CSN Agenda
February 3, 2021
1:15-3:00 p.m.
Via Zoom
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83173542110?pwd=VnlGd2k5K2diMm4xb
Meeting ID: 831 7354 2110
Passcode: 520179
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+16699006833,,83173542110# *520179# US (San Jose)

General:
• Introductions
• Announcements
• Additions to the Agenda
• Public Comment

Action Items:
• Approval of November 4, 2020 Minutes

Presentation:
• FFPSA Power-Point Presentation – Jim Roberts

Information/Discussion items:
• Child Abuse Prevention Plan – Lisa Fraser and Linda Belch

Standing Agenda Items:
• AB2083 MOU – Linda Belch
• High-Needs Shelter Care – Jim Roberts
• Priority: Homeless Services for Children and Families – Laurel Weir
• SLO County CSEC Collaborative – Linda Belch
• Child Advocacy Center Update – Lisa Fraser

Round Table:

Future Agenda Items:

Next Meeting:

May 5, 2021
Via Zoom
1:15 – 3:00 p.m.
Minutes
February 3, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present:</th>
<th>Chair, Dan Dow – District Attorney</th>
<th>Michael R. Hill – Co. Health Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair, Jim Roberts - FCN</td>
<td>Jill Bolster-White – Transitions Mental Health</td>
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<td>Devin Drake – DSS Director</td>
<td>Lisa Fraser – CFSSLO</td>
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<td>Dr. Jim Brescia – Office of Education</td>
<td>Kayla Plourde-Reynolds</td>
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<td>Bruce Gibson – 2nd District Supervisor</td>
<td>Robert Reyes – Probation Chief</td>
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<td>Ian Parkinson - Sheriff</td>
<td>Anne Robin – Behavioral Health</td>
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<td>Teresa Tardiff – CASA of San Luis Obispo</td>
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<td>Excused:</td>
<td>Dr. Penny Borenstein – Public Health</td>
<td>Biz Steinberg - CAPSLO</td>
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<td>Staff:</td>
<td>Linda Belch – DSS Deputy Director</td>
<td>Laurel Weir – DSS Homeless Services Coordinator</td>
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<td>Cherise Day – Network Secretary</td>
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<td>Guests:</td>
<td>Melinda Sokolowski – CAPSLO/First 5</td>
<td>Timothy Murphy – DA’s Victim/Witness</td>
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Introductions, Announcements, Critical Issues and Additions to the Agenda:
On February 4, 2021, Biz Steinberg sent an email to CSN members announcing the newly hired Division Director of CAPSLO’s Child, Youth and Family Services Division, Melinda Sokolowski. Melinda has been with CAPSLO for 25 years, has a background in Child and Family Services, Child Abuse Prevention, Child Care, Research Projects, Head Start, SAFE and Homeless Case Management, etc. Melinda will now serve as the CSN Representative for CAPSLO, with Biz acting as the alternate. Congratulations and welcome Melinda!

Announcements: Update re: Children moving back to CA from out of State Placement Homes- Devin Drake
In 2020, the SLO Co. Dept. of Social Services (DSS) had ten high-needs children placed with out-of-State Group Homes. In December 2020, a youth was killed in a group home located in Michigan, which led the State of CA to investigate, subsequently decertifying out-of-State placement homes. Unfortunately, the placement homes were notified of their decertification before DSS had a chance to prepare. This led to DSS employees scrambling to find homes for the 10 high-needs children, with limited time to re-house. However, within 20 working days, DSS staff was able to find placements for all ten children; 8 remain in CA, 3 of which were placed with relatives, one child was returned to her mother and one remains out of State.

In addition, Jim Roberts reports the CA Alliance is currently working with State officials to move 140 high-needs youth back to CA. However, CA is currently lacking proper facilities for children with high-needs behaviors and the State is just now recognizing the large gap in services. This is especially evident, since most CA high-needs youths must be sent to other States that provide locked mental health treatment facilities. Jim was able to share his Whitepaper findings to officials, highlighting the work started within SLO County.

Additions: The question arose of when a new Chair and Vice Chair would be elected. According CSN Bylaws, the election of Chair and Vice Chair shall be held biannually at the fall Council meeting, held in November. The Chair and Vice Chair will then take office on January 1, with their term to run two (2) calendar years.

Public Comments: None

Action Items:
1. Approval of CSN November 2020 Minutes
   Motion: Jill Bolster-White
   Second: Mike Hill
   Motion Passed: Unanimous
**Presentation:** Family First Preservation Services Act of 2018 (FFPSA) Power-Point Presentation – Jim Roberts

FFPSA was designed to provide early intervention and prevention, so children won’t end up in “the system” or congregate care. FFPSA supports prevention services, as well as kinship and kin providers. This allows more flexibility to Child Welfare Agencies by reducing the use of congregate care and creates a new system called QRTP (Quality Residential Treatment Programs), which also improves services for transitional age youth up to age 23. This is part of a larger effort to change Child Welfare Services at a National level. By focusing on families and preventing children from coming into the system, this allows Foster Care to become the “last resort” it was intended. Developing a comprehensive model could be beneficial for early intervention and prevention, which could have great potential. This should be a primary focus for CSN, asking what the services would look like and how would they be funded. *The entire Power-Point presentation will be added at the end of the minutes.*

**Information/Discussion Item:** Child Abuse Prevention Plan – Lisa Fraser and Linda Belch

Linda Belch reports OCAP is looking for methods to blend the Child Abuse Prevention Plan with existing programs, focusing on how the current services connect within the County system. The objective is not to build something new, but to build bridges for families to navigate the system effectively, especially when those families are facing a crisis. The OCAP team will reconvene on February 19 to go over the steps on how to get to build a system that is easy to enter and easy to navigate, looking for gaps, adjusting, then focusing on new services and funding opportunities. Lisa and Linda will provide updates at the May 5, 2021 CSN meeting.

**Information/Discussion Item:** AB2083 MOU – Linda Belch

The AB2083 MOU has been drafted with feedback from County Counsel. We’ve incorporated their suggestions, as well as addressing issues and concerns regarding content. Once the MOU is in place, the “real” work begins, by making sure the MOU has the intended impact on the community. All of the team members of AB2083 will have participation in prevention services, as well as future events within the County.

**Standing Agenda Item:** High-Needs Shelter Care – Jim Roberts

High-Needs Shelter Care is an issue in which the State is still looking at of state placement. Unfortunately, there isn’t any new news to report, other than children have been returned to CA, but are now running away.

**Standing Agenda Item:** Priority: Homeless Services for Children and Families – Laurel Weir

The County is set to receive $8.4 million from the Treasury Dept. for COVID-19 related Eviction Prevention funds. These funds are earmarked to prevent households who are behind on their rent from being evicted. In addition, the State will provide approximately $9 million for COVID-19 related eviction prevention funds, but with exacting rules, which include landlords agreeing to excuse a portion of back-rent owed, in order to get assistance under the program. We’re expecting prohibitions for those who enlist in more than one program, including tracking the programs and matching participants to programs that fit their specific needs. This will not meet all the needs of the community since most low-income households owe close to $18 million in back rent. In addition, when you add moderate households, the number reaches closer to $24 million. There are so many families at risk, these programs will not address all their needs, but it’s an important means for keeping families housed, as well as providing help for the landlords who are providing low-income housing. Sheriff Parkinson suggested that Homeless Services should team with the Sheriff’s Civil Division to work on court-ordered evictions, providing a pre-notice to those who are unaware there’s a program in place to assist.

The current census of homeless families with children is not exact, especially since shelters had to reduce their capacity due to social distancing. There had been a decrease in families entering into the shelters, which is believed to be tied to families doubling-up together. Unfortunately, there is no way to track the progress of those who are not in the system, so we cannot confirm the data, nor will there be a Homeless Point in Time Count within shelters, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

**Standing Agenda Item:** SLO County CSEC Collaborative – Linda Belch

There were two new referrals, no new cases were opened from those referrals. We continue to see online exploitation as a theme and a difficult topic to “outreach” to minors. There are 6 current cases, 5 females and 1 transgender male. CSEC provided a number of presentations, including the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Counsel meeting, Labor Trafficking presentation and worked with the Tri-counties Team. The SLO County Office of Education, along with DSS partnered to provide tutoring, cyber-safety, and technical assistance to
resource families in an effort to address some of the online difficulties we’re observing this time of year and will continue to provide on-line training.

**Standing Agenda Item:** Child Advocacy Center Update – Lisa Fraser
The CAC Steering Committee has taken a big step to better understanding how to get families into the appropriate ACTS (Abused Children’s Treatment Program) services and how to segue them into Stand Strong, which houses CHAT (the Child Abuse Treatment Grant), improving access of services to non-perpetrating families. This will allow the family advocate to ensure those families get the correct information to begin the healing process. In addition, a newly created training video for CAIT and SART will be forthcoming for agencies to better understand the vision for the Child Advocacy Center.

**Round Table:**
Kayla Plourde-Reynolds wanted to acknowledge and thank long-time Commissioner Herb Filipponi for his completed service on the Commission, if anyone knows him, please forward your thanks.

Anne Robin wanted to acknowledge Jim Roberts for his insightful presentation. In addition, Anne wanted CSN to know that the reform to Medi-Cal, named “CalAIM” has re-started and to expect many initiatives that support the changes Jim named in his presentation, specifically from the Medicaid and Medi-Cal point of view. Anne would like to give a presentation in the future on what that means to Medi-Cal and health providers in the State of CA.

**Adjournment:**
2:38

**Next Meeting date:**
May 5th via Zoom
Teresa Tardiff
Executive Director
ttardiff@slocasa.org
805-541-6542
http://slocasa.org
CASA Mission Statement

CASA of San Luis Obispo County advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the court system. CASA recruits, trains and supervises volunteers who advocate for this vulnerable population with the goal of ensuring that each and every child grows up in a safe, nurturing and permanent home.
Best Interests

TO DETERMINE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD:

- The CASA volunteer should know the children he or she is appointed to advocate for well enough to form fact based recommendations to the court that address the child’s needs, and know appropriate resources to meet those needs.

- The CASA volunteer also informs the court of the child’s wishes, whether not those wishes are, in the opinion of the CASA volunteer, in the child’s best interest.
What is CASA?

- CASA is an acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocates.
- A Seattle judge was concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children without sufficient information. He conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court. It was so successful that soon judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates.
Program Governance

CASA programs must comply and adhere to all state and county laws. CASA programs must also meet all standards as set forth by National CASA. Program requirements for CASA programs are governed by:

- California Rule of Court 5.655
- San Luis Obispo County Court Rule 12.10
- Welfare & Institutions Code Section 100-109
- National CASA Standards
- National CASA Code of Ethics
Screening and Training

- CASA recruits volunteers from all sectors of the community.
  - Volunteers must commit to at least a year.
  - Volunteers are fingerprinted and a complete background check is done, as well as an extensive interview and references checked. CACI, DOJ and FBI, registries and local law enforcement.
  - Volunteers must complete 35 hours of training and 12 hours of continuing education per year.
Swearing-In

- Once CASA volunteers complete their training they are sworn-in by the Judge as Officers of the Court.
- As Officers of the Court the volunteer will have access to all records relative to the child’s case. Access to these records will help volunteers in their assessment of the child’s needs.
CASA of SLO is assigned every dependency case at detention.

Cases are prioritized by CASA staff.

Consideration for assignment to a volunteer is given to requests by the child, the Judge, attorneys, or social workers.
CASA Volunteer Role

- Spend time with the Child
- Investigation: history, environment, relationships, needs
- Facilitation: resources and services
- Advocacy: speak up for the child
- Monitoring: are the orders of the court and the case plan being carried out.
Support

- Every CASA volunteer is assigned to an Advocate Supervisor who provides hands-on training, guidance, and support for the entire time the volunteer is assigned to a child.
What CASA Volunteers Do

- Meet with the child and caregivers. We request that CASA volunteers contact their CASA child at least once per week whenever possible.
- The volunteer becomes a consistent adult mentor and role model.
And CASA volunteers:

- Investigate and research information about the child’s situation.
- Speak to everyone involved in the child’s life.
- Prepares a report with information for the parties and the court and recommendations appropriate to the hearing.
CASA Court Report

Includes:

- Placement history of the child.
- Summary of CASA involvement
- Facts and background of the case.
- Medical and dental history.
- Current medical and dental needs.
- Developmental, educational and behavioral concerns.
- Conclusions and recommendations.
CASA Volunteers Attend:

- TDM Meetings
- Wraparound Meetings
- TBS Meetings
- CFT Meetings
- Treatment Team Meetings
- IEP Meetings
- Martha’s Place Assessments
- All regularly scheduled Court dates
- Any meetings that may impact the lives of their assigned child.
Contact with the Social Worker
CASA Volunteers Speak Regularly with SW and FCNI
Regarding:

- Supervisors will reach out to ask questions prior to assigning a case to an advocate.
- Initial meeting with SW and advocate to discuss the case.
- Child’s Needs
- Parent Compliance with Case Plan
- Any Special Issues
- Recommendations
CASA Needs to be Notified

- When a child is going to be moved.
- When a child needs an educational representative.
- When anything important happens in the child’s life.
- Prior to filing of a W & I Code 241.1 joint assessment report
- Whenever the law requires all parties to the case receive notification.
Mentor Program

- Serving former/current foster youth 18-24
- Referrals from FCNi, CWS, and Probation
- Provides guidance on life skills, career and education planning, and money management.
- Meeting with mentee once a month
- Mentee has to want to be matched with a mentor.
Infant and Toddler Advocacy

- Children between 0-5 are the most vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
- This is a crucial time in their brain development and early intervention can make a huge difference.
- Specific training on the unique needs of young children in foster care is provided for infant/toddler advocates.
- The advocate monitors the child’s health, development, services, and advocates for permanent placement in a timely manner.
Victim Compensation

- All children in the dependency system are considered victim’s of crime under the Victim’s of Crime Act (VOCA)

- Medi-Cal typically picks up all expenses for children in dependency. FCNI and CWS also have funding to cover some expenses.

- If Medi-Cal does not accept coverage, Victim Compensation funds can be utilized.

- At Martha’s Place there was a waiting list of 6 months to get occupational therapy. Qualifying court dependents for compensation enabled them to see private therapists, eliminating the wait list. For children under 3 this is a crucial time developmentally and 6 months is a long wait.

- Since March of 2019, CASA has been submitting California Victim Compensation applications on behalf of all children in dependency.

- Total Victim Comp applications filed by CASA as of 10/1/2020: 491
CASA Statistics
In San Luis Obispo County

- Currently serving 193 children and young adults
- 142 Volunteer Advocates
- 195 Children are waiting for a CASA volunteer.
- 5 Trainings a year
- Funding for the program comes from grants, fundraisers, and donations.
CASA...
A Powerful Voice in a Child’s Life®