

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

April 25, 2025

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on April 25, 2025, at the Virginia Department of Social Services, 5600 Cox Road, York River Room, 111B, Glen Allen, VA 23060.

Members Present

Jackie Robinson Brock
Davy Fearon
Judge Eugene Butler (Virtual)
Sandy Karison
Morgan Cox
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez (Virtual)
Pat Popp, Vice-Chair
Eric Reynolds
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair

Members Not Present

Randy Bonds
Shamika Byars
Katharine Hunter
Lana Mullins
Lora Smith (for Shannon Hartung)

Guests

Rachel Miller (VDSS)
Michael Southam-Gerow (Director, Center for Evidence Based Partnerships)

Staff Present

Jenna Foster
Laurel Marks
Melissa O'Neill
Terry Willie-Surratt

- I. Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Members introduced themselves. Judge Eugene Butler and Giselle Pelaez attended the meeting virtually per the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee approved Policy for The Remote Participation of Members. Both members requested approval to attend virtually due to personal matters and their principal residences being more than 60 miles from the meeting location. Judge Butler attended the meeting from Amherst, VA and Ms. Pelaez from Washington, D.C. A motion to approve the virtual attendance by Judge Butler and Ms. Giselle Pelaez was made by Sandy Karison and seconded by Eric Reynolds. The motion was approved.

- II. Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the January 24, 2025, meeting. Eric Reynolds made a motion to approve the minutes, and Davey Feron provided the second. The motion was approved.
- III. Final Outcome of Tracked General Assembly Bills:** The committee received a final list of bills passed during the 2025 General Assembly session involving the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- IV. Center for Evidence Based Partnerships Presentation on the Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis of Virginia’s Family First Implementation Efforts:** The committee received a presentation from Michael Southam-Gerow, Director of the Center for Evidence Based Partnerships Virginia (CEP-VA). The presentation provided information on the work of CEP-VA, an overview of the evidence-based practices available in Virginia, the Needs Assessments and Gaps Analysis studies completed, and the interface between CEP-VA and Virginia’s Family First implementation efforts.
- V. Appointment of Nominations Committee for Chair and Vice-Chair**
The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee elects a Chair and Vice-Chair every two years. A Nominations Committee is needed to develop a slate for consideration by the full Committee at the July meeting. Jeannine Panzera and Eric Reynolds volunteered to serve as the Nominations Committee. Davey Feron made a motion to appoint Jeannine Panzera and Eric Reynolds as the Nominations Committee and Pat Pop provided the second. The motion was approved.
- VI. CASA Program Update:** The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. The following additional updates were discussed.
- National CASA Funding Eliminated:** On April 23, 2025, DCJS was notified that federal funding for the National CASA Association programs through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention had been terminated effective immediately. This funding was used to support grants to local programs and fund the National CASA office. Grants to five Virginia CASA programs were among those terminated, totaling \$186,000. Two grants were awarded and in process, and three were due to begin on May 1, 2025. National CASA funding accounts for less than 1% of the overall funding of Virginia CASA program revenue.
- CASA Program Annual Statistics:** Committee members were provided with the FY24 annual statistics report. A discussion of data trends and highlights was held.
- VII. 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.
- a. MDT Survey:** DCJS is creating a survey to send to all constituents who may serve on various multidisciplinary teams in Virginia. This survey will collect demographic information that can be summarized by MDT type and locality to create an MDT database. The goal is to update this database annually and further

assess needs and challenges that may be addressed by training and technical assistance based on MDT type.

- b. **MDT Training:** Two MDT 101 virtual trainings and two MDT: Good to Great in-person trainings have been scheduled for 2025. Learn more here: <https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/safer-communities-youth-services/training>

- VIII. Citizen Review Panel 2025 Recommendations:** The committee received the 2025 Citizen Review Panel recommendations in advance of the meeting. Several amendments to the draft were made after the Committee discussion. These included changes under the language in paragraph 1.a. in the Family First Prevention Services Act recommendation. Changes were also made under paragraph 1.b. in the Parental Child Safety Placement Program Implementation. Finally, changes were made under paragraph 1.c. Child Abuse Prevention Services Model. Eric Reynolds made a motion to accept the 2025 Citizen Review Panel Recommendations with approved amendments. Davey Fearon provided the second. Giselle Pelaez abstained. The motion was unanimously approved.
- IX. New Business:** Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.
- X. Adjourn:** Davey Feron made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Sandy Karison provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:58 AM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday July 25, 2025 – Virtual