



Member of the Coastal Tri-Counties Child Abuse Prevention Coalition

July 16, 2020 ♦ **9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**
via Zoom

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ashleigh Erving and Alison Wales welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

Attendance: Elizabeth Adams, Holly Benton, Maria Chesley, Ashleigh Erving, Flo Furuike, Tony Hollenback, Carrie Martin, Yvonne Nelson, Shana Pompa, Marianne Reagan, Michelle Robertson, Isabel Ruiz, Melana Serka, Kimberly Valenzuela, Alison Wales

Staff: Barbara Finch and Gloria Munoz

2. Approve Minutes from June 18, 2020

Holly Benton, Maria Chesley, Yvonne Nelson, Marianne Reagan and Melana Serka abstained from voting; all others voted in favor and the June 18, 2020 minutes were approved.

3. Public Comment

Shana introduced the 100-Day Challenge, sponsored by Santa Barbara County Continuum of Care, which is trying to end youth homelessness in the county. Stakeholders include: Allan Hancock Community College, Community Action Commission, Child Welfare, Probation, Transitions Mental Health, Good Samaritan Shelter, Lompoc School District, Santa Maria Joint Unified High School District, Santa Barbara Unified School District, Channel Islands YMCA Youth and Family Services, Housing Authority, Court Appointed Special Advocates and others. Santa Barbara County has established a 100-day goal to achieve the following:

- House 50 youth
- Assign a navigator to 100% of youth identified on a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness
- 75 percent of youth accept case management with an individual service and housing retention plan

They have four work streams that the team is divided into: housing resources, supportive services, data tracking and cross system collaboration. Shana stated that Santa Barbara County has a very high rate of homelessness for youth. One in 10 transition aged youth ages 18-25 are experiencing homelessness and in the 2018-19 school year, 8,316 students met the McKinney Vento definition of a homeless youth in Santa Barbara County school districts.

4. Protective Factor of the Month

The Protective Factor of the Month was Social Connections. Folks were divided into breakout groups and were asked to discuss one of the following questions:

- How do you relate to people who are different from you?

- How do you stay true to your values despite social pressure?
- What have you learned about building healthy relationships and where did you learn it?
- How can you personally contribute to dismantling or healing racism?

5. Mandated Reporting Needs and Resources

At the last meeting, there was a discussion about reaching mandated reporters and helping them shift their focus to the realities of distance learning. CALM has been doing virtual mandated reporter trainings and they have added some slides about what to look for virtually. Barbara asked the group who is doing mandated reporter training within their own organizations and/or for the community.

Department of Social Services: Mandated reporter information has been included in the New Employee Orientation-need to check about current practices. No community trainings at this time.

Family Service Agency: For the most part, they do a pre-recorded webinar, which lacks the local context and the opportunity to engage with folks. In recent months, with COVID-19, isolation, and heightened risk factors for families, they reached out to CALM and had a virtual training with their Family Resource Center staff throughout the county. She felt that it gave more local context.

North County Rape Crisis Center: They are still doing trainings with their partners. CADA has always requested trainings and they have also done a few churches virtually. There is always more conversation when it is in person versus having it virtually. Their outreach staff is still continuing to reach out to the people that they normally do trainings for.

Behavioral Wellness: Tony asked if anyone offers a red flags training for child abuse intervention. What are the red flags that might indicate that a child or family needs support before the hotline call? Is that something that has been offered? From a preventative perspective, he feels that would be a powerful training.

Barbara stated a standardized MR training was developed in partnership with CAPC, CWS, CALM and NCRCCPC. CAPC members were able to use it with their own organizations and those who wanted to do community trainings could use it as well. The training includes physical and behavioral indicators for each type of abuse – some of these could also be considered red flags. Barbara suggested revisiting the PowerPoint – to pull together a workgroup and review the materials and make edits and additions. The red flags and prevention message could be presented to a wider audience, not just mandated reporters. The prevention message emphasizes connecting families to resources even as they are making the report because reports may not rise to the level where Child Welfare can get involved, and early intervention can help build protective factors in that family.

Santa Barbara County Education Office: They are required to do a mandated reporter training through their online training portal every year. A flyer was created for COVID that they sent out to superintendents to share with staff about things to look for during virtual learning.

Probation Department: Probation does ongoing internal training for their staff. Probation officers have many opportunities to speak with youth, and also have ongoing interactions with families. They teach officers to think about safety for the kids they are working with in their professional life, and also in their interactions with others outside their professional capacity. It is important for them to understand the role that abuse plays and how those particular kids react when they face authority figures. CAPC has not partnered with Probation on mandated reporting training. Holly concluded by mentioning that she would love to see deputies receive more training about what actually works with youth and families and how to look beyond compliance.

Tony asked about working with children and families through the lens of cultural competency. Often times there is a disparity among youth of different cultures who are involved with corrections, probation and abuse. Service providers need training-perhaps it could also be included in Mandated Reporter training.

A small workgroup formed to look at and modify mandated reporter materials. (Alison, Tony, Ashleigh, Barb) Barb will reach out to CWS and CALM.

6. Child Welfare Services COVID Update

Marianne Reagan, Operations Manager for Adult and Children Services, gave an update on Child Welfare Services and COVID. Fall and spring are historically the busiest times of the year for Child Welfare but this year they did not see the usual increase in referrals. In March, there were 546 referrals and 335 in April. Marianne stated that even though the referrals went down significantly in number, reports called into the Hotline were much more serious. They had fewer reports of general neglect, more calls related to physical abuse, and more severe circumstance involving parental mental health and drug abuse. This resulted in a much higher rate of children coming into care in the months of March, April and May - close to 70 children. Marianne stated that June and July seem to be back on track as far as their rate of referrals on the telephone line. In regards to their Front Porch referrals, there was not much change. As far as the social workers who do emergency response, there was really no change in how they responded during COVID. They were still required to go out and investigate in person and they gave out a lot of PPE.

Front Porch is the County's model for differential response. Path 1 are calls that come into the hotline that do not meet the level of a child abuse investigation but there may be concerns about mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse, or parenting. They refer them to CALM, and CALM may refer to a Family Resource Center. Path 2 is where a Child Welfare Social Worker goes out to meet with the family and then refers them to CALM for services. Child Welfare caseloads have been steadily increasing since March. They have not been able to finalize adoptions because the juvenile court is working remotely. Court hearings are happening through phone conference or Zoom but the adoptions require an in-person court appearance. COVID restrictions have been particularly hard for children in foster care who are not able to see their biological parents. The state came out with guidance that allowed parent and child visits to happen virtually through video conference but that was very challenging on many levels. Starting July 1st, they have been doing the best they can to get all of their virtual visits back to being in person. This has really helped because biological parent and child visitation is what keeps parents engaged in their case plan and it is a big predictor of successful reunification.

Ashleigh: From the approximately 70 children that went into care during those three months, what would look normal during a similar timeframe outside of COVID? In March, April and May of 2019, they took 42 kids into care. In general, they have had more entries into care this year than they did last year. It can fluctuate every month but having 20 kids come into care three months in a row is very high.

What suggestions might she have for some of them in terms of risk factors that seem prominent right now? The type of services that parents were receiving changed. In late March and early April, parents were not being drug tested and they were not receiving in-person treatment because mental health became telehealth. This has since changed but it was a challenging time. Alison added that the hotline at NCRCC also had a dip in April but they have been steady recently. The cases that they have had are more layered and there are a lot more services needed. The domestic violence as well as sexual assault that they have responded to and dealt with is much more severe on that spectrum and is a lot more work per case. Marianne mentioned that historically summer is a slower time for child welfare but the cases that they are getting are more complex.

With the ongoing caseload and the investigations, are the social workers able to utilize safety organized practice and the child and family teaming or has that been also challenging? Overall, it has been a little more challenging to provide the optimal engagement with families because they have families not wanting social workers in their home and they have social workers being more cautious about entering homes. They have had to be very creative with their ongoing caseloads and do a lot over the phone. They are

doing their best to maintain that engagement but it is certainly not optimal. Kids have been able to get links to the services such as mental health support.

7. Strengthening Partnerships for Child Abuse Prevention

At the last meeting, several topics of interest emerged: support for schools; bringing youth focus and youth voice into prevention work; support for CWS-involved families (resource families, bio families, adoptive families); strengthening the continuum of support and improving access to the programs that we offer through our organizations; engaging the justice system - creating partnerships with courts and judges.

The group decided to focus on schools as the topic to discuss. Barbara stated that there are 22 districts and getting representation from all the districts is challenging. She encouraged folks to think outside the box as they consider these partnerships. What are the opportunities for us to engage? How can we go to where they are rather than expecting them to come to us? Right now, schools are focused on what schools will look like in the fall and they don't have much bandwidth to focus on joining groups or creating new partnerships. Elizabeth shared that they have a Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program Executive Advisory Council that brings together a lot of the districts. She will also be working with superintendents.

Why is the partnership with schools so important? Michelle stated that it is because every child and family eventually goes through that system. Schools are seen as community hubs, not only delivering education, but also support services like food distribution and communication. It may be possible to get on the school board agendas with advanced planning. Ashleigh mentioned that they can't expect schools to address all the challenges of children and youth - partnership is necessary because there is a lot of work to do.

Michelle shared that First 5 is going to be working with four specific districts on their early learning planning grants, which are Santa Maria Bonita, Lompoc, Guadalupe and Santa Barbara Unified. CAPC could start with these four rather than trying to get to 22 all at once. They already have the Local Control Accountability Plans that have eight priorities embedded to them. One of them is Family Engagement and the other is Student Support Services. These are two priority areas where CAPC can contribute.

Elizabeth added that she will be meeting with every district superintendent to coordinate training and talk about services and data collection. She would also like to have a presentation at the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program Executive Advisory Council meeting. The topic could be the importance of noticing red flags and reminding educators about what to look for in mandated reporting of child abuse. Flo asked if there are superintendents or folks from the school districts that attend the KIDS Network meeting. Barbara mentioned that Bridget Baublits is part of the Executive Committee and the Prevention Team. One of the benefits of CAPC is that we meet every month so we have an opportunity to move this stuff forward a little bit more quickly than the KIDS Network can. We can certainly bring in those relationships to help us engage.

8. Taking Action: Connecting CAPC to Community

Barbara encouraged everyone to assume the role of CAPC spokesperson by talking about Protective Factors and Strengthening Families and preventing child abuse, looking for opportunities to raise issues, and letting people know that they are part of this collaboration, working hard to make a difference for kids in our community. Please reach out to Barbara or Gloria if you know of someone who should be invited to be a part of CAPC. The key is to be welcoming as a group and to make sure that the things we are talking about are resonating and will motivate them to be ambassadors for prevention.

9. Member Updates & Announcements

- **Elizabeth Adams** shared that they recently printed plastic handout cards that promote services for people who engage with homeless and transitional youth. If anybody would like a stack of cards, please contact Elizabeth at elizabethadams@sbceo.org

- **Kimberly Valenzuela** announced that the new CEO for Casa Pacifica, Shana Morris, starts on Monday.
- **Ashleigh Erving** mentioned that Family Service Agency along and Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley are hosting a series of couples classes over the next few weeks to focus on connection and communication. The classes are available in English and Spanish and they have three different series that they are launching based off of their historical model of healthy relationship education. They have now adapted it for virtual services and they are available to everyone.

10. Next meeting - September 17, 2020

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gloria Munoz