

Louisiana State Bar Association Children's Law Committee  
November 6, 2019 – Baton Rouge, LA

**In Attendance:**

|                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ariel Test, Co-chair      | Barry LaCour               |
| Karen Hallstrom, Co-chair | Martha Maher               |
| Danika Benjamin           | Michelle Perkins           |
| Michael Brown             | Thailund Porter-Green      |
| Kenneth Doggett           | Hon. Kathleen Richey       |
| Steven Farber             | Courtney Schroeder         |
| Barbara Ferguson          | Angela Smith               |
| Jesse George              | Cherrilynne Thomas         |
| Margot Hammond            | Madalyn Wasilczuk          |
| Mark Harris               | Jacqueline Williams        |
| Jack Harrison             | Jennifer Womble            |
| Kellie Johnson            | LSBA Staff: Joanna Laidler |
| Guy Lain                  |                            |

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

**2. Trauma Informed Care**

Continuing conversation from last meeting. Ariel noted that several documents were sent out in advance of this meeting to spark discussion. This committee wants to talk about (a) how trauma effects the children we work with (b) how the process itself can be traumatizing; and (c) how this committee can help minimize the trauma experienced by children in court settings through system changes.

- *Kellie* –court rooms are sterile environments and it would make a difference to the experience to have a waiting room with television with children's programming/ parenting videos etc.
- *Karen* – 4 or 5 court rooms in Louisiana where Judges have taken leadership and made changes to court rooms to make the physical entity less traumatizing to children. Pelican Center and TBRI starting to make sure that everyone in the system is educated. Working on targeted, application of TBRI in court room settings.
- Tried to get additional programming at Spring Judges Conference, as well as Judicial Administrators Association. There is a National Judicial Administrators meeting in New Orleans in July 2020 that could be an opportunity to speak about trauma informed practices, as well as the state meeting in March 2020 (Covington). Trying to reach courts who are doing family preservation and may attend conference in May 2020. Involves understanding that there are ways that the court room setting can be modified to minimize trauma.

- *Michelle* -Examples of Trauma Informed Practices (1<sup>st</sup> JDC)- TBRI training for all staff members, counsellors, and service providers, trauma assessments & treatment, staggered dockets, calming room, therapy dog.
- *Hon. Kathleen Richey* – Are children still being physically restrained in court? Shouldn't be occurring, but committee members of the opinion that the practice still occurs in some jurisdictions.
- *Bar Journal Article* –Judge Matlock and Michelle are going to write Bar Journal article about trauma informed courts. Designed for courts and practitioners.
- *Training for judges/Judicial Administrators?* Start with teaching them the science and then the basic impacts in the court.
- *Margot* – Committee produced video for children on the Foster Care system and then going to Court in Child in Need of Care cases. Can we find out how much it is being viewed? Do we want to film additional video for delinquency/FINS cases? Prior video distributed to agencies, courts and online. Used by agencies, courts, and legal aid practitioners. If video is being accessed online, we could ascertain how many views it is getting. We know that many DCFS workers using DVDs.
- *Working Group* – there isn't a protocol/curriculum that details how that court room processes can be traumatic and what changes can be made to minimize effects. Opportunity for this committee to establish a working group. No one else working on the practical implications. Working group will seek feedback from entire committee e.g. through a questionnaire. Jennifer Womble offered to be part of working group & Karen offered to chair. Joanna to send follow up email asking for volunteers.

### 3. Pelican Center Report - Mark Harris

Focused on two action items in Child and Family Services Program Improvement Plan (PIP): (1) quality legal representation – coordinated by Caitlin Glass – focused on 4 pilot areas (Rapides, Livingston, EBR, Caddo). Looking at early appointment of counsel for parents/children. Specialized training for attorneys. (2) Developing statewide group to consider service array and services which can help to prevent removal into care. Working out how to make families more aware of legal service e.g. pro-bono programs, local bar associations. Having targeted conversations in 4 pilot areas about what services would help them keep families safe and stable. Pelican Center partnered with Casey Family Programs presented the Cost Of Poverty Experience (Livingston & BR), which is a simulation of what it is like to be a family in poverty. Nearing 6-month mark of 2-year PIP, which is when first report will be due.

### 4. Training

- a. **Interview Skills Training**– Training occurred at Tulane University on September 18, 2019. Loyola students were also invited to participate. Training was successful and feedback was that the students enjoyed the small size of the groups and the ability to receive feedback from professionals in the field. This Committee is looking to partner with other law schools, and/or new legal aid and public interest attorneys. CASA programs may also be interested.

#### b. Upcoming Trainings:

- i. CLARO Website updated with Pelican Center training

- ii. November 12-14 - Together We Can Conference
- iii. November 15 -Pro Bono Project will conduct training for children's attorneys in New Orleans on November 15 – 5 hours including ICWA. Registration on website.
- iv. November 22 – JAC conducting CLE on the use of solitary confinement
- v. February 7 - Journal of Public Interest Law at Loyola – conference on unmet lawyering and criminal and juvenile justice reform
- vi. December 9- Pelican Center PIP Safety Decision Making Training (Monroe @ ULM and Homer/Thibodaux Local Hospital)
- vii. CLARO - Child Wellbeing Summit 2020 will be on educational advocacy

## 5. Other Business

- a. **Education Workgroup** – Barbara Ferguson noted that education workgroup still on task, working on goals submitted last time, and would like to prepare a written report for the next meeting.
- b. **Updating the Becoming an Adult Brochure** – Joanna Laidler noted that Candice Savoy an extern from the Pelican Center has been working with this Committee to update sections of the Becoming an Adult Guide. What we want to do with this guide/ do we have contacts with the Department to be able to publish this guide?

How to connect people not just to information but for referrals/people who will be able to assist? Similar questions asked in relation to the Kinship Navigator. Margot Hammond thanked assistance by Committee members in relation to the Kinship Navigator. Working to pull in resources that will go online with the guide, but its only a starting point. Joanna noted the Find Legal Help Portal as one possible resource. Margot says many of the resources online are difficult for members of the public to navigate.

How do we compile available resources available? Difficult when information becomes more specific. Is there any centralization of this process so that people can be provided with accurate legal information? Joanna noted that Civil Legal Navigator is one program that is being developed to help direct people to appropriate civil legal resources using technology. Michelle Perkins suggested brainstorming what information is needed so that appropriate resources and referrals can then be located, including providers and agencies.

Hon. Kathleen Richey suggested that the Becoming an Adult Guide would be useful to be distributed at schools. 151 children who turned 18 last year in foster care, but many young adults not in foster care system would also find the information contained in the guide relevant. Committee discussed whether a hard copy of the guide was necessary, or whether a flyer with a link to the website would be sufficient.

We will look to this committee for assistance reviewing the guide and brainstorming dissemination opportunities. Would also be useful to get feedback from young people on the usefulness of the guide e.g. teen court in Baton Rouge.

- c. **Recognition of attorneys who exceed CLE requirements** – Committee discussed whether it is useful/worthwhile to recognize attorneys who undertake excess CLE hours. Karen notes that the Supreme Court only records CINC attorney CLE hours only, so we only have the information to recognize CINC attorneys. Would it be better for the Supreme Court to recognize these attorneys? Does that have value and/or motivation for those attorneys? Is it important to recognize attorneys who are undertaking additional CLE hours or are there better ways to recognize attorneys who are performing good work e.g. Children's law awards? Important to draw attention to this area of work and could possibly serve to recruit attorneys. Karen Hallstrom to discuss this issue further with Curtis Nelson.
- d. **Children's Law Opinion Service** – Joanna provided update about status of adding children's law option to LSBA Children's Law Opinion Service. The LSBA IT Department has indicated that this is a complicated process because of coding/age of program. IT will know whether it is possible to make changes to system prior to the end of the year. Committee can proceed once we receive new information.

**6. Adjournment – February 5, 2020 (New Orleans)**