

Child Fatality Task Force Meeting Minutes – Approved

Type of Meeting: Intentional Death Prevention Committee		Date: January 10, 2022	
Facilitators: Jennie Kristiansen, Whitney Belich, Committee co-chairs	Time called to order: approx. 1:02 pm		Location: Virtual only via GoToWebinar platform
The slides used for this meeting were combined into a single deck titled “Combined slides ID meeting 1-10-2022” that is posted on the CFTF website: https://www.ncleg.gov/DocumentSites/Committees/NCCFTF/Intentional%20Death%20Prevention/2021-2022/Presentations%20and%20handouts/Combined%20slides%20ID%20meeting%201-10-2022.pdf			
Jennie Kristiansen welcomed everyone and thanked Whitney Belich for stepping into her new role as a co-chair of this committee.			
Roll call attendance as follows:			

Ann Nichols - absent
 Brent Culbertson - present
 Brett Loftis - present
 Catherine Joyner - present
 Christy Malott - present
 Danielle Carman - present
 Deana Joy - present
 Sen. Don Davis - absent
 Rep. Donna White - present
 Dr. Ellen Essick - absent
 Emi Wyble - absent
 Geoff Farmer - absent

Ingrid Bou-Saada - present
 Jennie Kristiansen - present
 Jill Cox - present
 Kerry Young - present
 Rep. Kristin Baker - present
 Lisa Cauley – absent (Kathy Stone attending)
 Michelle Hughes - absent
 Michelle Zechman - present
 Dr. Molly Berkoff – present
 Dr. Natasha Scott - present
 Dr. Nicole Lawrence - present

Pamela Thompson - present
 Rachel Zarcone - present
 Sarah Kirkman - present
 Sharon Hirsch - present
 Susan Robinson – absent (joined after roll call)
 Trishana Jones (absent, Olivia Bass attending)
 Whitney Belich - present
 William Lassiter - present

Approval of minutes from previous meeting dated 11-15-21
The unapproved minutes were posted and sent out prior to the meeting, and a link to the minutes was also on the agenda. [Error: no motion to approve was recorded] All those who answered present above voted to approve the minutes]
A moment of silence was taken by the committee to honor those children who have died since the committee last met
Kella Hatcher reviewed the goals and format for today’s meeting (see slides 3 – 6)
Topic #1: Data update: suicides, homicides, firearm deaths
Topic presenters Kella Hatcher, JD, CFTF Executive Director; Kerry Young, MS, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, NC DPH
Online presentation: See slides #7 - 19
Scope of presentation: A range of data was presented to show data on suicide, homicides, and firearm deaths. The trend line for all three types of deaths increased in 2020, with dramatic increases between 2019 and 2020 for both homicides and firearm-related deaths.

Main topics covered during questions or discussion related to presentation: No questions or discussion.
Actions taken: None, information only.
Topic #2: Infant Safe Surrender
Topic presenters: Kella Hatcher, JD; Christy Malott, JD
Online presentation: See slides #20 - 27
Scope of presentation: Kella Hatcher explained that this topic is a carry-over topic and how this set of recommendations was addressed in 2021 legislation that passed the House unanimously (HB 473). Christy Malott explained the background for CFTF work on this topic and then explained each of the four areas of the safe surrender law that have been recommended for change by the CFTF in prior years.
Main topics covered during questions or discussion related to presentation: No questions.
Actions taken: (Additional discussion later in meeting; see in minutes below where committee voted to repeat the 2021 infant safe surrender recommendations.)
Topic #3: Updates, review, and additional information related to: funding to increase the number of school support professionals; statewide school health data system; implementation of school mental health policy
Topic presenters: Jennie Kristiansen, MSW & Whitney Belich, JD – Committee Co-Chairs
Online presentation: see slides # 26 - 34
<p>Scope of presentation:</p> <p>Topic of school support professionals:</p> <p>Whitney Belich provided a brief overview of information addressed in prior meetings related to increasing the number of school support professionals (school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors). She also noted the recent U.S. Surgeon General’s recent advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health. She explained what was addressed in the 2021 Appropriations Act related to this topic – some funds for psychologists but no recurring funds for other types of professionals; there is also a required study by the SBE to report on barriers for these professions. She noted that prior presenters on this topic have noted the challenges of a lack of recurring funding, lack of competitive pay and other pipeline challenges. Kella Hatcher commented that while the committee wanted to get information on the cost of continuing those positions that have been temporarily funded via pandemic funding, that information was not available; instead, information on entry level salaries for these positions was provided.</p> <p>Main topics covered during questions or discussion related to this topic: There was discussion by the committee related to challenges that have been encountered in the past related to increased funds for these professionals. There were comments about school nurses needing to have significant experience and comments about problems with the current pay structure for school nurses being too low for the necessary experience level. There were also comments about the challenges of filling these types of positions generally and whether these challenges could be further studied; and whether the type of study required by the Appropriations Act would get at these issues. Dr. Natasha Scott commented on the addition in their school district of a number of these professionals and how they were able to fill all positions, yet doing so with the type of three years of COVID funds available has created logistical challenges due to the funding being temporary. She said the landscape for school psychologists and nurses is different and more challenging than for social workers and counselors. Having additional school social workers has had impacts, for example tracking down kids who are not coming to school, doing more home visits, getting kids services, etc. Dr. Scott said her district has very much appreciated</p>

the extra positions but it will be challenging when these temporary funds are gone and they will go back to the numbers of positions they used to have.

Topics of statewide school health data system and implementation of school mental health policy related to school/community connections:

Jennie Kristiansen reviewed highlights of the information presented at prior meetings on the topic of school health data. She also explained the CFTF 2021 administrative recommendation related to following implementation of the school mental health policy and how a presentation on this topic for this committee would have to be postponed until the fall.

There were no questions on these two topics.

Actions taken: (Additional discussion later in meeting; see actions taken later in these minutes.)

Topic #4: Full Toxicology in all medical examiner jurisdiction child fatalities

Topic presenter: **Michelle Aurelius, MD**, Chief Medical Examiner; **Jason Hudson, PhD**, Chief Toxicologist, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, NC DPH

Online presentation: See slides # 35 - 46

Scope of presentation: **Kella Hatcher** first explained how this topic came to the Task Force and how this committee had questions about this topic that the OCME was here today to address. **Dr. Aurelius** expressed appreciation for this CFTF committee and how the committee's work gives voice to the children who are examined through the Medical Examiner System. She explained the enormous case load that their medical examiners are dealing with right now and emphasized the complexities of toxicology analysis. **Dr. Hudson** explained how the NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner does not have the necessary resources to conduct comprehensive toxicology screening in all child deaths under their jurisdiction. He explained the need for expanding testing, how testing is currently done and what expanded testing would be, and how without comprehensive toxicology testing, there may be missed opportunities to determine contributing factors to a fatality. He addressed the committee's questions about how NC compares to other states and what the OCME has historically done with respect to toxicology testing, also what the impact of expanded testing would be. He explained how a comprehensive and complete toxicology report has value to a variety of stakeholders and could identify information related to a child's death that helps to explain more about the circumstances of the death that may be relevant to inform strategies for the prevention of deaths and injuries. Dr. Hudson also addressed the resources and funding needed to accomplish expanded testing: year 1 cost of \$550K with \$110K recurring.

Main topics covered during questions or discussion related to presentation: There was a question about the numbers of undetermined cases. **Dr. Aurelius** reiterated the recent dramatic increase in the OCME's caseload without sufficient resources to meet the increase; this puts them behind somewhat. In addition, each case is unique and it may take time to get critical information in a case prior to making a determination.

Actions taken: (Additional discussion later in meeting; see actions taken later in these minutes.)

Topic #5: Committee discussion and determination of recommendations for full CFTF

Facilitators: **Jennie Kristiansen, Whitney Belich, Kella Hatcher**

Online presentation: See slides #47 - 50

Kella Hatcher explained that now the committee needed to determine what recommendations it wanted to make to the full Task Force for inclusion on the 2022 Action Agenda. She reviewed the issues that were under consideration and explained the types of recommendations that could be made.

Infant Safe Surrender: Rep. Donna White commented that she would like to see continued efforts on this bill addressing infant safe surrender that has already passed the House and that she is happy to continue to work on it.

Funding for School Support Personnel: There was discussion about supporting the study that is in the Appropriations Act that addresses barriers with increasing school support personnel and about the potential need to understand how funds already allocated for this purpose are being used and about barriers prior to making a recommendation for additional funding. There was also discussion about whether the study required in the Appropriations Act would be likely to produce the desired information and how it may not meet the needs the committee has in mind, and the fact that there is a sustained need for funds that goes beyond temporary funding. Comments were made about potentially crafting a recommendation so that additional funding would be based on the outcome of the study required in the Appropriations Act. There was further discussion about the degree to which the Task Force would or could be involved in this or any type of study about the barriers related to increasing the numbers of these types of professionals and how the Task Force itself has no ability to do an in-depth study that would provide the kind of comprehensive information that would need to be gathered on this topic; the Task Force could hear from some experts on the topic and about the results of a study done by someone else but is not itself structured to study this type of issue comprehensively.

School Mental Health Policy: there was discussion about the fact that the committee was not able to get an update on the implementation of this policy for this study cycle, but this administrative recommendation could be repeated and an update could be provided when the committee reconvenes. There was discussion about how this item is connected to the one above and connected to suicide prevention.

School health data system: There was discussion about whether more information needed to be gathered about privacy and confidentiality with this type of system, also discussion about learning more related to the funding for this type of system.

Comprehensive toxicology: there was a question about whether funding for crime lab scientists has a relationship to toxicology testing by ME for children; these are separate streams of funding. There was also discussion about how/whether this funding would impact the current overload experienced by the ME system.

Actions taken: [Votes for the following motions are in the chart below]

1. Infant Safe Surrender: Rep. Donna White made a motion to repeat the recommendations on infant safe surrender that were made in 2021, Rep. Kristin Baker seconded the motion. This recommendation is to support legislation to strengthen the infant safe surrender law to make it more likely the law will be used in circumstances for which it was intended to protect a newborn infant at risk of abandonment or harm by making legislative changes to accomplish the following:

- 1) remove “any adult” from those designated to accept a surrendered infant;
- 2) provide information to a surrendering parent;
- 3) strengthen protection of a surrendering parent’s identity;
- 4) incorporate steps to help ensure the law is only applied when criteria are met.

2. School Support Personnel: Rep. Donna White made a motion to recommend administrative support to follow implementation of the study in the 2021 budget for increased numbers of psychologists in public schools to address the increased mental health needs of students and to support the increased funding to address staffing issues. Whitney Belich seconded that motion.

3. School Mental Health Policy: Christy Malott made a motion for administrative support to follow implementation of provisions in the NC Board of Education School Mental Health Policy that relate to strengthened school/community connections to address student mental health; information on implementation to be studied by the Intentional Death Prevention Committee prior to the 2023 legislative session. Susan Robinson seconded the motion.

4. Statewide school health data system: Jennie Kristiansen made a motion for administrative support to gather additional information on privacy and confidentiality of a potential statewide school health data system and further evaluation of funding needs related to implementation and recurring costs of the system, providing this information to the Intentional Death Prevention Committee prior to the 2023 legislative session. Jill Cox seconded this motion.

5. Toxicology Testing: Molly Berkoff made a motion to support an appropriation of \$550K in nonrecurring funds and \$110,000 in recurring funds to enable the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to conduct comprehensive toxicology testing in all Medical Examiner jurisdiction child deaths. Whitney Belich seconded.

Votes on motions above (Alphabetical by FIRST name)	Infant Safe Surrender (1)	School Support Personnel (2)	School Mental Health Policy (3)	School health data system (4)	Comprehensive Toxicology (5)
Ann Nichols	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Brent Culbertson	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Brett Loftis	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Catherine Joyner	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Christy Malott	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Danielle Carman	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Deana Joy	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sen. Don Davis	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Rep. Donna White	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Dr. Ellen Essick	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Emi Wyble	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Geoff Farmer	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Ingrid Bou-Saada	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Jennie Kristiansen	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Jill Cox	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Kerry Young	yes	yes	yes	yes	abstain
Rep. Kristin Baker	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Lisa Cauley	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Michelle Hughes	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Michelle Zechman	yes	yes	yes	absent	absent
Dr. Molly Berkoff	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Dr. Natasha Scott	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Dr. Nicole Lawrence	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Pamela Thompson	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Rachel Zarcone	yes	yes	yes	absent	absent
Sarah Kirkman	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Sharon Hirsch	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Susan Robinson	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Trishana Jones (Olivia Bass)	absent	absent	absent	absent	absent
Whitney Belich	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
William Lassiter	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Whitney Belich explained that the Task Force was able to get a block of training on child abuse and neglect reporting and dealing with children approved for law enforcement in-service training for 2023 and that this training was being developed through collaboration with ND DSS and OCME; she invited those on the committee interested in the development of this training to contact her.

Adjourned at approximately 3:45