

Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment

January 14, 2021, 10:00 AM

Virtual Meeting

1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council was convened on January 14, 2021 virtually, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (22)	Members Absent (4)
Mrs. Angela Ducey, Co-Chair	James D. Molina
Kathryn A. Pidgeon, Co-Chair	Jay A. Cory
Andrea Stuart	Kate Brophy McGee
Berisha Black	Terry M. Crist
Brad Snyder	
Colleen A. McNally	
Darlene G. Newsom	
Janet L. Garcia	
Jeffrey James Taylor	
Katie J. O'Dell	
Leslie Y. Reprogle	
Lorrie G. Henderson	
Mark Upton	
Michael Faust	
Obed Escobar	
Paul S. Mulligan	
Rachel Mitchell	
Richard D. Yarbough	
Torrie Taj	
Vicki Mayo	

Warren H. Stewart	
Zora Manjencich	
Staff and Guests Present (11)	
Maria Cristina Fuentes	Judge Pamela Svoboda
Kim Brooks	Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz
Vianney Careaga	Dr. Sarah Beaumont
Judge Joseph Kreamer	Ryan Young
Pastor Brian Steele	Skye Steele
Kathryn Blades-Ptak	Faith Sexton

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Kristin Sorensen	
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Call to Order

- **Ms. Kathryn Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, called the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. with 22 members and 11 staff and guests present. **Ms. Pidgeon** reviewed the procedures of how the remote meeting would be facilitated and welcomed all those present.

Opening Remarks

- **Mrs. Angela Ducey, Co-Chair**, welcomed Councilmembers to the first Council meeting of the New Year.

Roll Call

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, conducted roll call of the Council and took note of Councilmember proxies.

Approval of Minutes

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, requested a review of the **November 10, 2020** meeting minutes. ○
 - **Vicki Mayo** moved to accept the **November 10, 2020** minutes.
 - **Obed Escobar** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes at 10:14 a.m.

Special Recognition

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, publically recognized **Pastor Brian Steele** and **Mrs. Skye Steele**, on behalf of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment, for the work they have done to help

victims of human trafficking overcome their trauma. They have served together in international and domestic missions for nearly ten years, and served in the inner-city, ministry social services field for over fifteen years. During their time at the Phoenix Dream Center they have directly driven the creation and implementation of four different transitional housing programs including the Trauma Informed Sex Trafficking Program, Family Systems Emergency Family Program and the Age Out Foster Care Programs. They have also created numerous community based outreaches, including Youth and Sex Trafficking Prevention Outreaches to Teen Girls, as well as greatly increased Community and Church Support of the vision and mission of the Phoenix Dream Center. **Mrs. Steele** now serves as the Chief Executive Officer of StreetLightUSA, a collaborative partner organization with the Phoenix Dream Center specializing in Trauma Informed and Behavioral Health Services to child victims of human trafficking. The Council is appreciative of their partnership and hard work.

- **Pastor Brian Steele** and **Mrs. Skye Steele** thanked **Mrs. Ducey** and the Council for the recognition they have shown them and feel this Council's membership comprises the essential participants in moving the work of the Council forward.

Youth Experiences Survey

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz**, Director of the Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research at Arizona State University, to present on the 2020 Youth Experiences Survey (YES) Study. **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz** began her presentation by publicly recognizing the social service agencies that helped disseminate the survey: Our Family Services,

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Native American Connections, UMOM New Day Centers, and One-n-Ten. The purpose of the YES study is to determine the gaps in service needs for particularly vulnerable populations and explore the prevalence of sex and labor exploitation as a result of these vulnerabilities.

- The targeted population of this study is homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 25 in central and southern Arizona. Efforts are being made to expand the survey offering to Yuma and Flagstaff for future studies. Due to the limited capacity of social service agencies during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the number of homeless youth who participated in the 2020 YES study represents the lowest sample size in the history of the YES study. However, the findings reflect the dire circumstances that homeless youth continue to find themselves in, including housing instability, job insecurity, mental health, medical challenges, substance use, and the presence of sexual and labor exploitation.
- The average age of participants reporting their first experience with homelessness was 16.6 years old and the average number of times participants reported being homeless was 3.5 times. The majority of 2020 YES study participants were raised in Arizona. **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz** emphasized the home-grown nature of the circumstances youth find themselves in. Almost half of the participants reported experiencing some form of human exploitation, either sex or labor. Nine participants reported experiencing both sex trafficking and labor exploitation. Twenty participants reported experiencing labor exploitation and twenty-four participants reported experiencing sex trafficking. The two main reasons participants reported being sex trafficked for were for money and food. The relationship participants identified the most (33.3%) as their sex trafficker was friends.
- Despite a 48.5% decrease in sample size from the 2019 YES study, the findings from the 2020 YES study remain consistent across the seven years with regard to the most critical vulnerabilities to the sex trafficked and labor exploited homeless young adults in the state of Arizona: self-harm, attempted suicide, history of abuse, experiencing four or more adverse childhood experiences, drug use, and PTSD.
- The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/01/14>. ● **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked for clarification with terminology in the study regarding the "I" and "A" designation in LGBTQIA+. **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz** explained that the "I" stand for intersex and the "A" stands for asexual.
- **Brad Snyder** inquired for further clarification of the friend-relationship category of identified sex traffickers. **Dr. Roe-Sepowitz** explained that sex traffickers identified by participants as friends were

those they had gotten to know while homeless.

STRENGTH Court

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Judge Joseph Kreamer**, Maricopa County Associate Presiding Judge and Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, and **Judge Pamela Svoboda**, Associate Presiding Juvenile Judge at Durango, to present on the STRENGTH Court. **Judge Kreamer** explained that “STRENGTH” in STRENGTH Court stands for “Succeed Through Resilience Empower New Growth Through Hope.” He additionally thanked those in attendance who have helped make the STRENGTH Court a success over the years.
- **Judge Svoboda** provided more background on the STRENGTH Court. The court became operational in August 2018 and was birthed out of a collaborative effort between the juvenile presiding judge, Mercy Care, the McCain Institute for International Leadership, Arizona State University, and other partners to help victims of sex trafficking. STRENGTH Court employs a trauma-informed lens to address all aspects of a juvenile’s case, including safe and appropriate housing, education, and any other barriers they may face towards success. This trauma-informed and victim centered approach has helped build trust and good rapport in

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working the juveniles. Trafficking is not discussed in court in order to avoid re-traumatization. Involvement in the court is voluntary but juveniles must identify and be a confirmed trafficking victim to participate in STRENGTH Court. This identification is usually done by police, mental health providers, Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS), probation officers, and the Maricopa County Child Sex Trafficking Collaborative.

- **Judge Kreamer** credited much of the groundwork for getting the STRENGTH Court operational to **Judge Svoboda’s** hard work and efforts. He also added that they are looking at ways in which to expand their education offerings and domestic violence resources.
- **Director Mike Faust** inquired as to how the Council and DCS can be more helpful in connecting the STRENGTH Court behavioral services specialist. **Judge Kreamer** responded that he has reached out to **Director Fuentes** to seek out funding opportunities aimed at further training staff personnel. **Director Faust** stated that he will follow-up with **Judge Kreamer** after the meeting.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, inquired about how the STRENGTH Court identifies its survivor mentors and whether there is a need for more; and if the youth, as they work towards continuing their education, work with FosterEd. **Judge Svoboda** responded that survivor mentors are vetted and identified through third party agencies before individuals can serve as survivor mentors. Additionally, survivor mentors must be individuals who have processed their own trauma in order to help others. In regards to the second question, most of the youth they have encountered typically opt to continue their education by pursuing a GED instead of participating in FosterEd.
- **Judge Colleen McNally** emphasized how beneficial the trauma-informed and victim centered approach of the STRENGTH Court is in helping the lives of the youth. **Judge Svoboda** thanked **Judge McNally** for her compliment.
- **Jeffery Taylor** inquired about how drug and substance abuse problems affect youth in STRENGTH Court. **Judge Svoboda** responded by assuring **Mr. Taylor** that drug and substance abuse treatment is offered to the youth in STRENGTH Court to ensure they are provided with the care they need to succeed.
- The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/01/14>.

Unique Health Needs of Trafficked Youth

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, introduced **Dr. Sarah Beaumont**, Medical Director of Homeless Youth Outreach at Phoenix Children’s Hospital, for a presentation on the unique health needs of trafficked youth.
- **Dr. Sarah Beaumont** shared that on average it is estimated that 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness each year. This number is alarming because about one-third of the adolescents living on the street are recruited for sexual exploitation within 48 hours of becoming homeless. Youth are more likely to succumb to trafficking if they experience these predisposed factors:

history of substance abuse, mental health problems, complex trauma, and stress. Additionally there are biological factors at play, such as limited life experiences and immature brain development. This affects decision making, inhibition, planning, and reasoning. About 88% of trafficked youth victims come into contact with a medical professional while being trafficked. Few are reported due to the lack of education, training of providers and staff, and patients not self-identifying. If not properly reported, the youth may miss out on the care that they need for their physical and mental well-being. Trafficked youth are in need of trained medical professionals and staff that can identify the signs of trafficking, provide trauma informed care, and increased access and availability of mental health resources.

- The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/01/14>.

Arizona Youth Empowerment Council

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Mr. Ryan Young**, Vice President of the Arizona Youth Empowerment Council, and **Ms. Faith Sexton**, President of the Arizona Youth Empowerment Council, for a presentation on the Arizona Youth Empowerment Council (YEC).
- **Mr. Ryan Young** explained that the mission of the YEC is to improve the experience of foster care for youth and is a concerted effort by the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) to establish an authentic Youth/Adult partnership. The YEC is currently composed of ten active members. **Ms. Sexton** described the projects the YEC engaged in during the past year. The YEC developed a presentation for youth in group homes to explain to them the foster care bill of rights, ways to self-advocate, and the roles and responsibilities of staff required by group home contracts. The YEC also improved Arizona's cell phone policy for youth living in congregate care by having access to landlines and cell phones.
- **Mr. Young** described the plans the YEC intends to undertake in 2021. The first is to work with the DCS Executive team to compile ways the Council can work collaboratively to find solutions. The second is to stay in touch with peers through multiple mediums. **Ms. Sexton** then provided examples of the YEC engaging in networking events and representing Arizona in inter-state events.
- **Director Faust** thanked **Mr. Young** and **Ms. Sexton** for their leadership and inspiration to drive change.
- **Katheryn Blades-Ptak** requested clarification regarding the number of youth that have been adopted twice. **Ms. Sexton** confirmed that there have been a large number of children adopted twice. Failed adoptions is an area that the YEC wants to work on addressing, focusing on education and partnering with adoption agencies to support education for both potential parents and staff.
- **Leslie Repogle** noted that educational resources on failed adoptions and how to mitigate them would be helpful to share with providers.
- The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/01/14>.

DCS Update

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, introduced **Director Mike Faust**, Director of the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS), for an update from the department.
- In the past few months, DCS has had about 70 employees out on FMLA due to COVID-19. However, due to contact tracing, none of the COVID-19 cases are attributed to their work but rather from their personal lives. During the pandemic, there has also been an uptick in the number of threats received by DCS employees when working with clients. DCS will be working with the legislature to further protect their employees and deter the threatening behavior. Arizona remains one of the few states that has prioritized children visitations with parents in order to achieve permanency and reunification in the lives of the children. The department has also made increased efforts in providing in-home services by utilizing more local services where they can. **Director Faust** thanked the community for the tremendous support they have shown towards DCS during this time.
- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, inquired if the number of new families getting adoption licenses has gone down. **Director Faust** responded by stating that the numbers are steady, however, over the past three years there has been a downward trend in the number of licensed foster families.

- **Jeffery Taylor** lauded the efforts of DCS in a recent case he was working on that resulted in a successful kinship reunification and noted that the expediency in resolving this case was in large

part due to the positive changes DCS has undergone in recent years. **Director Faust** thanked **Mr. Taylor** for his compliments and support.

- **Brad Snyder** inquired on the percentage of youth entering the foster care system for the first time. **Director Faust** did not have an answer to this but will get back to the Council and **Brad** with an answer after the meeting.
- **Ms. Kathryn Blades-Ptak** inquired on the steps DCS undertakes in order to close a case. **Director Faust** stated that this was not the case and he will follow-up on her question offline and help clarify the information.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, thanked **Director Faust** for his presentation and for the hard work of DCS. ● The full presentation can be accessed at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/01/14>.

Workgroup Updates

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Vicki Mayo**, Chair of the Prevention Workgroup, for an update on the Workgroup. **Vicki Mayo** updated the Council on a recent project the Workgroup has undertaken on school readiness among those students whose parents did not enroll them in school because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Workgroup has a kick-off meeting scheduled with its partners to help gauge where the Workgroup's efforts can be best spent.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Katie O'Dell**, Chair of the Outreach Workgroup, for an update on the Workgroup. **Katie O'Dell** was unavailable and had asked **Richard Yarbough** to provide their update. **Richard** updated the Council that the Workgroup intends to meet in February.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Rachel Mitchell**, Chair of the CJ Taskforce, for an update on the Taskforce. **Rachel Mitchell** was unable to provide an update due to audio connectivity issues and asked **Kim Brooks** to provide her update. **Kim** updated the Council that the Task Force has received over 400 responses so far to their survey.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, went over the list of meeting dates for 2021 and reminded Councilmembers to mark their calendars for their next meeting on March 18, 2021.

Adjournment

- **Ms. Pidgeon, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - **Leslie Reprogle** moved to adjourn.
 - **Richard Yarbough** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Dated 14 of January 2021
Governor's Council Child Safety and Family Empowerment
Respectfully Submitted By:
Kim Brooks and Vianney M. Careaga
Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family