**Child Abuse and Neglect Work Group Notes**

January 5, 2015

Dr. Zuckerman began the meeting with introductions and agenda overview. Our objectives for the meeting included the following:

* + - Heard updates from Dr. Andrew Zuckerman
    - Reviewed and provided feedback on the revised *Child Abuse and Neglect Work Group* recommendations document
    - Shared feedback with the larger group

Dr. Zuckerman:

* Updated the work group members on upgrading the December 17 notes and adding some further information based on their feedback.
* Asked work group members to spend some quiet time reading over the proposed recommendations and discuss thoughts/ideas with table partners before sharing out with the larger group.
* Asked committee members to make note of the timely nature of this work as the January 13 Board of Education meeting was one week away.

The following are notes regarding work group members’ feedback identified in the discussion. Work group members commented that some of the comments referenced issues that would be addressed in drafting the revised policy and regulation, and in the implementation efforts more generally.

**(Area 1): Revise the Board of Education’s policy and the MCPS regulation on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect, and update them on a regular basis, to reflect current practices in the area and ensure efficient collaboration with County partner agencies.**

***Suggested Revisions/Questions:***

* Incorporate language to emphasize that MCPS will ensure compliance with the revised and updated reporting procedures and requirements.
* Add specific language about the process of reporting.
* Clarify statement that MCPS is in compliance with existing federal and state law to make clear that the revised and updated requirements seek to go further than the law currently requires in order to ensure even more robust requirements for MCPS.
* Clarify which sections speak to parent responsibilities, employee responsibilities, and county partner responsibilities
* As these recommendations are implemented, we will need to clarify what information will be reported to the Board of Education—what statistics will be reported?
* Clearly identify in the recommendations the definition for abuse and neglect, including that it covers physical and sexual abuse.
* Recommendation 1.2—the language should clarify more precisely what it means that MCPS will not conduct internal investigations prior to reporting to CPS.
* Craft statements that begin with “MCPS employees will…”
* Integrate a statement that captures that just because a case is turned over to CPS, the school does not “wash its hands” of the child/family. Schools also serve as a support network to the child/family.
* Ensure that county agency employees, such as nurses, are covered by the updated policy and regulation.
* As these recommendations are implemented, we will need to ensure against loopholes in coverage. One work group member suggested using the term “people in position of authority” to apply to employees, volunteers, and service providers. The work group members agreed that the revised and updated policy and regulation will need to ensure clarity in terms of their coverage and application.
* As implementation plans for these recommendations are drafted, we will need to develop impact statements for this work, including increased expectations/responsibilities for employees and potential budget implications.

**(Area 2): Enhance human resources management systems and processes to ensure robust screening of new and existing employees, volunteers, and outside contractors.**

***Suggested Revisions/Questions:***

* A provision should be added to enhance MCPS systems for monitoring misconduct by substitute teachers.
* Add language to ensure that employee’s rights and the rights to privacy are respected.
* How do we close the loop on getting that information if an employee is arrested in another state? Can we consider language about self-reporting?
* Recommendation to read/share the Howard County Public Schools policy as a model for MCPS’ work to revise its policy and regulation.
* The work group discussed possible models and processes for updating employee background information. Discussion focused on a possible protocol for employees to self-report when they have been arrested. Some concerns were raised about whether this process would apply to all arrests, including protesting, or only those related to child abuse or neglect.
* Consider using outside experts to guide this work, in addition to the county partner agencies.

**(Area 3): Design and implement updated training for all employees in accordance with the most current practices for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.**

***Suggested Revisions/Questions:***

* 3.2—Are you suggesting that you are going to have 23,000 employees trained by June 2015? Answer? Answer as soon as possible.
* Goal is to not undertake internal investigations prior to reporting to CPS/police and then not to conduct an investigation without consultation with county partner agencies.
* Training should incorporate materials from national experts, such as the *Darkness to Light* program.
* Clear and consistent message to principals about reporting.

**Conclusion/Meeting Wrap-Up**

* Work group members requested more time to review and comment on the draft recommendations.
* Dr. Zuckerman stated he would send the draft recommendations via e-mail for feedback, due back by Wednesday, January 7, 2015.
* Dr. Zuckerman reminded the work group members that this document contains recommendations, and implementation will be more detailed.