



The Mandatory Reporting Task Force | Meeting 7

Meeting Minutes

September 20, 8:00 am-10:00 am Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Facilitators: Doris Tolliver and Trace Faust

Members: See Appendix A

<p>Welcome & Approval of Minutes</p>	<p>After member welcome, Task Force Chair Stephanie Villafuerte recorded Mandatory Reporting Task Force attendance and approved minutes from the previous meeting. The motion for approval was provided by Tara Doxtater and seconded by Michelle Dossey. Minutes approved. The Meeting Recap motion for approval was provided by Kathi Wells and seconded by Zane Grant. Recap approved.</p> <p>Trace Faust, Keystone Policy Center, outlined the agenda for the day including multiple panels and data presentations. Providing further reintroduction to the Task Force space, they reminded members of the driving question “Is mandatory reporting effective for the professionals charged with making the calls?”</p>
<p>Effectiveness of Mandatory Reporting</p> <p>Presentation 1: Process for Receiving the Calls</p>	<p>Trace Faust introduces the presenters; Hope Pfalzgraff, Carrie Gillit, Ron Trownbridge, and Laura Hobden. All comments are individual and not to be attributed to the Task Force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope: Job title is specialized outreach and assessment for Mesa County. Primarily, the work is investigating and assessing concerns callers have about a child’s wellbeing. The county also investigates institutions like foster homes and youth services. It also provides informative outreach to the community. Call takers use their investigative skills when taking hotline calls. The calls are not always reports; they are sometimes to answer questions. But, the call takers always use investigative interview skills when on calls to tease out the information required to make an assessment. Typically, callers do not withhold information to be misleading, but because they do not think to include it. So, the call taker asks the questions that tease out the information needed. This is because mandatory reporters are experts in their field but not experts in abuse, neglect, domestic violence, etc.; the hotline is there to combine knowledge- of the situation from the reporter’s point of view and of abuse from the county’s expertise- to assess. In short, reporters might not recognize the situation but they know what they are seeing so, the hotline offers that assessment for them. • Carrie: Job title is community services administrator for Arapahoe County which is mainly hotline work. It is a unique county with a dual hotline for both children and adult protection. The call takers are usually college grads in their first full-time position. The sheriff dispatch takes after hours calls. The county is looking to go 24/7 as the call volume is growing. Additionally, oral reporting is very prevalent and more useful than police reports or email reports. The system is similar to Hope’s system; this includes asking questions and drawing more information. Having more information provides an opportunity to go through gray areas and weed out biases. This process also uses enhanced screening tools to properly assess families and situations. Once a report is made, it goes to the RED team (Read, Evaluate, Direct). The team determines if the situation meets the statutory threshold, the appropriate response time, the risk and, referrals. Referrals can consist of community development to prevent abuse such as education and connection with services. Turning to the data, the top 4 callers are mandatory reporters- specifically school reporters as they see kids all day, everyday. The county took over 26,000 calls and, over 13,000 referrals. 39% of referrals were investigated which is consistent across the state. Of the 39% investigated, only 6% were transferred to permanency services which means



	<p>94% were mitigated. Trace asked about what happens to reports when the decision is to refer. Carrie explained that the county makes notes of what had happened and saves it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ron: Job title is hotline manager for Hotline County Connection Center (HCCC). The hotline has 25 call takers and is growing. HCCC contracts with 56 counties to take their calls. The hotline took over 67,000 calls and wrote over 30,000 reports. It takes child and adult protection reports. It took over 47,000 adult protection calls. Both adult and child protection calls are growing as call volume picked up after COVID. The hotline is 24/7. It has fall back systems to remain 24/7 in the event of power outages, for example. It is staffed more heavily around peak hours. One of the struggles is having time for uninterrupted training. Training is often interrupted by needing to take calls. The need is to determine a system for passing on knowledge while they are still taking calls. The hotline also faces the same challenges as hotlines around the county. These challenges include heavy turnover for call takers and taking calls for very different counties. Trace asked what the expectations are for training and professional development. Ron answered that the call takers get the state required training, then shadow, and then slowly get involved with their own calls with supervisory guidance. Yolanda also answered that the minimum education is a highschool diploma and a fundamentals training required by the state to become a certified case worker. She also explained that there is a different course for hotline call takers. After these requirements, there is also on the job training. Finally, the continuing education requirement is 10 hours in a fiscal year.● Laura: Job title is supervisor with HCCC. She has a background of trauma which comes up in her work. She invites call takers to return back to the purpose of their positions, rather than the steps. Another focus point is to ensure that every call taker has the education to have these hard conversations.
Questions for Presenters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Chris: When calls are not routed out to services or deemed uncredible, is there a way to tell the reporter what happened? Carrie answered that they do not have the capacity to call the reporting party back or even call all the families that the calls were about. They do not call the families, also, because it can be a triggering phrase to say 'Child Protective Services (CPS)'. But, reporters can leave their name and check the disposition of the report; those types of reports sit in the system for referencing back to.● Kathi: First, sometimes, reports are not reflective of what the reporter wants to share so a call taker having a skill set to discern the right next questions is really important; this skill comes from experience so it is a good thing that there is more training. Second, she understands the limitations on giving feedback to mandatory reporters and is not sure what the solution would be without funding; the concern is how to inform reporters who have an ongoing, professional relationship with the child and who need to know how to proceed. First, Michelle answered that the county values call takers to have experience; many case workers come to them after work in the field, specifically after burn out. Second, there are mandatory reporters that have a need to know and they are entitled to some information; but they need to request it. They need to fill out a form to show that they meet the threshold of needing this information within the first 90 days of involvement. It's not really about funding and calling everyone back; it is about reporters requesting the information. Kathi asked again if the call takers having



	<p>experience is helpful and if the ability to request information is disseminated. Michelle said that reporters cannot leave anonymous tips and then ask for information. She also said that she personally values her skills to tease through questions. But this is controversial since the call takers in her county are required to have a Bachelor's and not every county will agree with this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stephanie: For Carrie and Michelle, what does the post-outreach look like and what does recidivism look like? Michelle answered that post-outreach is a subset of prevention work. It includes booster programs if families are struggling with the previous plan. This work goes to a different case worker who specializes in post-outreach. It is not always the best at informing all parties where reports leave off.• Jessica: Does the hotline exist for data collection and routing calls to the correct county, rather than screening appropriateness of calls? Ron answered that all calls are taken as a report. Yolanda also answered that screening decisions are made with a supervisor and done with intention. No call is unanswered and the decision is not made in isolation. Trace asked if the screener is going off the hotline call takers account. Yolanda said that the call taker's job is to gather information and the screener uses that information to make decisions; then it gets assigned to a caseworker. The screener will use other information. They will look for patterns if there are many calls for one person. They will use documents from CO courts to see if the family has a criminal case complicating factor. Finally, they will use documents from the CO benefits management system to see if the family has support. After that, it is decided if the report goes to prevention, a caseworker, or to archives. Kathi asked if the reporter is contacted again to gather more information before a decision is made on the report. Yolanda answered that there can be call backs to get clarity on the report that will go into the decision by the screener; this is different from assessment information gathering call backs, which happens after a report is screened to a caseworker for investigation. Call takers usually do not make the choice to screen; the decision is for the county to make. Reporters do not usually know who they are talking to.
<p>Effectiveness of Mandatory Reporting</p> <p>Panel 1: Who Takes The Calls</p>	<p>Doris Tolliver transitions to the panel and to dive deeper into what happens when a report is made. She introduced the Task Force Member Panel of Who Takes The Calls; Michelle Dossey, Nicci Surad, and Yolanda Arredondo. All comments are individual and not to be attributed to the Task Force at large</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doris asked about the confusion from reporters. About 75% of reports are coming from mandatory reporters with a desire to help but also a confusion about what child abuse is. Is the hotline the best way to understand abuse? Is there a potential to shift to prevention work?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Michelle: "I know that community members struggle with this system and are confused by it." Referrals from school districts do not have the resources to fully help families in the way they want to and oftentimes they misperceive situations as abusive when they are not. These reporters default to services to check out the situation when they are unsure what is going on. Prevention programs have the purpose of getting curious with families and asking them what they need after. The struggle is reporters not being able or willing to have hard conversations



with families and then make calls to hotlines instead. There is a possibility to expand the definition of mandatory reporters to provide them coaching on how to talk with community members; reporters could partner with services to do this. Even when reports do not meet the statutory threshold, organizations can still document prevention services provided.

- Nicci: There is an intervention program in Mesa county to serve the community however it is different from Michelle's program. People have to go through the hotline to get support for services, called family empowerment. Oftentimes, families turn away county representatives, even when they say, 'this is the department of human services', rather than CPS. She is interested in Michelle's program. The community is seeing the family struggle and the families need resources prior to abuse starting; the struggle is the family saying no to support. And, as always, the family has a right to parent the way they want to prior to it meeting the threshold.
- Doris: What has the impact been to enlist the community in servicing families prior to abuse or neglect?
 - Michelle: It has been largely successful. There are better outcomes for those who had prevention and they have lower recidivism rates compared to those who did not get prevention. There is still the same struggle of families that not do not meet the statutory threshold and refuse resources. It is important to see yourself in families and to put yourself in their shoes. It is also important to serve families with dignity and respect.
- Doris: On reduction in calls made during the pandemic, is there anything to think about differently?
 - Yolanda: During the pandemic, there was struggle all around and since reporters are primarily motivated by worry for the families, the pandemic lended itself to more sympathy and empathy. There was an increase in grace with each other. The decline in reporting was also due to lower interactions with children and mandatory reporters. But there was an uptick in reports from neighbors. These reporters share a desire to see families resourced and supported. The hard conversations that we were not having prior to the pandemic are not and will not go away. In sum, families should not have to get reported to find services.
- Doris: Everyone named a tension around reporting confusion and better education for reporters, what are our priorities on reporter training?
 - Michelle: Training needs more clarity and better examples. It also needs a better understanding of what happens after a call is made and about what the system can and cannot do. Training needs to help moderate unreasonable expectations for what the system can do.
 - Nicci: She agreed with Michelle. Training needs to help with understanding what the system can and cannot do. It also needs clarity on the neglect statute as neglect can often be confused with poverty. Right now, she trains as 'when in doubt make the call and let the system



	<p>decide'. "I am not sure if that is problematic... I hesitate to change this thinking due to situations when a child was saved due to intervention"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yolanda: We need more training on biases in call making and how our perspectives impact our understanding of situations. Good questions in training like; "is this abuse or is this situation triggering something for me?", "is this abuse or am I just worried about a family getting resources?", "is this abuse or not how I parent?" ● Doris: She appreciates Michelle's approach to allow for providing alternative support. These are good conversations on alternative support, training, as well as intercultural perspectives and biases.
Open Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Donna talked about moving from mandated reporting to parenting support. However, parenting support is not always equitable or contextual for families. She wants to move away from the lens of surveilling kids. She ponders about the role of the Department of Human Services (DHS). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Doris commented that 'mandated' reinforces the surveillance model and referenced Chris's chat of rebranding DHS and CPS as a supporter of families. She acknowledged that this is hard when there IS a role of investigating families and the negative consequences of that. ○ Nicci commented that the caseworker training is already working to rebrand. In practice it is much more different; it is hard to be engaging when there is an authority with the agency to take kids away. It will be very difficult to meet with families even though only 5% of cases get removed and that is not the agency's goal ● Jade: The fear of taking kids away will make it really hard for child welfare to build a relationship with families. The dual role is complicated and it is why we are in this position; child welfare does not feel like a supportive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stephanie chatted "We ask caseworkers to occupy dual and competing roles: we want them to help people and be supportive AND document lack of progress and report it to courts/attorneys for potential removals."
Next Steps and Adjourn	Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 4th from 8 AM to 11 AM. The Mandatory Reporting Task Force was adjourned at 10:00 am.



Appendix A:

Dawn Alexander
Yolanda Arredondo
Kevin Bishop
Sherry Dans
Jill Cohen
Jessica Daughter
Michelle Dossey
Tara Doxtater
Ida Drury
Leanna Gavin
Zane Grant
Adriana Hartly
Lori Jenkins
Gina Lopez
Chris Menz
Michelle Murphy
Sara Pielsticker
Roshan Kalantar
Nicci Surad
Kathi Wells
Donna Wilson
Stephanie Villafuerte

Appendix B:

Hope Pfalzgraff
Carrie Gillit
Ron Trownbridge
Laura Hobden