA, Training Specialist for the Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center, is responsible for providing training, technical support, and assistance to MDT/CACs and supporting the development of MDT/CACs in underdeveloped areas in the Northeast region of the United States (from PA to ME). NRCAC is a proud supporter of the CT Children's Alliance and regularly partners with CCA in their efforts to improve and expand the Child Advocacy Centers of Connecticut. Mr. DeVincenzo has worked in the field of child abuse and neglect for more than 16 years, in a variety of roles (e.g., detective/forensic interviewer, trainer, CAC Program Director, MDT coordinator), and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his work.

## **Co-Chairs: MDT Evaluation Committee**

Co-Chair: Krystal Rich is the Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA). Biography listed above.

Co-Chair: Paula Schaeffer is the program manager of Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy & Healing. She earned her master's degree in psychology from Southern Connecticut State University. She has been with these programs for 12 years and in her position for the last three years. These Yale Programs provide evaluations and recommendations when there is a suspicion of child abuse. The program serves the southern communities in CT, including the following MDTs: Norwalk, Stamford, Fairfield, New Haven, Middlesex, Waterbury. Paula is also a member of the South Central Child Advocacy Center management team. Paula is a co-chair of the Governor's Task Force MDT Evaluation Committee

## **Co-Chairs: Training Committee**

Co-Chair: Elizabeth C. Leaming, BA, JD, is the Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Windham. She leads a team of six attorneys who handle the prosecution of motor vehicle, misdemeanor, and felony crimes in Windham County while maintaining a caseload in both G.A. 11 and Part A prosecuting child abuse cases. Before her position in Windham County, SASA Leaming was responsible for the prosecution of child physical and sexual abuse cases that occurred in Tolland County for 24 years. She began her legal career in 1992 as a prosecutor in Ft. Myers, Florida, where she discovered her passion for prosecuting crimes against children. Her interest in this area continued once she moved back to her home state of CT, where she has spent her entire career pursuing justice for abused children. Ms. Leaming co-chaired the Tolland County Multi-Disciplinary Team for 22 years and currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Windham County Multi-Disciplinary Team. Additionally, she co-chairs the Training Committee of the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children and serves on the faculty of Finding Words Connecticut. Attorney Leaming lectures statewide on topics related to child abuse investigation and the criminal justice system to DCF, law enforcement, medical providers, and school administrators and staff.

Co-Chair: Kristen M. Clark, Governor’s Task Force on Justice for Abused Children Coordinator. Biography is listed below.

**Connecticut’s Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (HART) Project Director**

Tammy M. Sneed, Program Director, Office of Human Trafficking Services (DCF). Biography listed above.

**Governor’s Task Force on Justice for Abused Children Coordinator**

Kristen M. Clark became the coordinator of the Governor’s Task Force on Justice for Abused Children in June 2008. She graduated from Watkinson Day School and Howard University, with a B.S. in Sociology, before going on to pursue a Master in Social Work at the University of Connecticut. Ms. Clark has been employed with the Village for Families & Children, Inc. since 1993, where she previously coordinated the agency's emergency preparedness, public policy, and advocacy efforts. At The Village, she has been responsible for connecting with key community and corporate organizations, developing key legislative relationships, coordinating volunteers, promoting Village programs, and cultivating media and fund-raising prospects. Previously she worked as the interim Director of RAMBUH Family Center, Community Ambassador, supervisor, therapist, and case manager in the Village's foster care program. Ms. Clark is also active in the Greater Hartford community through her current and past public service activities, including serving on the Boards of Watkinson Day School and Community Health Services; being an adult achiever mentor in the YMCA Minority Achiever Program; a mentor in the Delta Academy; and actively participating as a member of the National Association of Black Social Workers, the Greater Hartford Alliance of Black Social Workers, and the NAACP. She served as President of the Howard University Alumni Club of Greater Hartford and is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., where she is a past Assistant Secretary of the Eastern Region. In May 2010, Kristen was elected Region I Chair of the Howard University Alumni Association and covered all Howard University alumni in Africa, Europe, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont until June 2018. On a statewide level, Kristen was a commissioner for the African American Affairs Commission of Connecticut’s General Assembly. In March 2017, Kristen was selected as a 100 Women of Color 2017 honoree. The 100 Women of Color Gala and Awards recognize 100 women of color from Springfield, Massachusetts to Stamford, Connecticut, for their leadership, entrepreneurial success, and community service. Kristen received the additional honor of being selected as the 2017 Valedictorian for the 100 Women of Color. Kristen currently serves as a corporator for the Hartford Public Library, is a member of the inaugural Community Engagement and Advocacy Advisory Committee of the YWCA Greater Hartford Region, is a member of the inaugural Community Engagement Board for Connecticut’s Division of Criminal Justice, and is a Civic Ambassador with Everyday Democracy.

Ms. Clark coordinates the Task Force's administrative duties, Finding Words training, and chairs the Training Committee, the Membership Committee, and the By-Laws and Website workgroups. Kristen currently serves as the MDT evaluator for the task force and is a trainer of the Minimal Facts Discoverers curriculum. She participates in several of the committees and workgroups for the Task Force. Ms. Clark also represents the Governor's Task Force on Connecticut’s Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (HART) Project and has participated in HART efforts since the Spring of 2014.



<b>Task Force Membership Designation</b>	<b>Name</b>
Law Enforcement	Seth Mancini Chris Robak
Criminal Court Judge	Judge Patrick Carroll Judge Bernadette Conway
Civil Court Judge	Judge Patrick Carroll Judge Bernadette Conway
Prosecuting Attorney	Richard Colangelo Kevin Lawlor Elizabeth Leaming
Defense Attorney	Chris Rapillo Sue Hamilton
Attorney for Children	Sarah Eagan Natasha Pierre Hakima Bey-Coon William Tong Carolyn Signorelli
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	Josiah Brown
Health Professional	Andie Asnes
Mental Health Professional	Dr. Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon Stephanie Zanker-Rivera Eliza Borecka
Child Protective Services	Vannessa Dorantes Tammy Sneed
Individual Experienced in Working with Children with Disabilities	Mark Hedrick
Parent/ Representative of Parent Group	Margaret Doherty Nancy Nesbitt
Adult Former Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect	Alison Johnson
Individual Experienced in Working with Homeless Children and Youth	Stacy Schleif

## **Section III: Program Performance Reporting: FFY 2020-2021**

### **A. Three-Year Assessment Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations from Connecticut's 2018 Three Year Assessment.

**Recommendation #1: Use the next six months to develop a framework and plans for the next federal grant application, which was due May 2018. Four ad-hoc groups replaced all the existing workgroups and committees as follows:**

Based on the 2017 retreat outcomes, the four ad hoc groups established at that time have been incorporated into the ongoing priority areas of the Task Force. During this reporting period, the MDT/CAC Evaluation and Quality Assurance workgroup has been incorporated into the MDT Evaluation committee; the training workgroup has evolved into a larger Training Committee. The Systems Gaps and Barriers nor the Child Fatality Response workgroups were active during this fiscal year. However, based upon input from these areas, ongoing presentations have occurred during bi-monthly Task Force Meetings. (The areas addressed in the section of 107 e (1) (A), (B) and (C) are identified next to the topic area)

**1. MDT/CAC Evaluation & Quality Assurance** -- Section 107 e (1)(A) and (B)

**2. Training** -- Section 107 e (1)(A), (B) and (C)

**3. System Gaps & Barriers** -- Section 107 e (1)(A), (B) and (C)

**4. Child Fatality Response** – Section 107e (1) (A) and (C)

**Recommendation #2: Discuss possible restructuring of the GTF meeting schedule and agenda.**

The Connecticut task force has been in existence for several years. The task force needed to refocus and ensure it met the tenets of the CJA legislation and adopt national best practice standards. Education around the legislation, review of the bylaws, discussions around the model, and a review of best practices culminated in the restructuring of the task force, voted on in March 2018 and implemented as of July 2018. During this reporting period, the task force dedicated time on each agenda for presentations to the membership to increase member knowledge in various areas. These topic areas are suggested and selected at the task force meeting and presented at a subsequent meeting. The Task Force also looked at possible barriers to having representation from key stakeholders on the task force including in 2020-2021, due to ongoing social distancing due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The Task Force continued its bi-monthly meeting to an online format with strong attendance rates. Three new members joined the task force in the past year.

**Recommendation #3: GTFJAC and CCA continue to work together to support MDT/CAC development.**

It is recommended that the GTFJAC and CCA (Connecticut Children's Alliance) continue to work together to support the ongoing needs of Connecticut's Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) that are legislatively mandated to investigate specific cases while ensuring that all Connecticut children and their families have access to high quality, comprehensive, specialized and culturally competent services. The task force is committed to ensuring MDTs receive evidence-based training, peer review support for forensic interviewers, and resources to serve Connecticut's families. The task force continues to look at ways that Connecticut can fully implement Public Act No. 17-190, which spelled out in statute, Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs): ensure accreditation of Connecticut's CACs, include key members of the MDTs, and the role of the Connecticut Children's Alliance to provide annual reports to the GTF and the Connecticut General Assembly. This legislation was signed into law in June 2017 and went into effect on July 1, 2018. The task force is committed to assisting all Connecticut's Child

Advocacy Centers to reach and maintain full accreditation. In addition, it has looked to closely align the MDT evaluation tools and NCA standards. The task force feels this comprehensive support will address Section 107 e (1)(A), (B), and (C). With the continuation of social distancing due to COVID 19, in-person training scheduled by the teams was canceled. The GTF Training Committee and CCA have continued to partner to provide virtual training to meet the needs of team members with higher participation rates than in-person training.

#### **Additional recommendations since 2018 Three Year Assessment Submission:**

##### **Recommendation #4: The task force will review the goals of the next Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP).**

The Department of Children and Families is responsible for developing and implementing the Child and Family Service Plan due on June 30, 2019. The 2019 CFSP was shared with the members of the task force. Additionally, the GTFJAC members reviewed the approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and summary, which outlined strategic actions for the department to meet the goals and outcomes found in the CFSR. One of the task force chairs participates in the APSR process and provides updates regarding the MDT/CAC model. Task force members intend to ensure that purposeful connections are made between the work of the task force and the goals of the CFSP.

**Recommendation #5: The task force will review statewide data.** The Chapter Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) provides the task force data collected from the statewide Outcome Measurement System (OMS); surveys are distributed to caregivers, multi-disciplinary team members, and other key stakeholders. The 2020 surveys collected data regarding the Minimal Facts training, allowing the GTF to evaluate various factors related to the training. The MDT Evaluation committee began the evaluation process on four of the state's Multidisciplinary teams. The data collected during the evaluations of the MDTs are reviewed to ascertain if there are trends, issues, or gaps in services statewide. These universal issues enable the GTF to solicit and develop training or recommend policies to address the need. The Office of the Child Advocate provides the Task Force annual data regarding child fatalities and speaks to the trends related to child maltreatment-related fatalities. The task force conducted the 2020-2021 Three-Year Assessment. The data collected was shared with the task force, recommendations were developed and voted on by the GTF.

The following are the recommendations from Connecticut's 2021 Three Year Assessment.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Recommendation #1:** Enhance communication, collaboration, and role clarity through training.
- **Recommendation #2:** GTFJAC and CCA continue to work together to support MDT/CAC development.
- **Recommendation #3:** Increase system transparency and identify gaps through an annual data collection process and report.
- **Recommendation #4:** Begin to address racial disparities and implicit bias through training, policy/protocol changes, and updates to MDT standards and evaluation criteria.

#### **B. Governor's Task Force Committees**

The Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTFJAC, GTF, Task Force, and Governor's Task Force) meets on a bimonthly basis for planning, decision making, and information sharing. Its membership is large, diverse, and active. Consequently, the GTF has established several committees and workgroups to focus on critical issues as identified by the GTF. It is in these committees that much of the work of the GTF is done. All of the activities of the GTF fall in line with the expectations as outlined in the annual Program Instruction. Members of the task force are expected to be present at meetings, receive minutes and meeting packets electronically, and can share relevant GTF information and recommendations with the state and local agencies

they represent. This is vital for ongoing system changes that are recommended by the GTF. Outlined below are the 2020-2021 activities of the Governor's Task Force.

### **The Multidisciplinary Team Evaluation Committee**

In 2002, in accordance with Connecticut General Statute Sec. 17a-106a(c), a permanent Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Evaluation Committee was established to review protocols, monitor, and evaluate the performance of multidisciplinary teams. The MDT Evaluation Committee is a permanent GTF committee. It is charged with reviewing the protocols of all multidisciplinary teams, monitoring, and evaluating teams, and making recommendations for modifications to the system of multidisciplinary teams. The Governor's Task Force membership elects this committee. It is co-chaired by Krystal Rich, Director of the Connecticut Children's Alliance, and Paula Schaeffer, Program Manager for Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy & Healing. The committee's composition is diverse geographically, culturally, and by discipline. Current membership includes representatives from child protection, forensic medical providers and interviewers, States Attorney's Office (prosecutors), mental health, victim services, the Attorney General's office, law enforcement, and MDT coordinators.

Since 2002, the Village for Children and Families has been contracted to conduct the evaluations in collaboration with the GTF's MDT Evaluation Committee. In early 2020, the duties of the evaluator have been transitioned to the GTF Coordinator. The MDT Evaluation Committee redesigned the evaluation process in 2013 and completed an additional refresh of the design and functionality of the tools in 2019. The updated evaluation tools were implemented in the 2021 evaluation cycle. The tools and methodology for the review include:

- A biennial standardized team functioning survey to all team members;
- Caregiver feedback survey results;
- Self-assessment surveys in six topic areas (Team Functioning, Investigations, Forensic Interviews, Medical Evaluations, Advocacy, Mental Health Services);
- Quantitative case data analysis;
- Qualitative case review;
- Observation of team meetings (by committee members and the evaluators); and,
- Review of records and protocols maintained by each team.

The state has completed the revised MDT Standards and standardized Team Protocols. During this reporting period, the committee finalized both of these documents that were later forwarded to each team to update their team information. During the last half of 2020, the committee completed discipline-specific MOUs for all MDTs. The MOUs were reviewed and will be utilized by teams in 2021. The MDT evaluations, using the newly developed tools, were rolled out in Spring 2021. The committee began evaluating four teams.

Activities: The MDT Evaluation Committee worked on the following during the 2020-2021 reporting period:

- Finalized the evaluation and reporting tools and processes for efficiencies and to ensure they reflect the latest NCA Standards
- Finalized the state Team Protocol to be consistent across the state.
- Reviewed each team's protocol and provided feedback.
- Implemented a new standardized follow-up with teams regarding their evaluations.
- Finalized discipline-specific standardized MOUs to be consistent across the state.
- Began evaluations of four of Connecticut's MDTs with the new tools that have been rolled out.

## Training Committee

The MDT Training Committee has been active this year. The committee is chaired by Elizabeth Leaming, BA, JD Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney Judicial District of Windham, and Kristen M. Clark, GTF Coordinator. The committee looks to meet the training needs of the multiple disciplines involved in Connecticut teams and throughout the system and award financial reimbursement for those wishing to attend training. During this reporting period, the training committee increased its multidisciplinary membership to include two new members from the Connecticut State Police Officers Standards Training Council. The training committee works with an established annual budget, and the committee has Finding Words and Minimal Facts as sub-committees. The Training Committee finalized Connecticut's Minimal Facts curricula and updated the training to include increased observations during a pandemic. Details of Minimal Facts and this process are detailed in a section below.

In 2020, the committee continued its focus on developing additional statewide training to respond to Outcome Measurement Survey(OMS) data from Connecticut's teams provided to task force members. Five Areas of Interest Identified in the MDT survey:

- 1) Responding to sexually reactive children
- 2) Understanding the role of each discipline on the MDT
- 3) Understanding federal law enforcement's response to child trafficking
- 4) Joint investigation process through disposition
- 5) Assessing for poly-victimization cases

The Finding Words Co-Chairs are looking at the feasibility of developing a session on the role of each discipline to be conducted on the first day of the Finding Words course. Although Minimal Facts begins the conversation around the joint investigation, there was an additional suggestion of adding a practical hands-on activity on Thursday of the Finding Words course to assist students with increasing their knowledge of the differing roles and discussing the joint investigation process through disposition. Therefore, finding Words was offered virtually during this reporting period.

The COVID 19 pandemic created an increase in school-age students online. There was a need to remind and educated parents, educators, and professionals of the dangers for youth to be groomed and exploited online. In response, Connecticut's Human Anti-trafficking Response Team(HART), CCA, and The Underground contracted for Internet Safety webinars for parents, teachers, and youth ages 10 to 18. There was such demand for the initial training series that three more had to be scheduled.

The committee chairs have connected with Zero Abuse Project(ZAP) to discuss resources around assessing poly victimization cases. The committee received additional questions that Forensic Interviewers can ask during the closure stage of the interview protocol and their poly victimization protocol.

The Training Committee supported the 4th Annual Conference entitled "Response to Recovery," held in May of each year. The annual conference offers a diverse selection of session topics. It is an opportunity for law enforcement, child protective services staff, lawyers, social workers, therapists, teachers, forensic interviewers, medical professionals, and child advocacy center staff to learn how to strengthen their response to child abuse and exploitation cases across Connecticut. The Governor's Task Force was scheduled to co-sponsor the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Response to Recovery Conference in place of HART. The conference was slated for May 2020, before the COVID-related suspension of in-person meetings. In response to this, the Response to Recovery conference was converted to a virtual format. The CCA Chapter Director and the GTF Coordinator developed and solicited virtual training presenters through an RFP. The following topics were offered through the virtual Response To Recovery series since the last CJA report:

- May 19 2020 Investigations of Polyvictimization Cases

- May 21, 2020, Enhancing Student Safety During a Pandemic
- May 26, 2020, Unto the Third Generation: A Call to End Child Abuse
- May 28, 2020, Identifying and Balancing Compassion Satisfaction and Vicarious Trauma
- June 2, 2020, Best Practices in MDT Responses to Cases of Juveniles Who Offend
- June 4, 2020 Brick by Brick: How to Build a Cyberstalking Case
- June 16, 2020, Understanding Implicit Bias
- June 18, 2020 Intro to Aces and Trauma-Informed Care
- June 25, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers
- June 30, 2020, Ten Things Every Youth-Serving Org. Needs to Know
- July 2, 2020, Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Boys
- July 9, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers
- July 16, 2020, Creating Trauma-Informed Spaces
- August 4, 2020, A Guide to Welcoming Students Back to Class: Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19
- August 6, 2020 Child Abuse Prevention in Youth-Serving Organizations
- August 11, 2020 Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Children
- August 20, 2020, Language Development: Keys to School Success
- September 8, 2020 Child Neglect: When Indifference is Child Abuse
- September 29, 2020, Supporting the Non-Offending Caregiver
- October 6, 2020 Attachment and Bonding: Fostering Safe and Healthy Relationships
- October 13, 2020, Adverse Childhood Experiences: Identify, Intervene and Interrupt
- October 19, 2020 Internet Safety Training for Parents
- October 20, 2020 Internet Safety Training for Students
- October 22, 2020, Minimal Facts for First Responders
- December 1, 2020, Checking Your O2 Level: Managing Secondary Traumatic Stress
- December 8, 2020, The Role of Cultural Humility and Implicit Bias
- January 5, 2021, Sex Trafficking of Boys & Male Bodied Youth
- January 7, 2021 Introduction to Labor Trafficking in Connecticut
- January 19, 2021, Federal Response to Human Trafficking
- February 16, 2021, Racial Trauma: The Road To Healing
- February 18, 2021, Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) in the United States
- February 25, 2021 Race and Human Trafficking
- March 19, 2021, The CT State Legislature: Process and Public Influence (during a Pandemic)
- March 25, 2021, Building Empathy: The power of connected children in a disconnected age
- March 30, 2021, Creating Trauma-Informed Spaces
- April 1, 2021, The CT State Legislature: Process and Public Influence (during a Pandemic)
- April 8, 2021 Intro to ACES and Trauma-informed Care
- April 14, 2021, Vicarious Trauma and Self Care Strategies
- April 22, 2021, Identifying and Balancing Compassion Satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma
- April 29, 2021, Teachable Safety Skills: Replacing Myths with Facts

### ***Finding Words Connecticut – A ChildFirst State Sub-committee***

Connecticut, through the Governor’s Task Force, was certified as a *Finding Words* state in 2007. *Finding Words (ChildFirst)*, *Interviewing Children and Preparing for Court* is the nationally recognized 40-hour child-interviewing program that 19 states and two countries have adopted as of May 2021. The National District Attorney’s Association’s (NDAA), American Prosecutors Research Institute, in cooperation with CornerHouse of Minnesota, initially instituted this program under the Finding Words name. After the NDAA ceased to sponsor the course in 2008, the national course name was changed to *ChildFirst*.

From 2008 to 2012, the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) in Winona, MN, and CornerHouse in Minneapolis, MN, supported the state courses globally. Connecticut continually renewed its contract with the NCPTC and CornerHouse. As mentioned, the national program's name is *ChildFirst*, and some of the certified states have chosen to adopt the *ChildFirst* name in place of *Finding Words*. Connecticut has decided to retain the *Finding Words* name. Originally part of the NDAA, the NCPTC has gone through several changes; and in 2019 left the Gundersen Health System and acquired by the Zero Abuse Project. The national program link is:

<https://www.zeroabuseproject.org/education-training/childfirst-forensic-interviewing-protocol/>

As of 2013, CornerHouse stopped participating in the *ChildFirst* program, though they did allow their RATAAC protocol materials to be used until December 2014. In 2013 – 2014 the *Finding Words / ChildFirst* states and the NCPTC developed a new forensically sound protocol for use by the states. Now known as the *ChildFirst* Protocol, Connecticut's faculty participated in developing this new protocol and introduced it in the October 2014 course.

In 2020, Connecticut started its fourteenth program year. Each course trains 37 child abuse professionals free of charge. During the 2020-2021 year, the course was administered virtually by Zero Abuse Project. The virtual course was held in December 2020.

In total, there have been over 880 child abuse professionals trained with the Connecticut *Finding Words* course, including law enforcement, social workers, prosecutors, forensic interviewers, and other MDT members. Every county in Connecticut has been trained. Starting with the April 2010 course, the non-state employee faculty had received a \$100 per day honorarium during the course week and mileage reimbursement. With the April 2017 course, this honorarium increased to \$175.00 per day. If an agency donates its time, the money goes to that agency. Connecticut will continue this practice when the Connecticut faculty resumes administering the course.

Every student completes a pre-test on the first day of the course. This allows for a baseline regarding student knowledge before the course. On the last day, the course culminates with a post-test. Both tests include fill-in-the-blank and narrative questions. Finding Words faculty correct tests, and students receive one-on-one feedback on their answers before receiving their course certificates. The test is also available orally to accommodate students with testing limitations. Students receive evaluations after each workshop topic area and are allowed time to complete them before the next workshop begins. On the last day, students are given an evaluation for the student exercises and the overall course. Feedback from student evaluations of the course remains exceptionally positive. At the end of the course, faculty receive scanned copies of the evaluations for the sections they taught. This allows the faculty time to read student comments, suggestions, concerns and make changes to or highlight critical pieces of their presentation in future courses.

Periodically, the Connecticut faculty makes changes to the *Finding Words* and, if needed, incorporates those changes into both the course itself and the participant binder. This can include research-based updates. For example, during a faculty retreat in summer 2014, it was decided to substitute a new exercise called Behind the Mirror for the child exercise. This exercise replaced the child exercise. Behind the Mirror has been used in courses since October 2014. In this exercise, the students are sent to two breakout rooms. A faculty member treats the breakout group as an MDT. Using a mock child abuse case runs a case investigation discussion and then interviews one of the child actors using the *ChildFirst* Protocol. After the interview, the information received from the child (actor) is discussed in terms of what further steps should be taken on the investigation, including corroboration for what the child (actor) has said. Student evaluations continue to be positive, and the segment will remain with the course.

Krystal Rich and Attorney Michelle Manning, co-chairs of the *Finding Words* sub-committee, and Kristen M. Clark, GTF coordinator, continue to participate in quarterly national calls held with ZAP and the other certified states. In addition, Connecticut continues to belong to the *ChildFirst* Alliance, an affiliation of the 19 states adhering to the original intents and purposes of the *Finding Words* program as published by the NDAA in June 2003.

The co-chairs and the coordinator have traveled yearly to the national conference that supports the *Finding Words* / *ChildFirst* states administered by Zero Abuse Project—formerly known as the When Words Matter conference, covering primarily forensic interviewing includes the annual meeting of all *Finding Words* / *ChildFirst* states. The conference, now called Violence Intervention and Prevention Summit, features advanced courses in forensic interviewing, prevention, addressing the spiritual needs of maltreated children, and reforming undergraduate training of future child protection professionals. While funding for out-of-state faculty training is available only on a limited basis, Connecticut will attend the virtual summit in 2021.

### **Peer Review**

Falling under the Finding Words sub-committee, Connecticut forensic interviewers, who serve the 17 MDT's in the state, have participated in statewide peer review since 2002. One of the Forensic Interviewers who teaches the *ChildFirst* Protocol coordinates the quarterly peer review at a minimum. Over the last year, the group has begun to meet every two months and has added a statewide peer review for Spanish-speaking interviewers. In addition to Statewide Peer review, forensic interviewers are expected to participate in more localized peer review. Depending on the area of the state, this occurs anywhere from weekly to monthly.

In addition to administering the course and collaborating with Zero Abuse Project on national projects, the Finding Words Faculty also facilitate statewide peer review for all of Connecticut's Forensic Interviewers. In 2020 peer review was offered six times in various parts of the state. In 2020, faculty members updated the peer review process to include additional time slots and educational opportunities. Connecticut Forensic Interviewers have been provided information regarding virtual training for their profession offered by ZAP. Since April 2020, Connecticut professionals have participated in ZAP's Coffee and a Conversation. In addition, Connecticut professionals have signed up to participate in a national peer review session conducted by the Zero Abuse Project.

### **Minimal Facts Sub-Committee**

Best practice indicates that, to minimize trauma, a child who has disclosed child sexual abuse should be interviewed once by a trained forensic interview. However, there is also recognition to ensure a child's safety; some information may need to be obtained immediately from the child. In these instances, the goal is to gather minimal facts that will not jeopardize the forensic interview and investigation integrity or cause further trauma to the child. In response to this, the Governor's Task Force has partnered with the Connecticut Children's Alliance, the DCF Academy, DCF Careline, State's Attorney's Office, the CT State Police, the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC - the state police academy), CT Children's Alliance, local police departments, multidisciplinary teams, forensic interviewers and other stakeholders across Connecticut to develop comprehensive minimal facts training.



This workgroup prepared two training curricula: first responders (targeting law enforcement and DCF) and one for other mandated reporters (targeting educators, daycare, etc.). This second group has been recognized as the "Discoverers" group. There have been several Train the Trainers (TOT) sessions for both groups, and these will continue as needed. In addition, the Minimal Facts Stewardship Committee (and later the Minimal Facts Advisory Board, whose responsibility was to maintain and disseminate the curricula, materials, and support and further TOTs as needed) now falls under the jurisdiction of the Training Committee.

Since the initial training of DCF staff and members of law enforcement, trainers have reached out to their communities, and multiple trainings have been provided throughout the state. Adopted in policy, the Connecticut State Police Academy has continued to teach the First Responder curriculum to new recruits. The Connecticut State Police (CSP) has vetted First Responders Minimal Facts PowerPoint presentation in its entirety and has created an online version; to ensure that every sworn member of the CSP participates in the online version as part of their required training mandates. The DCF training academy has also incorporated the First Responders training into its intake training and the training for all new social work trainees. The Department of Children and Families initially aimed to make Minimal Facts part of their agency policy. Still, following administrative review, it will now be part of the best practice guide for the department regarding child sexual abuse investigations. The training is offered to new employees through the Workforce Academy at DCF.

The Discoverers curriculum continues to be offered. MDT coordinators are the conduit for this training and have reached out to their communities to receive the training and facilitate training. Feedback from student evaluations, distributed at each training, has been positive, and there has continued to be considerable and eager interest in this training by community members.

The Minimal Facts curricula were updated during this reporting period. Train the Trainer sessions were held in fall 2019; a new virtual training request and trainer scheduling system was implemented in fall 2019. The new curricula presentations were fully implemented in 2020. The Committee had a great response to the targeted marketing campaign that was initiated in early 2020. Once the state went remote due to COVID 19, that marketing campaign was placed on hold due to the need to cancel in-person meetings. The marketing campaign resumed when the training was switched to a virtual format. The Committee converted the curricula to virtual training and has been administered virtually during this reporting period.

To ensure that high-quality legal representation is provided to all parties in all stages of child welfare proceedings, including the front-end stages, the committee offered Minimal Facts training to lawyers of Connecticut's Attorney General's office in June 2019. This training was provided to Connecticut's Public Defenders during this reporting period. This training ensured that Connecticut's Public Defenders were familiar with Minimal Facts training and its objectives. The goal was for the attorneys to understand the proper methods for first responders to interact with children when they become aware of an abuse allegation or disclosure. The public defenders learned what first responders/mandated reporters are expected to document regarding the nature and circumstances of the disclosure. The public defenders need to assess whether or not disclosures obtained by police, social workers, teachers, daycare providers are spontaneous and not the result of suggestion or leading questions. This training allows public defenders to understand what to look for as they prepare witnesses to testify about the disclosure, the circumstances under which it was made, and how the witness responded. This training served to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect and reduce family and child trauma.

### **Minimal Facts –Training since May 2020**

- June 9, 2021, First Responders– Connecticut State Police 129<sup>th</sup> Class of New Recruits
- June 9, 2020, First Responders – Minimal Facts – Response to Recovery Series
- June 25, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers – Response to Recovery Series
- July 9, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers – Response to Recovery Series
- July 15, 2020, First Responders – DCF Workforce Academy
- September 29, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Rape Crisis Center
- October 15, 2020, First Responders -- Connecticut Public Defenders
- October 20, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers -Youth Continuum
- October 22, 2020, First Responders– Response to Recovery Series
- October 30, 3030 Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Clifford Beers Clinic
- November 12, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Child Guidance Center in Stamford
- December 4, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Clifford Beers Clinic
- December 9, 2020, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Hartford Public Schools (Social Workers/Psychologists)
- December 15, 2020, First Responders – DCF Workforce Academy
- February 24, 2021, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Hartford Public Schools (Nurses).
- March 4, 2021, First Responders – Connecticut State Police 130<sup>th</sup> Class of New Recruits
- April 21, 2021. Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Hartford Public Schools Administrators
- April 30, 2021, Less is More-Minimal Facts for Discoverers - Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Families – Plenary at the annual conference.

### **C. Other Governor's Task Force and Related Activities**

#### **Governor's Task Force Coordinator**

The Village for Families and Children continues to serve as the contractor for the GTF Coordinator, Finding Words training, MDT evaluation, and education and training funds allocated by the Governor's Task Force. Supervision, overall direction, and evaluation of the GTF Coordinator is supervised by the Department of Children and Families (contract holder), including the Tri-Chairs of the Governor's Task Force in collaboration with the Village for Families and Children.

During this reporting period, the GTF Coordinator provided coordination and staff assistance to all GTF's task force meetings, committees, workgroups, and the Governor's Task Force, as reported throughout this report. In 2020, the GTF Coordinator assumed the evaluator's responsibility for the MDT Evaluation committee and had participated in four evaluations during this reporting period. The GTF Coordinator co-chairs the Training Committee, chairs the Membership Committee, chairs the By-Law Committee, updates the GTF website, manages the fiscal oversight of the Village CJA budget, and writes Connecticut's Children's Justice Act progress report and annual application. Due to COVID 19, the coordinator is responsible for convening virtual meetings of the Task Force.

#### **Membership Committee**

The Membership Committee was formed in 2003 to address membership issues, particularly regarding clarifying the role and function of Task Force members and maintaining and recruiting members. This remains a standing committee. This year, the committee completed identifying members for areas that have not had consistent attendance at the task force meetings and ensured a full task force. The GTF coordinator ensured that all new members were oriented to the task force before their first meeting and has met or will meet with each new member to discuss collaborative initiatives. During this reporting period, the task force has dedicated time on each agenda for presentations to increase member knowledge

in various areas. The addition of these presentations has increased member engagement in the work of the task force. The task force has received presentations regarding Children’s Justice Act Priorities (Kristen M. Clark); Three-Year Assessment Process (Kristen M. Clark); Freedom of Information Act (Tom Henick); Parent Representative Perspective (Nancy Nesbitt); Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence-CCADV (Kelly Anelli); Medical Exams for Child Sexual Abuse cases. – (Dr. Andie Asnes and Paula Schaeffer); The Medical Exception in Court (Michelle Manning); and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (Mariya Taher). These training opportunities have allowed members to gain knowledge in critical areas, discuss gaps in service areas, discuss potential task force activities, and contemplate opportunities for interagency collaborations. Over the last year, the task force conducted the Three-Year Assessment, and this process was presented at each GTF general meeting and the focus of the April 2021 Special Meeting.

### **Website**

The GTF has a website that provides information regarding the Task Force, including its meeting minutes/agendas/attendance, membership, roles/responsibilities, current activities, and resources. The State of CT Department of Children and Families maintains this site at no cost. The GTF coordinator and DCF Director serves as the content manager and works with the DCF Webmaster continually updating to ensure the site is user-friendly and current; additional updates will occur over the next reporting period. The GTFJAC website is: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/GTF-CJA/Home>

### **By-Laws**

The by-laws of the GTF were last amended in 2018 and approved by the GTF in January 2019 and will be reviewed every three years in concert with the Three-Year Assessment.

## **Connecticut Children’s Alliance, Inc.**

### **Child Advocacy Center and Multidisciplinary Team Coordinators**

For more than 16 years, the Connecticut Children’s Alliance, Inc. (CCA) has provided a forum for education and support to the state’s MDTs and CACs via monthly meetings and regular training opportunities. Formed initially as a grassroots alliance of the MDT coordinators, the CCA is now a federally recognized non-profit organization (established in May 2009) and a National Children’s Alliance (NCA) State Accredited Chapter as of June 2011. CCA’s purpose is to support Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams across Connecticut by providing education, training, and resources. The CCA’s mission is to avail comprehensive statewide services to all child victims and their families through collaboration, systemic change, public awareness, and legislative advocacy. It is CCA’s vision that all child victims and their families have equal access to system-wide, high-quality, culturally competent services of a Child Advocacy Center/Multidisciplinary Team to ensure that all children receive a comprehensive response to child abuse investigations.

All recognized state MDTs/CACs are represented in the CCA and play an integral role in developing goals for statewide improvement of services to child abuse victims. CCA, Inc. is a mandated standing member of GTF. CCA members participate in almost every committee, sub-committee, or ad hoc task group of the GTF, often taking a leadership role. During the reporting period, CCA focused on Connecticut meeting the new NCA standards, developing standards and standardized protocols. The Executive Director of CCA is currently a tri-chair of the GTFJAC.

### **Connecticut Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Statistics/ Survey Data**

#### **NCATrak: A Data System for Multidisciplinary Teams**

Since 2010, all of Connecticut’s CACs and MDTs have been using NCATrak, a computerized, secure web-based care review and tracking system developed by the National Children’s Alliance and Science Application

International Corporation (SAIC). This is an intuitive, user-friendly system explicitly geared toward the work that MDTs/CACs do daily. The ongoing challenge has been the system's ability to aggregate data at a statewide level, limiting effectiveness related to utilization, outcome monitoring, contract compliance, and general ongoing QI. In 2018, CCA participated in a pilot project to start testing a statewide interface within NCATrak. In 2019, CCA applied for and received a grant for the 2020 calendar year to work with NCA to create a statewide interface that will allow the development of statewide reporting. The statewide platform was finalized in 2020.

### **January through December 2020**

Total number of children served at the MDTs in Connecticut: **1,528**

#### Gender of children:

Male: 366

Female 1,155

Undisclosed 7

#### Age of children at first contact with center:

0-6 years: 353

7-12 years: 479

13-18 years: 696

Undisclosed: 0

#### Relationship of the alleged offender to the child:

Parent: 315

Stepparent: 83

Other Relative: 282

Boyfriend/girlfriend:119

Other known person: 423

Unknown: 108

#### Types of abuse reported:

Sexual Abuse: 1,284

Physical Abuse: 211

Neglect: 53

Witness to Violence: 17

Trafficking: 76

Race or ethnicity of total children seen at CAC:

White: 566

Black/African American: 224

Hispanic/Latino: 456

American Indian/Alaska Native: 3

Asian/Pacific Islander: 15

Other: 254

Undisclosed: 11

The number of children receiving services:

Medical Exam/Treatment: 354

Referral to Counseling Therapy: 992

Onsite Forensic Interviewing: 1,007

Offsite Forensic Interviewing: 17

**Outcome Measurement Survey (OMS) Highlights**

Outcome Measurement System: In 2015, Connecticut partnered with NCA to bring the Outcomes Measurement System (OMS) to the state. OMS is a nationally recognized satisfaction survey system in which caregivers and multidisciplinary team members can express how satisfied they are with the services being provided. Although nationally, it is optional for Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams to sign on, Connecticut has decided that each of the 10 CACs will participate in this new initiative to collect satisfaction data. Although each professional is doing their best to provide effective services, we must continue to collect data from families to understand better their needs and views on the services provided. This was fully implanted by the end of 2016, with all of Connecticut's Child Advocacy Centers began taking part in OMS. In 2017, all CACs in Connecticut started administering an additional follow-up survey to caregivers to gather more outcome-based information on services provision. CCA presents an analysis of the annual data to GTF, and this continues to be a framework towards improving the state's joint response to these cases and support the victim and their families.

In 2020, CCA added COVID-19 related questions to both caregiver and MDT partners surveys to assess additional needs brought on by the pandemic. This information was utilized to create best practices when responding to a pandemic/crisis, as well as

## Connecticut Results January 2020-December 2020

**Satisfaction Survey Results: Caregivers** (This survey captures a caregiver and child's satisfaction with services provided at the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) during their first visit.).

- 91% of parents felt their child's questions were answered to their satisfaction.
- 21% of parents felt they would have liked additional services available for their child.
- 91.2% of parents felt the CAC staff made sure they understood the reason for their visit to the CAC.
- 89% of caregivers felt the CAC staff provided them with resources to support their child and respond to his or her needs in the days and weeks ahead.

**Satisfaction Survey Results: MDT Partners** (This survey is meant to capture the satisfaction of multidisciplinary team members with the process).

- 90.5% of multidisciplinary partners strongly or somewhat agree during the multidisciplinary team process, and they have the opportunity to provide input into the forensic interview process, thereby securing the level of information needed to fulfill their area of responsibility.
- 79.5% of team members believe case review team meetings are useful in the development of cases.
- 93.4% of team members strongly or somewhat agree the clients served through the center benefit from the collaborative approach of the multidisciplinary team.

**Satisfaction Surveys: Northeast Comparison** (The below results capture both caregiver and multidisciplinary team member satisfaction in CT as it compares to results from the surrounding northeastern states).

- Clients served by CACs in Connecticut were 2% more satisfied overall with the information provided to them on additional services following the interview.
- Clients served by CACs in Connecticut were approximately 1% more satisfied with the information they received to prepare them for possible behaviors they might expect from their child after leaving the center.
- Non-offending caregivers served by CACs in CT were 4% more likely to want additional services for themselves not provided by the CAC.

### Connecticut MDT Partner Narrative Response Trends

- A lack of understanding regarding the MDT/CAC model and its purpose (41 responses)
- More training on what other disciplines are responsible for and what they can and cannot do (31 responses)
- More training on how to respond to physical abuse cases (17 responses)
- Child fatality cases and the MDT's role (9 responses)
- Witness to violence/exposure to violence and the MDT/CAC response (9 responses)
- Standardized referral process (38 responses)
- Policies that better align with the MDT model across different disciplines (18 responses)
- Policies in the state that mandate MDT referrals for certain cases (31 responses)
- Minimal Facts (28 responses)
- The need for more case planning and discussing versus updates (62)
- Need for additional ad-hoc meetings outside of monthly case reviews (68)
- Need for Clarity on what other disciplines guidelines and restrictions are (72)

### Connecticut Caregiver Narrative Response Trends

- More information and resources for caregiver support (10 responses)
- More consistent follow-up from advocacy services throughout the life of the case (12 responses)
- More services for siblings (6 responses)
- More information on other services outside medical and mental health- basic needs (9 responses)



- More mental health services for the family without having to go far or go through another intake process (7 responses)
- Additional support related to basic needs/impacts from COVID-19 (72)
- Need for additional mental health support for parents and caregivers (61)

## **COVID-19 Response**

At the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, CCA and its membership of CACs and MDTs began meeting every other week as a full membership and almost every week with the CAC Directors to focus specifically on service provision. Statewide response guidelines, including a tele-forensic interview policy, were developed early on, and emergency cases were provided with in-person services. Mental health, advocacy, and medical consults were made available remotely. Case reviews went remote immediately and will remain remote for the foreseeable future. CCA was able to ensure, with the help of GTF, that all CACs in the state had the appropriate equipment and web-based subscriptions for teleservices, appropriate PPE for in-person services. At the end of 2020, CACs began doing more in-person services while following all appropriate safety precautions. Currently, services are being offered in a hybrid format as the state assesses what pieces of the system can and should stay remote.

## **Training and Awareness Events**

**Response to Recovery Conference:** The CCA hosts an Annual Conference entitled “Response to Recovery” in May of each year. The project was an ongoing collaboration between the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART) to highlight the work being done to address child abuse, including child trafficking. Over 600 partners attended the last in-person conference in May 2019. The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was scheduled for May of 2020, with the GTFJAC poised to collaborate with CCA on the in-person event. COVID 19 prohibited in-person events. The Response To Recovery conference was instead offered as a virtual conference series. Workshops were made typically available on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays and Thursdays of each month. By the end of 2020, over 2100 individuals were trained. The format has continued in 2021. Workshop topics are based on the training needs expressed by MDT partners in the bi-yearly OMS survey referenced above.

**Learning Management System:** CCA began developing an LMS system in 2018 to allow for a centralized place to handle training registrations, virtual webinars, and on-demand training. After some work with existing LMS platforms, CCA began working with a consultant in 2019 to develop a new LMS that can cater to the membership’s needs. Currently, the LMS system is live and is being integrated into the CCA website for easier access.

**CAC Orientation Training:** CCA began in 2020 to work with MDT partners to develop a three-part CAC/MDT orientation training that will be available virtually and on-demand. The three-part series will include an overview of the CAC/MDT model, the CT system, policies and laws; each discipline’s roles and responsibilities; the functions of case review; and joint investigations. The complete training is expected to be available during summer 2021.

## **MDT-Specific Accomplishments:**

**Windam County CAC, CAC of Greater Danbury, and CAC of Greater Waterbury:** All three CACs went through the National Children’s Alliance reaccreditation process in September 2020 and passed.

**Torrington CAC, Children’s Connection of Norwalk, and Bridgeport Family Justice Center CAC:** All three CACs are up for reaccreditation in June of 2021 and are in the process of preparing their applications.

**Klingberg CAC of Hartford and South-Central CAC:** Both CACs participated in the strategic planning process with the Northeastern Child Advocacy Center and CCA to update their goals to match the revised standards and standardized protocols.

**All CACs:** All 10 of Connecticut’s CACs were able to provide services (virtual and/or in-person) to children and families throughout the pandemic.

### **Northeast Regional Children’s Advocacy Center**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) established the Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers (RCACs) in 1995 to provide technical assistance and training resources for communities establishing or strengthening CACs. The Northeast Regional CAC offers such services for the nine northeast states, inclusive of Connecticut. The four Regional CACs work collaboratively to further the development of CACs across the country. The primary goal of the collaborative partners is to make sure that every child has access to a Children’s Advocacy Center. The Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center (NRCAC) promotes the use of Child Advocacy Centers and a multi-disciplinary approach to child abuse investigation, intervention, response, and prevention. NRCAC supports Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) through training, technical assistance, support, and outreach.

During the past year, NRCAC has been an active member of the Governor’s Task Force on Justice for Abused Children. It has provided technical assistance, training, consultation, and support to the GTF, the CT state chapter (Connecticut Children’s Alliance) of National Children’s Alliance, and the MDT teams of Connecticut. The NRCAC continued a strategic planning process with the South-Central CAC in 2020. During the COVID 19 pandemic, the NRCAC continues to provide training and technical assistance to CAC’s and MDT’s throughout the region. The NRCAC is working with State Chapters to identify specific needs in each state.

Additionally, the NRCAC facilitates regular calls with State Chapter Directors from the Northeast to promote the sharing of information and resources during this crisis. NRCAC training and technical assistance moved to virtual formats during social distancing, and the NRCAC plans to resume in-person training when appropriate. One of the signature training programs, Team Facilitator 2.0, a 6-month training program for MDT coordinators, occurred in August 2020 and November 2020. In addition, the NRCAC conducted a 1.5-day Introduction to Team Facilitation training designed for new team coordinators in September 2020. The LEC program was offered to CAC Directors in 2021.

### **Human Trafficking**

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) includes child trafficking under mandated reporting. DCF continues to be the receiver of all possible child trafficking cases in the state; calls go through the DCF Careline or are identified through DCF's everyday casework. In addition, the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children has focused efforts on the critical issues of Child Trafficking beginning in 2013. The CAC and MDT teams continue to be trained on human trafficking, including sex and labor trafficking and high-risk populations such as LGBTQ/ GNCT.

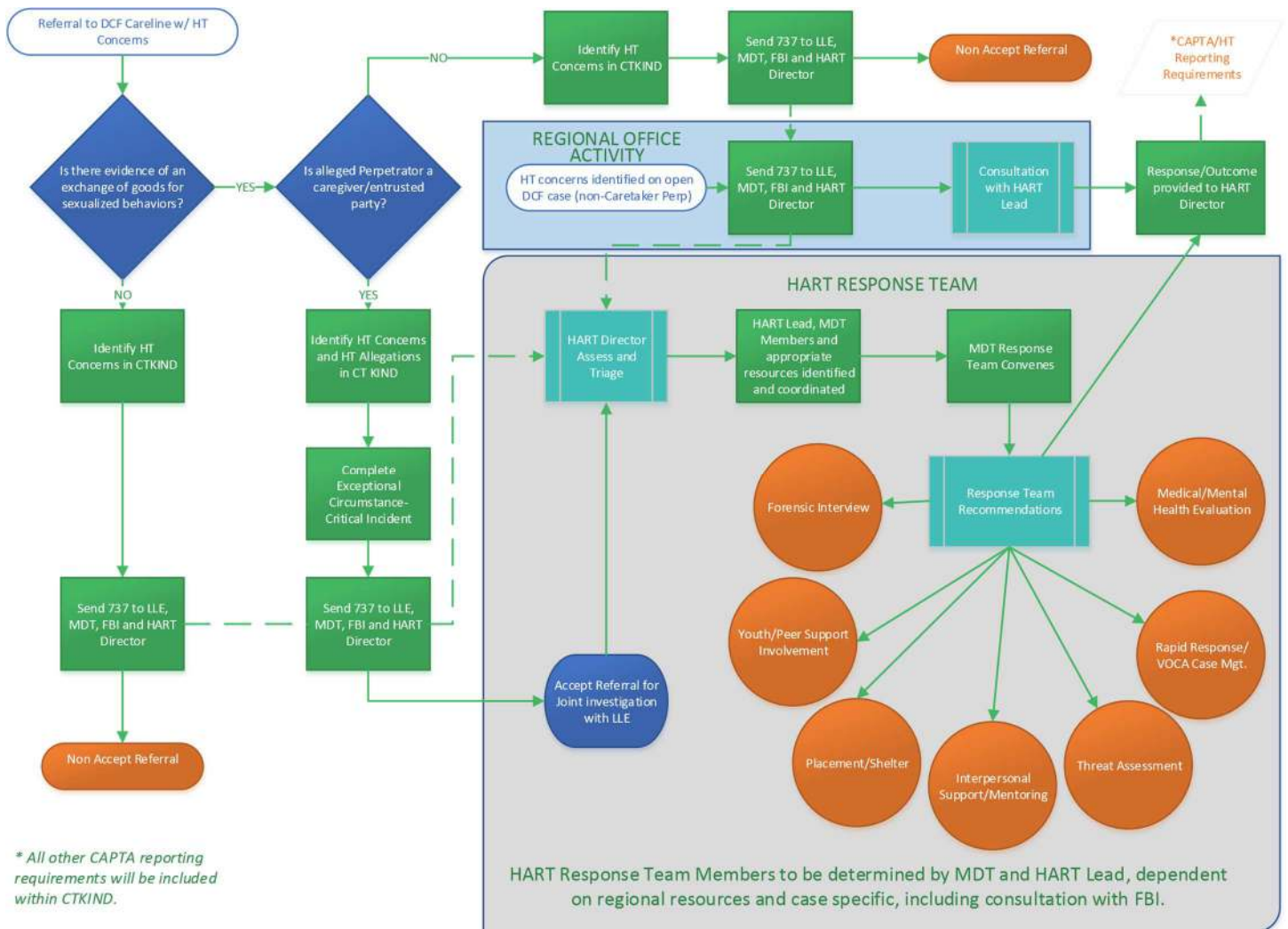
The HART team has a four-chair structure which includes the HART Director, one DCF HART Lead, the CCA Chapter Director, and a service provider. HART membership consists of the HART Leads and Liaisons, MDT Coordinators and membership, all levels of law enforcement, medical and mental health providers, service providers, states attorneys, public defenders, legal services, and the faith-based community. In all, HART has



over 900 member partners with over 500 active participants at various meetings. HART has worked tirelessly to eradicate and spread awareness about human trafficking in Connecticut.

The number of referrals to the department of suspected child victims of trafficking have fluctuated over the last two years due to policy change, position changes, data entry challenges, and the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 there were 149 referrals. The data over the last quarter has increased dramatically, with 62 referrals, indicating the reporting issues have been resolved.

DCF’s regional HART liaisons continue to utilize the resources of their local Multidisciplinary Teams. Below is the flow chart of how cases move through DCF and the HART partners, including law enforcement and the Multi-disciplinary Teams.



Public Awareness is a critical component of the work conducted through the HART. Over the past year, we have provided 196 trainings and reached over 7,873 individuals. Over the last year, we offered 14 TOTs in our various curriculums resulting in over 182 new trainers. Currently, there are 432 certified trainers in Connecticut offering 13 specialized training curricula for professionals, youth, and community members.

Our HART webpage continues to ensure state and national sharing of information and direct connections to the teams doing this work on a daily basis. HART Portal: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/HART/Home>

### **Statutorily Mandated Statewide Child Fatality Review Panel**

The State of Connecticut has established a Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP), which is charged with reviewing the circumstances of the death of a child placed in out-of-home care or whose death was due to unexpected or unexplained causes. Although the CFRP is a separate entity, its day-to-day operations are coordinated through the Child Advocate Office, which is a member of the Governor's Task Force. The Child Advocate serves as a Co-Chair of the CFRP. The 2020 OCA Annual Report: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OCA/OCA-Annual-Report/2020-OCA-Annual-Report.pdf2>

#### State Statutes:

Sec. 46a-131. Child Advocate's duties. Child Fatality Review Panel. Reports to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Sec. 46a-131 (b) There is established a child fatality review panel composed of thirteen permanent members as follows: The Child Advocate, or a designee; the Commissioners of Children and Families, Public Health and Public Safety, or their designees; the Chief Medical Examiner, or a designee; the Chief State's Attorney, or a designee; a pediatrician, appointed by the Governor; a representative of law enforcement, appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate; an attorney, appointed by the majority leader of the Senate; a social work professional, appointed by the minority leader of the Senate; a representative of a community service group appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives; a psychologist, appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives; and an injury prevention representative, appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives. A majority of the panel may select not more than three additional temporary members with particular expertise or interest to serve on the panel. Such temporary members shall have the same duties and powers as the permanent members of the panel. The chairperson shall be elected from among the panel's permanent members. To the greatest extent possible, the panel shall reflect the ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity of the state.

Sec. 46a-131 (c) The panel shall review the circumstances of the death of a child placed in out-of-home care or whose death was due to unexpected or unexplained causes to facilitate the development of prevention strategies to address identified trends and patterns of risk and to improve coordination of services for children and families in the state. Members of the panel shall not be compensated for their services but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

Sec. 46a-131 (d) On or before January 1, 2000, and annually thereafter, the panel shall issue an annual report which shall include its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on its review of child fatalities for the preceding year.

Sec. 46a-131 (e) Upon request of two-thirds of the members of the panel and within available appropriations, the Governor, the General Assembly, or at the Child Advocate's discretion, the Child Advocate shall conduct an in-depth investigation and review and issue a report with recommendations on the death or critical incident of a

child. The report shall be submitted to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the commissioner of any state agency cited in the report and shall be made available to the general public.

Sec. 46a-131 (f) The Chief Medical Examiner shall provide timely notice to the Child Advocate and the chairperson of the child fatality review panel of the death of any child that is to be investigated pursuant to section 19a-406.

Sec. 46a-131 (g) Any agency having responsibility for the custody or care of children shall provide timely notice to the Child Advocate and the chairperson of the child fatality review panel of the death of a child or a critical incident involving a child in its custody or care.

**CFRP Membership: \*\*\* Denotes members who also sit on GTF**

Office of the Child Advocate	Sarah Healy Eagan, JD (Co-Chair)***
Office of the Chief State's Attorney	Bret Salafia, JD
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner	Gregory Vincent, M.D.
Emergency Services and Public Protection	Lt. Seth Mancini, Esq.***
Department of Children and Families	Ken Mysogland, MSW
Department of Public Health	Angela Jimenez
Pediatrician	Kirsten Bechtel, M.D. (Co-Chair)
Community Service Representative	Pina Violano, Ph.D.
Neonatal-Perinatal Practitioner	Ted Rosenkrantz, M.D.
Domestic Violence Representative	Tonya Johnson, MPA
Injury Prevention	Steven Rogers, M.D.
Psychologist	<i>Vacant</i>
Child Abuse Physician	Michael Soltis, M.D.
Attorney	Andrea Barton Reeves, J.D.
Social Work Professional	Thomas C. Michalski, Jr., LCSW
Law Enforcement	<i>Vacant</i>

**Connecticut's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)**

Per the CJA Program Instruction, Connecticut's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) was disseminated to the members of the GTF. The Department of Children and Families designee connected with the members of the Department responsible for oversight of the CFSP who have agreed to attend future GTF meetings to present the plan, answer questions, and review goals that may align with those in Connecticut's Children's Justice Act application. In April 2019, in response to the 2016 CFSR findings, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) began implementing the Agency's Program Improvement Plan (PIP), which the Administration approved for Children and Families (ACF) in February 2019. The Program Improvement Plan outlines key goals, strategies, and activities that the state will implement to meet the improvement goals identified by ACF. Connecticut's PIP focuses on strategies for improvement to assist the agency in achieving the PIP performance goals set by ACF for ten items. In its first year of PIP implementation, ACF has certified that Connecticut has completed 9 of the 10 PIP performance goals. Connecticut continues to implement strategies to impact the one remaining PIP item positively.

The last CFSP presentation to the GTF was in May 2019, with a plan to meet with GTF annually. Unfortunately, the COVID 19 pandemic will delay this year's presentation. Nevertheless, three members of the Task Force and the GTF Coordinator participated in the CFSP process through stakeholder meetings and contributed to the final report due June 30, 2019. In June 2019, the Child and Family Service Plan for 2020 through 2024 was released. The final CFSP was shared with the GTF.

### **Court Improvement Plan (CIP)**

GTF was able to use the CIP Coordinator list offered by the Children's Bureau to assist CJA programs and CIP programs with collaboration to improve the handling of Child Welfare proceedings. The state of Connecticut's CIP Coordinator, Cynthia Cunningham, is a member of the Governor's Task Force and will provide information to keep the GTF informed of efforts in this area. A copy of the most current CIP Strategic Plan submitted to ACF in November 2019 has been provided to the GTF. The final copy of Connecticut's CIP, along with the self-assessment submitted in June 2020, was provided to the Task Force for review. During the COVID 19 pandemic, CIP worked closely with the Department of Children and Families to update technical systems to allow the most normal functioning possible of the child protection process. At the same time, the courts operated limited schedules, and many DCF employees worked remotely.

### **Legislative Updates**

Although no formal legislative committee exists, GTF members will continue to monitor legislation concerning children and families. As appropriate, the GTF will engage community partners, review legislative agendas of stakeholders and provide members with updates during the session. Legislative and policy issues will be raised at GTF committee meetings and full GTF bi-monthly meetings. The task force members were surveyed at the start of the legislative session to provide the group with copies of their organization's 2021 legislative priorities. During this reporting period, a bill was raised in the legislature that included requirements of the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children.

### **HB-6113 AN ACT REQUIRING THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE.**

This legislation requires the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children to develop and make available online instructional guidelines for youth coaches on best practices for:

- 1) appropriate interaction with youth athletes, and
- 2) ways to identify possible child sexual abuse and how to contact the appropriate authorities

The legislation, if passed, would likely go into effect upon passage, and the Task Force will have until December 1, 2021, to develop the guides. There is no funding attached to this request; confirmed in hearing.

## **Section IV: Use of CJA Funds: FFY 2019 - 2020**

The information provided is to clarify how each activity funded over the last year was associated with one or more GTF recommendations that resulted from the 2018 Three Year Assessment.

### **Multidisciplinary Teams - \$10,000 Allocated**

The Children's Justice Act Grant continued to support one multidisciplinary team. This meets recommendations #1, 3, and 5 through MDT evaluation, training, support to MDTs, and MDT data collection.

### **Training, Resources, and Technical Assistance - \$64,175 Allocated**

The GTF restructured its Training Committee resulting in Finding Words and Minimal Facts falling under this area. In addition, the Task Force re-allocated funds to support the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Response to Recovery conference scheduled for May 2020. These funds were used to secure national trainers to conduct virtual training in the Response to Recovery Virtual Series. These trainings, along with others, meet the recommendations of #1, 3, and 5. For this reporting period, we also used funds to support a Three-Year Assessment facilitator who conducted an overview of our state's systems.

### **GTF Coordinator – \$94,237 Allocated**

This position is responsible for supporting most of the GTF activities and meets recommendations #1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The coordinator convenes the GTF meetings and supports the committees and workgroups and has worked to ensure that there are no vacancies on the GTF and orients new members. In early 2020, the GTF Coordinator assumed the responsibility of the evaluator for the MDT Evaluation committee. In addition, the GTF Coordinator co-chairs the Training Committee, chairs the Membership Committee, chairs the By-Law Committee, updates the GTF website, manages the fiscal oversight of the Village CJA budget, and writes Connecticut's Children's Justice Act progress report and annual application.

### **Travel - \$2,500 Allocated**

Funds intended to support the attendance of the GTF Coordinator and the GTF Executive Committee Co-chair to the 2020 annual, federal CJA technical assistance meeting in Washington DC, as required.

### **Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) State Chapter Director - \$19,950 Allocated**

CCA's State Chapter Director meets the recommendation # 1, 2, 3, and 5. The state director chairs the MDT Evaluation Committee and the Finding Words workgroup. She provides ongoing support and development to MDT/CACs by providing education, training, and resources. Additionally, the state chapter director compiles the survey results from Outcome Measurement Surveys. As the GTF has undergone a year of restructuring, the new legislation requires the Connecticut Children's Alliance participation on the GTF, where they serve as Tri-Chair for the task force.

## **Section V: Areas of Continued Focus of the Governor's Task Force: FFY 2021-2022**

### **A. Development and Support of MDTs**

The development of teams across Connecticut has strengthened the joint DCF/law enforcement investigations of child sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, child sex trafficking, and child witness to violence cases. It has also promoted the use of trained forensic interviewers. In addition, the creation of additional teams has allowed prosecutors to access at least one multidisciplinary team in every judicial district in CT.

Looking back, legislative activity in Connecticut has supported the role and value of multidisciplinary teams. In 1996, PA # 96-246 (now C.G.S. 17a-101j) required that substantiated cases of serious abuse and child sexual abuse be reported to the state prosecutor. It also mandated that efforts be made to reduce the number of interviews

of child abuse victims in the investigation process by coordinating the response of multiple agencies. The statute recognized multidisciplinary teams and permitted greater flexibility in sharing information, requiring greater collaboration among the numerous disciplines. In 1998, C.G.S. 17a-106a established the purpose of teams and provided for the establishment of a team in each of the 13 judicial districts. This legislation stipulates that responding agencies must advance and coordinate their activities and interventions to ensure the protection and treatment of child victims. It further required the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children to establish standards for teams (an activity accomplished in 2002 and updated in 2008, 2016, and 2018) and review protocols developed by the teams on ongoing compliance and practice standards are maintained.

The GTF will continue to support MDTs and CACs. Statewide, the Department of Children and Families provides managerial and administrative oversight of MDT contracts and addresses issues or concerns related to service provision. The Department of Children and Families designee to the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTF) currently functions in this capacity. In addition, the GTF supports ongoing training for the teams throughout the state, directly supports an individual MDT, and evaluates all seventeen of Connecticut's MDTs. The GTF will also utilize data collected from the MDTs to increase support to caregivers referred for services.

### **B. MDT Evaluation**

The GTF will continue to fund and implement the evaluation of multidisciplinary teams in partnership with The Village for Families and Children. The GTF Coordinator assumed the role of coordinating the evaluations and all follow-up activities and reports. In addition, the MDT Evaluation Committee will provide technical assistance to improve team functioning and oversight to ensure that recommendations and/or corrective action are pursued and followed.

In 2021-2022, the committee will focus on accomplishing the following:

1. Implement the updated standards for Connecticut's multidisciplinary teams and best practices for multidisciplinary investigations and assessments.
2. Disseminate and orient team coordinators and members to the new standards/best practices.
3. Implement the new evaluation tools.
4. Implement a comprehensive follow-up to teams around their team evaluations.
5. Evaluate five Multi-Disciplinary Teams.

### **C. Training, Resources, and Technical Assistance**

The committee will explore strategies to increase the use of in-state training and statewide training to maximize training funds. The GTF and MDTs will continue to sponsor multidisciplinary training programs annually to bring state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to front-line staff. MDT coordinators, team members, and individuals from related disciplines will continue to have access to training funds through the GTF on a limited basis. Finding Words and Minimal Facts committees are now subcommittees under this committee. The subsequent Finding Words courses are currently scheduled for July 2021 and November 2021. Three GTF members will attend the virtual VIP Conference in June 2021. A member of the Finding Words faculty will ensure that statewide Peer Review for Forensic Interviewers occurs. Minimal Facts will continue to be offered throughout Connecticut. First Responder's training is provided statewide to DCF investigations staff, law enforcement personnel, and Discoverer's training to all other mandated reporters. The training materials continue to be distributed statewide. The training committee will complete additional Training of Trainers to update current trainers and prepare new

trainers to provide statewide training to the various stakeholders. The translation of training materials and informational materials is being explored as a priority for the GTF. The Training Committee will continue to support the virtual Response to Recovery series and provide comprehensive training statewide virtually. Connecticut conducted its Three-Year Assessment in 2020-2021. Additional areas of focus for training were identified through this process and the 2020 Outcome Measurement Surveys, including ongoing access to virtual offerings, training around MDT cross-discipline and role clarity and addressing racial disparities and implicit bias through training.

#### **D. MDT Data Collection**

The GTF and CCA will continue to refine data collection systems for optimal use and efficiency. NCATrak will continue to be used by Connecticut's teams. CCA will continue to produce statewide quarterly reports and Outcomes Measurement data that is shared statewide. The Task Force will collaborate with key stakeholders to collect data regarding victims and families serviced by Connecticut's MDTs.

#### **E. GTF Membership**

The Membership Committee will continue to ensure that all positions on the GTF remain filled and provide members the tools and resources needed to assist their work on the GTF.

#### **F. GTF Website**

The committee will continue its work to update the website for GTF to ensure pertinent content and valuable resources to the membership and greater communities.

#### **G. By-Laws**

The GTF By-Laws committee will continue to monitor for compliance and long-term revisions.

#### **H. Legislation**

Although no formal legislative committee exists, GTF members will continue to monitor legislation concerning children and families. As appropriate, the GTF will engage community partners, review legislative agendas of stakeholders and provide members with updates during the session. In addition, legislative and policy issues will be raised at GTF committee meetings and full GTF bi-monthly meetings.

#### **I. Human Trafficking**

The Governor's Task Force will continue to support the state's response to child victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The MDTs will receive referrals from DCF as well as other key stakeholders. In addition, additional training and consultation will be provided to the MDT's to ensure competencies in addressing such cases.

#### **J. Children with Disabilities**

The GTF recognizes the importance of addressing the issues facing children with disabilities. To this end, the GTF has decided to pursue ways to incorporate this area into all aspects of the GTF efforts. These issues are addressed during the Finding Words training, Minimal Facts training and will be prominent in legislation tracked throughout the year.

### K. Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)

The GTF will have annual updates in this area at a GTF meeting regarding the state’s progress in this area.

### L. Court Improvement Plan

The GTF will have annual updates in this area at a GTF meeting regarding the state’s progress in this area. In addition, both of Connecticut’s CIP Monitors are members of the Governor’s Task Force and will provide information to keep the GTF informed of efforts in this area.

### M. Child Fatalities

The GTF will monitor child fatalities through partner member agency the Office of the Child Advocate. In addition, two members of the statewide task force on child fatalities are members of the Governor’s Task Force.

### N. Cultural Competency, Racial Disparities, and Implicit Bias

The GTF will address racial disparities and implicit bias through training, policy/protocol changes, and updates to MDT standards and evaluation criteria.

The majority of the 2021-2022 proposed activities reflect the ongoing needs of Connecticut and have driven much of the GTF’s work over the years. Therefore, 2021-2024 Three Year Assessment Recommendations align with the GTF and Connecticut's ongoing work and will continue to implement each priority area identified during the 2021-2022 year.

#### 2021-2024 Recommendations

- **Recommendation #1:** Enhance communication, collaboration, and role clarity through training.
- **Recommendation #2:** GTFJAC and CCA continue to work together to support MDT/CAC development.
- **Recommendation #3:** Increase system transparency and identify gaps through an annual data collection process and report.
- **Recommendation #4:** Begin to address racial disparities and implicit bias through training, policy/protocol changes, and updates to MDT standards and evaluation criteria.

2021-2022 Priority Area	2021-2024 – 3 Year assessment Priorities and Recommendations
Development and Support of MDTs and CACs	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4
MDT Evaluation	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3
Training	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4
MDT Data Collection	Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3
GTF Membership	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4 It is an ongoing priority to have a full GTF to continue the work of GTF statewide and provide to members training opportunities that will assist them in their work.
GTF Website	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2



2021-2022 Priority Area	2021-2024 – 3 Year assessment Priorities and Recommendations
By-Laws	These are reviewed and updated as needed.
Legislation	Recommendation 3
Human Trafficking	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4
Children with Disabilities	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4
Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)	Recommendation 3 This is a requirement in the CJA program instructions. The documents have been provided to the GTF members for review, and a chair participates in the APSR process. Additionally, the CJA grant application is provided to the CFSR professionals at the Child Welfare agency each year.
Court Improvement Plan	This is strongly encouraged at the CJA grantee meeting. The documents have been provided to the GTF members for review. Both of Connecticut’s CIP monitors sit on the GTF.
Child Fatalities	Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4
Cultural Competency, Racial Disparities, and Implicit Bias	Recommendation 1 Recommendation 2 Recommendation 3 Recommendation 4

**Section VI: Proposed Budget for CJA Funds: FFY 2021-2022**

	<b>2021-2022 CJA Allocation</b>
<b>A. Multidisciplinary Investigation Teams</b> To continue to support one multidisciplinary team at \$10,000 annually	\$10,000
<b>B. Training, Resources and Technical Assistance</b> To focus on developing and implementing statewide training opportunities and resources associated with the investigation, assessment, intervention, and prosecution of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse statewide. We will also continue to offer to fund individuals on a limited basis.	\$63,370
<b>C. GTF Coordinator</b> To support the full-time GTF coordinator through a contract with The Village for Families & Children. The Coordinator will assist the MDT Evaluation committee in completing evaluations of Connecticut's Multi-Disciplinary teams.	\$94,237
<b>D. Travel</b> As required, to permit travel for the GTF Coordinator and GTF Co-chairperson(s) to attend the annual national CJA grantee meeting.	\$2,500
<b>E. Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) State Chapter Director</b> To support the CCA State Chapter Director, who has oversight and direction for the planning, development, and management of the Connecticut Children's Alliance.	\$19,950
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 190,057</b>