



Governor's Council on
Child Safety and
Family Empowerment

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON CHILD SAFETY AND FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

Hybrid Meeting

May 09, 2024, 10:00 AM

1700 West Washington Street, Suite 200, Phoenix, Arizona 85007

A general meeting of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment convened on **May 09, 2024**, with notice duly given.

Members Present (17)	Members Absent (07)
Maria Cristina Fuentes , Co-Chair	Colleen McNally , Co-Chair
Berisha Black	Malcolm Hightower
Pastor Terry Crist	Darlene Newsom
*Obed Escobar	Kathryn Blades Ptak
*Marie Fordney	Leslie Repogle
Tonya Hamilton	Torrie Taj
*Dr. Lorrie Henderson	Ryan Young
Claire Louge	
David Lujan	
*Sara MicFliker (proxy for Rachel Mitchell)	
*Paul Mulligan	
Katie O'Dell	
*Abi Saifi	
*Jeff Taylor	
Mark Upton	
Ginger Ward	
Richard Yarbough	
Staff & Guests Present (9)	
Amy Peep , Staff	*Charles Gray , Presenter
Emily Uline-Olmstead , Staff	*Robin Pearson , Presenter
Chantel Hutchinson , Staff	Shauna Anderson , Presenter
Ann Carver , Staff	Lindsey Shine , Presenter
	Samara Vaught , Presenter

**Indicates Virtual Attendance*

Call to Order

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, called the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment (CSFE) meeting to order at **10:05 AM** with **17** members and **nine** staff/guests present. She reviewed the Council meeting procedures, welcomed all those joining via Zoom, and thanked them for their flexibility.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, asked **Marie Fordney** to introduce herself briefly since this is her first Council meeting.
 - **Marie Fordney** is the executive director at the [Children's Advocacy Center of Southern Arizona](#). She is pleased to be a part of the Council and looks forward to contributing her expertise. Her primary goal is to focus on equity and inclusion, which includes not only racial and ethnic diversity but also ensuring that resources are allocated fairly to rural communities.

Approval of Minutes

- With the quorum met, **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, requested a review of the **March 07, 2024**, meeting minutes.
 - **Claire Louge** moved to accept the meeting minutes.
 - **Richard Yarbough** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **10:09 AM**.

CASA Services

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Robin Pearson** and **Charlie Gray** to give a presentation to the Council.
 - **Robin Pearson** is the Executive Director, co-founder, and former Board Vice President of [Voices for Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\) Children](#). She began as a volunteer child advocate for the CASA of Maricopa County program in 2010 and believes every child deserves a chance to thrive.
 - **Charlie Gray** has been working as a part of the [Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\) of Arizona](#) since 2021. He is an Arizona State University (ASU) graduate and has dedicated over 30 years of his career to serving the community in social services and child welfare. Previously, Charlie has worked with the Family Assistance Administration, Foster Care Review Board, and CASA programs. He has over 25 years of experience in supervisory, volunteer, and project management roles. Charlie is passionate about advocating for the rights of foster care children, and he continues to promote this cause through his work.
- **Charlie Gray** began by discussing how CASA of Arizona is a program that operates across the entire state, with local offices set up in each of Arizona's 15 counties. The state CASA office works with and supports the county programs, ensuring they can recruit volunteers, provide training, and maintain a computer database. The county programs differ in size based on their population and the number of foster children in their care.
 - Arizona County Examples:
 - Maricopa County has a population of 4.6 million, 4,400 children in foster care, and about 450 CASAs.
 - Navajo County has a population of 110,000, 100 children in foster care, and fewer than 10 CASAs.
 - Since CASA volunteers interact directly with children and other interested parties, the county program staff are responsible for explaining the program and preparing the volunteers for their first case assignment. Once the volunteers grow into advocacy roles, the county staff takes on a nurturing role, ensuring volunteers follow program policies.
- **Charlie Gray** explained that the CASA of Arizona program currently has over 1,000 CASA volunteers, nearly 2,000 children with a CASA, and approximately 9,000 children in foster care. Some CASAs have one or multiple children in one case and may have more than one case at a time.
- **Charlie Gray** played one of CASA of Arizona's recruitment videos.
- **Charlie Gray** explained that CASA volunteers are individuals from the community appointed by a judge as a child's voice and represent their best interests. They provide a consistent presence in the child's life and don't need a social welfare background. All that is required is a passion for helping children in foster care.
 - CASA best-interest advocacy principles:
 - Learn all you can about the child, their family, and life.
 - Engage with the child during regular visits.
 - Speak up for the child's best interest in court, make recommendations regarding the child's placement and needed services, and monitor the child's situation until the court releases the case.
 - Collaborate with others to ensure necessary services are in the child's best interest.
 - Report what you have learned and observed to the court.
- **Charlie Gray** provided the different qualifications interested individuals need to meet to become a CASA.
 - Before being a CASA:
 - Must be 21 years or older.
 - Pass a thorough background check.
 - Complete 30 hours of pre-service training.
 - When appointed as a CASA:
 - Dedicate 12-15 hours per month.

- Provide written reports.
- Complete 12 hours of annual training.
- **Charlie Gray** explained the various recruitment projects the CASA of Arizona actively participates in, including, but not limited to, public service announcements (PSAs) throughout the state (digital, TV, and radio), social media advertising, community presentations, and postcards/mailers.
- **Robin Pearson** discussed that Voices for CASA Children helps Maricopa County foster children thrive with CASA volunteers' support.
 - To strengthen the CASA advocacy experience, Voices for CASA Children increases community awareness to recruit more advocates, offers tailored education for CASA volunteers, and provides activities that recognize and enrich each child's uniqueness.
- **Robin Pearson** explained providing Voices for CASA Children advocates the following:
 - Live and on-demand classes.
 - An introductory gift.
 - Targeted resource referrals.
 - Public information sessions for prospective volunteers.
 - Gas cards for top CASA drivers.
 - Child Enrichment activities for toddlers to teens.
 - Opportunities for CASA volunteers to connect with peers.
 - Gift cards for essential or urgent needs.
 - Resource tools for quick referral to community agencies.
 - A Teen Roadmap to guide life skills development and find aging out resources.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, commented she is in the process of becoming a CASA. They are always looking for more volunteers.
- **Berisha Black** mentioned that she appreciates the creativity in the recruitment videos and flyers in coffee shops.
- **Pastor Terry Crist** asked how long the training takes and if they are available online or in person.
 - **Charlie Gray** responded that while the pre-service training is three days, annual training is ongoing throughout the year. CASAs can complete their 12-hour annual obligation in lump sums (attend conferences) or one hour a month (suggested).
- To view **Charlie Gray's** presentation, [click here](#). To view **Robin Pearson's** presentation, [click here](#).

Department of Child Safety Update

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced Cabinet Executive Officer **David Lujan** to speak about the [Arizona Department of Child Safety's \(DCS\)](#) goals, priorities, and objectives.
- **David Lujan** discussed the DCS' upcoming fiscal year budget and the current number of children in out-of-home care.
 - Fiscal Year 2025 Budget:
 - The State expects a 1 million dollar shortfall, affecting all state agencies.
 - Implemented a hiring cap that prohibits creating new full-time positions, but they can still fill open positions.
 - Currently, DCS has a 96% retention rate.
 - The DCS has relied on vacancy savings and federal funds for four to five years. With both depleted, the Department expects a challenging time going forward.
 - The DCS needs to cut 4% of the current budget, approximately \$20 million. Deciding what to cut is difficult; the DCS must choose the "least bad" option. However, they do not need to institute those changes yet.
 - The community can help throughout this process by increasing the number of community and kinship foster families. Regardless of the shortfall, this will result in better outcomes for children in the child welfare system.
 - Children in Out-of-Home Care:
 - Currently, 8,900 children are in out-of-home care. In 2018/2019, Arizona had 19,000 children in care.

- The DCS is continuously focusing on reducing those numbers while not compromising safety. It is looking at the data, particularly whether or not it didn't substantiate an initial report and whether or not additional reports were made within the 12 months following.
- Arizona's numbers are still high compared to other states.
- The DCS' goal is to keep families together and do it safely.
- **Claire Louge** asked if the DCS has a process for identifying kin in group home settings.
 - **David Lujan** responded the DCS is committed to reducing the number of children in congregate care. To achieve this, the DCS has partnered with Casey Family Programs to focus specifically on African American children in care. The project analyzes cases and the DCS efforts to understand why they made certain decisions. This approach will take a systemic point of view, which will help improve the agency's future performance.
 - The DCS collaborates with providers who conduct further assessments of children in care and place them with their relatives.
- **Paul Mulligan** asked how the training had been going.
 - **David Lujan** clarified the Buster Parent College, which the DCS acquired two months ago. While he has no data, he has received information anecdotally that the training has been successful thus far. He will provide more details at the next Council meeting.
- **Pastor Terry Crist** asked when the department would finalize the budget.
 - **David Lujan** responded that the state budget is currently in negotiations and expects those decisions to be made within the next 50 days as the fiscal year ends on June 30.
- **Mark Upton** inquired about reducing the number of children in care and whether there is a comparable state or goal that the DCS is striving to achieve compared to Arizona.
 - **David Lujan** answered that the DCS is reducing its numbers by 100 children monthly. Its current actions are working. However, there is no magic number, but if he had a goal, it would be 0.

Hushabye Nursery

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Shauna Anderson** to speak about [Hushabye Nursery](#)'s services to children and families, their relationship with the DCS, and the child welfare system.
 - **Shauna Anderson** is the director of outreach and community education at Hushabye Nursery. With over 15 years of experience in nonprofit leadership and teaching, she holds a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from ASU's Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation. Shauna is a certified adverse childhood experience (ACEs) facilitator through the Arizona ACEs Consortium, a Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Practitioner, and has been a part of Hushabye since its opening in November 2020. Her expertise lies in integrating trauma-informed care into leadership practices.
- **Shauna Anderson** thanked the [Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family \(GOYFF\)](#) for providing grants to Hushabye and shared that CEO David Lujan had toured the facility.
- **Shauna Anderson** discussed Hushabye Nursery's mission to embrace substance-exposed newborns and their families with compassionate, evidence-based care that positively changes their lives. The Hushabye Nursery Care Model offers prenatal services/community support, nursery, and discharge services. The main program serves as an in-patient withdrawal center for newborns exposed to opiates. The goal is to engage families right when they know they are pregnant. They can provide food, a place to stay, and residential treatment.
- **Shauna Anderson** described the outpatient services provided by Hushabye, highlighting that they begin with positive affirmations such as "congratulations" because pregnant individuals are often stigmatized and do not receive adequate support from their families or institutions.
 - Hushabye can also connect them to medical resources (e.g., Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) Services) or marriage and family therapists if they need counseling.
 - Ultimately, Hushabye is trying to prevent the baby from entering the system in the first place.
 - Educate parents on what to expect when interacting with the DCS, provide parenting classes, and offer services statewide (in person or virtually).
- **Shauna Anderson** explained that Hushabye collaborates with the DCS and operates under the mantra "Healthy Family, Safe Baby." They aim to ensure that families are well and the baby can go home with their parents. For this, parents develop a care plan for themselves and the baby, which identifies trusted adults who can help them and

includes relapse scripts. Hushabye provides daily updates to the DCS regarding the status of the parent and the baby while the parent is in-patient. They value honest communication with the DCS, especially if there are safety concerns.

- **Shauna Anderson** explained that Alicia Jefferson is the DCS Liaison for Hushabye Nursery. She provides education to one to two Hushabye Opioid Pregnancy Preparation and Empowerment (HOPPE) program groups per month to:
 - Prepare for interactions with the DCS.
 - Change the relationship from punitive to collaborative.
 - Diminish the myths about the DCS to increase trust.
 - Improve community perception of the DCS.
 - Decrease turnover rate within the DCS- staff are hopeful when families succeed.
- **Shauna Anderson** explained why Hushabye Nursery differs from the current industry standard (hospitals).
 - Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Model:
 - NICU environment.
 - Design NICU for premature babies, not Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) babies.
 - Limited resources for family recovery and navigating the DCS.
 - Restricted visitation.
 - Ensure one caregiver to every three babies (1:3).
 - Hushabye Model:
 - Treat babies in a quiet, dark, calm environment.
 - Private nurseries.
 - Educate families on how to care for NAS babies.
 - The family can stay in the room 24/7.
 - Ensure one caregiver per baby (1:1).
 - DCS-specific Case Manager.
 - Specially-trained staff with a passion for NAS babies.
 - Promote bonding and breastfeeding.
 - Use five Ss, rock up and down, and 6th S-squat techniques.
 - Wean and treat babies with medications as necessary.
 - Eat, Sleep, Console (ESC) Treatment Model.
 - Validate Finnegan Neonatal Abstinence Scoring System.
 - Provide outpatient behavioral health treatment on-site.
- **Shauna Anderson** provided data explaining the effectiveness of Hushabye's services. Since establishing the organization, approximately 800 babies and 1,600 parents/families have received services.
 - Inpatient Outcomes:
 - Hushabye Nursery
 - Infants Requiring Pharmacologic Care - 35.5%.
 - Length of Stay - 8.3 Days.
 - Cost - \$11,659.
 - Industry Average
 - Infants Requiring Pharmacologic Care - 98%.
 - Length of Stay - 22 Days.
 - Cost - \$44,824.
 - Discharge Disposition:
 - At Hushabye, 74% of families safely take their babies home, and 62.5% of clients access treatment/services (see Slide 11 for breakdown).
- **Berisha Black** inquired if Hushabye Nursery tracks the diversity of individuals referred for or who have received services.
 - **Shauna Anderson** confirmed that Hushabye Nursery does track this data, although she is unsure of the specific breakdown. She did mention that African Americans are a minority group among those who receive services.
 - **Shauna Anderson** also mentioned that Hushabye is working with Maricopa County Public Health to increase awareness of their services among individuals from rural and tribal communities.

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, inquired about the percentage of parents with children at Hushabye Nursery who enter substance use treatment programs.
 - **Shauna Anderson** responded that 65% of families connect to outside resources.
- **Jeff Taylor** mentioned taking a tour and asked if the hospital's average cost included services for parents when comparing costs between the hospital and Hushabye.
 - **Shauna Anderson** responded that Hushabye collaborates with hospitals on referrals since hospitals only sometimes provide services to parents.
 - **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, added that the NICU is solely designed to care for infants and does not provide services to parents.
- **Paul Mulligan** asked if Hushabye had tried to scale or increase its reach within the state or nationally.
 - **Shauna Anderson** responded that Hushabye Nursery is the only agency in the country offering outpatient behavioral health and inpatient health services. Although Hushabye is willing to expand, they must maintain a consistently full nursery before considering expansion plans.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, mentioned that public and private partnerships have made Hushabye Nursery possible. She added she is working with Hushabye through her business.
- **Shana Anderson** also mentioned that Hushabye Nursery has an upcoming Gala on October 26, 2024. For more information, [click here](#).
- To view **Shauna Anderson's** presentation, impact report, and other materials, [click here](#).

Family Reunification Day 2024

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** to speak to the Council.
 - **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** are parents who have firsthand experience navigating the child welfare system. They now work for the Family Involvement Center, assisting other families in navigating the system. They also serve as co-chairs of the [Maricopa County Family Reunification Day](#) Planning Committee.
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** explained that the purpose of Family Reunification Day is to celebrate the achievements of families who have successfully overcome various challenges and are reunited safely. The day also aims to recognize the critical role that community partners, courts/judges, foster parents, and others play in helping to strengthen, reunite, and support families. Moreover, the day seeks to inspire other parents, particularly those undergoing the recovery process, that it is possible to confront and resolve the issues that led to their separation and reunite with their children.
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** discussed the following sponsors and contributors for the 2024 event:
 - [Arizona Department of Child Safety](#)
 - [Casey Family Programs](#)
 - [Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family](#)
 - [Open Hearts Family Wellness](#)
 - [Voices for CASA Children](#)
 - [City of Grace](#)
 - [CASA of Arizona](#)
 - [Family Involvement Center](#)
 - [Maricopa County Office of the Public Advocate](#)
 - [Prevent Child Abuse Arizona](#)
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** explained that each year, the Family Reunification Day Planning Committee reflects on the impact of previous Family Reunification Day Events because they are always inspired to do more.
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** explained the Planning Committee's Framework.
 - Purpose: Reunification heals families and nourishes Child Welfare System workers. The Planning Committee harnesses parent participation's power to support positive, long-lasting permanency outcomes. Joining parents with lived experience will co-create a better child welfare experience that prevents re-entry.
 - Principles: Come with hope and heart. Family voices are central to the work. We must collaborate with reunified families to create a psychologically safe forum for parents to share their concerns and express their needs. We must actively cultivate a community that reflects the larger Arizona community in all its diversity, remaining culturally humble as we do so. We must acknowledge the pervasive impact of trauma upon generations of people and communities.

- Vision: All reunified families feel care and support, receive empathy and understanding from the community, can leverage the strength of the reunification community, and collaborate with stakeholders to connect with families as they reunify.
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** stated that the committee launched a new website in January 2024 to reach more reunified families in partnership with the DCS. The website provides information about upcoming and past events. This year, the approach will focus on delivering ongoing recognition to these inspirational families during Family Reunification Month in June and throughout the year.
 - A new approach in 2024 is to kick off celebrations virtually in June and have an inclusive event in the fall, no nomination process, and an open celebration for any family who has reunified in Arizona.
 - Celebrate Family Reunification statewide.
- **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught** announced that the Maricopa County Virtual Family Reunification Day 10th Annual Celebration will be held on Saturday, June 15, 2024 (1:00 PM—2:30 PM). To register, [click here](#).
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, commended **Lindsey, Samara**, and the planning committee for their efforts to help visualize what the research says about reunification. This event means a lot to her and **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**. She added she is proud of this Council and its members' participation in and support of this event.
- **Pastor Terry Crist** mentioned that the event holds significant importance. He expressed gratitude to Governor Katie Hobbs for being the first Governor to attend a Family Reunification Day event.
- To view **Lindsey Shine** and **Samara Vaught's** presentation, [click here](#).

Workgroup Updates

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, asked Council members to provide brief updates. The purpose and structure of the Council's workgroups is an ongoing conversation.
 - **Katie O'Dell** invited members to a screening of The Sound of Hope, hosted by [Arizona 1.27](#).
 - **Claire Louge** explained that the [30th Annual Child Abuse Prevention \(CAP\) Conference](#) will be on June 23 and 24. She asked members to provide short videos of their families experiencing joy to use in a video montage at the Conference, and participants have a chance to win prizes.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, reminded members that the next meeting will be on **August 08, 2024, at 10:00 AM** in the Executive Tower. The meeting will be hybrid; members can attend in person or virtually.

Adjournment

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Tonya Hamilton** moved to adjourn.
 - **Berisha Black** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes. The meeting adjourned at **11:44 AM**.

Dated May 10, 2024
Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
Respectfully Submitted By:
Amy Peep
GOYFF