

Office of the Child Advocate
Childhood Trauma Task Force Meeting Minutes
Monday March 1, 2021
1:00pm-3:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Task Force Members or Designees Present:

Yvonne Sparling (DYS)
John Millet (Probation)
Maggie Randall (Sen. Boncore's office)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Andrea Goncalves-Oliveira (DMH)
Michelle Botus (DMH)
Janice LeBel (DMH)
Claudia Dunne (CPCS)
Nicole Daley (DPH)
David Melly (Rep. Dykema's office)
Tammy Mello (Children's League of MA)
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)
Laura Brody (DCF)

OCA Staff:

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

Other:

Members of the Public
Sarah Gottlieb (Suffolk County's DA)

Meeting Commenced: 1:05pm

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Childhood Trauma Task Force (CTTF) meeting. CTTF members and guests introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of Minutes from December 1, 2020 Meeting:

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

The meeting minutes for December were approved.

Updates on 2020 Work and OCA Projects:

Ms. Threadgill announced updates for this group since its last meeting:

1. *An Act creating a center on child wellness and trauma* (SD 971/HD1782) was filed by Senator Chandler and Rep Khan. This bill would establish statutory authority for creation of a Center for Childhood Wellness and Trauma (CCWT) based on the recommendations of the CTTF 2020 Annual Report. Funding would also be necessary.
2. Currently, the OCA in partnership with UMass Medical School and the Worcester Trauma and Resilience Collaborative is developing a training opportunity on trauma, racial trauma, and racial equity for educators. This training will consist of five modules for school professionals and will be developed in part and led by Dr. Heather Forkey, Dr. Maryam Jerrigan, and Matthew Rodriguez. This resource will be freely available online by the summer.
3. A member announced an additional DMH training scheduled for March 30th on implicit bias with Dr. Fisher.

2021 Work Plan Presentation and Discussion

Ms. Threadgill mentioned that the 2021 work plan objectives for the CTTF were developed based on the brainstorming this group did as well as one-on-one discussions the OCA had with each named member. Ms. Threadgill listed the four main objectives for this group and presented on each objective.

1. Expand Distribution of TIR Framework and Implementation Resources

Ms. Threadgill reminded the group that the TIR *Framework* the group released in 2020 is currently on the OCA's website, as well as a list of implementation resources. The OCA is in early stages of planning to develop a TIR Resources website (beyond the implementation resources currently listed on the CTTF government website).

Ms. Threadgill mentioned the OCA is seeking recommendations from CTTF members for distribution of the TIR *Framework* and resource list. She asked the group two questions: what other mechanisms should we consider for getting the word out? Is this the right moment in time for distribution, or should we delay until early summer?

Members discussed different audiences to send the *Framework* to, including: colleges/universities and members of the public via broad advertising, school psychologists associations, superintendents, political candidates, agency-leaders, and folks in collaboration with the new CBHI re-design roll-out. The group mentioned that the people on the ground need this *Framework* in addition to system leaders. Other members mentioned conferences coming up

across sectors. Members agreed that the *Framework* should be disseminated now as well as again in the summer.

Ms. Threadgill suggested the OCA put together a template email that she will send out to CTTF members to send to their networks. Ms. Threadgill asked the group for their feedback on the development of sector-specific toolkits based on the TIR *Framework*. She mentioned the OCA will be drafting these over the course of the year. She will be seeking help from CTTF members to review them. One member brought up adding a toolkit for young professionals who need support to advocate among their organizational leadership for the need to become TIR.

2. Study and Provide Recommendations Regarding Trauma Screening for Children

Ms. Threadgill discussed the next objective for the CTTF this year. She reminded the group that this objective was identified during the brainstorming discussion last year, and the statute creating the CTTF requires the group take on this objective. Ms. Threadgill explained to the group that there is significant interest in the legislature for this topic as well. She mentioned a new bill filed this session with the Legislature: *An act relative to screening for childhood trauma* (SD 1919) filed by Senator Creem. This legislation would create a subcommittee of the CTTF to study and make recommendations regarding the use or avoidance of targeted/universal screening tools in different child-serving sectors; available tools used in different sectors—specifically those used by MassHealth providers; the administration, training, review protocols, reimbursement, assessment & follow-up.

Ms. Threadgill presented to the group some proposed topics for research and discussion this group could take on this year, which include:

- Should children be screened for trauma?
- What is current practice in MA? (Update from the CTTF's 2019 report)
- All children (universal) or children that meet certain criteria (targeted)?
- In what setting(s) should screening occur? (e.g. pediatrician offices, schools)
- Who should conduct screenings? (types of professionals/trainings needed)
- What screenings tool(s) should be used?
- What barriers exist and how can they be addressed?
- What are models used in other states?

The group brainstormed more questions and ideas including:

- What screening tools are designed with a racial equity lens?
- What are the steps after screening?
- At what age should we start screening? What about very young children (0-5 years old)?
- How do parents feel about trauma/resilience screening?

- How can we pull in the social determinants of health?
- Screening for *potential* traumas, not just post-traumatic event occurrence
- Screening for resiliency (A member mentioned The Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE) Center is doing interesting work around resiliency/Positive Childhood Experiences.)
- Screening for community resiliency and being concrete about resources in places for the family (Boston Public Health Commission Trauma program)
- Suggestions to look at other countries' models as well

Ms. Threadgill went over the month-by-month outline for screening and assessment discussions starting in April with a discussion around screening basics, the purpose statement and current practices in Massachusetts. Ms. Threadgill mentioned pulling in the community factors to this first discussion based on the conversation the group just had as well.

Ms. Threadgill asked members to think about the named organizations in the draft legislation (SD 1919) and whether they should be invited to participate in meetings before legislation is passed. The group agreed that others could be invited to the screening discussions and mentioned local, state, and federal organizations from across child-serving sectors. She asked the group if there was anything else for the April meeting that the group would want covered. Members wanted to include the history of racial bias in assessments and tools.

3. Participate in the Production of a JJPAD COVID-19 Follow-Up Report

Ms. Threadgill spoke to the contributions this group will also make to other JJPAD work this year. She mentioned the JJPAD will develop a COVID-19 report follow up from the CTTF's 2020 report. This report would detail any positive changes that came from the COVID-19 pandemic and what policies agencies should keep. The other part of this report will explain what the Commonwealth is worried about regarding children's behavioral health.

Ms. Threadgill laid out a proposed timeline for this report through release around September 2021 starting with each JJPAD committee brainstorming this Spring. There was a suggestion to include mental health and wellbeing of practitioners and providers in the report as well.

4. Participate in JJPAD project focused on Crossover Youth

Ms. Threadgill discussed the final objective of this group to participate in a JJPAD project focused on Crossover Youth. This work is a natural extension of all three subcommittees' previous two years of work. She explained how years of reform in Massachusetts have decreased the overall population of the juvenile justice system; the next step is analyzing the processes and systems impacting youth that remain justice-involved.

Ms. Threadgill presented an overview of crossover youth to this committee starting with the definitions of crossover youth and the different populations. The OCA views addressing crossover youth as an opportunity to address several different priorities and mandates of JJPAD. She discussed each priority including:

- Reduce racial/ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems
- Prevent traumatized youth's involvement in the juvenile justice system
- Intervene earlier and more effectively to prevent maltreated children from entering the juvenile justice system.

Ms. Threadgill mentioned that data in Massachusetts is limited, but a significant percentage of youth in the juvenile justice system have child welfare involvement. She presented recent data on DCF involved youth at DYS.

Ms. Threadgill noted that the number of youth with child welfare involvement who are arrested, arraigned, placed on probation, etc. is unknown at this time. She proceeded to highlight a 2015 report from Citizens for Juvenile Justice entitled *Missed Opportunities* that presented results from a study of youth with open DCF and DYS cases finding. Additionally, Ms. Threadgill highlighted previous efforts in the state to address needs of this population including:

- CHINS to CRA reform in 2012
- Hampden County Pilot Program
- Crossover Youth Practice Model (DYS/DCF/Partners)

She explained there has been some successes from these initiatives, but challenges and gaps remain. She said that this is where the JJPAD and CTTF membership and expertise allows for a systems-level approach to the problem.

Ms. Threadgill continued to explain the role the JJPAD could have in this work. She sees this as an opportunity to do a state-level review of policies, practices, funding and service gaps, to include:

- **Data:** What do we have? What could we get? What do we need?
- **Qualitative Research:** System mapping, interviews and focus groups, review of current policies/practices, all with goal of refining understanding of problem and cultivating list of potential solutions
- **Promising Practice Identification:** What are other states/counties/cities doing that we could adapt? What is the research/evidence base for various practices?

She suggested the JJPAD could focus this work by age as well as stage and referral point.

Ms. Threadgill presented the big picture plan of how each subcommittee will take on part of this work. The Data Subcommittee will look at identification of available data and data gaps. The Community Based Interventions subcommittee will look at the CRA process and early delinquency system stages. The CTTF will look at trauma screening and referrals and prevention/early intervention based on setting.

Members expressed interest in this topic and emphasized the need for youth and family voices in this section, including the Suffolk JDAI Youth Subcommittee.

Ms. Threadgill told the group she will send out the PowerPoint with discussion questions to get more members' feedback on next steps between now and when this group starts this work.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill thanked the group and reminded participants that the meetings for 2021 will be the first of every Monday from 1:00pm-3:00pm. The next meeting is on April 5th.

Adjournment: 2:45pm