

Office of the Child Advocate
Childhood Trauma Task Force Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 8, 2020
1:00pm-3:00pm

Task Force Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides, Chair (OCA)
Claudia Dunne (CPCS)
David Melly (Representative Dykema's Office)
Janice LeBel (DMH)
Sarah Gottlieb (Suffolk County District Attorney Office)
John Millett (Probation)
Kate Lowenstein (CFJJ)
Laura Brody (DCF)
Maggie Randall (Sen. Boncore's office)
Nicole Daley (DPH)
Tammy Mello (Children's League of MA)
Yvonne Sparling (DYS)
Andrea Goncalves-Oliveira (DMH)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)
Alix Rivière (OCA)
Kristi Polizzano (OCA)
Christine Palladino-Downs (OCA)
Noor Toraif (OCA)

Other:

Members of the Public

Meeting Commenced: 1:02pm

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Childhood Trauma Task Force meeting. This meeting was held virtually via the WebEx platform due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. Ms. introduced the individuals in the WebEx video conference. Individuals on the phone introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from May Meeting:

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the May 2020 Childhood Trauma Task Force meeting minutes.

The May 2020 meeting minutes were approved.

COVID -19 Trauma Legislative Report

Ms. Threadgill reviewed the legislative report on Covid-19 and children's mental health that will be submitted by the CTTF . Members were e-mailed a draft of this report a week prior to the meeting and were asked to provide any feedback before the meeting. Additional feedback was provided during the meeting.

The subcommittee provided recommendations to re-draft the title of the report. The group wanted to make sure the title wasn't hyperbolic and accurately depicted what we know about potential trauma youth are experiencing and may experience as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The group gave some suggestions and Ms. Threadgill will formulate new titles based on their feedback. Some of the finding titles may need to change as a result of these suggestions as well.

Feedback on Findings

Finding #1: During this Pandemic, Many Children Will Experience Heightened Traumas and Stressors

Provide additional examples to the stressors and traumas to reflect the current state including: rent moratorium coming to an end that can exacerbate financial hardships and homelessness.

Finding #2: Vulnerable Communities Will Require Targeted Support

Members suggested "under-resourced" in lieu of "vulnerable" communities, and suggested just leaving it as "communities" might suffice. There was a suggestion to mention environmental inequalities and their impact on certain communities in this finding.

Finding # 3: Impact of Covid-Related Trauma Will Have Serious Consequences for Children

The members had no feedback for this section.

Finding #4: Our Current Behavioral Health System Cannot Adequately Meet the Needs of Children During This Crisis

The members had no feedback for this section.

Finding #5: Technology-Based Resources Hold the Potential to Overcome Many (But Not All) Barriers to Mental Health Services- If Allocated Equitably

The members had no feedback for this section.

Members agreed to move this finding up from its previous position as Finding #7 to strengthen the connection with Finding #4

Feedback on Recommendations

Overall feedback to this section of the report included adding references to culturally diverse and competent clinicians for behavioral and mental health supports. Members also suggested supportive environments for families and caregivers are critical to mental health and well-being of youth. The Commonwealth and this subcommittee has the information on how to support families and youth and these should not be mutually exclusive endeavors. There was also recommendations to speak more about police brutality and the subsequent protests that occurred during the pandemic.

Recommendation #1: Build Skills & Capacity on the “Front Line” to Address Covid-Related Traumatic Stress and Behavioral Health Needs.

The members had no feedback for this section.

Recommendation #2: Increase Availability of Mental Health Services for Students

Some subcommittee members emphasized the need to recruit and encourage a diverse community of behavioral health specialists and continue the work to do this that was going on pre-Covid. The group also suggested adding language on “enrichment activities” (e.g. art classes, music, physical education), which are known to help children build resiliency. These activities can mitigate stress and should be supported as well.

Recommendation #3: Build Capacity in Community to Provide Behavioral Health Services

The members suggested adding a section on economically supporting adults to ensure they can meet the needs of the children in their care.

Approval of Covid-19 CTTF Legislative Report:

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the Childhood Trauma Task Force Covid-19 Legislative Report based on the edits made today. The Report was approved with members and designees voting as follows:

Maria Mossaides, Chair (OCA) - AYE

Claudia Dunne (CPCS) - AYE

David Melly (Representative Dykema’s Office) - AYE

John Millett (Probation) - AYE

Kate Lowenstein (CFJJ) - AYE

Laura Brody (DCF) -- ABSTAIN

Maggie Randall (Sen. Boncore's office) - AYE

Nicole Daley (DPH) -- ABSTAIN

Tammy Mello (Children's League of MA) - AYE

Yvonne Sparling (DYS) -- ABSTAIN

Andrea Goncalves-Oliveira (DMH) -- ABSTAIN

Closing Comments:

Over the next few days, the OCA staff will finalize the report based on the feedback from today's meeting and send out for a final read from the subcommittee. At that point, members will have 48 hours to respond with any last feedback before the report is finalized and sent to the Legislature.

The next meeting will be held on July 8th from 2:00pm-4:00pm and will be virtual. This may be rescheduled to August or September, but Ms. Threadgill will be in touch with the details.

Adjournment: 1:58pm