

Office of the Child Advocate
Childhood Trauma Task Force Meeting Minutes
Monday March 7, 2022
1:00pm-3:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Task Force Members or Designees Present:

Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Andrea Oliveira (DMH)
Janice LeBel (DMH)
Yvonne Sparling (DYS)
Rachel Gwaltney (Children’s League of Massachusetts)
Stacy Cabral (DESE)
Claudia Dunne (CPCS)
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)
Laura Brody (DCF)
Yves Singletary (DPH)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Alix Rivière
Morgan Byrnes

Other:

Brooke Arrigo (Suffolk County DA’s Office)
Katherine Hughes (Parent Child Trauma Resources)
Aditi Subramaniam (MSPCC)
Audrey Smolkin (Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma)
Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)
Katie Perry-Lorentz (DYS)
Edward Jacoubs (Plymouth County DA)
Kate Ginnis (MassHealth)
Andrea Parker (FCSN)
Jenifer Urff (MAMH)
Julia Campion (Riverside Trauma Center)
Addie Houle
Shakira Rosado
Courtney Chelo (MSPPC)
Caroline Palleschi
Other Members of the Public

Meeting Commenced: 1:04pm

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 2021 Meeting:

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the December 6, 2021, meeting minutes. Janice LeBel, Yvonne Sparling, Rachel Gwaltney, Claudia Dunne, Yves Singletary and Laura Brody all voted in the affirmative. Rachel Wallack abstained. No members opposed.

The meeting minutes for December were approved.

Update on Center for Child Wellbeing and Trauma:

Ms. Threadgill introduced Ms. Smolkin who gave an update on the Center for Child Wellbeing and Trauma at UMass Medical School. Ms. Smolkin provided a brief overview of the Center's year one accomplishments to date before presenting the Center's year two expansion plans. She highlighted the following year one accomplishments:

- Development and funding of Center
- Goals and Objectives of the Center
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Staffing the Center
- An overview of work being done in partner communities/organizations
- An overview of program and policy guidance to state agencies

Ms. Smolkin described in detail the assessment and coaching process the Center provides to organizations. She noted that this process re-emphasized how useful it is for organizations to use their data to inform program and policy changes. Ms. Smolkin continued with the presentation, highlighting the Center's efforts to expand. She noted that currently, there is an intense level of need, one that the Center at its current capacity cannot meet. Therefore, the Center is looking to expand its reach and staffing, depending on funding availability.

Next, members asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected organizations' need for support. Ms. Smolkin explained that it was difficult to know because there was no Center prior to the start of the pandemic, but that COVID-19 has exacerbated social determinants of health and pre-existing system inequalities, leading to an increase in trauma. Ms. Threadgill noted that the pandemic caused an increased awareness of trauma amongst stakeholders. Members asked Ms.

Smolkin to expand on the Center’s plan to increase reach. Ms. Smolkin explained that the goal was the hire more staff that are bilingual, allowing the Center to reach more stakeholders. Members discussed the logistics of this, with Ms. Threadgill noting that the OCA will advocate for funding on behalf of the Center. Ms. Threadgill thanked Ms. Smolkin for her presentation and explained that she will continue to update the group every quarter.

Discussion of Trauma Screening Recommendations:

Ms. Threadgill then began discussing Trauma Screening recommendations. She briefly reviewed the work done by the group, including an overview of the 2021 Interim Report on Trauma. She explained that based on the information on the report, the group will now move onto the “recommendations” phase of the project, which will culminate in a report to the Legislature.

Ms. Threadgill presented the proposed framework for the recommendations presented, suggesting the following:

Part I: Guidance on trauma screening & referral for child-serving organizations in Massachusetts

- a. Who (sector) should screen, who should be screened, and how
- b. Requirements for effective implementation (i.e. should be in place if screening)

Part II: Recommendations for what state government should do to support implementation of 1A and 1B

Ms. Threadgill introduced a poll asking members to answer the following:

- Which of the five sectors highlighted in the Interim Report (K-12 schools, pediatrics, child welfare, juvenile justice and first responder) should the OCA issue guidance for?
- Which sectors should the OCA prioritize?

Ms. Threadgill explained that the information collected will be used to inform what sectors the CTTF will begin to make recommendations on. She also explained that the poll would be for named members only but welcomed guests to share their thoughts via the chat. After a few minutes, Ms. Threadgill welcomed Ms. Rivière to share the results of the poll. She noted that the majority agreed that recommendations should be made for all sectors mentioned, but that pediatrics and child welfare should be prioritized. Members discussed the results, with one member mentioning that the group should research what screening is already being done in those sectors and integrate that information into the recommendations. Ms. Threadgill agreed, noting that the Interim Report answered some of those questions. Members also discussed screening for not only adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) but also for positive childhood experiences (PCEs).

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members for their participation and transitioned the group into the next activity, a brainstorming session on how state government can support implementation of the recommendations using the following levers for change to help guide submissions:

- Mandate an action
- Incentivize an action
- Fund an action
- Provide Training/Technical Assistance
- Provide/Require certification
- Initiate a pilot project
- Expand an existing initiative

Ms. Threadgill introduced Ideafly, an online platform that would allow members to post their ideas under each sector and under an additional “general” category. After giving a brief technical demonstration she gave members time to submit their ideas.

Next, Ms. Threadgill welcomed members to discuss the submissions. She highlighted common themes submitted across all sectors, including providing training and technical assistance, initiating a pilot program and increasing funding. Members highlighted the importance of not over-screening multi-systems involved youth, which should be integrated into recommendations. Members agreed. Ms. Threadgill explained that the ideas brainstormed will be used to inform what sector the OCA will research and present on in next month’s meeting.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill thanked the committee members and other attendees for their time and their continued efforts and reminded members that the next CTTF meeting will be held on April 4, 2022.

Adjournment: 2: 27pm