



**Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment**  
**September 9, 2021, 10:00 AM**  
**Governor's 2nd Floor Conference Room**  
 1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment was convened on September 9, 2021, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

<b>Members Present (20)</b>	<b>Members Absent (7)</b>
Angela Ducey, Co-Chair	Kathryn A. Pidgeon, Co-Chair
Berisha Black	Colleen A. McNally
Brad Snyder	Darlene G. Newsom
Claire Louge	Jeffrey James Taylor
Ginger Ward	Kate Brophy McGee
James D. Molina	Warren H. Stewart
Janet L. Garcia	Torrie Taj
Katie J. O'Dell	
Leslie Y. Reprogle	
Lorrie G. Henderson	
Mark Upton	
Michael Faust	
Obed Escobar	
Paul S. Mulligan	
Rachel Mitchell	
Richard D. Yarbough	
Terry M. Crist	
Zora Manjencich	
Kathryn Ptak	
Maria Cristina Fuentes	
<b>Staff and Guests Present (7)</b>	
Thomas Winkel	Christina Corieri
Kim Brooks	Karen Hellman
Vianney Careaga	Janelle Wood
Kristin Sorensen	

Call to Order

- **Director Maria Cristina Fuentes**, called the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment meeting to order at 10:11 a.m. with 20 members and 7 staff and guests present. **Director Fuentes** reviewed the procedures of how the remote meeting would be facilitated and welcomed all those joining in-person.

### Opening Remarks

- **Mrs. Angela Ducey, Co-Chair**, welcomed Councilmembers to the Council meeting and introduced the newest member of the Council: **Rachel Mitchell**, Chair of the Children's Justice Task Force and Special Assistant for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office.

### Roll Call

- **Director Fuentes**, conducted the roll call of the Council and took note of Councilmember proxies.

### Approval of Minutes

- **Director Fuentes**, requested a review of the **May 13, 2021** meeting minutes.
  - **Richard Yarbough** moved to accept the **May 13, 2021** minutes.
  - **Terry Crist** seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed with no dissenting votes at 10:16 a.m.

### Special Recognition

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, thanked **Rachel Mitchell** on behalf of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment for her efforts and passion in supporting children and families throughout Arizona. **Ms. Mitchell** has supported the prosecution of sex crimes and crimes against children for the majority of her 28 year career as a prosecutor, including cases involving child molestation, sexual assault, computer-related crimes against children, child physical abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse. She also instructs prosecutors and other professionals nationally and across Arizona in these areas. **Ms. Mitchell** also works on legislation for her office and serves on various committees and task forces, including serving as Chair for the Arizona Children's Justice Task Force. In 2019, she was appointed to serve as Co-Chair of the Justice for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, where she played an integral role in examining a broad range of concerns and opportunities to enhance the protection of victims of child sexual abuse and sex trafficking. As Special Assistant for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, **Ms. Mitchell** oversees the Prosecution Integrity Unit that is responsible for reviewing claims of actual innocence after a conviction and responding to prosecutors' concerns about police conduct.
- **Ms. Mitchell** thanked **Mrs. Ducey** and the Council for the recognition.

### Legislative Session Update

- **Director Fuentes**, introduced **Christina Corieri**, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Ducey, for an update on the past legislative session. **Ms. Corieri** began her presentation by highlighting three bills that the Governor signed during the past legislative session.
  - The first was S.B. 1660, sponsored by **Sen. Paul Boyer**, known as the Crimes Against Children Omnibus bill. This bill takes many steps to protect children in Arizona, such as expanding the definition of position of trust to include all employees of the school, the minor's employer, and anyone who is related by blood or marriage to the child by the third degree. Employees of a group home or residential treatment facility where a child resides have also been included in the definition of position of trust. The law also requires that children over the age of eight in the custody of the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) receive age-appropriate information on abuse and exploitation, and how to report it. The law also directs the Arizona State Board of Education to establish best practices for social media and cell phone usage between students and school employees.
  - The second piece of legislation was H.B. 2410, which deals with the Baby Safe Haven program. The Baby Safe Haven program allows a parent to deliver a newborn infant into the program if they feel that they cannot properly care for or do not want to care for the newborn infant. The bill increases the age for the safe haven placement of unharmed newborn infants from 72 hours old or younger to 30

days old or younger. The child must be delivered unharmed in order for the parent to not be prosecuted for abandonment. After the newborn infant is handed over to the program, the newborn infant is placed with an adoptive family. In Arizona, there are about 10 to 12 safe haven infants entering into this program each in a year.

- The third piece of legislation was S.B. 1391, which protects a child's right to be represented by legal counsel in all dependency cases. Outside of this legislation, a variety of funding has been provided to the states through different federal relief bills, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Some of this funding is being directed to assist kinship families. Qualified kinship families may be eligible to receive up to \$1,800 per family. The Governor's Office is working with DCS to provide these funds to kinship families by the Fall of 2021. Additionally, one of the federal bills provides for Chafee Program funding, which provides assistance to older foster youth and individuals aging out of foster care. DCS has set up an application system at <https://dcs.az.gov/fosterfunds> where individuals can apply for grants of up to \$2,000 to be used for a variety of expenses including: education, housing, employment, driving, health care, and electronics and communication support. The application is open till the last day in September 2021.
- **Berisha Black** inquired about the age cap to receive the foster funds. **Ms. Corieri** responded that the age cap is 26 years of age. **Director Michael Faust** added that the age range to be eligible for the funds is 14 to 26 years of age and on September 30, 2021 available funds will expire for individuals 21 to 26 years of age. **Ms. Corieri** further added that in the past legislative session, a bill was passed that allows individuals who had previously aged out of the extended foster care program to return to extended foster care up to the age of 26 through the end of September 2021.

#### Children of Incarcerated Parents

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Karen Hellman**, Assistant Director of the Arizona Department of Correction, Rehabilitation & Reentry (ADCRR), for a presentation on Positive Parenting Program in Prison. **Assistant Director Hellman** began her presentation by discussing the needs and challenges. In the United States, there are over 5.7 million children that have had a parent incarcerated at some point during their childhood. Those children have three times more ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) than those children whose parents were never incarcerated. Nearly 2.7 million children currently have a parent in jail or in prison. **Assistant Director Hellman** then provided an anecdotal story of generational incarceration in which three generations of a family shared the same prison yard. Through collaboration with the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family, grant funding was made available to initially train 12 inmates and three staff members in Triple P facilitation. As of last week, seven cohorts with 63 participants have been enrolled to be trained. Pregnant inmates are given priority placement to receive Triple P training. The inmates that are Triple P Facilitator trained can also market those skills when they leave prison and re-enter society. **Assistant Director Hellman** hopes to blend the program in the future to allow family members in prison and outside of prison to go through the program together to better inform their visitations and reduce familial friction on post-release. The full presentation can be found at <https://govff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/09/09>.
- **Claire Louge** lauded the efforts of ADCRR for bringing Triple P into the prisons. Her vision is to be able to have a system of referrals in the future where people can access Triple P services. **Director Michael Faust** added that DCS too has struggled with the referral process, particularly with adoptive families. He further added that DCS now has federal funding that could help with the referral mechanism.
- **Director Fuentes** also lauded the efforts of ADCRR and noted how far the department has come since the change to the department's name and mission.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, also commended **Director Fuentes** for her helping advance this program through the support of the Governor's Office.

#### Black Mothers Forum: MicroSchools

- **Director Fuentes**, introduced **Janelle Wood**, President and Founder of Black Mothers Forum, for a presentation on MicroSchools. **Ms. Wood** began her presentation by providing background information on the

Black Mothers Forum (BMF). BMF was founded in August 2016 with the mission to promote healthy mindsets and relationships to end the school to prison pipeline. MicroSchools came about from three main problem areas: disproportionate disciplinary practices; the discounting of Black parents' and children's concerns regarding over and excessive discipline for misbehavior/minor infractions; and the districts/schools' inability to create safe and supportive learning environments for Black children. BMF partnered with Prenda's Microschool program to create safe and supportive learning environments. This is a group-home school approach that blends class grades. Currently, BMF MicroSchool operates 11 schools in 4 different locations. There are currently 43 children enrolled in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The goal of BMF is to operate 58 MicroSchools with an enrollment of 580 students by the end of the 2021-22 school year. BMF MicroSchools employ a method of discipline that is called connect and redirect to better serve its students. It costs approximately \$10,000 to set up a MicroSchool. BMF MicroSchool Learning Guides are also trained in Triple P. **Ms. Wood** added that these schools are open for all children. One of their biggest needs are locations with adequate meeting spaces and nutritious food suppliers to provide food to the students. The full presentation can be found at <https://govff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/09/09>.

- **Terry Crist** inquired about the Prenda platform for microschooling. **Ms. Wood** explained that Prenda is the technology platform that they employ to help guide children to manage their own education.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, inquired as to who they recruit to serve as their teachers/learning guides. **Ms. Wood** responded by stating that recruitment has been through word of mouth and has come through parents. People are coming to them to be learning guides.
- **Director Fuentes** noted that the Triple P component is new to BMF and has helped provide them with more support.

#### Be Connected

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Thomas Winkel**, Director of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF), for an update on the Be Connected Program. **Mr. Winkel** began his presentation by explaining the two key elements of ACMF. The first is the Coalition itself. The Coalition was established in 2009 and is a public/private partnership. It is a collective impact initiative that engages all helpers, organizations and communities to create a coordinated ecosystem of support. All veteran serving organizations tap into the coalition. The second is the Be Connected Program. The Be Connected Program was established in 2017 and serves as the statewide upstream prevention program to support Arizona's 500,000+ service members, veterans, and their families across all social determinants of health. The Be Connected public health approach is predicated on acknowledging that the same approach does not work for every service member, veteran, and family member. To account for this, Be Connected relies on an upstream prevention model that focuses on universal, selective, and indicated population groups. ACMF's Be Connected Program is designed to prevent suicide by addressing the social determinants that lead up to suicide. These determinants include, but are not limited to basic needs, employment, finances, housing, physical health, family support, and spirituality. Be Connected consolidates helpful phone lines, apps/websites, programs, educational tools, and has trained team members embedded throughout the state to better connect people to the services and resources they need. **Mr. Winkel** emphasized that those operating in this space need to consider the resource and support needs of everyone in the family; they need to take an inclusive view of needs and social determinants of health; and create clear pathways to help people and families navigate systems and resources. The full presentation can be found at <https://govff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/09/09>. More information about Be Connect can be found at <http://connectveterans.org/>.
- **Director Michael Faust** commented that he would like to meet with **Mr. Winkel** to further discuss this model. He noted that he often sees connecting people to resources as a big issue and what is needed in other spaces is to leverage the resources at their disposal to avoid duplication of efforts. **Mr. Winkel** responded that he would be eager to meet and noted that ACMF has done technical assistance work with every state in the United States.
- **Berisha Black** inquired on how we could do a better job on connecting people to show them validation and understanding instead of just providing a handoff resource. **Mr. Winkel** responded by stating that ACMF has

faced some of these challenges. ACMF strives to build that sense of camaraderie and acknowledges that there is still more to be done in this space to help more people receive that validation.

### Update from DCS

- **Director Fuentes**, introduced **Director Michael Faust** for an update from the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS). **Director Faust** began his presentation by highlighting the struggle DCS has in hiring staff. There is a high demand on members of this workforce, due in large part to the nature of the work. On average, it takes six months for a new employee to adjust to their work, one year for them to get comfortable with the work, and a decade for them to fully understand the work because of the complexities involved with child safety.
  - DCS has seen the highest volume of calls into their hotline recently during the month of August 2021. This has been due in large part because children are back to in-person school. Another contributing factor was the difficulties experienced from the recent installation of new programmatic software. In regards to the reports received, DCS has seen an increase in domestic violence reporting since September 2020. This has caused DCS to take on initiatives around domestic violence. School reporting volume is back to where it was prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
  - DCS has also been working with **Rachel Mitchell** and Children's Justice Task Force to standardize and improve fidelity around the legality of mandated reporting. Law enforcement reporting volume has started to decrease from where it was last year.
  - In regards to presented reports, one of the charts provided to the Council denotes a sharp increase in the number of open cases during the time when DCS's new computer system came online and technical challenges presented obstacles to staff. As DCS moves to close this gap, it is important to also remember the workload challenges that are brought on by their staffing challenges.
  - In regards to criminal conduct reports, when the bars on the chart trend upward, that denotes more joint investigations with law enforcement. Regarding entries and exits, the number of youth entering care is going down and the number of youth transitioning home is also going down. This trend is partly due to service delivery disruption because of staff shortages.
  - Since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the utilization of foster care homes has decreased. 46% of the youth are in kinship placement and 32% are in foster care homes. DCS has struggled to recruit foster families, due in large part to the rising needs of youth. As part of the DCS's budgetary request, the department has requested \$24 million, of which \$19 million will be used to increase the kinship stipend from \$75 a month to \$300 a month. The intent of this increase is to help meet the needs of kinship families and to grant them access to a dollar match from the federal government if they become a licensed foster family. In regards to congregate care, the number of youth in congregate care has remained relatively flat. In turning to children in out-of-home care, this chart delineated the number of youth 18 years of age and older in extended foster care. As mentioned earlier, through the Chafee Program funding application, DCS has already been able to push out around \$1.8 million in direct support.
  - In regards to departmental prioritization, DCS is committed to focusing on program/models, culture, services, and placement in the coming year. The full presentation can be found at <https://goyff.az.gov/meeting/cfse/2021/09/09>.
- **Terry Crist** inquired if **Director Faust** could summarize the recent settlement of the class action lawsuit that DCS recently finalized. **Director Faust** explained that in 2015 the DCS was sued by Children's Rights, which represented children in the care of DCS, and claimed that DCS was providing an unconstitutional-level of care for children. The lawsuit resulted in a settlement with an agreement on four major tenants: delivery of behavioral health services, physical care, workload management, and caregivers and placements. He further noted that Arizona should be proud of how they negotiated the settlement. It has set a national pathway for others to resolve these lawsuits in a way that helps improve the overall system.

### Workgroup Updates

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Claire Louge**, Chair of the Prevention Workgroup, for an update on the Workgroup. **Ms. Logue** updated the Council that her Workgroup has met once and is working to identify how it can add value to building a connected system of resources.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Katie O'Dell**, Chair of the Outreach Workgroup, for an update on the Workgroup. **Ms. O'Dell** updated the Council that one of the focuses of the Workgroup is to recruit foster care and kinship families. She added that the Workgroup has lost some members, and has extended an invitation to Councilmembers to join. **Director Faust**, **Director Fuentes**, and **Mrs. Ducey** offered their assistance in helping to recruit foster care and kinship families
- **Director Fuentes**, on behalf of **Rachel Mitchell**, Chair of the Children's Justice Task Force, provided an update on the Task Force. **Director Fuentes** shared that the Task Force is working to standardize the mandatory reporter training, as mentioned earlier in the meeting. The Task Force has also taken a look at county protocols and is recommending that some counties update their protocols on child welfare abuse and neglect investigations and they are working on drafting a report on best practices for family advocacy care centers.

#### Upcoming Meeting

- **Director Fuentes**, reminded Councilmembers that the next meeting will occur in November and asked that Councilmembers lookout for an update from her office about the meeting time and date so as to not conflict with Veterans' Day.

#### Adjournment

- **Director Fuentes**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
  - **Terry Crist** moved to adjourn.
  - **Berisha Black** seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Dated 9 of September 2021  
Governor's Council Child Safety and Family Empowerment  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Vianney M. Careaga  
GOYFF