

**CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT
TASK FORCE
2021 THREE-YEAR
ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Submitted by the Nevada Division of Child and Family
Services

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OVERVIEW OF THE CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT STATE TASK FORCE:

The Nevada Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force was established in February 1994 by the Administrator of the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services. The purpose of the CJA Task Force is to make policy and training recommendations for systems improvements in:

1. The assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the child's family;
2. The assessment and investigation of cases of suspected child abuse-related fatalities and suspected child neglect-related fatalities;
3. The investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
4. The assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.

Additionally, the CJA Task Force makes recommendations for projects to be funded by the CJA annual grant award. CJA funding must support front-end efforts or intake and investigation phases of child welfare cases and must be made in each of the following funding categories:

- A. Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.
- B. Experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches.
- C. Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures.

2018 – 2020 CJA Task Force Goals

The CJA Task Force completed the three-year assessment through member participation in the Statewide Assessment as part of the 2018 Child and Family Services Review and two work sessions, which included the Court Improvement Program (CIP) coordinator who reviewed the CIP's annual report and Court Improvement Council (CIC) 2017 Action Plans. All information sources were reviewed to identify for improvement consistent with the mission of the CJA Task Force. Goals were prioritized to support meeting the CAPTA requirements for the Juvenile Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA).

Goal 1: Provide child protection workers and stakeholders "front end" specialty, discipline specific and advanced training. Training should be prioritized, but not limited to, training requirements of CARA and JVTA Program Improvement Plans, child protection model assessments, ICWA, sexual abuse, reduce trauma for victims, domestic violence, forensic interviewing, trauma-informed practices and training needs identified in collaboration with Court Improvement Program. (ABC)

Goal 2: Support the implementation of the Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Model

Coordinated Response Protocol and provide training and support for the formation of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) and Task Forces. (ABC)

Goal 3: Support the establishment of new Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) or other multidisciplinary team approaches and improve the capacity of existing CACs to provide a multidisciplinary response for victims of child sex abuse and exploitation, physical abuse and child victims with disabilities. (AB)

Goal 4: Fund technology requests to improve the investigation, assessment and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the through use of latest technology and to support the use of new and existing training technologies. (B)

Goal 5: Identify new or needed changes to policy, regulation and/or legislation to meet requirements of federal program improvements plans and other federal and state initiatives. Support training and policy needs related to new or revised policy, regulation and legislation. (C)

Key: Required categories for use of CJA funds:

A= Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.

B= Experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches. C= Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures

Highlights of Progress Made Related to Goals

Goal 1: Provide child protection workers and stakeholders “front end” specialty, discipline specific and advanced training.

- Development of Mandated Reporter Training Curriculum
- CARA Mandated Reporter Training through partnership with Project ECHO
- 4th and 14th amendment due process rights/warrant training
- Shared Hope International Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JUST) Conference*
- Child Sex Trafficking – From Suspicion to Disclosure*
- Harm Reduction Training*
- Forensic Interview Training provided by National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC)*
- Rural CAC provided trainings throughout their service areas to increase awareness of the CAC
- Court Preparation for the Medical and Legal Professions*
- Interdiction for the Protection of Children*
- Child Welfare League of America Annual Conference
- Child Abuse and Family Summit
- Domestic Violence Training provided by the Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCEDSV)

** trainings attended by CAC members to also further enhance goal 3*

Goal 2: Support CSEC Protocol and formation of MDTs

- The CSEC Protocol and CSEC Strategic Plan were finalized.
- The CSEC Coalition put forth recommended language to create a statute to meet JVTA requirements.
- A plan to implement the CSEC strategic plan was developed.
- CSEC Protocol has begun implementation in Nevada.
- A plan to establish the infrastructure to provide treatment, housing and services to CSEC victims has been developed.
- New legislation was approved in 2019 (NRS 432C) that allows the child welfare agencies to assess and serve CSEC Victims and requires mandated reporters to report to a child welfare agency when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

Goal 3: Support CACs

- CAC representatives participated in the review and approval of the CSEC Protocol.
- Multiple trainings provided to CAC members.
- Rural CAC provided trainings throughout their service areas to increase awareness of the CAC

Goal 4: Fund Technology

- 35 laptops purchased between 2019 and 2020 for “front end” investigative CPS workers.
- MiFi/hotspot, myAvatar (electronic health record manager) and Dragon Professional (dictation/transcription software) purchased for laptops.

Goal 5: Changes to Policy, Regulation, and/or Legislation

- CARA Regulations (449 LCB File No. R-133-18) were approved in December 2018 by the Nevada State Board of Health.
- New legislation was approved in 2019 (NRS 432C) that allows the child welfare agencies to assess and serve CSEC Victims and requires mandated reporters to report to a child welfare agency when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation.
- New legislation was approved in 2019 that requires DCFS to have a coordinator of services for CSEC victims. The position was required to assess the current and anticipated needs of CSEC victims, evaluate any incentives necessary to recruit providers or housing for such children and develop a plan to establish the infrastructure to provide treatment, housing and services to such children.
- Legislation drafted and currently in the legislative process addressing the “front end” of the child welfare system making several clarifications to the law that governs child welfare in Nevada (NRS432B)

PROCESS USED TO COMPLETE THE 2021 THREE YEAR ASSESSMENT

The CJA Task Force began the three-year-assessment during the November 2020 quarterly Task Force meeting. The Task Force received information and an update from a member of a Court Improvement Program subcommittee (who is also a Task Force member) on the drafted NRS432B legislative changes, the statutes that govern Nevada's child welfare system. Several changes of this statute include: the addition to Nevada law for child welfare staff to obtain a warrant to take children into protective custody unless exigent circumstance exist, clarification around notifying parents of the initial protective custody hearing, and clarification around proper jurisdiction to improve interstate investigations.

The Task Force received and reviewed Nevada's CSEC Infrastructure Plan that was completed in November 2020. A CSEC Coordinator was hired to survey existing services for CSEC victims in Nevada and establish workgroups that would develop recommendations to improve Nevada's infrastructure to serve CSEC victims. Recommendations from this report include the establishment of a 24/7 CSEC Receiving Center and Specialized Foster Care Homes with specialized CSEC training and to further training of mental health professionals including a training standard for professionals who serve CSEC victims or could come into contact with them, a certification process to work with CSEC victims, and the use of evidence-based treatment modalities to enhance traditional cognitive therapy.

In 2019, DCFS together with Domestic Violence service providers hosted a listening session to better understand the intersection of Domestic Violence and Child Welfare in Nevada. As a result of this, three workgroups each with a mission were established. This included child welfare policies and procedures, child welfare training, and victim advocate training and support. Each group surveyed current policies, training, and best practices and developed recommendations for child welfare policy and training and victim advocates training in Nevada. During the January 2021 quarterly meeting the Task Force reviewed and discussed these recommendations.

The CJA Coordinator and CJA Task Force chair developed a plan to ask for recommendations from Task Force members. A letter and survey tool adopted from West Virginia's CJA three-year-assessment were used as part of this process. Task Force members were tasked with providing recommendations that included consultation with peers and professional organizations within their discipline while completing a table to outline their recommendations. These recommendations were discussed during the November 2020 Task Force meeting.

The CJA Coordinator and CJA Task Force chair and vice-chair finalized the CJA's goals for the next three years and presented the updated goals during the January 2021 meeting. The goals were needed for approval to allow for the SFY2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity to occur in May 2021.

2021-2023 CJA TASK FORCE GOALS

The Goals reflect overarching areas in child welfare that the Task Force intends to focus on to improve the front end of the child welfare system. The Nevada CJA Task Force endorses the following Goals to be supported by CJA grant funds for the Three-Year Period of 2021-2023:

Goal 1: Provide child protection workers and stakeholders “front end” specialty, discipline specific and advanced training. Training should be prioritized, but not limited to, child protection model assessments, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), sexual abuse, domestic violence, forensic interviewing, mandatory reporting, trauma-informed practices, substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders and training needs identified in collaboration with Court Improvement Program. (ABC)

Goal 2: Support the implementation of the Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Model Coordinated Response Protocol and provide training and support for the formation of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) and Task Forces. (ABC)

Goal 3: Support the establishment of new Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) or other multidisciplinary team approaches and improve the capacity of existing CACs to provide a multidisciplinary response for victims of child sex abuse and exploitation, physical abuse and child victims with disabilities. (AB)

Goal 4: Fund technology requests to improve the investigation, assessment and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the through use of latest technology and to support the use of new and existing training technologies. (B)

Goal 5: Identify new or needed changes to policy, regulation and/or legislation to meet requirements of federal program improvements plans and other federal and state initiatives. Support training and policy needs related to new or revised policy, regulation and legislation. (C)

Key: Required categories for use of CJA funds:

A= Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.

B= Experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches. C=

Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures.

CJA TASK FORCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Training will be prioritized, but not limited to, child protection model assessments, ICWA, sexual abuse, domestic violence, forensic interviewing, mandatory reporting, trauma-informed practices, substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders and training needs identified in collaboration with Court Improvement Program. DCFS is currently exploring the development of a mandatory reporter training platform. The CJA Task Force will lend expertise during the development of profession specific mandatory reporter trainings. The Task Force will support training needs identified as a result of legislation passed during Nevada's 81st legislature in 2021.

Primary activities related to CSEC include training about CSEC awareness and supporting the implementation of the CSEC Coordinated Response Protocol. CSEC work in Nevada continues to be vast with multi-year efforts. The CJA Coordinator will remain apprised of the continued work by CSEC subcommittees to understand to identify further opportunities for improvement in the identification and handling of investigations involving CSEC. The CSEC Coordinator is currently exploring opportunities for the CJA to assist with various CSEC activities in Nevada.

The CJA Task Force will be exploring ways to increase opportunities to achieve goal #3, including further collaboration with the Nevada State CAC Chapter. The CJA will continue to support other activities, including technology for "front end" investigative CPS staff. The CJA Task Force will continue to award subgrants yearly to applicants who applied for funding that will further enhance all goals of the CJA Task Force.