

STATE COUNCIL ON CHILD
ABUSE AND NEGLECT

ANNUAL REPORT



JANUARY 1, 2003 – DECEMBER 31, 2003

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INTRODUCTION

The 1999 General Assembly passed legislation codifying the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and renaming it the *State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)*. *SCCAN* is composed of up to 23 members—legislators, State agencies or associations designate eight members and the Governor appoints fifteen.

SCCAN meets monthly to carry out the duties and responsibilities defined by state and federal law, including the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). *SCCAN* has three mandated committees and several subcommittees. Through the Conference, Legislative, Systems Improvement (Research), and federal Children's Justice Act committees, *SCCAN* engages in a range of activities related to the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

SCCAN's primary purpose found in CAPTA is to, by examining the policies and procedures of State and local agencies and specific cases that the Council considers necessary to perform its duties under this section (of CAPTA), evaluate the extent to which State and local agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. In addition, Maryland Family Law Article § 5-7A-01 -- .09 charges *SCCAN* with the following three responsibilities:

- Plan and implement the annual statewide conference on child abuse and neglect;
- Review and make recommendations concerning legislation to improve the State's response to the problem of child abuse and neglect;
- Review and evaluate State investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases, and make policy and training recommendations to improve system response and intervention.

SCCAN 2003 Members

- *Bill Benton*, Benton and Associates
- *Stephen K. Berry*, Social Services Administration, Department of Human Resources
- *Lucia Biers*, Private Citizen
- *Rev. Lisa Connors*, Private Citizen
- *Linda Davis*, Survivors of Incest Anonymous
- *Diane DePanfilis, PhD*, University of Maryland School of Social Work
- *Howard Dubowitz, MD*, University of Maryland School of Medicine
- *Heather Girvin, PhD*, University of Maryland School of Social Work
- *Sue Hazlett*, State's Attorney Association
- *Edward T. Kilcullen, Jr.*, Maryland CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Association
- *Lawrence F. Kreis, Jr.*, Private Citizen (Chair)
- *The Honorable Susan K.C. McComas*, Maryland House of Delegates
- *Ellen Mugmon*, Private Citizen
- *Mary Louise Orth*, Department of Juvenile Services
- *Pamela Ortiz*, Administrative Office of the Courts
- *Richard Scott/John McGinnis*, Maryland State Department of Education
- *Leslie Shedlin, Esq.*, Private Citizen
- *Charles Shubin, MD*, University of Maryland
- *Linda Spassil*, Private Citizen
- *Joan Stine*, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- *Allen Walker, MD*, Johns Hopkins University

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT COMMITTEE

The Children's Justice Act Committee (CJAC) was reconstituted in January of 2000 as required by Maryland statute and to be in compliance with federal CAPTA. The current committee was established on January 27, 2000 as a sub-committee of the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. The purpose of CJAC is to examine the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases, with an emphasis on child sexual abuse.

In January 2003, CJAC members and staff began to work on refining a survey of local law enforcement agencies in Maryland to identify different approaches and needs related to the investigation of child abuse and neglect cases. The committee staff developed a database to identify all appropriate law enforcement entities to receive the survey instrument. The survey will be completed and analyzed in 2004.

In March 2003 the CJAC met to discuss the HHS triennial state CJA review process, met the new Special Secretary of the Governor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families, discussed the upcoming state child abuse conference, and examined legislative issues that were before the Maryland legislature.

In August 2002, the State issued a Request for Proposals by which to award approximately \$700,000 in CJA funds. These funds were distributed in 2003. This section will highlight the five funded focus areas and the individual grantees within each one.

Enhancing Training in Investigations

- Anne Arundel County Police Department, in cooperation with the County's Department of Social Services
- Caroline County Department of Social Services
- Life Crisis Center (Wicomico County Child Advocacy Center)
- Somerset County Department of Social Services

Enhancing Forensic Interviewing of Children

- Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Inc
- Baltimore County Department of Social Services

Enhancing the Availability and Utilization of Court-Appointed Special Advocates

- Center for Children, Inc (St. Mary's and Charles Counties)
- Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts (Anne Arundel County; Baltimore City; Baltimore County; Carroll County; Harford County; Frederick County; Wicomico and Worcester Counties; Montgomery County; and Prince George's County)

Enhancing Multidisciplinary Teams and Child Advocacy Centers

- Maryland Child Advocacy Center Alliance (statewide)

Enhancing Court Sensitivity to Child Victims and Witnesses

- Howard County Office of the County Executive

- Circuit Court of Baltimore City, Juvenile Division

Children's Justice Act Committee Sponsorship of *Finding Words*

Maryland's Children's Justice Act Committee unanimously agreed to set aside funds to use towards the American Prosecutor's Research Institute (APRI) program, "*Finding Words – Half a Nation by 2010.*" Maryland is one of three jurisdictions selected for participation in this program for the year 2004 and is only one of nine states to be selected since the program's inception in 2001. A team from Maryland completed a detailed application to participate in the program that involved, among other things: securing a commitment from the talented members of the local team; procuring the use of trained actors as well as student volunteers; locating training sites; developing a budget; and identifying the reasons why Maryland should be selected. APRI's goal is to train professionals in 25 states by the year 2010, and clearly Maryland – through this project – will be moving forward as an innovator in the area of forensic interviewing.

Finding Words is an intensive 5-day forensic interviewing course for prosecutors, law enforcement officers, child protection workers and forensic interviewers. In November 2003, Maryland sent its core training team to Minnesota to be trained. All participants successfully completed the program thereby enabling Maryland to move on the stage two of the program, running the training in our state utilizing the faculty of Finding Words. The training will be offered in Maryland three times during 2004.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The Conference Planning Committee plans the Annual Statewide Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect—the Governor's Conference—that is designed to be the best practices mechanism for multidisciplinary training across Maryland. The committee consists of professionals and advocates in the field of child maltreatment.

The Governor's 10th Annual Conference—*In Safe Hands: Protecting Our Children*—took place on April 29, 2003 at the Baltimore Convention Center. There were approximately 700 attendees from various fields such as law, education, home visiting, social work, mental health, faith-based and advocacy. There were over 50 workshops including a separate Medical Track specifically for doctors and other health care professionals. Governor Ehrlich provided the opening remarks for the conference.

The 2003 Conference Planning Committee was co-chaired by Ed Kilcullen of the Maryland CASA Association and Richard Scott of the Maryland State Department of Education. The Planning Committee began meeting in July 2002. The charge of the Planning Committee was to develop the conference theme, issue the Call for Presentations, review and select workshop presentations, select the keynote, review and select annual award recipients, develop a basic fee schedule, and other miscellaneous tasks.

Below is information on the approximately 700 attendees:

- There were approximately 670 people registered for the general conference, 109 of whom were presenters/co-presenters.

- In addition to the 670 regular registrants, 19 attendees participated in the medical track, including 8 presenters.
- Approximately 60 people registered through the State Citizens' Review Board for Children.
- Approximately 60 people registered through Maryland's Court Appointed Special Advocates programs.
- Approximately 50 people registered through the Department of Human Resources, 25 of whom were from the Child Care Administration.
- There were over 20 exhibitors and sponsors.

In addition to the call for general workshops, the Planning Committee organized and solicited workshops for six concentration areas: CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates), CRBC (Citizen's Review Board for Children), Education, Healthy Families, Law Enforcement, and Legal/Law. While any conference attendee was able to register for any workshop, concentration area workshops were designed with a specific audience in mind. Thirty (30) general workshops and 20 concentration area workshops were offered. The average attendance per workshop was 34.

Overall Conference Evaluation Results

Please rate the following	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor
Keynote Speaker	73	105	0	2	0
Plenary Session	74	117	6	2	0
Ease of Registration— courteous and efficient	126	71	2	0	0
Quality of workshop rooms—conducive to learning	83	70	12	4	2
Quality and relevance of workshops	89	92	2	2	1
Location of conference	95	9	16	7	3
Cost of conference	46	79	34	13	3
Quality of food	71	83	21	4	1

Suggestions for Future Workshops

- Mediation skills, techniques and approaches
- Roundtable discussions with judges and masters
- Developing interview protocols for Child Protective Services investigations
- More information about prevention programs, like home visiting

- Techniques to deal with aggressive children, play therapy techniques
- County specific topics and information
- Direct care of children who experience abuse
- More workshops for volunteers who work with abused and neglected children
- For CASA concentration—very basic interviewing skills, where to look for community-based services
- Mental illness and child abuse
- Child Advocacy Centers—forensic interviewing
- Basic child abuse investigation
- Assessment of depression in family settings, Postpartum Depression and Failure to Thrive
- Law enforcement and the judiciary for the Social Worker
- Reunification and safety issues regarding physically and sexually abused kids
- Working with Foster Parents

Summary of Findings

The conference was very successful, as evidenced by the largest turnout ever and, in general, very favorable evaluations. This success is particularly notable given the state budget crisis and the limited training funds available among the public and private agencies that make up the target audience.

There is a growing need for training among professionals and volunteers working in the field of child abuse and neglect, as indicated by the above list of suggested workshops and consistent feedback in conference evaluations for longer workshops, more information, etc.

Lack of funding for the conference creates financial constraints that limit the scale of the conference and significantly hamper marketing strategies to publicize the event and increase attendance. It is likely the conference could become a major regionally or even nationally recognized conference were sufficient funds to be allocated to support it.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The Legislative Committee is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations concerning legislation to improve the State's response to the problem of child abuse. During the 2003 General Assembly session, the committee, on behalf of the entire Council, supported the following bills:

- *SB 67: Criminal Procedure - Period of Probation After Judgment for Sexual Offenses Against Minors.* This bill authorizes the court to extend the maximum period of probation after judgment for defendants convicted of specified sexual offenses involving a victim who is a minor to a period not exceeding the maximum period of confinement for the offense
- *SB 68/ HB 165: Civil Actions - Child Sexual Abuse - Statute of Limitations.* This bill extends the statute of limitations for civil child sexual abuse actions
- *SB 154/HB 104: Criminal Procedure - Criminal Justice Information System*
- *SB 195/HB 550: Family Law - Child Abuse and Neglect - Failure to Report – Penalty.* This bill provides a criminal penalty for failing to report child abuse and neglect

- *SB 249/HB 346: Family Law - Grounds for Absolute Divorce.* This bill prohibits a court from awarding unsupervised visitation with a child to a noncustodial parent who has been found guilty of incest, rape, a sexual offense against a child, or child abuse)
- *SB 412/ HB 823: Family Law - Child Abuse and Neglect - Reporting by Members of the Clergy.* This bill limits a provision that exempts specified members of the clergy from the child abuse and neglect reporting requirements under specified circumstances)
- *SB 453/HB196: Sexual Offenses - Reputation and Opinion Evidence and Evidence of Prior Sexual Conduct – Admissibility.* This bill expands the rape shield law to include child victims of sexual abuse, prohibiting admission in a prosecution reputation and opinion evidence relating to a victim's chastity or abstinence or prior sexual conduct.
- *HB 480: Task Force on Child Welfare System Accountability.* This bill established the task force.

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE (RESEARCH)

The Systems Improvement Committee (SIC) is a subcommittee of the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. Its responsibilities include monitoring Maryland's public child welfare system to identify problems and strengths, evaluating local and state initiatives aimed at improving child welfare practice, and assessing the degree to which current practice is consistent with state and federal policies. A major accomplishment of 2003 was the completion of a screening practices study.

Exploring CPS Screening Practices in Maryland

To explore the degree to which screening practices and decisions are consistent with state policies (DHR, 1996), a collaborative evaluation was undertaken by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Social Services Administration (SSA), the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN), and the University of Maryland Center for Families (UMCFF).

Deciding which referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies are appropriate and should therefore be evaluated is one of the most difficult decisions made by CPS agencies. "The appropriateness of this decision depends on the ability of the worker to elicit critical and accurate information and to apply law and policy to the information gathered" (Well, 2000, p. 3). Prior research on screening decision-making has suggested that many factors affect the decision to accept or not accept the referral as a report of child abuse or neglect that must be investigated (Wells, Fluke, and Brown, 1995). Factors that affect this decision range from differences in referral information, to differences in the training and expertise of workers, to jurisdictional differences in interpreting laws and policies.

Evaluation Methods

Each of the 24 local Maryland jurisdictions were asked to submit copies of all referrals received in their jurisdiction during one month in 2001. Twenty-three jurisdictions submitted copies of their screened out referrals for May 2001 and Baltimore City Department of Social Services submitted all screened out referrals for November 2001. Data regarding the number of investigated CPS reports each jurisdiction received during those same months were also collected from the statewide Client Information System (CIS). In all, 5,023 referrals were

received by CPS agencies during the one-month study period and 1,811 referrals were screened out (an average of 36%).

A coding system was designed to record information about the nature and extent of all referral information, demographic information about the child, information about the referral source, the type of suspected maltreatment (if specified), the result of the history clearance, the basis for the screened out decision, whether the situation was referred for other services, whether there was documentation that the supervisor and/or a panel was involved in the screening decision, and whether the review panel concurred with the screening decision. The case review protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of Maryland, Baltimore Institutional Review Board.

A collaborative review team was developed with policy analysts from SSA and researchers from the UMCFF. Most review team members were social workers, one member was a pediatrician, and one member was a lawyer. Review criteria guided coding decisions. At least two team members reviewed cases at the same time and team discussions were held regarding any case in which the individual coder was uncertain about how to classify case material. The lead team member randomly reviewed approximately 10% of each coder's cases to increase consistency in coding decisions. The lead team member also reviewed cases in which other team members requested a second review. If there were questions about medically related referral information, the pediatrician was consulted. After all data were coded, cases in which incomplete data were coded were flagged and researchers went to the original forms to reconcile missing data.

Summary of Findings

- These 1,811 screened-out referrals involved 2,389 children. Approximately one-third of the screened out-referrals identified concerns about children who were age 6 or under. Forty-one % of referrals identified concerns about children ages 7-13 and the remaining children were either over age 13 (23.4%) or information about the age of children was missing from the referral (4.8%).
- The largest number of screened out referrals originated from school personnel (27.9%) followed by a parent or parent substitute (14.4%).
- It was possible to classify the type(s) of suspected maltreatment in 92% of the referrals. The largest block of screened-out referrals identified suspected neglect (37.9%) followed by suspected physical abuse (34.3%).
- To assess the basis for screened out referrals, coders classified referral information related to five categories of appropriate referrals specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996). The majority of referrals alleging physical abuse did not include accounts of circumstances that would match any of these five categories (59.7%).
- In 45% of the 222 referrals classified as suspected child sexual abuse, coders were unable to match the circumstances to categories of appropriate referral circumstances specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996). In approximately 36% of the screened out-referrals, referral information suggested that a caretaker or family member touched a child.
- In 53% of the 686 referrals classified as suspected child neglect, coders were unable to match the circumstances to categories of appropriate referral circumstances specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996).

- In 82% of the 61 referrals classified as suspected mental injury, coders classified the suspected type as abuse and in 18% the type was coded as neglect.
- The proportion of referrals screened out significantly differed between jurisdictions ranging from 62.5% to 5.6%. Larger jurisdictions tended to screen out fewer referrals (29.8% in Baltimore City; 25.7% in Prince George's County) than the state average (36%).
- Fifteen percent (15%) of the screened out referrals were referred to another DSS service and 10% were referred to a community agency.
- Reasons for screening decisions varied across cases with the most frequent reason being "no injury alleged" (13.4%).
- Coders agreed with the screening decision 83% of the time. The most frequent reason for disagreeing with the screening decision was because the documentation was insufficient to suggest that this was an inappropriate referral. Other reasons were that coders believed that the allegations could indicate abuse or neglect or that the child could be vulnerable due to the circumstances described in the referral. In less than ten of the cases, concerns were serious enough for DHR to ask the local jurisdiction questions about the referral.

Conclusions

This study was undertaken to explore the degree to which screening decisions were consistent with guidance provided in DHR state policies (1996). Findings from the study indicate that most of the time (82%), documentation suggests that the correct decisions were made. However, given the significant differences in the percentage of referrals screened out between jurisdictions in Maryland, DHR may want to provide technical assistance and/or training in some jurisdictions, particularly related to situations that should be accepted for investigation. Furthermore, because some of the reasons for disagreeing with screening decisions were due to incomplete documentation by the screening worker, DHR may want to provide guidance to local jurisdictions about the expectations for documenting decisions. In a couple of jurisdictions, workers actually coded the screening information using categories in state policy. This practice provides important accountability to the agency and should possibly be recommended in other jurisdictions. Future studies should explore whether screening practices change over time, particularly as workloads increase because of the hiring freezes in Maryland. As has been documented nationally, when agencies have fewer resources to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, the percentage of referrals screened out from investigations often increases.

SIC Agenda for 2004

In the wake of mounting evidence that states across the nation are failing to adequately provide for the needs of abused and neglected children, the work of the SIC subcommittee becomes increasingly important. In 2004, the SIC subcommittee will review recent evaluations of Maryland's child welfare systems and offer recommendations for inclusion in improvement plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***Multi-Disciplinary Teams:*** Increase use of the Multi-Disciplinary Team approach so that child victims are interviewed in one place, and that interviewers have special expertise in the interviewing process so that the number of interviews decreases while the quality increases.
- ***Forensic Interviewing Training:*** Provide state-of-the art forensic interviewing training, such as Finding Words, statewide so that interviewers are trained in proper interview techniques. Children are often subjected to too many interviews that are often developmentally inappropriate and lead to inadequate responses and difficulty obtaining prosecutions.
- ***“Finding Words”:*** Provide dedicated training dollars for the Finding Words initiative at the local level so that the training can be replicated in every jurisdiction. Currently, there are three annual regional trainings that are limited to 40 participants each. Ideally, there would be a “train the trainer” model in each jurisdiction to ensure ongoing yearly training in developmentally appropriately interviewing techniques with children.
- ***CPS Screening Practices:*** The Department of Human Resources (DHR) should provide ongoing technical assistance and/or training to local Departments of Social Services regarding criterion for screening in and screening out CPS cases to ensure consistency across jurisdictions. DHR should provide guidance to local jurisdictions regarding the minimum expectations for documenting decisions. In a couple of jurisdictions, workers actually coded the screening information using categories in state policy. This practice provides important accountability to the agency and should be recommended in other jurisdictions. Future studies should be undertaken to explore whether screening practices change over time, particularly as workloads increase because of the hiring freezes in Maryland.
- ***Annual Child Abuse and Neglect Conference:*** Given the growing need for training among professionals and volunteers in the field of child maltreatment and the ongoing success of the Annual Child Abuse and Neglect Conference, a budget line item should be dedicated to support this endeavor. It is likely the conference could become a major regionally or even nationally recognized conference were sufficient funds to be allocated to support it.
- ***Legislation:*** While Maryland has a general child abuse and neglect reporting law and a specific mandated reporting law for those in specific professions, there are no penalties for those who fail to report. The majority of states, approximately *forty-seven*, now provide in their reporting statutes a specific penalty for failure to report suspected cases of abuse. Of these jurisdictions, approximately thirty-five States impose penalties on mandatory reporters who *knowingly, knows or should have known*, or *willfully* fail to report suspected abuse. It is recommended that legislation be passed in Maryland creating a penalty for those mandated reporters who knowingly failure to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

APPENDIX

SCCAN AND THE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT (CAPTA)

SEC. 106. GRANTS TO STATES FOR CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS. [42 U.S.C. 5106a]

- a. CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS.--
 1. ESTABLISHMENT.--
 - A. IN GENERAL.--Except as provided in subparagraph(B), each State to which a grant is made under this section shall establish not less than 3 citizen review panels.
 - B. EXCEPTIONS.--
 - i. ESTABLISHMENT OF PANELS BY STATES RECEIVING MINIMUM ALLOTMENT.--A State that receives the minimum allotment of \$175,000 under section 203(b)(1)(A) for a fiscal year shall establish not less than 1 citizen review panel.
 - ii. DESIGNATION OF EXISTING ENTITIES.--A State may designate as panels for purposes of this subsection one or more existing entities established under State or Federal law, such as child fatality panels or foster care review panels, if such entities have the capacity to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (4) and the State ensures that such entities will satisfy such requirements.
 2. MEMBERSHIP.--Each panel established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be composed of volunteer members who are broadly representative of the community in which such panel is established, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
 3. MEETINGS.--Each panel established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall meet not less than once every 3 months.
 4. FUNCTIONS.--
 - A. IN GENERAL.--Each panel established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall, by examining the policies and procedures of State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, evaluate the extent to which the agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with--
 - i. the State plan under subsection (b);
 - ii. the child protection standards set forth in subsection (b)²; and
 - iii. any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children, including--
 - I. a review of the extent to which the State child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under part E of title IV of the Social Security Act; and

- II. a review of child fatalities and near fatalities (as defined in subsection (b)(4)).
- B. CONFIDENTIALITY.--
 - i. IN GENERAL.--The members and staff of a panel established under paragraph (1)--
 - I. shall not disclose to any person or government official any identifying information about any specific child protection case with respect to which the panel is provided information; and
 - II. shall not make public other information unless authorized by State statute.
 - ii. CIVIL SANCTIONS.--Each State that establishes a panel pursuant to paragraph (1) shall establish civil sanctions for a violation of clause (i).
- 5. STATE ASSISTANCE.--Each State that establishes a panel pursuant to paragraph (1)--
 - A. shall provide the panel access to information on cases that the panel desires to review if such information is necessary for the panel to carry out its functions under paragraph (4); and
 - B. shall provide the panel, upon its request, staff assistance for the performance of the duties of the panel.
- 6. REPORTS.--Each panel established under paragraph (1) shall prepare and make available to the public, on an annual basis, a report containing a summary of the activities of the panel.

SCCAN AND THE MARYLAND FAMILY LAW ARTICLE

§ 5-7A-01.

- (a) There is a State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- (b) The Council is part of the Office for Children, Youth, and Families for budgetary and administrative purposes.

§ 5-7A-02.

- (a) The Council consists of up to 23 members including:
 - (1) a Senator designated by the President of the Senate of Maryland;
 - (2) a Delegate designated by the Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates;
 - (3) a representative of the Department of Human Resources, designated by the Secretary;
 - (4) a representative of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, designated by the Secretary;
 - (5) a representative of the Maryland State Department of Education, designated by the Superintendent;

(6) a representative of the Department of Juvenile Services, designated by the Secretary;

(7) a representative of the Judicial Branch, designated by the Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals;

(8) a representative of the State's Attorneys' Association, designated by the Association;

(9) a pediatrician with experience in diagnosing and treating injuries and child abuse and neglect, who shall be appointed by the Governor from a list submitted by the Maryland chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;

(10) members of the general public with interest or expertise in the prevention or treatment of child abuse and neglect who shall be appointed by the Governor and who shall include representatives from professional and advocacy groups, private social service agencies, and the medical, law enforcement, education, and religious communities; and

(11) at least two individuals who have personal experience with child abuse and neglect within their own families or who have been clients of the child protective services system who shall be appointed by the Governor.

(b) (1) The term of a member appointed under subsection (a)(9), (10), or (11) of this section is 3 years.

(2) An appointed member may serve up to two consecutive 3-year terms.

(3) This section does not affect the term of any person who is a member of the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect on July 1, 1999.

(4) In case of a vacancy, the Governor shall appoint a successor for the remainder of the unexpired term.

(c) All other members of the Council shall continue in office so long as they hold the required qualification and designation specified in subsection (a)(1) through (8) of this section.

§ 5-7A-03.

The Governor shall select a chairperson from among the members of the Council.

§ 5-7A-04.

(a) The Council shall meet not less than once every 3 months.

(b) Members of the Council shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with the Standard State Travel Regulations and as provided in the State budget.

(c) The Council may employ a staff in accordance with the State budget.

§ 5-7A-05.

(a) The Council shall operate with three standing committees.

(b) The Conference Committee shall be responsible for planning and implementing the Council's annual statewide conference on child abuse and neglect. It shall include representation from the public and private sectors.

(c) The Legislative Committee shall be responsible for reviewing and making recommendations concerning legislation to improve the State's response to the problem of child abuse and neglect.

(d) The Federal Children's Justice Act Committee is established in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Children's Justice Act, Public Law 100-294. It shall review and evaluate State investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases, and make policy and training recommendations to improve system response and intervention. The Committee shall include representatives of the State judiciary with criminal and civil trial court docket experience, law enforcement agencies, the Maryland Public Defender's Office, State's Attorneys, the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program, health and mental health professions, child protective services programs, programs that serve children with disabilities, parent groups, and attorneys who represent children.

(e) In addition to the three standing committees, the Council may establish other ad hoc committees as necessary to carry out the work of the Council.

§ 5-7A-06.

(a) In addition to any duties set forth elsewhere, the Council shall, by examining the policies and procedures of State and local agencies and specific cases that the Council considers necessary to perform its duties under this section, evaluate the extent to which State and local agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with:

- (1) the State plan under 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b);
- (2) the child protection standards set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b); and
- (3) any other criteria that the Council considers important to ensure the protection of children, including:
 - (i) a review of the extent to which the State child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption program established under Part E of Title IV of the Social Security Act; and
 - (ii) a review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

(b) The Council may request that a local citizens review panel established under § 5-539.2 of this title conduct a review under this section and report its findings to the Council.

(c) The Council shall coordinate its activities under this section with the State Citizens Review Board for Children, local citizens review panels, and the child fatality review teams in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

(d) The chairperson of the Council may designate members of the Children's Justice Act Committee as special members of the Council for the purpose of carrying out the duties set forth in this section.

§ 5-7A-07.

(a) The members and staff of the Council:

(1) may not disclose to any person or government official any identifying information about any specific child protection case about which the Council is provided information; and

(2) may make public other information unless prohibited by law.

(b) In addition to any other penalties provided by law, the Special Secretary for Children, Youth, and Families may impose on any person who violates subsection (a) of this section a civil penalty not exceeding \$500 for each violation.

§ 5-7A-08.

A unit of State or local government shall provide any information that the Council requests to carry out the Council's duties under § 5-7A-06 of this subtitle.

§ 5-7A-09.

(a) The Council shall report and make recommendations annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on matters relating to the prevention, detection, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including policy and training needs that require the attention and action of the Governor or the General Assembly.

(b) The Council shall annually prepare and make available to the public a report containing a summary of its activities under § 5-7A-05 of this subtitle.