

DRAFT

Pursuant to § 2.2-3707.1 of the Code of Virginia this DRAFT of the minutes of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Advisory Committee is available to the public. The public is cautioned that the information is provided in DRAFT form and is subject to change by the Advisory Committee prior to becoming final. Once the minutes have been finalized, they will be marked “FINAL” and made available to the public.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 26, 2024

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held virtually on January 26, 2024. The Committee met virtually pursuant to the approved CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Remote Participation Policy.

Members Present

Randy Bonds
Jackie Robinson Brock
Judge Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Davy Fearon
Katharine Hunter
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Peleaz
Pat Popp, Vice-Chair
Lora Smith for Shannon Hartung
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Eric Reynolds

Guests

Kathleen Hollywood (VDSS)
McKayla Burnett (DCJS Human Trafficking Coordinator)

Staff Present

Jenna Foster
Carolyn Halbert
Laurel Marks
Melissa O’Neill
Terry Willie-Surratt

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM. Members introduced themselves.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the October 27, 2023, meeting. Shamika Byars made a motion to approve the minutes. Randy Bonds provided a second and Sandy Karison abstained. The motion was approved.
- III. **Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Reminder:** The committee was reminded that as members they are required to complete annual financial disclosure statements. Members should have received emails with instructions for completing the forms. Additionally, every two years, members must complete the Conflicts of Interest Act training. Those members required to complete the training this year will be notified.
- IV. **General Assembly Session: Presentation of Bills of Interest**
DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills of interest introduced during the 2024 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- V. **CASA Program Update:** The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. A draft document of proposed changes to the CASA regulations was sent to the committee for review and comment in advance of the meeting. The committee held a brief discussion regarding the proposed changes and the regulatory process. Committee members are requested to provide additional comments to DCJS by March 25, 2024. A revised draft will be presented during the April 26, 2024 meeting.
- VI. **CJA Program Update**
The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report detailing significant activities of the CJA program this quarter. The following additional updates were provided.

In 2024, DCJS will focus on child victims during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 22-26. A virtual resource kit and daily training will be available to professionals throughout the week.

In 2020, the CJA program surveyed Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence (DVSV) programs to assess gaps and challenges in their Children's Advocacy programming efforts. Due to COVID, plans to move these findings forward were put on hold. In the Spring, DCJS plans to re-survey the DVSV field to gain new data on trends and needs for children's programming within shelter programs and community-based programs that serve primary and secondary (children) victims of domestic and sexual violence. Following the survey results, a workgroup of 10-20 child advocates throughout the Commonwealth will convene to analyze data and identify training, technical assistance, and other resources that are needed in DVSV children's programming in the field. The plan is for the group to meet monthly and to prepare a formal report to share with other agencies and technical assistance providing organizations that can meet the identified needs.

The committee requested a report on the activities of multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs). A report including FY23 MDT and CAC data based on locality was provided to the Committee via email following the meeting.

VII. Citizen Review Panel

The committee reviewed the current Citizen Review Panel recommendations to the Virginia Department of Social Services and began discussion for updates for 2024 recommendations. Committee members will make final recommendations at the April 26, 2024 meeting.

VIII. New Business - Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

IX. Adjourn – Pat Popp made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Giselle Pelaez provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:07 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, April 26, 2024

Friday, July 26, 2024