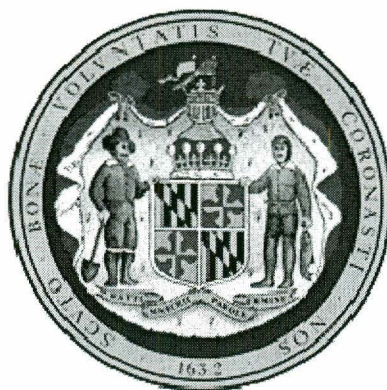


MARYLAND  
STATE COUNCIL ON CHILD  
ABUSE AND NEGLECT

ANNUAL REPORT



JANUARY 1, 2004 – DECEMBER 31, 2004

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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 (8) members and the Governor appoints fifteen (15).

*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; and
- 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 2004 Members*

- *Bill Benton*, Benton and Associates (partial year)
- *Dorothy Askew-Sawyer*, Family and Children's Services (partial year)
- *Stephen K. Berry*, Social Services Administration, Department of Human Resources
- *Lucia Biers*, Private Citizen (partial year)
- *Linda Davis*, Survivors of Incest Anonymous
- *Diane DePanfilis, PhD*, University of Maryland School of Social Work (partial year)
- *Matthew Dolan*, Private Citizen
- *Howard Dubowitz, MD*, University of Maryland School of Medicine
- *Heather Girvin, PhD*, University of Maryland School of Social Work
- *The Honorable Sharon M. Grosfeld*, Maryland Senate
- *Sue Hazlett*, State's Attorney Association
- *Jessica Hill*, Wicomico County Sheriff's Department (partial year)
- *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
- *Mary Louise Orth/Alexander Obeahon*, 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
- *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 (CJAC)

The Children's Justice Act Program was established in 1986 by Congress as Section 109 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). In order to be eligible for these funds each State must have a standing CJA Committee that establishes priority areas and criteria for funding based on a triennial assessment of the administrative, judicial and investigative handling of child maltreatment in the State, with an emphasis on child sexual abuse. Within this targeted areas of focus, the three immediate goals of the CJA Program are to:

- reduce the secondary victimization of children by the administrative/investigative/legal system;
- increase the chances of successful prosecution of the abuser or molester; and
- improve the procedures for protecting all children from maltreatment.

In 2003, the CJA was amended to add a new area of focus for State CJAC funding activities: the handling of cases involving children with disabilities or with serious health related problems who are victims of maltreatment.

The ten priority areas identified by CJAC are:

- enhance medical expertise by improving child sex abuse evaluations;
- enhance the availability of Court Appointed Special Advocates to children involved in the adjudication of child maltreatment case;
- enhance Child Protective Services training in investigating reports of child maltreatment;
- enhance the police response to investigating reports of child maltreatment;
- enhance court sensitivity to child victims and witnesses;
- enhance the use of multi-disciplinary teams and Child Advocacy Centers;
- enhance the capacity to review deaths from child maltreatment with the goal of better understanding and more effectively responding to child fatalities;
- enhance interventions for children with disabilities who are vulnerable to or victims of child maltreatment;
- enhance services that address secondary traumatic stress of child protective service staff and police exposed to major child maltreatment cases; and
- enhance initial mental health evaluation and crisis treatment for children and family members during the investigation and adjudication of child maltreatment.

**Law Enforcement Survey.** In February 2004, a survey was sent out to all branches of law enforcement in Maryland that respond to reports of child abuse and neglect. The survey was designed to obtain information as to: (1) how law enforcement officers respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, (2) how investigations of child abuse and neglect proceed, (3) general protocol related to child abuse and neglect, and (4) any other information relating to collection of data and desired resources.

The survey was developed over the course of one year. Over 550 surveys were sent out and, as of April 2004, 114 surveys had been returned. At least one survey was returned from every county and Baltimore City. Several responders also included letters, copies of protocols, and expanded answers. The responses revealed a great variation in the way these cases are handled throughout

the State. Most notably, the majority of the responders indicated a great need for training, more staff, and increased use of specialized children's advocacy centers or multi disciplinary teams. All of these results are consistent with Maryland's priority areas for CJA grants. In addition, law enforcement training is a significant component of the *Finding Words* training described below, which is taking place in three locations throughout the state.

**Grants.** On May 28, 2004, a Notice of Availability of Funds was issued to the Local Management Boards (LMBs) requesting bids for CJAC grants. The LMBs will contract with local vendors to perform the tasks and/or provide the services identified in their respective proposals, ensuring that the money is targeted to those specific areas of need that local communities identified. Members of CJAC will be available to local communities to provide technical assistance in their areas of expertise. Listed below are summaries of the 2004 Children's Justice Act Grant Recipients:

- **Caroline County Human Services Council was awarded \$37,173** to use on a variety of projects. They will conduct a volunteer outreach/media campaign for the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, as well creating a Mid-Shore Multi-Disciplinary Child Sexual Abuse Services Training. Additionally, they will use some funds to send multi-disciplinary team members to *Finding Words Maryland*. Finally, some funds will be used to furnish the Child Assessment Center with the necessary audio/video equipment to ensure investigative interviews are conducted in an effective and timely manner and in a safe environment.
- **Harford County Partnership for Families, Inc was awarded \$6,328** to conduct a Child Abuse Symposium coordinated by the Local Management Board, Harford County Child Advocacy Center, the local Department of Social Services, and Family and Children's Services. The purpose of the symposium is to enhance the skills and increase the knowledge of professionals working in investigative, judicial, therapeutic, and child welfare systems in Harford County regarding child abuse and neglect. The program will be held in April 2005 to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- **Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families was awarded \$48,963** to fund an information technology consultant and a half-time data manager to design and operationalize an automated database system for the Montgomery County Child Assessment Center. The development of a case tracking and review capability is a critical to the Center's continued work toward accreditation as a Child Advocacy Center by the National Children's Alliance, the National Association of Child Advocacy Centers.
- **Prince George's County Commission for Children, Youth and Families was awarded \$16,468** to create and staff a Children's Waiting Room at the Courthouse and/or to fund a much-needed part-time staff person with the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program.
- **Somerset County Local Management Board was awarded \$12,880** to lease office space to open up the County's first Child Advocacy Center. The purpose of the Center, located in Princess Anne, Maryland, is to provide a child-friendly, neutral environment where social workers, law enforcement, and State's Attorneys can collaboratively conduct a sound forensic interview in cases of child maltreatment.

- **Wicomico County Partnership for Families and Children was awarded \$10,543** to conduct a Victim Recantation Training. The training will examine the psychological and sociological dynamics of child abuse as it affects recantation, the investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse cases with recanting witnesses, and rehabilitating the credibility of a child after an induced recantation. An innovative curriculum outlining best practices will be developed for this training and will be available at cost after the conference.
- **Worcester County's Initiative to Preserve Families was awarded \$14,112** to conduct an Improving Investigations of Child Maltreatment Interagency Conference. This training will be a best practices conference held in Ocean City, Maryland to meet the identified needs of Worcester County child maltreatment investigators. It will offer training sessions to enhance medical expertise, Child Protective Services training, police response training, and it will explore the feasibility of developing a Child Advocacy Center in the County.

**Finding Words Maryland.** In October of 2002, Maryland became one of the first 10 states to be admitted to the American Prosecutors Research Institute's Half A Nation by 2010 initiative, a forensic interviewing course for law enforcement officers, child protection caseworkers, and prosecutors. The course was modeled after and developed in collaboration with CornerHouse, a child sexual abuse evaluation and training facility in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The first three Finding Words Maryland trainings occurred in 2004. The program was at-capacity and the participants were unanimous in their praise for the program. Maryland is now the ninth state to become certified to facilitate the Finding Words training.

Funding for Finding Words has been provided solely through the Children's Justice Act Grant and from minimal student registration fees. In May 2004, the CJA Coordinator held a stakeholders meeting with the presidents of the State's Attorney's Office and the Child Advocacy Center Alliance and representatives from the Department of Human Resources and Maryland Police Training Commission to plan for Maryland's Finding Words 2005 and beyond. There is strong commitment and support for this initiative across the State, and three trainings are scheduled for 2005. At the end of Finding Words Maryland's first year, professionals from 17 of the 24 jurisdictions had been trained in the forensic interviewing protocol.

**Miscellaneous Activities.** The Co-Chairs and CJA Coordinator attended the annual CJA Grantees Meeting in Washington, D.C., and CJAC sent four individuals to the *Beyond Finding Words* training in South Carolina. In 2005, CJAC will be hosting a workshop at the Governor's Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect to discuss changes in CAPTA with respect to children with disabilities who are victims of abuse or neglect and the problems that confront that community. Finally, CJAC is planning to schedule a series of roundtable discussions with the law enforcement community to discuss the findings from the law enforcement survey.

#### **2004 Children's Justice Act Committee Members**

Roger Friedman, Co-Chair, Psychologist  
 Leslie Shedlin, Co-Chair, State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect  
 Sgt. David Betz, Harford County Child Advocacy Center  
 Shirley Brown, Department of Human Resources

Hon. Philip T. Caroom, Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County  
Laura Chase, Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office  
Lisa Fillpot, Legal Aid Bureau  
Althea Stewart Jones, Foster Care Court Improvement Project  
Edward Kilcullen, Maryland CASA Association  
Mary Jo Livingston, Office of the Public Defender  
Cristine Marchand, The Arc of Maryland  
Phillip J. Merson, Governor's Office for Children, Youth, & Families  
Madeline Morey, Frederick County Child Advocacy Center  
Ellen Mugmon, State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Hon. Katherine D. Savage, Circuit Court of Montgomery County  
J. Charles Smith, III, Deputy State's Attorney's Office  
Hon. Martin Welch, Circuit Court for Baltimore City  
Alisa Santucci, Governor's Office for Children, Youth, & Families, Staff

### **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 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference—*Securing the Safety Net for Maryland's Children*—took place on April 29, 2004 at the Baltimore Convention Center. There were approximately 800 attendees from various fields such as law, education, home visiting, social work, mental health, faith-based and advocacy. There were over 40 workshops including a separate Medical Track specifically for doctors and other health care professionals. First Lady Kendall S. Ehrlich provided the opening remarks for the conference and Dr. Bruce Perry provided the keynote.

The 2004 Conference Planning Committee was co-chaired by Ed Kilcullen of the Maryland CASA Association and Janice Kispert of the Frederick County Child Advocacy Center. The Planning Committee began meeting in September 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 800 attendees:

- There were approximately 694 people registered for the general conference, 101 of whom were presenters/co-presenters.
- In addition to the 694 regular registrants, 21 attendees participated in the medical track, including 8 presenters.
- Approximately 69 people registered through the State Citizens' Review Board for Children.
- Approximately 59 people registered through Maryland's Court Appointed Special Advocates programs.
- Approximately 50 people registered through the Department of Human Resources.

- There were over 27 exhibitors and sponsors.

In addition to the call for general workshops, the Planning Committee organized and solicited workshops for five concentration areas: CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates), CRBC (Citizen’s Review Board for Children), Early Childhood, Legal/Law, and Juvenile Justice/Institutional Abuse). While any conference attendee was able to register for any workshop, concentration area workshops were designed with a specific audience in mind. Twenty-seven (27) general workshops and 17 concentration area workshops were offered. The average attendance per workshop was 41.

**Overall Conference Evaluation Results**

<b>Please rate the following</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Keynote Speaker	70%	26%	4%	0	0
Ease of Registration— courteous and efficient	70%	24%	4%	2%	<1%
Quality of workshop rooms—conducive to learning	57%	38%	4%	1%	<1%
Quality and relevance of workshops	56%	38%	5%	1%	<1%
Location of conference	48%	42%	10%	0	0
Cost of conference	29%	42%	21%	5%	3%
Quality of food	49%	43%	5%	2%	1%

**Suggestions for Future Workshops**

- More on mediation
- Developing interview protocols for CPS investigations
- More information about prevention programs
- Techniques to deal with aggressive children, play therapy techniques
- County specific topics and information
- More on direct care of children who experience abuse
- More workshops for volunteers
- For CASA concentration—really basic interview skills, where to look for community-based services
- Mental illness and child abuse
- CAC—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
- More information concerning practical techniques for interfacing with children in crisis
- More workshops focused on clinical interventions and more hands-on learning opportunities
- More workshops geared toward the pre-school population
- Would like members of legislature to attend on a panel to hear concerns and brainstorm on youth issues

### **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**

- Lobbied and testified before the Senate Judicial Affairs Committee and the House Judiciary on behalf of SB237, HB 1098, a bill to require members of the clergy to report child abuse and neglect. The bill failed in both houses.
- Lobbied and testified before the Senate Judicial Affairs Committee and the House Judiciary on behalf of SB 98, which would have mandated penalties for failure to report child abuse and neglect. The bill was withdrawn.
- Testified before the Senate Budget Committee in support of a public health initiative in the DHMH budget to aid child victims of abuse and neglect.
- Testified on behalf of SB 772, H.B. 1202, the Child Welfare Workforce Initiative of 2004.
- Testified before the House Judiciary Committee against H.B. 325 a bill to exempt from the definition of child abuse, reasonable punishment administered by a parent or stepparent of a minor.

### **SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

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. In 2004, much of the Systems Improvement Committee's work was shaped by the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).

- Members reviewed results of the CFSR audit.
- (Along with other SCCAN members), SI Committee members met with Dr. Satyshur, Executive Director of the Social Services Administration of the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to discuss CFSR findings and their implications.
- Member of the SI Committee is participating in the development of the PIP.
- CFSR findings suggested that additional research in the areas of *scarcity of services* and *recurrences* would be useful.
- Developing a survey that will be distributed to local panels. The survey will include questions that explore the availability of services to families across Baltimore city and the surrounding counties.
- Working with DSS to compile data that will allow us to explore recurrence rates across MD jurisdictions.
- Reviewing research that examines recurrence in child welfare (creating a bibliography that will become a source of information for professionals, advocates, and policymakers).

During 2004, the SI Committee also has aimed to augment its capacity to function as an informational resource for practitioners and policymakers in the state of Maryland. In pursuit of this objective, the SI Committee is:

- Gathering resources on promising practices in child welfare, paying particular attention to differential response.
- Developing an overview of key child welfare practices and procedures in Maryland. Currently, the SI Committee is creating a summary presentation of Maryland's intake and screening procedures. The presentation will be shared with SCCAN members and be made available to other interested professionals and advocates who need to familiarize themselves with some of MD's child welfare procedures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Plan for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor's Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect to be held in the fall of 2006.
- Continue the work of the Children's Justice Act Committee with Finding Words and grants to promising practices.
- Recruit new Council members as many current members are reaching the close of their membership.
- Explore legislation to allow maintaining information on ruled-out cases longer than 120 days. Many recurrences come from ruled-out cases. By maintaining data, we can track families, study trends and patterns, and do a better job of identifying families specific needs (type/length of service needed, etc.).
- Explore differential response and the possibility of suggesting legislative action to change Maryland's child abuse/neglect statute.
- Pursue completion of the service array survey and explore using existing local Child Protection review panels to conduct the reviews.
- Review proposed legislation in the upcoming General Assembly and provide information and advise elected officials when appropriate.

## DISCUSSION

It is important to note that there was a disruption to the operation of the activities of the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect during 2005 delaying production of this report. The State legislature greatly reduced the responsibilities of the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families, the office where SCCAN was placed for administrative purposes. Staff of that office was significantly reduced requiring the Council to take on more of their own support functions. Additionally, the Chair of the Council resigned in the spring of 2005. Presently, administrative responsibility for SCCAN has shifted to the Department of Human Resources, an interim Chair appointed and new members are being recruited.

## 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)<sup>2</sup>; 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.