

Children's Code Reform Task Force (CCRTF)
December 5, 2024
4.00 - 5.30 p.m.

Members present

Cristen Conley, Chair
Rosenda Chavez-Lara
John Romero
Justin Boyd
Shira Greenberg
Leslie Jones
Alison Endicott-Quinones
Mary McQueeney
Judge Alma Cristina Roberson
Bette Fleishman
Beth Gillia
Catherine Pavelski
Lorilynn Violanta
Reed Ridens
Shelly Bucher
Carolyn Casillas

Others present

Kathleen Sabo
Tony Ortiz
Alison Pauk

Introductions

Cristen Conley introduced herself. She is serving as the Task Force Chair. Ms. Conley is also the Executive Director of the Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice, University of New Mexico School of Law. Kathleen Sabo, Task Force Coordinator, and Tony Ortiz, Task Force Staff, also introduced themselves. Finally, the task force members then introduced themselves and briefly described the work they perform in the child welfare system.

Task force processes

The three subcommittees (FINCOS, Juvenile Justice, and Revisions and Recommendations) have been meeting and will generate proposals for the

consideration of the entire task force. At the end of this meeting, 15 minutes will be available for public comment.

Subcommittee reports

The **Juvenile Justice Subcommittee** is working on responses to legislative proposals presented by the 2nd Judicial District Attorney's Office. Kathleen and Tony have synthesized research articles and bullet points on a range of topics, including adverse childhood experiences (ACES), juvenile detention alternative initiatives (JDAI), brain development in adolescents, the effects of incarceration on youth and other topics. Kathleen and Tony will develop formatting for one-pagers that succinctly summarize the issues.

The **Revisions and Recommendations Subcommittee** is working on a "Dependent Child Act", including a definition for a "dependent child" and accompanying, expedited hearing procedures. The subcommittee has reached consensus on the following definition: "dependent child" means a child whose parents or legal guardians are deceased and the child is left without a legal guardian. Under current provisions in the Children's Code, orphaned children are adjudicated as "abandoned". Cristen and Kathleen are reviewing elements of the Abuse and Neglect Act and Indian Family Protection Act for language that, properly modified, may be useful.

The **FINCOS Subcommittee** has formed work groups to develop proposed amendments to Chapter 32A-3B, the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act". The FINCOS Act is under-utilized and the work groups are exploring revisions so that the FINCOS Act could be more widely used to support children and families before the filing of an abuse or neglect petition. The goal is to create more clarity concerning case planning and to make it more comfortable for families to engage with support services. Additionally, there is a need for an "off ramp" into an abuse and neglect proceeding, if a family does not engage in good faith with support services.

General task force discussion

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- we will produce a supplemental report that is focused on policy initiatives. The supplemental report will also include recommendations, such as a prohibition on strip searches of juveniles. A draft supplemental report will be presented to the task force on January 9, 025;
- Senator Linda Lopez is speaking with other legislators regarding potential sponsorship of legislation we have developed. She is also trying to organize a joint meeting of standing House and Senate committees, early in the legislative session;
- Cristen, Kathleen and Tony will be available to testify during the legislative session, if we are invited to do so;

-several task force members recently attended a conference organized by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Data points presented at that conference will be shared with task force staff;

-Cristen will attend a Zoom meeting hosted by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, Juvenile Justice Division, and she will assess the usefulness of data points shared during that meeting.

Public comment

Kirsten Dick asked what type of data would be useful to support testimony before the legislature. For instance, what are the demographic profiles of youth who have contact with the juvenile justice system. Other topics discussed were the value of “ACES” assessments to inform treatment and the “my child” view of supports and services. Finally, there was a reference to a 20-year study conducted in Hennepin county, Minnesota.

Next meeting

The next task force meeting will be held on January 9, 2025, at 4.00 p.m