



THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S TASK FORCE ON ACES-INFORMED COURTS MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2023

The Chief Justice's Task Force on ACES-Informed Courts (TFAC) met at the N.C Judicial Center in Raleigh on Friday, May 5, 2023. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM. The following TFAC members, Advisory Group members, North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) staff, and guests were present.

TFAC Members

- Ryan Boyce, AOC Director
- Chief Justice Paul Newby, Convenor
- Joseph Kyzer, AOC Deputy Director
- District Attorney Ben David, Co-Chair
- Clerk Meredith Edwards
- Judge Quintin McGee
- District Attorney Spencer Merriweather
- Mike Silver
- Judge J.H. Corpening II
- Amelia Thorn
- Judge Mario Perez
- Nalini Joseph
- Judge Angelica McIntyre
- Jack Marin

Guests

- Siarra Scott
- Amber Harris
- Kevin Leonard
- Sean Callan
- Liz Henderson
- Mary Vail Ware
- Susan Osborne
- Belinda-Rose Young

Advisory Group Members

- Dr. Peter Kuhns
- Emma Paul
- Kelly Graves
- Bill Goebel
- Margaret Weller-Stargell
- Liz Star
- William Lassiter

NCAOC Staff

- Asia Prince
- Kaylin Bennett
- Alexia Stith

Approval of Meeting Minutes

DA Ben David motioned to approve February minutes. Judge Quintin McGee seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

Resilience and Victim Compensation

Mary Vail Ware, Director of Training and Technical Systems of the US Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) gave an overview of available Training and Technical Assistance (TTAC). OVC TTAC is gateway training and technical assistance for victim-serving organizations and allied professionals who serve crime victims. Their goal is to build the capacity, sustainability and expertise of organizations that serve



victims and survivors.

OVC TTAC is serving 1.4 million each year with over 500 subject matter experts. 70% of Organizational requests are for vicarious trauma work. 54% of people know someone impacted by gun violence. Mrs. Ware stresses that she “takes this very seriously”. Some ways OVC TTAC works with organizations are by providing subject matter experts, conducting organizational needs assessments, and strengthening advocacy programming.

Organizations are responsible for addressing work related trauma exposure for their employees. An organization must be challenged to think “what are you doing to help your team?” When the issues go unaddressed, staff members are likely to experience burn out, empathic strain, compassion fatigue and secondary trauma stress. With diminished health and wellbeing along with poor quality of service, staff turnover is inevitable.

Team members will need to focus on the core elements of resiliency; self-knowledge and insight, a sense of hope, healthy coping, strong relationships, and personal perspective and meaning. The blueprint for organizations to address the issues and their employees include talking openly, having leadership support, forming workgroups, developing actions plans and monitoring progress. “We find people aren’t doing the small stuff. This can’t be extra”.

Advisory Group member Kelly Graves, shared her experience with OVC TTAC noting that training is “so easy to work with and setup “once an organizational assessment is completed a correspondent is assigned. DA David suggests every employee get two hours off to volunteer. “Being connected as a whole needs to start with us.” Judge Corpening discusses simply bringing apples to his office for staff members and the positive affect his small gesture had. “It’s important to get this right as a team”.

Crime Victim Compensation Funding: Reimbursement for losses due to crime is based on a federal reimbursement grant governed by the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). These funds are available in all states and territories. Each state sets their own rules for the money. What we need to ask is if states are fully leveraging this funding. Dr. Graves suggested the task force look at this funding more closely. Currently this funding is very difficult to access. DA David notes this is something Chief Justice Paul Newby asked to focus on. There’s a lot we can do here with legislative help.

Bolch Institute Update

Amelia Thorn reviewed 3 topics of discussion: Educational Program, Research Initiative, and Take Questions.

- Summer 2021 Pilot Program. This course included 11 judges, and 6 hours of content. The program received lots of feedback.
- October 2021 District Court Judges Conference included both judges and chiefs. The program is adjusted based on available time as well as feedback. New sessions are planned for
 - New Judges Orientation June 19th
 - Chief District Court Judges Seminar Nov.30th-Dec.1st

The goal of each is to address what judges can do, offering specific approaches and self-care practices.

The New Judges Orientation was created by Bolch with a grant from IOLTA. Amelia and Dr. Eva McKinsey will lead the session. It is to take place prior to the District Court Judges Conference in Wilmington. Approximately 50 new judges will be in attendance with 9 instructors and 8 sessions total. Those instructors will include the ACEs Task Force’s own Judge Quintin McGee, DA David and Chief District Court Judge J. Corpening. Sessions will include “Trauma & the Brain”, and “Trauma-Informed Movement in NC.

A Skills Workshop will be the newest course. This session will give judges the opportunity to dissect fictional judge’s statements and interactions in a case. They’ll be asked to recognize the “issue spot” for more/less trauma-informed moments. Another aspect of the course WWYD? Judges are presented with a difficult situation within court that has no clear “right answer” for how to respond. Once small groups have discussed the scenario, they will be asked to share their thoughts out loud. In turn, they will receive feedback from panelists.

Amelia invited the Task Force members and guests to discuss sample scenarios and provide feedback to identify items that are not trauma-informed practices.

1. At 9:00 am, the prosecutor goes out to the courthouse’s waiting area to ask that all defendants present come inside the courtroom. All 10 defendants, along with their attorneys, enter the courtroom and sit down. No one is online—this court does not allow remote appearances. The

room is brightly lit and quite chilly. The bailiff and the prosecutor are having a friendly conversation and occasionally laughing. No other courtroom official is present, and no instructions are given.

2. The judge enters the courtroom at 9:30 am, sits at the bench, and asks the prosecutor to make sure everyone is here. The prosecutor takes roll, calling out each defendant's name and associated crime. They discover that one defendant is late. "That's his loss," the judge says to the prosecutor. "Let's reschedule him." A public defender who is there representing another client happens to overhear the judge. He asks the judge if he can speak, and the judge agrees. The defender stands up in the gallery and raises his voice so he can be heard, telling the judge that he just got off the phone with the defendant (also his client), who accidentally went to the wrong courthouse and will be here in 30 minutes. "We'll see about that," the judge replies. When role call is done, the judge turns to the prosecutor. "Up to you—call what you want. I'm ready for all of them."

Participants note inappropriate laughing, bright lights, and names being called out.

The research initiative includes 3 parts: a survey of judges who attended the October 2022 District Court Judges Conference, observations of juvenile court across NC and a survey of youth from juvenile court. The overall goal is to inform educational programming for NC judges and beyond.

Education Subcommittee Update

UNC BTIC Project Update

Belinda-Rose Young shared the purpose of Building Trauma-Informed Courts in North Carolina Project. The project will develop, implement, evaluate, and scale up training and educational resources to foster a trauma-informed environment. The project is funded through the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) by the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force of their Juvenile Justice (JJ) Committee.

The project makeup will include trauma-informed curriculum for all Judicial Branch staff and trauma-informed booklets for minors engaging with the courts. Recent updates to the booklet include two age levels (younger-ages 11 and under/older-12 and older) and two language options. The booklet will offer education and resources as well as a distractor for minors during court. Content is finalized and will include animations, pictures and quizzes appropriate for each age group. Task Force members were shown examples of the booklet's contents. Final steps are currently taking place and the booklets are expected to be completed December 2023.

School Justice Partnerships

Chief District Court Judge J. Corpening presents the three main goals of the School Justice Partnership.

- Keeping kids in school and out of court by reducing school pathways to the justice system
- Reducing the harmful effects of exclusionary discipline practices.
- Eliminating zero tolerance in school discipline/charging practices.

Judge Corpening shared a graph showing the drastic reduction of students referred to School Resource Officers rather than entering the court system since 2013. Once the percentage was a high 85.66% but has now dropped to 28.05 as 2019. Along with that a positive turn, school dropout rates have also been reduced, while graduation rates have jumped up.

NCAOC is committed to successful statewide implementation of SJPs and appreciates the support of SJPs by the TFAC.

Opioid Settlement Update

Amber Harris shares that all 100 counties have signed on. \$750 million to be spent over the next 18 years. Planning is ongoing but there is a lot of need for impact. Many counties are still interested in treatment court. Liz Star mentions an upcoming Opioid Reduction Summit taking place June 7-8th. Leaders from all over will be invited. The summit will offer sessions built into 5 different tracks.

The Opioid Settlement Toolkit (released March 2023) includes an overview of different funding options, and clarification on how much money each county would receive.

Model ACEs Legislation

Ben David summarized the meeting highlights and discussed overall progress of the TFAC. Much of the work comes down to relationships. Resources and strategy are key. “We want all the resources”. DA David emphasized that 13% of the population has an ACEs score or higher. However, 7 positive childhood experiences, including enjoyment in participation in community traditions, feeling of belonging in high school, and feeling of being supported by friends can help build resilience. Of the 7, 4 happen within the community. There is a need to invest in kids. “What’s the plan for them?”. Two years have been committed to focusing on ACEs-Informed Courts by the Task Force, but the work continues.

There is potential for an ACEs National Conference in the future. The following topics were identified by the meeting participants as possible content:

- “Resilience” movie screening
- Continuing Success Sequence presentation
- Talk about Task Force work and components of ACEs in opening remarks.
- Past presentations
- An accountability piece
- ACEs Bench card availability
- Next steps, calls to action and sustainability
- Follow ups and check ins on current work being done

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Future meeting dates:

November 30, 2023, Duke Washington Inn

December 1, 2023, Duke University