



**Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Friday, September 06, 2019
Michigan Hall of Justice**

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Dr. Tana Bridge (chair), Dr. Shannon Lowder (vice-chair), Daniel Babin, Lori Budnik, Danita Echols, Fredrick Gruber, Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer, Dr. Bethany Mohr, Dr. Lisa Niergarth, Colin Parks, Lt. Jennifer Pintar, Hon. Kelly Ramsey, Dr. Cynthia Smith, Veda Thompkins

Members via Teleconference: None

Members Absent: Julie Nakfoor Pratt, Hon. Rachel Rancilio, Christopher Wirth

Non-members Present: Tanya Abdelnour – Prosecuting Attorney's Association of Michigan, Chayna Brunner, Kevin Bryan – MDHHS, Justice Megan Cavanagh – Michigan Supreme Court, Justice Elizabeth T. Clement – Michigan Supreme Court, Lori Droen, Elizabeth Henderson – SCAO, Julie Knop – Prosecuting Attorney's Association of Michigan, Katie Kruse University of Michigan Medical School, Pamala Maas – Livingston County Prosecutor's Office, Kimberly Meyer-Gamet, Seth Persky – MDHHS, Lori Roberts, Patty Sabin – Michigan Court Appointed Special Advocates, Cassie Stajich

➤ **Welcome – Dr. Tana Bridge**

- Meeting called to order at 11:01am

➤ **Public Comment:** Kimberly Meyer-Gamet indicated she was a stepmother to three children which had come into contact with Children's Protective Services on multiple occasions. She indicated she had concerns regarding the handling of the Children's Protective Services case by multiple stakeholders, including MDHHS, law enforcement, and the prosecutor's office. Concern was expressed regarding the children regressing due to poor handling of the case. Kimberly Meyer-Gamet had previously contacted the Office of Family Advocate and Office of Children's Ombudsman to address her concerns. During the open public comment, GTFCAN members asked clarifying questions. **Colin Parks** and **Seth Persky** agreed to meet with the family to address their concerns during the lunch break.

➤ **Public Comment:** Public comment was made by Lori Droen. She expressed the need for all stakeholders within child welfare to assess the mental health of the child(ren) during divorce proceedings. **Dr. Tana Bridge** reiterated the need to look at prevention by addressing mental health concerns.

➤ **Public Comment:** Cassie Stajich indicated she was a therapist who had concerns regarding the child welfare system. She indicated there were times she felt abuse or neglect occurred; however, a preponderance of evidence was not found. She

expressed concerns regarding courts not assigning a L-GAL or parent coordinator as the courts felt these violated the rights of the other parent. **Fredrick Gruber** indicated the need to have a L-GAL assigned during family court cases and discussed the need to have them assigned at other times. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated the task force will explore and discuss L-GALs during their work as a task force.

➤ **Consideration of Minutes from 05/31/2019 – Dr. Tana Bridge**

- Motion by Daniel Babin to adopt the minutes which was seconded by Dr. Shannon Lowder. Motion unanimously carried.

➤ **Chair Report – Dr. Tana Bridge**

- Discussion was held regarding the current Executive Order. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated she would work on potential edits with **Kevin Bryan**. Once this process was completed, the proposed Executive Order would be submitted to the Governor's Office.
- **Dr. Tana Bridge** is currently looking for additional funding opportunities such as grant solicitations. She indicated concern regarding the rules set forth by MDHHS not allowing items to be expensed back such as snacks for upcoming focus groups.
- **Dr. Tana Bridge** is attempting to network with various groups on behalf of the task force. She recently attended MDHHS reunification day. She also recently attended a Protocol Committee meeting to thank everyone for their work on the project.
- Discussion was held regarding the budget for fiscal year 2020. **Dr. Tana Bridge** would like to have a spend plan approved during the December 2019 meeting. Discussion occurred regarding what was and was not funded through the Children's Justice Act (CJA), which is how the task force currently obtains all funding. Going forward, committees must indicate how their funding requests comply with CJA funding. **Kevin Bryan** will send committee chairs information regarding funding requirements.
- Discussion was held regarding a potential State of Michigan shutdown due to the state not having an approved budget. The task force was informed should a State of Michigan budget not be approved by 11:59:59 on September 30th, the State of Michigan would be shut down and only essential employees could report or complete work. **Colin Parks** indicated the coordinator position was currently a .5 FTE in which the coordinator will complete both task force work and MDHHS work. Currently this role is vacant as the previous coordinator was completing other duties. Currently, **Kevin Bryan** is filling in and will continue to do so in the future. **Colin Parks** also discussed the allocated funds associated with managing the grant were capped at \$51,000. The task force also pays 50% of a MDHHS analyst salary.
- **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated the Mental Health Standards and Training Committee will determine if Relias will be utilized for the last option year as this contract will expire in February 2020 unless the option year is utilized.
- Discussion regarding membership occurred. It was noted the task force should be diverse in all areas including demographics and region. The task force currently has vacancies regarding:

- Individuals experienced in working with children with disabilities
 - Parent groups
 - Child advocate attorney
 - It was noted the Upper Peninsula was not represented on the task force. The task force also does not have tribal representation.
 - Discussion was held regarding potential occupations which may comply with both the Executive Order and CJA requirements.
 - During the 2019 Summit meeting, occurring on November 13, 2019 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, committee chairs will create goals for the upcoming year, as well as measurables for determining if goals were reached. Committee chairs will also determine potential funding asks based on the previously mentioned criteria.
 - During the chair report, discussion occurred regarding a packet of information received by **Governor Whitmer** regarding a children's protective services case. It was determined that a response would be sent by **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicating the task force received the information and include resources such as the contact information for the Office of Family Advocate and the Office of Children's Ombudsman.
- **Child Advocacy Committee – Fredrick Gruber**
- Discussion was held regarding recent foster care recruitment forums which were sponsored by this committee. **Fredrick Gruber** indicated there was a need to obtain therapeutic foster parents. A therapeutic foster provider attended the last forum and indicated they had adopted children who had been placed in a residential facility.
 - **Fredrick Gruber** presented a Plan of Action to the task force and called for a motion of support. This motion was seconded by **Dr. Shannon Lowder**. The motion passed.
- **At 12:45 pm, Dr. Tana Bridge called for a recess for lunch.**
- During recess, Justice Elizabeth T. Clement and Justice Megan Cavanagh spoke to the task force regarding their commitment to child welfare and desire to attend a future task force meeting. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated she would contact them in the future to coordinate their attendance.
- **At 01:18 pm, Dr. Tana Bridge called the meeting back to order.**
- **Coordinator's Report – Kevin Bryan**
- Discussion was held regarding **Kevin Bryan** completing the training necessary to train a three-day forensic interview class. **Colin Parks** indicated the Forensic Interview Protocol has been trained nationally and internationally in the past. **Julie Knop** indicated in the past; the task force sent forensic interview trainers to national conferences regarding forensic interviewing. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated any requests for funding needed to be made through the Protocol Committee and allow time for review. It was suggested this occur at the next task force meeting.
 - Discussion was held regarding a recent meeting with the Appointment's Division of the Governor's Office. **Kevin Bryan** indicated the Appointments Division was willing and able to help obtain membership to comply with the Executive Order.

The appointments did not appear to be political based on the previous meeting; however, applicants had to share the vision of the Whitmer Administration.

- **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated those who have terms expiring at the end of the year needed to reapply.

- **MDHHS Report – Colin Parks**
 - Discussion was held regarding the Babcock family who attended the previous meeting. **Colin Parks** could not provide outcomes due to confidentiality but was able to indicate the family discussed their concerns with both **Colin Parks** and **Seth Persky**. The redaction unit was reported to be behind which led to the family attending the previous task force meeting. MDHHS was working to address concerns regarding the redaction unit.
 - October was reported to be Safe Sleep month based on a proclamation by **Governor Whitmer**. Colin brought the proclamation for all members to review. **Seth Persky** indicated each year there are over 300 child deaths in Michigan and at least 150 involve sleep environment concerns. There have been four deaths which have contained concerns regarding the children's sleeping environment in the last few days.
 - **Colin Parks** indicated the Michigan Public Health Institute created training regarding safe sleep for both newer and experienced workers. Those who would like the training were requested to contact **Colin Parks**.
 - **Hon. Kelly Ramsey** indicated concern regarding unsafe sleeping conditions and recommended the Law and Policy Committee look into addressing sleeping conditions. **Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer** indicated the Law and Policy Committee would look into the messaging of safe sleep.
 - **Colin Parks** indicated a workgroup had convened to create a worker safety protocol for child welfare workers in Michigan. **Kevin Bryan** was in the process of putting together the protocol. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated the task force would be interested in seeing the final product to determine if they would help fund the project. The potential to absorb the protocol was also discussed as was potential training opportunities. **Kimberly Meyer-Gamet** indicated Henry Ford Hospital had recently completed work in this area including Non-Aggressive Physical Psychological Intervention (NAPPI) training.
 - **Colin Parks** indicated there were significant Children's Protective Services and Foster Care policy revisions. The new director of the Children's Services Agency, JooYuen Chang is focusing on revising policy to make casework easier for frontline staff while continuing to address child safety. **Lori Budnik** indicated the Children's Services Agency was seeking feedback from frontline staff regarding potential policy changes, as well as recent policy changes.
 - As a result of the recent Children's Protective Services audit, House Bills 4704-4709 were introduced by Representative Hall and Representative C.A. Johnson, among others. Both representatives spent time completing outreach in local offices. House Bill 4705 was seeking to change the definition of commencement to indicate commencement was completed by verifying the wellbeing of all children listed on the complaint. This would require all children listed on the complaint to have a face to face visit completed within the first 24 hours. MDHHS has identified concerns based on staffing challenges; however, MDHHS is neutral on the other bills contained in the package.

- **Law and Policy – Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer**
 - The committee currently has two members. If anyone from the task force, or those in the professional networks of those on the task force, would like to join the committee, they can contact **Colin Parks** as he will be the in-coming chair of the committee. **Dr. Tana Bridge** requested changes of the chair position occur at the end of the calendar year.
 - The committee is focusing on efforts to support better petition drafting within child welfare. The best interest criteria should be utilized when drafting a petition. **Elizabeth Henderson** indicated petition writing was previously trained through the Inter-Agency Agreement with SCAO; however, this was removed when the task force reduced funding.
 - Discussion was held regarding the need to create a protocol regarding plans of safe care. The protocol will help ensure MDHHS aligns with both state and federal statutes. A motion was made to form a committee to create a plan of safe care protocol under the Protocol Committee. **Dr. Lisa Niergarth** seconded, and the motion carried.
 - The process to review policy prior to publication was discussed.

- **Mental Health/ Training Committee – Dr. Shannon Lowder and Dr. Lisa Niergarth**
 - The committee had completed one of eight modules regarding the sexual abuse training through Relias. Each session will take two hours to complete. There is concern the training may not be able to leave the Relias platform should the task force decide to not renew the contract with Relias. Other states were reported to have interest in being able to complete the sexual abuse training.
 - The 2019 Summit will be held on Thursday, November 14 and Friday, November 15, 2019. The annual Summit public meeting will be held on Wednesday November 13, 2019.
 - The focus of the Summit is Substance Use and Child Endangerment.
 - After the open public meeting the task force will go to dinner together at Babarinos Pizza.
 - GTFCAN members were encouraged to nominate someone for the Steve Yager Lifetime Achievement Award. If anyone has any nominations, they can submit them to **Kevin Bryan**.

- **Protocol Committee – Kevin Bryan**
 - **Kevin Bryan** indicated there would be two potential costs associated to the completion of the Model Child Abuse Protocol. These would include both printing and distribution, as well as training. Discussion was held regarding potential task force funding. **Dr. Tana Bridge** indicated a motion could not be made as the task force had not reviewed or approved the material. It was requested the protocol be completed and provided to the task force two weeks prior to the next meeting. This would allow the task force to review.

- **Citizen’s Review Panel – Lt. Jennifer Pintar**
 - The CRP has been working to address concerns regarding substance using parents with infant children. Soon, the CRP will be completing surveys and focus

groups with various stakeholders. **Dr. Tana Bridge** was thanked for her work with this committee.

- Four members of the Citizen's Review Panel recently attended the national Citizen's Review Panel conference. The committee members presented and networked with other states.
- **Kevin Bryan** reminded all task force members and committee members he will be attending the focus groups with MDHHS personnel. It was requested they include him in the planning process to ensure he can attend.

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

- The data committee has been working with the CRP committee to address their research needs.
- Other committees were encouraged to contact the data committee if they would like to complete research.

➤ **New Business**

- Discussion was held regarding feedback from non-task force members attending the meeting. **Kimberly Meyer-Gamet** indicated she enjoyed connecting with members of the task force as the child welfare system was hard to navigate from the outside. **Cassie Stajich** indicated she was excited she discovered the task force and looked forward to working with them in the future.

➤ **Next Meeting**

- November 13, 2019 at 4:00 pm in Grand Rapids at DeVos Place.

➤ **Meeting Adjourned**

- The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 pm.