

## **Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force: Comments Received by Email Following the 5/14 Task Force Meeting**

The following comments were sent for consideration as the Task Force Recommendations are advanced for review and vote.

### **Jason Sharpe Partners in Equity YMCA of San Diego**

I am not in this work because it was a calling. I just answered the door one day and had my son legally kidnapped. There are other systems at play building labels and disenfranchising families. This is not something I went to school for. I am not seeking leadership, advancement, or retirement in this field. My intent is making forums like this completely unnecessary. However while these forums exist, I believe the ratio of lived experts should be far greater. I do not believe this task force has the data necessary to do this work completely. I also don't believe the means to gather the accurate data currently exist and are built into these recommendations. Public commentary about the individual counties' child welfare systems should be collected in real-time. The public should have access to its own data from collection to dissemination allowing all parties to form opinions and demonstrate patterns. I believe our community and families' votes are the only ones that truly matter. The public should be included in all aspects of these processes to ensure issues move forward.

The lived experience group disrupted the task force and status quo. This is not an indictment on anyone or meant to be any disrespect of all the hard work put in. I'm just not satisfied. I don't feel like my intentions were truly captured in this document. I don't believe there are any tangible accountability mechanisms simple enough to explain to my 6 year old son or to my 18 year old daughter. The use of require, encourage, recommend, is too inconsistent in use. Reasoning being that the Task Force has no jurisdiction in other groups but "require" was interchanged with "encourage" many times in reference to CDSS. There is no guarantee of "lived experts" being involved in future processes based on the use of language like "to as much extent as possible" etc. How many lived-experts were involved with the writing team? How was that person handpicked? How far removed are they from people suffering from Mandated Reporting currently? If we leave people who experienced and are currently experiencing this system out of the most critical areas of this Task Force how can we trust that the recommendations will be anything more than self praise and additions to resumes. I want to keep dreaming.

I envision a world where child welfare shows up and we cheer for them like we do for the fire department. Heroes who courageously fix problems. Who care for everyone regardless of race. Imagine a mobile unit with medical, dental, therapists, armed with culturally-competent conflict resolution, video games and healthy food. All barriers to resources addressed at your front door. I don't believe a recommendation can address these rooms with high costs of admission and the administrators being so far removed from the frontlines. So far from the spine tingling cries from parents and children being separated. I believe the environment of these conversations is far too comfortable for the deciders and not welcoming enough to those whom these decisions impact the most. While many excuses may include lack of funding or needs for legislative bodies, there is always funding for the court dates, CPS workers, and child detention centers.

Lastly, there isn't any strategy that clearly aims to address the disproportionality of race in child welfare interventions. WE HAVE FAILED TO INTERVENE. Maybe it is still a myth to some in this group just like police

brutality was before Covid-19 forced everyone to watch circumstances caught on camera phones, which forced what my grandparents drilled into my head into your living rooms. This forced officers to wear body cameras and I believe social workers should be included due to this being FAMILY POLICING.

## **Eve Sheedy**

### **Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence Expert and Consultant**

#### **Sheedy Consulting, LLC**

I have tremendous appreciation for the work that has gone into the creation, logistics and success of the MRCS Task Force. I understand the huge scope of the work, the limited time frame and the differing viewpoints that had to be accommodated. I know that it has taken hours and hours of hard work and that all involved have profound dedication to addressing the myriad issues that plague the mandatory reporting system. That said, I have the following comments:

1. I am disappointed that Recommendation #5 includes language that "reminds" mandatory reporters that they can still report general neglect. First, our subcommittee worked hard to come to a bold recommendation. We voted and approved language that did not include that provision. Moreover, inclusion of that language undermines our position. General neglect is one of the "doorways" through which both explicit and implicit bias enters the child protection system. It is, at best, a vague provision which encourages reporting so that even someone concerned about a child's welfare can "discharge their obligation" and be done with it. Our goal, as I understand it, is to move away from over-surveillance. This language does the opposite.

Critically, "general neglect" is one of the pathways that is used to report incidents of domestic violence, whether those incidents are recent, whether they represent a threat of immediate harm, or whether a child is actually in danger. By keeping this doorway open, survivors of domestic violence are brought into this system notwithstanding their protective parenting and notwithstanding their own victimization. Children whose safety could be assured by keeping them with their survivor parents are torn from them and pitted against them. The result is that the intergenerational cycle of trauma and violence continues as a result of state action. Our subcommittee recognized this harm and discussed it frequently. Inclusion of the unnecessary language regarding the option to report (which does not appear anywhere else in CANRA) continues to encourage reporting in cases that can best be handled by community based services, without government intervention.

I object, both as a member of the NLDN subcommittee and as a person who has dedicated her career to addressing domestic violence, to the inclusion of this unnecessary language which will, undoubtedly work to cause harm to those whose voice is already silenced by the mandatory reporting system.

2. I am disappointed that the recommendations do not do more to recognize the importance of fairly understanding and addressing domestic violence within the child welfare system. Despite estimates from 20-50% of cases involving domestic violence, domestic violence is mentioned only one time in the recommendations - in the training section. There were other places where domestic violence could have been recognized, including in the make-up of the MRAC. Guaranteeing a place for both survivors of domestic violence and those that support them would ensure that this issue would be part of the discussion about the future of mandatory reporting. Failing to include domestic violence reflects the ongoing unwillingness of the child protection field to understand, address and learn appropriate ways to support families impacted by domestic violence.

**Daniel Webster**  
**Project scientist and principal investigator**  
**California Child Welfare Indicators Project**

I think it's clear from Task Force members' comments that the recommendations are not perfectly worded. However, I suspect if we were to continue discussion and revisions for another year (or perhaps even more) that we still would not arrive at wording on which there would be complete consensus.

That said, I believe the good faith efforts that all the members and participants have applied in this process have moved us down the path toward positive reform--and I have always viewed the work of this TF as iterative.

So while there is clearly more work and refinement to be done, I do not think we should allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. I therefore think it is reasonable that the group has agreed to take the next step forward; and I would hope that we realize that the recommendations and ensuing results of our collective work (e.g., future workgroups, policy/practice amendments, resource allocations, etc.) – in the spirit of a CQI process –will continue to undergo modification and improvement.