

Office of the Child Advocate  
Childhood Trauma Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday December 1, 2020  
2:00pm-3:30pm

**Task Force Members or Designees Present:**

Maria Mossaides, Chair (OCA)  
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)  
Tammy Mello (Children's League of MA)  
Yvonne Sparling (DYS)  
Andrea Goncalves-Oliveria (DMH)  
Janice LeBel (DMH)  
John Millet (Probation)  
Kate Lowenstein (CfJJ)  
Maggie Randall (Sen. Boncore's office)  
Nicole Daley (DPH)  
David Melly (Rep. Dykema)  
Claudia Dunne (CPCS)  
Laura Brody (DCF)  
Michelle Botus (DMH)

**OCA Staff:**

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)  
Alix Rivière (OCA)  
Kristine Polizzano (OCA)

**Other:**

Members of the Public  
Sarah Gottlieb (Suffolk County's DA)  
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)  
Matt Pecoraro (Judge Baker Children's Center)  
Sarah Austin (Judge Baker Children's Center)  
Robin Richardson (PPAL)

**Meeting Commenced:** 2:03pm

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Childhood Trauma Task Force meeting. Ms. Threadgill introduced the individuals in the WebEx video conference and on the phone.

### **Review and Approval of Minutes from October & November Meetings:**

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous meeting minutes. No one was opposed or abstained from voting on the October or November minutes.

The meeting minutes for October and November were approved.

### **Final Review and Vote on the 2020 Legislative Report**

Ms. Threadgill asked the group if there was any discussion on the final draft of the group's legislative report. There was no discussion. A motion was made to vote to send the final version to the legislature. A vote was held on the 2020 legislative report. The legislative report was approved by the subcommittee.

Maria Mossaides, Chair (OCA)—Yes  
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)—Yes  
Tammy Mello (Children's League of MA)—Yes  
Yvonne Sparling (DYS) —Yes  
Andrea Goncalves-Oliveria (DMH) —Abstained  
John Millet (Probation) —Yes  
Kate Lowenstein (CfJJ) —Yes  
Maggie Randall (Sen. Boncore's office) —Yes  
Nicole Daley (DPH) —Abstained  
David Melly (Rep. Dykema) —Yes  
Claudia Dunne (CPCS) —Yes  
Laura Brody (DCF) —Abstained

Ms. Threadgill told the group the report will be sent to the legislature next week. She announced next steps to the group including adding a list of sector-specific resources (emailed to the subcommittee before the meeting) to the OCA's website. This list includes trauma-informed and responsive resources and toolkits for varied child-serving sectors, including child welfare, education, the justice system, healthcare, and community organizations. Members mentioned additional resources that could help expand the list included: a court clinic resource guide, additional resources for law enforcement and probation, and general trauma responsive resources. A member brought up if local trainings should be included. Ms. Threadgill asked the group if they thought this is something that could be added later, and just start with the initial resource list. The group agreed that local training sites might be more difficult to capture in this list.

Ms. Threadgill told the group that once the legislative report has been released and the resource list is on the OCA's website, the OCA will develop a distribution strategy for both. Ms.

Threadgill said this will be best after the holidays, and taskforce members should think of their individual distribution strategies and how the OCA can support the task force.

### **Next Steps for the CTTF: Discussion re: Year 3 Work Plan**

Ms. Threadgill mentioned this latest legislative report is a culmination of two years of work by the CTTF, and while there is still more work to do, the purpose of the next part of this meeting is to set a framework for the next year's work and brainstorm ideas. Ms. Threadgill provided a brief history of the CTTF formation and work since 2019 started. Ms. Threadgill then asked the group for ideas on what they want to see the CTTF work on this next year.

Members discussed potential project and research ideas the CTTF could work on. Discussions included improving access to higher levels of care for youth (i.e. hospitalization and substance abuse treatment), concentrating on students in middle school, the intersection of race and trauma, collaborating with other task forces, and an analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and child-serving organizations. The group also discussed the intersection of trauma and the juvenile justice system and, specifically, how youth could benefit from DYS resources and programs before re-entry into the community.

Members also discussed specific settings and points of contact with state agencies where children might be at an increased risk of experiencing trauma or might benefit from trauma-informed intervention and support. Members mentioned that the CTTF could potentially work on sector-specific questions or toolkits that can help identify trauma early on, instead of relying on universal screening for all children. The Task Force reiterated that any additions this group brings should build upon systems that already exist. For instance, an arresting officer could use one or two questions to ask a youth under arrest to see if additional supports or referrals are necessary. Another setting that was mentioned included students who were suspended or expelled. Students facing this level of school discipline could be screened for trauma as well. No matter the setting, members stressed the importance of trying to make screening questions part of work people are already doing, and not to add more steps to a process.

The group discussed the role of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study in screening. There was concern around unintended consequences of screening for trauma, such as possible over intervention of DCF. Members added that any screening should also provide room to screen for resilience/protective factors and strengths of a child. The group briefly discussed other committees doing work that might align with the CTTF's goals, including the Mandatory Reporting Commission. Balancing child-protection, over involvement, and/or stigmatization of children is a concern of the Commission as well. Members reiterated the need to think of the Commonwealth's current child-serving systems to evaluate gaps in services. They wondered if there are situations that do not rise to the level of child maltreatment and could be addressed before there is a need to involve DCF.

Another major point of discussion was age. Members agreed that preventative or “upstream” interventions are necessary, but expressed concern about not addressing adolescent youth who need support for trauma that already occurred and is impacting their behavior. The group discussed the importance of being able to respond to the continuum of experiences.

Finally, members discussed if and how this group should look at the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on youth and analyze structures put in place to respond to the pandemic.

Ms. Threadgill recapped the discussion held for the group mentioning common themes and questions the group discussed including:

- Identification of trauma and what happens after trauma is identified. Are there enough available supports?
- Particular high-risk settings (e.g. schools, homes, homeless shelters) or points of contact (e.g. arrests, school suspensions).
- The dual efforts of focusing on upstream prevention measures and children who already have experienced the trauma and behavior might be impacted.
- The need to concentrate on resiliency factors in addition to trauma.

**Closing Comments:**

Ms. Threadgill thanked the group for their enthusiasm and ideas. She explained that the OCA would reach out to task force members to set up one-on-one meetings to review work done in 2020 and plan for 2021. She mentioned that the group’s meetings in 2021 would be on a re-occurring time, and the OCA would reach out in the next few weeks to ask what days work best for members.

**Adjournment:** 3:04pm