



**Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Friday, March 15, 2019  
Michigan Hall of Justice**

**Approved Minutes**

**Members Present:** Dr. Tana Bridge (chair), Dr. Shannon Lowder (vice-chair), Daniel Babin, Lori Budnik, Danita Echols, Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer, Dr. Bethany Mohr, Dr. Lisa Niergarth, Colin Parks, Det./Sgt. Jennifer Pintar, Hon. Kelly Ramsey, Dr. Cynthia Smith, Mr. Christopher Wirth

**Members via Teleconference:** Hon. Rachel Rancilo, Sterling Riethman

**Members Absent:** Fredrick Gruber, Julie Nakfoor-Pratt, Catherine Onsted, Hon. Lisa Sullivan, Veda Thompkins, Rita Wieber

**Non-members Present:** Kevin Bryan – MDHHS, Maggie Devlin Wright– MDHHS, Brandy Dollinger – public, Elizabeth Henderson – SCAO, Julie Knop – PAAM, Kiyerra Lake – WLNS news

**Public Comment:** No public comments were made to start the meeting; however, public comments were made during the meeting.

- **Welcome – Dr. Tana Bridge**
  - Meeting called to order at 11:03am
  
- **Consideration of Minutes from 12/15/2018 – Dr. Tana Bridge**
  - Motion by Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer to adopt the minutes which was seconded by Dan Babin. Motion unanimously carried.
  
- **Chair Report – Dr. Tana Bridge**
  - The website for GTFCAN has been going through major updates. Work is still being completed; however, GTFCAN members were requested to check the website and make recommendations to Kevin Bryan regarding ways to make the website more appealing to the public and user friendly for GTFCAN members.
  - GTFCAN members will be receiving updated binders for this grant cycle. They are in the process of being completed and will be ready by the May 31, 2019 GTFCAN meeting.
  - A Google Drive has been created in an effort to ensure GTFCAN had all necessary GTFCAN information available to them. Discussion was held regarding the possibility this information would fall under the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) and be subject to a FOIA request. Kevin Bryan will speak with MDHHS legal regarding this.
  - Recently, GTFCAN obtained clarification on what is and is not included in the Open Meetings Act (AMA). It was determined committee meetings are

not subject to the AMA as all items discussed in committee meetings are voted on during the open GTFCAN meetings. The quarterly GTFCAN meetings will continue to be posted; however, committee meetings will not be as they are a working group.

- Communication with MDHHS has improved over the last six months. GTFCAN and MDHHS have been working collaboratively and have ensured open communication with one another.
- The Executive Order was discussed. Until a new Executive Order is created, GTFCAN will operate under the last Executive Order. Because the Executive Order aligns directly with the CJA grant, it is unlikely there will be major changes to the Executive Order. However, the task force works under the pleasure of the Governor. **Dr. Tana Bridge** will work on connecting with Governor Whitmer and will apprise Governor Whitmer of the accomplishments of the GTFCAN. Discussion was held on the best way to connect with Governor Whitmer.
- The Children’s Justice Act grant report is due in May, as are the three-year goals of GTFCAN. Committees have been working on ensuring they map out goals for this grant cycle. Prior to submission of these documents, they will be sent to all GTFCAN members for review.
- **Dr. Tana Bridge** discussed the current GTFCAN budget. GTFCAN can spend \$622,000 this year based legislative caps. The current balance of GTFCAN funds is \$928,290.40. Several items have not hit the budget line such as 2019 Summit costs or the Inter-Agency Agreement with SCAO for training. Due to MDHHS being transparent, and the previous budget concerns no longer present, the budget committee is no longer needed. Should future concerns arise, the budget committee will meet.
- **Det./Sgt. Jennifer Pintar** inquired about grant requests being received from the public. Discussion was held on what to do with the difference between the approved spend plan from the last meeting and the legislative cap. It was determined GTFCAN would not solicit grants at this time; however, GTFCAN may seek to spend additional monies on projects later in the year.

➤ **Icebreaker Activity – Dr. Shannon Lowder**

- An icebreaker activity was conducted as GTFCAN had several members attending their first meeting. Each person was presented with a “would you rather” scenario, answered the question, and provided the group with information about themselves.
- **Dr. Tana Bridge** is the chair of GTFCAN. She is a professor of Social Work and has worked in child welfare her entire career. She has expertise in trauma and represents mental health professionals on GTFCAN.
- **Kevin Bryan** is the coordinator for GTFCAN. In addition to his primary role with MDHHS as a program analyst, he works with GTFCAN to complete a variety of tasks behind the scenes. He is currently in the process of working on the grant report and three-year goals to submit on behalf of GTFCAN.
- **Det./Sgt. Jennifer Pintar** works for the Michigan State Police. She has served on the GTFCAN Task Force for many years and has served on

numerous committees. She is the chair of the Citizen's Review Panel Committee where the committee is focusing on opioid use.

- **Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer** is a judge in Monroe County. Prior to being a judge, she was an assistant prosecuting attorney in the juvenile court. She is the chair of the Law and Policy Committee.
- **Julie Knop** is the director of the child abuse unit through the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. She has never been a member of GTFCAN but works with the members regularly on protocol revisions. She is a member of the protocol committee.
- **Maggie Devlin Wright** is the Child Advocacy Center Coordinator for MDHHS. Prior to this role, she worked with the association of Child Advocacy Centers.
- **Dan Babin** represents adult former child victims of child abuse and neglect on GTFCAN. He retired in 2012 and began volunteering as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) after retirement and remains an active CASA volunteer today.
- **Dr. Lisa Niergarth** is a pharmacist by trade; however, she has not practiced in several years. She adopted children from the child welfare system, became a volunteer at the foster care agency she worked with, and is an active CASA volunteer.
- **Colin Parks** is the CPS Program Office Manager. He has worked within child welfare in a variety of roles over the last 21 years. He represents MDHHS on GTFCAN and as of December 2018, he is a voting member of GTFCAN. Prior to his appointment he served as the designee for Director Nick Lyons.
- **Dr. Cynthia Smith** is a pediatrician from northern Michigan. She worked as the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) at Munson in the past. She is currently focused on prevention as she has worked with numerous victims of child abuse and neglect after they were abused or neglected.
- **Hon. Kelly Ramsey** is a judge for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit Court. Previous to this, she completed an internship in juvenile probation, and worked on the backlog of sexual assault kits through the Attorney General's Office. Each day on the bench, she witnesses the issues that arise due to failure to parent children appropriately.
- **Arrice Bryant** is a third-year medical student at the University of Michigan. She completed her undergraduate at Yale.
- **Dr. Bethany Mohr** is a pediatrician and the Medical Director of the Child Protection Team at C.S. Mott Hospital. She has worked as a pediatrician for 19 years.
- **Danita Echols** has worked with teenagers throughout her career and enjoys watching the progression of teenagers throughout the years. Teenagers today are much more resilient than they were in the past.
- **Jennifer White** is medical student at the University of Michigan. She is currently completing work with **Dr. Bethany Mohr**.
- **Kristen Kunes-Rodriguez** is an intern with CPS Program Office. She is completing her master's degree in child welfare at the University of Michigan. Previous to moving to Michigan, she worked as a public assistance specialist in Massachusetts.

- **Christopher Wirth** is a member of the Law and Policy Committee. His focus is holding all stakeholders accountable for the state of the child welfare system, not just MDHHS. He strives to connect child welfare stakeholders to resources in an effort to ensure a better child welfare system.
- **Lori Budnik** is a Children's Protective Services Supervisor. She has witnessed firsthand the impact the child welfare system can have on children. She indicated she was not one to complain about things she did not like, rather she attempts to fix them, which is why she enjoys serving on the GTFCAN.
- **Elizabeth Henderson** works for SCAO as a court analyst. As part of her work she provides child welfare training through an agreement with GTFCAN. She serves on the data and training committees.
- **Dr. Shannon Lowder** is the CEO of a large mental health clinic. She is also an adjunct professor. She has served on GTFCAN since 2013 and is the current chair of the mental health/training/summit committee. In the past, she has served on numerous other committees.
- **Hon. Rachel Rancilo** is a judge who has a passion for working within child welfare to protect children. She wants to ensure she is utilizing her spare time to help the children in Michigan which is why she recently joined GTFCAN.
- **Sterling Riethman** represents adult former victims of child abuse and neglect. She indicated she was one of the first people to publicly identify themselves regarding Larry Nassar. Over the last few years, she learned a lot about statute reform. She wants to take her skillset and help others. She has a communications and psychology background.

➤ **MDHHS Report – Colin Parks**

- The coordinator position for GTFCAN was approved as a 50% position as of January 1, 2019.
- Neila Johnson is on special assignment. Kevin Bryan has absorbed the duties of the GTFCAN coordinator into the role of his primary job with MDHHS. Kevin Bryan will continue in this role until further notice.
- Discussion was held regarding how to keep a coordinator as this position has had a high turnover rate over the last few years. Numerous GTFCAN members expressed favorable remarks regarding the job Kevin Bryan has done while completing tasks for GTFCAN. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated due to the progress made while Kevin Bryan has been filling in, she is confident there will be open and constant collaboration with MDHHS going forward. **Colin Parks** agreed and ensured MDHHS collaboration moving forward.
- The Implementation, Sustainability and Exit Plan (ISEP) was discussed. **Colin Parks** indicated the focuses predominately on foster care cases. He acknowledged a judge made a recommendation to switch databases from the Michigan State Automated Child Welfare Information System (MiSACWIS) to another database. At a recent hearing the judge felt MDHHS has not accomplished as much as they should have throughout the last ten years.

- The CPS Audit was discussed. The Office of Auditor General (OAG) reviewed CPS investigations from 2014 through May 2016. The OAG reviewed 160 cases over 15 counties. In 159/160 cases, OAG made findings and MDHHS completed a read behind and made an internal finding on the 160<sup>th</sup> case. The main focus of the audit was the lack of quality documentation and supervisory oversight. MDHHS has responded to the findings by creating an Operational Excellence team to address the audit findings. MDHHS has addressed the findings by making changes to MiSACWIS, creating a worker mobile application for CPS investigators, creating a Supervisory Control Protocol (SCP), creating an expungement unit, creating a redaction unit, creating a Peer Review Team (PRT), and creating a Compliance Review Team (CRT). The worker mobile application allows workers to document policy questions in a quick and reliable manner, as well as addresses safety concerns in the field. The SCP has three checkpoints in which supervisors check to see if policy requirements were completed (7 days, 14 days, and before approval of the case). A dashboard is also available for the supervisors to check the status of these cases. The PRT is a team of supervisors who can help other supervisors across the state learn to utilize the SCP efficiently and effectively. The CRT is through the Office of Family Advocates (OFA) and reviews recent CPS cases which were approved by a supervisor to ensure policy compliance and monitor statewide trends.
- Discussion was held regarding the findings being qualitative or cultural. **Colin Parks** indicated there was some truth to both as CPS investigations are complex work in which investigators work with a large and diverse population. Public perception of MDHHS makes the job harder. MDHHS is working to ensure public perception of the department changes and remains positive. There is also high turnover in child welfare. Due to the turnover, workers are not learning the job thoroughly and become supervisors early in their careers. Current workers will not receive raises from this funding as they receive raises each year which are negotiated by UAW Local 6000.

➤ **At 01:05pm, Dr. Tana Bridge called for a recess for lunch.**

➤ **At 01:25pm, Dr. Tana Bridge called the meeting back to order.**

➤ A discussion was held regarding the functionality of the Law and Policy Committee. It was determined Law and Policy would work on both projects brought to the committee by other committees and will also complete projects on their own.

➤ **Law and Policy Committee – Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer**

- Discussion was held regarding possible ideas for Law and Policy Committee to address such as: Educate judges and attorneys on MDHHS policy, provide SCP questions to LGALs, courts, judges, attorneys, and assistant prosecuting attorneys, working with Children’s Services Agency to determine where this committee could help, safety planning, in-home cases, high turnover within child welfare, attorney training, address why

assistant prosecuting attorneys are not bringing forth child abuse and neglect cases when requested to do so by MDHHS and what barriers the assistant prosecuting attorneys are facing in doing so, inconsistencies in report writing, transportation for clients, and foster parent recruitment.

➤ **Public Comment – Brandy Dollinger**

- **Brandy Dollinger** expressed concern regarding safety planning. She indicated CPS will allow one parent to complete a safety plan and does not inform the other parent. She expressed concern when dealing with multiple systems (law enforcement, medical professionals, Friend of the Court, Children’s Protective Services, etc.) as each system appears to wait to see what the other systems are going to do before deciding how to proceed with the case. Due to this, Brandy Dollinger believed this was causing a delay in addressing safety concerns. Multiple GTFCAN members provided Brandy Dollinger with resources and spoke with her regarding her concerns.

➤ **Public Comment – Kiyerra Lake**

- At this time, Kiyerra Lake from WLNS news arrived at the open public meeting. She took several camera shots for a news story WLNS was publishing and spoke with Colin Parks and Dr. Tana Bridge to gain information on GTFCAN.

➤ **Committee Work**

- At this time, each committee met to discuss the status of their projects and work on creating a mission statement and three-year goals if they had not already done so.

➤ **Coordinator’s Report – Kevin Bryan**

- **Kevin Bryan** indicated he would connect with the committee chairs in the near future to ensure everything was received to complete the grant report and three-year goals. Although these are due to CJA in May, these must be approved internally and sent to Governor Whitmer’s Office no later than May 1, 2019.
- Members were reminded they will receive binders at the next GTFCAN meeting. Instructions for the Google Drive will be sent to GTFCAN members in the near future.
- Kevin Bryan recently absorbed the role of coordinator for the Guy Thompson Parent Advisory Counsel into his work as a program analyst. Should GTFCAN members be working on a project which would benefit from a person who has successfully completed child welfare services, it was requested they contact Kevin Bryan as he can help coordinate these efforts.
- **Kevin Bryan** indicated committee chairs should email him if they have work which needs completing.

➤ **Citizen’s Review Panel Committee - Det./Sgt. Jennifer Pintar**

- **The committee indicated they have two new members as Hon. Rachel**

**Rancilo and Dr. Cynthia Smith have joined this committee. This committee believes they are maxed out on membership at this time; however, they will continue to work to address concerns GTFCAN members have regarding the child welfare system.**

- **Four members of this committee will be attending the National Citizen's Review Panel Conference later this year.**
- **The Citizen's Review Panel is working with the data committee and are focusing on substance positive infants and what should be done to address these cases to ensure child safety. In the future, the committee will reach out to GTFCAN members to utilize their contacts in a variety of fields to receive feedback regarding the committee's current focus.**

➤ **Data Committee - Dr. Tana Bridge**

- **The data committee will be focusing on plans of safe care in the future. This will include looking at other state models and practices, looking at the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, as well as MDHHS policy to determine what can be done to improve the current system.**
- **The committee is working with the Citizen's Review Panel at this time; however, the committee is willing to work with all committees which need to have research completed and data obtained.**

➤ **Child Advocacy Committee - Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer for Fredrick Gruber**

- **The Child Advocacy Committee is looking to have additional forums to help obtain potential foster homes. Additional information will be forthcoming in the future; however, anyone willing to help assist in these efforts should contact Fredrick Gruber. This committee has openings should any GTFCAN members wish to join.**
- **The mission of the Child Advocacy Committee is focus on the Executive Order to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases and limit trauma to the victims. The committee believes this is best completed through foster parent forums, community outreach, and various programs such as free tuition waivers.**

➤ **Law and Policy Committee - Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer**

- **Colin Parks will meet with Children's Services Agency leadership to determine how this committee can collaborate with MDHHS.**
- **The committee would like to address poor legal representation, delays in brings cases to court, and safety planning in the future.**

➤ **Mental Health Standards/Training Committee - Dr. Shannon Lowder**

- **The sexual abuse training is 60% completed. The committee is in need of a lawyer to review the training to ensure the training complies with all laws.**
- **The Relias contract was recently renewed. Based on the information provided by Relias, this contract serviced the target audience and ensured mental health clinicians contracting with MDHHS received**

applicable training.

- The 2019 Summit is in the planning stages. Due to a conflict of dates, new potential dates will be obtained. The committee indicated the Summit may be a full two day training this year due to the location being moved to a centralized location within the state. The focus of the Summit will be substance use effecting parenting. A quick discussion was held regarding potential speakers. GTFCAN members who know of potential speakers will provide this information to the committee.

➤ **Protocol Committee – Kevin Bryan for Julie Nakfoor-Pratt**

- The Model Child Abuse Protocol is currently being revised. A rough draft date of July 1, 2019 was agreed upon by the committee. The revision committee is made up of law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, attorneys, PAAM, MDHHS, CAC representation, medical personnel, and others. The protocol revisions have also been sent to a variety of personnel who represent different groups such as mental health professionals, school professionals, and others.

➤ **New Business**

- There was no new business.

➤ **Next Meeting**

- May 31, 2019 at 11:00am in Lansing at the Hall of Justice.

➤ Meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.