

Child Support Guidelines Review Panel
November 16, 2011

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Amy Atkinson
Craig M. Burshem, Esq.
Heather A. Cooper, Esq.
Hilton W. Graham, II
Reeves Mahoney, Esq.
Jennifer D. Oram-Smith, Esq.
Senator Frederick M. Quayle
The Honorable A. Ellen White

Members Not Present:

Jennifer Crown
Delegate G. Manoli Loupassi
Paul McLean
The Honorable Wilford Taylor, Jr.
Delegate Ron Villanueva
Michael Woods

Staff Members Present:

Alice G. Burlinson
Cynthia G. Coiner
Melody C. McKinley
C. Robert Owen

I. Welcome and Introductions

Senator Quayle

Senator Quayle welcomed everyone and introduced Nathaniel (Nick) L. Young, Jr., Deputy Commissioner and Director of the Division of Child Support Enforcement.

II. Introduction of Commissioner Brown

Nick Young

Mr. Young expressed his appreciation for Senator Quayle's years of service on the Guidelines Review Panel and for his support of the Division of Child Support Enforcement and the children of Virginia. Mr. Young noted that Senator Quayle was named National Legislator of the Year by the National Child Support Enforcement Association in 2002.

Mr. Young introduced Martin Brown, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services. Commissioner Brown has held several positions under various governors over the last several years and was largely responsible for making welfare reform work in Virginia. Commissioner Brown's current focus is on reducing out-of-wedlock births, reconnecting fathers with their children and creating and sustaining intact two-parent families. Commissioner Brown has two children, ages nine and eleven.

III. Comments from the Commissioner

Martin D. Brown

Commissioner Brown recognized Senator Quayle for his service on the Panel and thanked Mr. Young and the public servants of the Division for their good work. He noted that his goals are to provide the best social services delivery system possible and to strengthen families. The Division is a valuable ally to families in those efforts. The Department of Social Services is serving 1.5 million people—900,000 receive

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits; 916,000 receive Medicaid services; and 420,000 children (one in four) are part of a child support enforcement case.

Commissioner Brown stated that the Division is one of the best child support enforcement organizations in the U.S., collecting \$7 for every \$1 spent on the program. He noted that the Division employs and is exploring a variety of ways to help families throughout the process, including initiatives such as the Intensive Case Monitoring Program. The Panel crafts policy which moves the child support enforcement program forward and provides an opportunity to improve aspects of the guidelines.

The Commissioner spoke about Princeton University's Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which revealed that at the time their child was born out-of-wedlock, 50% of unmarried parents were living together and another 32% were romantically involved. Most wanted to get married and form a family. However, by the end of the child's first year, only a small percentage had married and after three years, most couples were no longer together. This study emphasizes the importance of supporting families starting at the time of delivery to increase their chances of forming and sustaining a stable, intact two-parent family.

The Commissioner wants to enforce child support laws aggressively but also shift the focus to reducing the need for services and decreasing the number of children in the Division's caseload. He asks that the Panel keep this in mind in approaching the guideline review.

IV. Survey Results

Craig Burshem

Mr. Burshem noted that various stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth had been contacted and asked about issues which should be addressed in the survey. Once the final web-based Child Support Guideline Survey 2011 was completed, a request was sent to stakeholders asking that they forward the survey link to anyone who might be interested in participating.

Mr. Burshem gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the survey results and provided a handout summarizing results for each question. Two hundred eighty-nine people responded, including 164 attorneys and 85 noncustodial or custodial parents. Plans are underway to solicit more responses, possibly to include having Division representatives hand out the survey to parties in court. Mr. Burshem asked members to review the raw data and digest the info so that the Panel can decide at its next meeting which issues it would like to consider for further research. Mr. Burshem thanked Alice Burlinson and Melody McKinley for their work in analyzing survey results. Senator Quayle added his appreciation for the work that went in to the survey and encouraged Panel members to review the results and consider which issues are most important. Mr. Burshem's powerpoint presentation and the survey results will be posted on the Panel's website.

V. Election of a New Chairperson

Senator Quayle

Senator Quayle noted that, because of his retirement, the Panel needed to elect a new chairperson. Senator Quayle said he has enjoyed his years on the Panel, appreciates

everyone's hard work and is disappointed that, thus far, the Panel has not been able to convince the General Assembly to revise the guidelines.

Senator Quayle asked for nominations from the Panel. Amy Atkinson nominated The Honorable A. Ellen White. Heather Cooper seconded the nomination. After a unanimous vote from the Panel, Judge White was named the new chairperson and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

VI. Administrative Issues

Alice Burlinson

- Set 2012 meeting dates – Ms. Burlinson will contact Judge White for her available dates then send an online survey to other Panel members. She will circulate the meeting dates once they are determined.
- Travel vouchers and legislators' per diem – contact Ms. Burlinson with questions.
- Public comments – Ms. Burlinson asked that public hearing speakers submit their written comments at the meeting. If they did not have written comments with them, she asked they submit them by November 30, 2011. Comments are always welcome but those tied to this meeting should be submitted by the end of the month. All written comments will be posted on the Panel's website.
- Emails - Ms. Burlinson provided members with a compilation of all comments that have come to the Panel's email address (identifying information was removed). Emails which referenced specific cases were referred to the Division. Each person who sent an email received a return response under Mr. Burshem's name.

VII. Public Hearing

All

The following persons provided public comments:

1. Kenneth Skilling
2. Gail Hubert
3. Diane Poljacik
4. Brian Larson
5. Ed McMichael
6. Stuart Miller
7. Fred Hawkins
8. Annie M. Thomas
9. Rickey Carr

VIII. Adjourn

The Panel adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Action Items for Staff:

- Post the following items on the Panel's website.
 - Survey powerpoint, complete survey results and summary handout
 - Written comments submitted by speakers
 - Minutes, upon approval of Panel
- Contact Judge White for available dates for 2012 meetings, survey Panel members for their dates, and circulate finalized calendar.