



Member of the Coastal Tri-Counties Child Abuse Prevention Coalition

May 16, 2024 • 9:00am - 10:30am - Buellton Recreation Center

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cheyenne Rosson and Barb Finch welcomed everyone and asked participants to introduce themselves by sharing their name, organization, and how they are arriving.

Attendance: Karina Acosta, Carolina Ayala, Kelley Barragan, Whitney Booker, Cynthia MacDuff, Shana Pompa, Cheyenne Rosson, Karen Sanchez, Amy Tovas, Michelle Vargas, Alison Wales, Genevieve Wilkinson

Staff: Jessica Martinez, Barb Finch

2. CAPC Business

Approve Minutes from April 18, 2024

It was moved and seconded by Karina Acosta and Cynthia MacDuff respectively, to approve the minutes from the meeting on April 18, 2024. Alison Wales and Amy Tovas abstained. All voted in favor and minutes were approved.

Membership Agreements

Barb asked the group to ensure that all member organizations had an updated CAPC Membership Agreement on file and provided blank membership agreements for those who needed them.

3. Public Comment

Karina Acosta brought up the regional 'Parent Voices' collaboration, a project of the Coastal Tri-Counties Child Abuse Prevention Coalition. She attended the most recent meeting and requested time on a future agenda to share information and discuss Santa Barbara's participation.

4. Implementing AB 2085: Guidance for Mandated Reporters

Barb Finch introduced "Implementing AB 2085: Guidance for Mandated Reporters," a video training from the County of Los Angeles that was shared as a resource by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention. A brief background for AB 2085 was also given.

Assembly Bill (AB) 2085 is a new California state law modifying the definition of reportable general neglect. A look at statewide and national data revealed that most reporting does not lead to a

substantiation. The majority of reports are for suspected neglect. The way that the laws and reporting system is set up results in over-surveillance and over-reporting of families living in poverty.

The CA state legislature acted and revised the definition of neglect. AB 2085 took effect on January 1, 2023 and revised the definition of general neglect by narrowing it to circumstances in which the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness. AB 2085 further provides that general neglect does not include a parent's economic disadvantage.

CAPC members watched a portion of the training video, pausing for discussion:

Implementing AB 2085: Guidance for Mandated Reporters

This course provides Mandated Reporters in California with an overview of AB 2085 and guidance on how to implement the new law. Participants will learn concrete strategies to make more accurate, consistent, and equitable decisions about reporting suspected general neglect. Participants will also gain insight into approaches to supporting families in need when a report to the Child Protection Hotline is not required by law.

Discussion

What does disproportionality in Santa Barbara county look like?

- More reporting of BIPOC families
- "Dirty house" calls - people will call on their neighbors because their home is dirty or the child shows up to school with dirty clothing or smelling like they haven't had a bath

General comments offered when video was paused for reflection:

- Mandated Reporters are worried and concerned when they're making these reports. They've made multiple attempts to engage the family about kids not coming to school, yet parents aren't responding.
- The experience of calling the hotline is not a good one in the general sense. There is no explanation provided to the mandated reporter and little information is given.
- Educators don't want to get parents in trouble. They call the hotline to get help for the family, not because they think the child's in danger.
- It is important to be gracious, to be kind, to be supportive, responsive, and not dismissive
- Training is important
 - Training for educators, mandated reporters
 - Training for those receiving calls on the hotline
 - Training in civility, attitude, tone of voice
 - Understanding roles and time constraints, managing expectations
 - Education about resources
- Addressing turnover in the sector is important
- Relationships are important, relationships between:
 - Schools/educators and families
 - Schools/educators and government agencies / Child Welfare Services
 - Schools/educators and CBOs
 - Government agencies and CBOs
- CWS was asked to provide statistics on who is reporting

What does it mean to you to think critically?

- Thinking critically and offering resources could help reduce the need for reporting
- Helping people decide - if the family's not responding, that's a concern, but that's not child neglect
- Critical Thinking is questioning whether we really think the child is in danger
- There are opportunities all around for us to be clearer. This is a beginning point. Let's have people have the same understanding about what's important and what's not.
- All the agencies that are here in this room have a really important role in responding to families. We need more resources and we need more awareness and more ability to connect. There's always room to do better.
- The Rady Children's Center offers standardized online trainings for different professions but Mandated Reporters may not be required to complete it there – organizations can decide how to comply with training requirements.
- Some insurance companies offer mandated reporter training to school districts. The overarching theme may be child protection, but the emphasis may be on the reporting laws and protecting the district from lawsuits. That's a very different approach.
- Santa Barbara County developed a standardized training before the Rady training was available. Several CAPC member orgs worked together to create and adapt it through the years.
- Mandated reporters have been told "it is not your duty to investigate" – how many of the unsubstantiated calls stem from mandated reporters who do not ask clarifying questions because of this?
- If we can reduce the number of calls that aren't really neglect, then we can look more closely at the ones where there's a gray area

How does AB 2085 apply to the components of a situation?

- There is pressure on everyone to make good judgments that protect the child
- Cultural values must also be considered
- The system is complex, there are so many aspects that produce an outcome.

Consult whenever reasonably possible

- If you're not sure, you can consult with a coworker or supervisor or call the hotline
- Perhaps there is a way to improve the system - if a child is not in imminent risk, to leave a message for Child Welfare Services and get a call back?
- Suggestion that CWS provide training for districts at their professional development days

CAPC members agreed to complete the training videos offline and continue the discussion at the June meeting.

5. **Adjourn - Next meeting: June 20, 2024**

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Martinez