



Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

DENISE M. MIRANDA
Executive Director

NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Advisory Council Meeting Summary September 21, 2023

Advisory Council Members Present: William Gettman (Chair), Veronica Crawford, Norwig Debye-Saxinger, Jason Hershberger, M.D., Walt Joseph, Glenn Liebman, Ron Lehrer, Joe Macbeth, Tom McAlvanah, Kathy O’Keefe, Jeff Savoy, Euphemia Strauchn

Advisory Council Members Not Present: Delores McFadden, Judith O’Rourke, Harvey Rosenthal and Mary St. Mark.

Justice Center Staff Present: Denise Miranda, Executive Director; Robert Miller, Executive Deputy Director; Christine Buttigieg, Director of Public Information; Davin Robinson, Deputy Director of the Outreach, Prevention and Support Unit; Nadia Chanza, Director of Special Projects; Shannon Cantiello, Chief of Staff; Maria Lisi-Murray, Deputy Director of the Office of Audit, Control and Quality Management; Derek Holtzclaw, Deputy Director of the Office of Administration; and Theresa Wells, Ethics Officer and Director of Records Management and Access Unit

I. Justice Center Updates

Capitol Pressroom Series on the Justice Center

Capitol Pressroom, a local public radio program hosted by Dave Lombardo, did a multipart series titled “Justice for All” that featured the Justice Center as part of its content. Several individuals associated with the Justice Center were interviewed for this series, including Executive Director Denise Miranda and members of the Advisory Council.

The first episode explores the history of the service system in NYS starting with Willowbrook, the creation of the Commission on Quality of Care and its work, media/legislative attention, and the Sundram report. This episode is a great educational opportunity to learn more about the factors that influenced the Justice Center's establishment. [Click here to listen to Episode 1](#)

The second part of the series explores the ten years of agency operations. Here is the link: <https://capitolpressroom.org/2023/07/12/justice-for-all-a-new-sheriff-in-albany/>.

Investigative Cycle Time

Reducing the time it takes to complete a thorough and fair investigation continues to be a high priority for the Justice Center. Toward that end, the Justice Center continues to highlight the importance of this issue for stakeholders and looks inward to enhance operational supports for this objective. Shorter investigations will provide relief to provider agencies who have placed staff on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigations and the Justice Center will continue to strive for improvement in this area.

Family Engagement

The Justice Center is conducting three different online sessions for family members and provider agencies interested in learning about how the Justice Center supports individuals receiving services and their family members as they navigate the investigations process. The sessions will be offered on October 16, 17 and 18 and anyone interested in attending can register on the Justice Center's website by going to the 'training' tab.

As a result of the incident management roundtables held in the Spring, the Justice Center and the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities and ARC NYS have been meeting to develop materials to help improve family communication regarding reportable incidents. The group is working on developing resources aimed at family members to clearly explain the reporting, classification, and investigation process. The workgroup is also developing materials for provider agencies to help them navigate challenging conversations.

Code of Conduct Awards

The Justice Center received over 90 nominations for this year's Code of Conduct awards. The award ceremony will be taped and available on the Justice Center website in early October.

Staff Changes

Shannon Cantiello is the new Chief of Staff. Prior to joining the Justice Center, Ms. Cantiello worked at the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) where she was the Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Administration. Prior to OPDV, she was as an analyst with the NYS Assembly and a legal advocate and case manager for a domestic violence and rape crisis service provider in Saratoga County.

Maria Lisi-Murray is the Deputy Director, Office of Audit, Control, and Quality Management. Prior to joining the Justice Center, she was the Chief Risk Officer at the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles. Ms. Lisi-Murray is an attorney with both private and public litigation experience, most recently with the NYS Attorney General's Office, and a former police officer with the City of Binghamton Police Department.

Derek Holtzclaw is the new Deputy Director of the Office of Administration. Most recently, Mr. Holtzclaw served as Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration at the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Prior to OCFS, he served in the Public Protection Unit at the NYS Division of Budget.

II. Code of Ethics Overview

The Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government was established by the Ethics Commission Reform Act of 2022 to oversee and regulate ethics and lobbying in New York. The Commission has broad regulatory authority and oversight over officers and employees of state agencies as well as advisory bodies to state agencies. As a result of this new law, members of the advisory council are required to attend a training on the provisions of the law. Theresa Wells, Ethics Officer for the Justice Center, provided an overview of the new laws and member responsibilities. The *Plain Language Guide to New York Ethics Laws* was provided to members of the advisory council in advance of the meeting and is also attached to the email containing this meeting summary.

III. Committee Reports

Legislation and Regulations

Legislation was recently signed by the Governor codifying the Justice Center's multiple reporter requirement that permits one person to report the incident to the Justice Center if the names of all individuals with knowledge of the incident are provided to the Justice Center at the time of the report and also, the corresponding incident number is reported to all relevant individuals for the incident.

Workforce Issues

The committee met over the summer to select the Code of Conduct award winners. During the meeting, members discussed the workforce crisis and strategies that advocacy groups will be engaging in to increase salaries for the direct care workforce and to provide other enticements to attract qualified staff to the field.

Abuse Prevention

The Justice Center is seeking input from people who are, or should be, using our prevention tool kits. The goal is to find out what people like and do not like, what content is helpful, opinions on layout and ease of use, and gather opinions from a representative array of stakeholders to ensure our toolkits are providing information everyone can use. A link to the survey is included on the email containing this meeting summary. Members were encouraged to complete the survey and share with people who would be interested in participating in the survey.

Investigator and Law Enforcement Training

The Justice Center will be holding an in-person, in-service training for all staff in November in Albany, NY. There will be a workforce panel at the beginning of the in-service to provide Justice Center staff with a first-hand perspective of the challenges people working in human services are facing in the post-pandemic world.

The Justice Center will be offering training for law enforcement staff on forensic best practices for interviewing vulnerable persons. This training will be similar to the training provided to Justice Center investigators and will be helpful for members of law enforcement who interview vulnerable individuals.

The Justice Center is also re-vamping the disability awareness training that had been offered to law enforcement officials in the past. Members who have suggestions for curriculum, resources, etc., are encouraged to share those. The committee recommended that the target audience for these trainings be special victim units.

**Next Meeting
January 25, 2024
Via Webex Only**