



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
401 E Street, S.W.
CHILD FATALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE
Open Minutes of the January 19, 2023, Meeting

There were 31 attendees:

CFRC Members:

Dr. Kristinza Giese, MD (OCME)	Theresa Early (DHS)
Elizabeth Muffoletto (CFSA)	Marie Cohen (Community)
Dr. Amy Mack (OGVP)	Debbie Allen (DBH)
Allison Losey (OSSE)	Colleen Sonosky (DHCF)
Andrea Allen (DCPS)	Hon. Judge Darlene Soltys (Family Court)
David Gorman (USAO)	Ella Hanson (DC Council)
Erin Cullen (OAG)	Dr. Thomas Farley (DC Health)
Dr. Cheryl Williams (Community)	Collen Sonosky (DHCF)
Sgt. Rick Rice (MPD)	Hon. Brianne Nadeau (DC Council)
Antonio Nunes (DC Council)	

Participants:

Alicia Washington (OAG)	Elizabeth Malomo (CFSA)
Dana Edwards (OAG ATTEND Program)	Dante Daniel (OAG ATTEND Program)
Eric Harris (OAG ATTEND Program)	Charmaine Ford (OAG ATTEND Program)
Anita Dos Santos (OAG ATTEND Program)	

CFRC Staff:

Jessica Edwards (OCME)	Ebele Brown (OCME)
Katherine Barnes (OCME)	Enisa Boardwine (OCME)
Jessica Edwards (OCME)	

Open Meeting (recorded)

I. Greetings and Introductions

The meeting opened at 10:03am with Dr. Kristinza Giese and Theresa Early

providing opening remarks. Quorum was achieved and the roll call for the open portion of the meeting was conducted.

- The CFRC voted to approve the January, Open Agenda as written.
- The open portion of the **November 17, 2022**, minutes were reviewed and accepted with no amendments or corrections.
- No additional members of the public requested attendance at the open portion of the meeting or were present other than those with special invitation.

II. OAG Presentation (ATTEND Program)

An introduction of the ATTEND Program was provided to include the following:

- The ATTEND Program is housed in the Office of the Attorney General and was created to better address the underlying issues of absenteeism and truancy cases that were referred to the OAG for prosecution.
- The program works in conjunction with DCPS, and mediation partners and has a target population of children ages 9-12 who have unexcused absences.

The ATTEND Program Power Point was presented by the ATTEND Program team.

Discussion:

- A member noted that there are numerous programs across the District and inquired about the difference between the ATTEND program and the PASS (Parent and Adolescent Support Services) program and the ACE (Alternative to Court Experiences) programs at DHS. It was advised that the ACE program targets older children ages 13 and older and includes status offense (PENS) and delinquency cases, and works directly with youth in tandem with DHS, whereas the ATTEND program works with the youth and their parent/guardian- which then can impact the child. The PASS program is in the schools and children are referred to the program, however if they continue to experience absenteeism (at the 7th day mark), they are then referred to the ATTEND program where mediation with the parent occurs, and underlying issues that cause the child to miss school are addressed. The ATTEND program may work hand in hand with the PASS program as well.
- A member inquired about the specifics of the housing issues that were identified as barriers for families in the ATTEND program. It was noted that the issues were subjectively experienced but were frequently related to delinquent rental payments and homelessness (primarily in Ward 5, 6 where the shelters are located.) Additionally, some families live in transitional housing units and their time there expires, which results in

transient housing situations. The ATTEND program can assist families obtain housing vouchers (where eligible) or some level of housing assistance (to pay only a percentage of the rent.) For example, the program utilizes the Hotpads.com website to identify housing that falls within the limits of the family vouchers.

- A member noted that one of the early red flags of youth who are involved in gun violence is truancy from school and inquired about how the program effectiveness would be tracked, specifically outcomes data? The member also noted that it would not be a good thing if all of the unexcused absences turned to excused absences. OAG advised that they agreed with this notion and advised that the goal of the program was to ensure that the kids are actively and regularly attending school and not just simply submitting excuse notes. Therefore, addressing the underlying issues that result in absenteeism is key. Additionally, the effectiveness data of the program is in its early stages because of the pandemic (which warranted a restart of the data review.) However, it was noted that the attendance records are being reviewed to see if the students are attending school regularly and not just submitting excused absence notes. Additionally, the numbers are very preliminary, but the communication from the school staff is very indicative of positive impacts to school attendance (which has prompted other schools to request the ATTEND program at their school.) It was further noted that at this time the data is skewed relative to the pandemic. The ATTEND program rep advised that a methodology has been developed to shape the data in the most appropriate way, which was determined to be reviewing attendance data 90 days before the mediation and 90 days after the mediation. Previous data demonstrated peaks and lows of unexcused absences within 30-day increments. As the data is in its preliminary stages (it was noted attendance was not tracked during the period of March 2020 to August 2020 during the pandemic by DCPS.) Further, it is important to recognize incremental steps in moving families writing valid excuse notes, which not only helps the data, but also bolsters the culture and the “buy in” to school attendance and commitment to academics.
- A member inquired about the criteria that makes a student/family ineligible for the ATTEND program. It was advised that instances that make a student/family ineligible include: a) when there is a referral to the ATTEND program but a case has already been opened by CFSA or b) a referral is made for a student to the program, but the parent/family failed to report that they had moved to another state or had transferred the child to another school outside of the District. The member also inquired about the incentives or penalties of the program and was advised that the program deflects the criminal prosecution process, provides a neutral setting for mediation/communication, as well as sets a formal tone for the seriousness of attending school, without the criminal

proceedings.

- The Co-Chair inquired about how the public is made aware of the ATTEND program events and how donations can be made to the program? It was advised that an approved flyer or newsletter is sent to schools for distribution to students and the community. Those interested in making donations can contact the ATTEND office and advise of what they are interested in donating. Additionally, ATTEND staff get together to identify what each school culture is and what is needed, and how the program can assist in generating a new event or support an event the school has already established- so it really is by a school-by-school basis as the cultures and needs vary. For example, flyers were distributed at the OAG office, ATTEND program partners offices, as well as at the community schools. It was further noted that donation sites can be set up at partner locations and the ATTEND program reps can go and pick the donations up-so it really depends.
- A member inquired whether the ATTEND program planned on working with additional schools outside of the one's currently engaged in Wards 7 and 8, as well as chartered schools? It was advised that program expansion depends on funding (it was shared that the DC Council has been asked to fund the program, as they have done so in the past) because it takes a lot of resources to provide the hands-on engagement in the schools and with students. Additionally, the program is working with at least one chartered school currently.
- It was advised that the committee could receive the presentation slides. Additionally, the Co-Chair thanked OAG for the informative and engaging presentation at the close of the discussion.

III. Adjournment

- The Co-Chair provided closing remarks with the following legislative statement:
“This meeting is hereby closed to the public for the following reasons-
Open Meetings Act section B12 and 14; and 14 and §4-1371.08.”

CFRC members voted to close the open portion of the meeting and move into closed session. The next CFRC meeting is scheduled for **February 16, 2023**.