

Annual Report

Court Year 2023-2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NJ CPAC 2024 Annual Report highlights a continued shift in New Jersey’s child welfare system toward prevention, resilience, and supporting families, while underscoring persistent challenges in volunteer recruitment, equity, and system complexity.

Although overall out-of-home placements remain stable and hotline referrals have slightly declined, the system continues to face significant issues, including a shortage of Child Placement Review Board volunteers, ongoing racial disparities in referrals, and the difficulty families and professionals face navigating services.

This report emphasizes the importance of incorporating lived experience into policy and practice and calls for stronger, coordinated statewide efforts to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Key points:

- **Volunteer gap:** There were only 67 volunteers statewide instead of the 110 required. Just seven of 21 counties were fully staffed.
- **Equity concerns:** 70% of referrals involved non-white children. Hispanic children represented the largest group.
- **Referral trends:** Down 4% overall. The majority, 70%, were neglect-related, but only 2% were substantiated.
- **NJ CPAC Training Focus:** Expanded training and collaboration around mental health, communication, and community resources.
- **Recommendations:** Increase volunteer recruitment at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and encourage organizations such as the AOC, the New Jersey Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P), and child welfare non-profits to embed lived experience in policy and training.



New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council Executive Board

Executive Board

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Vice Chair **Lorene S. Wilkerson**
Secretary **Sarah Black**
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Middlesex County
Cumberland County
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Joe Prussin
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Colleen McKenna Tucker

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Essex County
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Passaic County
Hudson County

Non-Voting Members

Emeritus

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Susan Rodgers

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Rev. Dr. Darrell L. Armstrong
Greg Rapport

Mercer County
Mercer County

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

To the Esteemed Members of the New Jersey Supreme Court, Governor and Legislators:

It is my privilege, on behalf of the New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (NJ CPAC), to present our Court Year 2024 Annual Report.

Over the past year, NJ CPAC has aligned with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' focus on prevention and resiliency. Through workshops, our annual conference, and collaboration with partner organizations, NJ CPAC sought to amplify the voices of those with lived experience shifting the conversation from simply responding to harm, toward strengthening the ease of accessibility to community support for families and fostering resilience in at-risk children and youth.

Despite progress, we must acknowledge persistent and emerging obstacles: difficulty recruiting and retaining Child Placement Review Board (CPRB) volunteers; racial disparity in which families are referred to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P); and complexity in navigating the multiple avenues within the child welfare system and services which impact communities, schools, professionals, children, caregivers and permanency planning.

This past year has demonstrated that these obstacles can be overcome with a statewide approach to child welfare. Resilience is not a fixed quality, but a foundation that is reinforced through collective effort and care. That is why NJ CPAC is dedicated to supporting and strengthening voices, awareness and integration between community members and professionals within the child welfare system and services. The lived experience of children and families with DCP&P involvement continues to inform crucial policy changes, recommendations, and legislation.

On behalf of NJ CPAC, I extend deep gratitude to our volunteer board members, the New Jersey Judiciary, the Department of Children and Families, and our partners in the community. Throughout these challenging times, we continue to move toward our shared vision of safe, permanent homes and communities for every child.

With respect and hope for the year ahead,

Eunice I. Salton

Chair, New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council

Chair, Middlesex County Child Placement Review Board

cc: Michael J. Blee, J.A.D., Acting Administrative Director of the Courts,
Christine Norbut Beyer, Commissioner,
New Jersey Department of Children and Families
Legislative Chairs of the Senate and General Assembly Judiciary Committees



NJ CPAC ANNUAL REPORT FOR CY 2023 - 2024

The New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council

Established by the NJ Child Placement Review Act (1978), NJ CPAC is a statewide advisory council of dedicated citizen volunteers that supports county Child Placement Review Boards (CPRBs). Pursuant to the CPR Act, every county should have a CPRB that holds monthly meetings to review cases in which children have been removed from their home. These infants, children, youth, and adolescents are among the most vulnerable in the child welfare system.

At these sessions each month -- the CPRB meets with their county's CPR court coordinator and the assigned social workers and social work supervisors involved in each child's case. After carefully reviewing the child's file, the CPRB makes recommendations to the judge based on the best interest of the child in terms of health, permanency and well-being.

The Family Practice Division in the Administrative Office of the Courts provides administrative support to NJ CPAC. As a statewide council, NJ CPAC is comprised of CPR Board members who have served their county as a CPR volunteer for one year or more. The council meets quarterly to share statewide information on current trends in child welfare practices and issues. NJ CPAC is also mandated to produce this annual report with recommendations to the governor, legislature, and the New Jersey State Supreme Court regarding the safety and welfare of children placed outside of the home.

NJ CPAC Activities for Court Year 2024

NJ CPAC's activities for Court Year 2024 focused primarily on raising awareness surrounding the mental health and well-being of at-risk children and youth, including building communication skills with youth and informing the public about resources available in the community for youth and families.

On March 15, 2024, NJ CPAC collaborated with the Judiciary to present *Advancing Equity through Inclusive Communications*. Lisa Burke, diversity, inclusion, and community engagement program officer for the Judiciary, presented an interactive webinar to teach conversational techniques and strategies to help attendees in their conversations with children in placement and their families.

On June 27, 2024, NJ CPAC hosted its annual conference, *Our New Jersey Children and Youth: A Collaboration for Mental Health and Well-Being* in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Mollie Greene, assistant commissioner of the Children's System of Care, shared an overview of the mobile response and stabilization services that supports youth with behavioral health, substance use, intellectual, and developmental challenges.

Workshops were presented by Greg Rapport, founder and executive director of Age-Out Angels, Lisa Burke, and the Rev. Dr. Darrell Armstrong, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton.

The afternoon plenary was presented by the New Jersey Children's Alliance, where Debbie Riveros, director, and Olga Aramini, director of communications and outreach, discussed steps to respond to and communicate with children who disclose that they have experienced physical and mental abuse and the important role of trained recorders in this process.



CPR Board Activities for Court Year 2024

Based on data received from the Administrative Office of the Courts, of the 21 counties in New Jersey, only seven have recruited the minimum number of volunteers required to conduct CPR reviews. Fewer counties have recruited five members and two alternates, as required by the CPR Act of 1978.

Table 1 shows the number of reviews conducted per county during Court Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024), and the number of current volunteers, volunteers needed, and if that county has sufficient volunteers to constitute a CPR board.

In cases where a county cannot recruit enough volunteers to constitute a CPRB, the judge will conduct the 60-day review.

In total, the Administrative Office of the Courts reports there were 67 CPR volunteers as of Oct. 22, 2025. This is four fewer volunteers than in the previous court year.



Table 1: Number of Board Reviews and Board Members by County in CY 2024

County	# of Child Placement Reviews CY 2024	# of CPR Volunteers as of 10/22/25	# of Volunteers Required per CPR Act	Sufficient Volunteers?	# of Additional Volunteers Needed
Atlantic	71	2	5	No	3
Bergen	46	6	5	Yes	0
Burlington	148	6	5	Yes	0
Camden	261	1	10	No	9
Cape May	7	2	5	No	3
Cumberland	56	2	5	No	3
Essex	132	9	5	Yes	0
Gloucester	82	0	5	No	5
Hudson	39	6	5	Yes	0
Hunterdon	3	1	5	No	4
Mercer	29	6	5	Yes	0
Middlesex	35	1	5	No	4
Monmouth	75	4	5	No	1
Morris	24	5	5	Yes	0
Ocean	28	5	5	Yes	0
Passaic	84	4	5	No	1
Salem	5	1	5	No	4
Somerset	12	3	5	No	2
Sussex	11	0	5	No	5
Union	42	1	5	No	4
Warren	11	2	5	No	3
Total	1,201	67	110		51

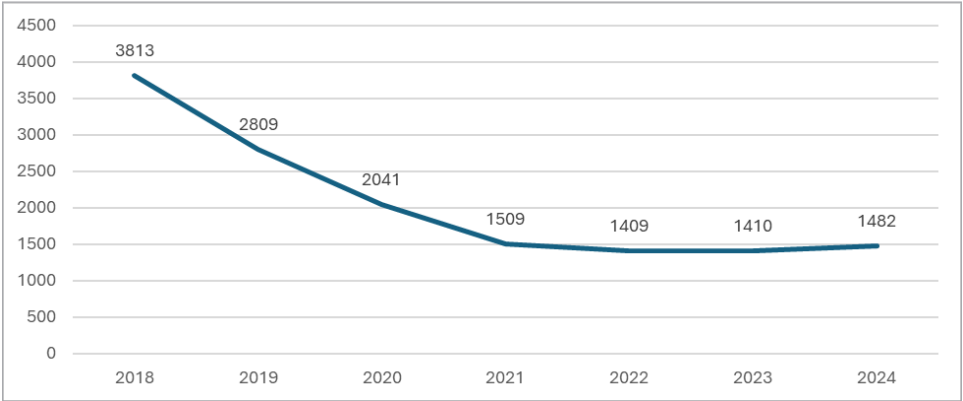
NEW JERSEY CHILDREN AND YOUTH: OUT OF HOME (OOH) PLACEMENT FACTS AND FIGURES

This report typically includes data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau. The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) was not available for comparison with this dataset (Administration for Children and Families, *Data and Statistics: AFCARS*, 2025). Therefore, this report only contains data collected by the state of New Jersey.

New Case Filings for OOH Placements Over Time

There has been a slight increase in new OOH placements between 2023 and 2024, ending the downward trend observed since 2018 (*Administrative Office of the Courts, New Filings Dashboard*, 2024).

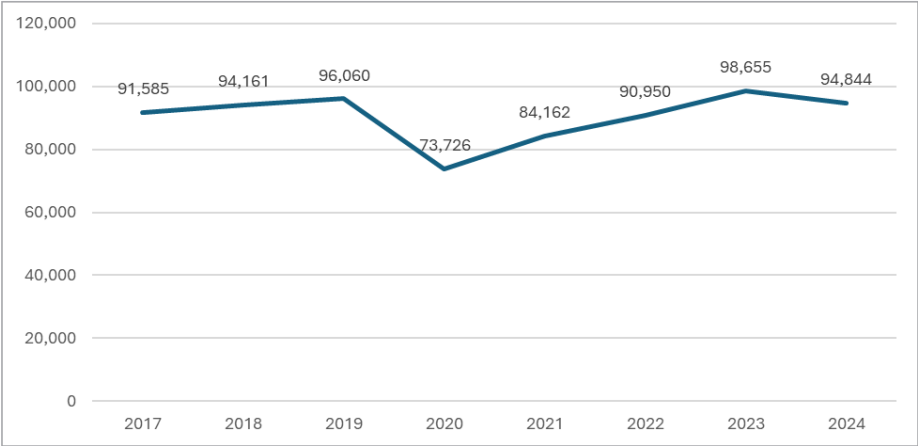
Chart 1: Number of New FC Case Filings Over Time by CY



Slight Reduction in the Number of Abuse and Neglect Hotline Referrals to DCP&P

Between 2023 and 2024, a decrease in referrals to the DCP&P New Jersey Child Abuse Hotline was observed. The total number of referrals for 2024 was 94,844, approximately 4% less, or 3,811 fewer referrals than in the prior year. (*Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024*).

Chart 2: Number of Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals to DCP&P for an Investigation



Most Counties Saw a Reduction in DCP&P Referrals in 2024

The NJ CPAC Annual Report for Court Year 2023 revealed ongoing socioeconomic and racial disparities in Essex County, which consistently had the highest number of referrals in the state despite other counties, such as Bergen County, having a higher population.

This year, though it still led the state in the number of referrals, Essex County reported that the number of referrals to DCP&P decreased to 9,842 from 10,298 referrals in 2023. (Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024).

The county that saw the greatest percentage reduction in referrals was Burlington County at -10%, followed by Gloucester and Ocean counties at -9% and -8% respectively.

Overall, 16 of New Jersey’s 21 counties saw a decrease in abuse and neglect referrals, with increases only in counties where the number of referrals were comparatively low, meaning a small increase in the number of referrals will have a high impact on the percentage of referrals.

See Table 2: Percentage Change in Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals by County from 2023-2024 on page 13.

Most Hotline Referrals to DCP&P in 2024 Were for Neglect

The Rutgers University School of Social Work Child Welfare Data Hub shows that in 2024, as in prior years, most referrals made to DCP&P were for neglect. A total of 94,844 referrals were made in 2024 of which 65,988 or 70%, were to report a family for neglect. (Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, 2024).

Chart 3: Number of Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals to DCP&P by Type in 2024

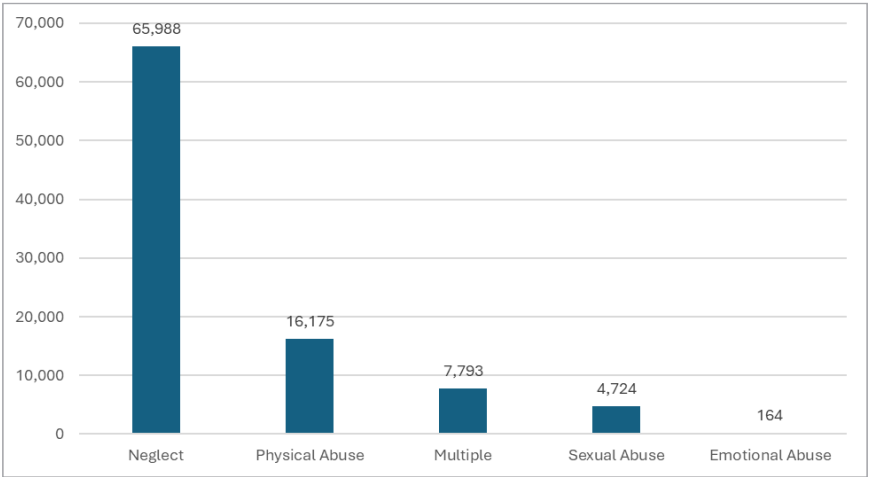


Table 2: Percentage Change in Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals by County from 2023-2024

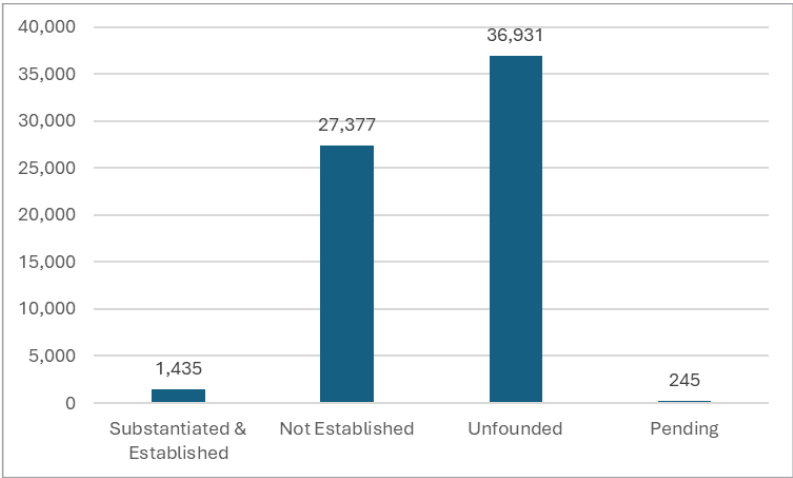
County	# of Referrals in 2023	# of Referrals in 2024	Percent Change
Atlantic	4,670	4,441	-5%
Bergen	5,977	5,596	-6%
Burlington	5,507	4,949	-10%
Camden	8,543	8,296	-3%
Cape May	1,192	1,202	1%
Cumberland	3,521	3,492	-1%
Essex	10,298	9,842	-4%
Gloucester	4,354	3,949	-9%
Hudson	6,528	6,468	-1%
Hunterdon	799	850	6%
Mercer	4,676	4,698	0%
Middlesex	7,230	7,147	-1%
Monmouth	5,424	5,406	0%
Morris	3,530	3,488	-1%
Ocean	6,923	6,362	-8%
Passaic	6,809	6,330	-7%
Salem	1,201	1,177	-2%
Somerset	2,510	2,479	-1%
Sussex	1,711	1,612	-6%
Union	5,598	5,324	-5%
Warren	1,654	1,736	5%



Only 2% of Hotline Referrals to DCP&P for Neglect Are Established and Substantiated

In 2024, 65,988 referrals were made to DCP&P for neglect, and of these only 1,435, or 2%, were established and substantiated. (*Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024*).

Chart 4: Neglect Referral Results in 2024

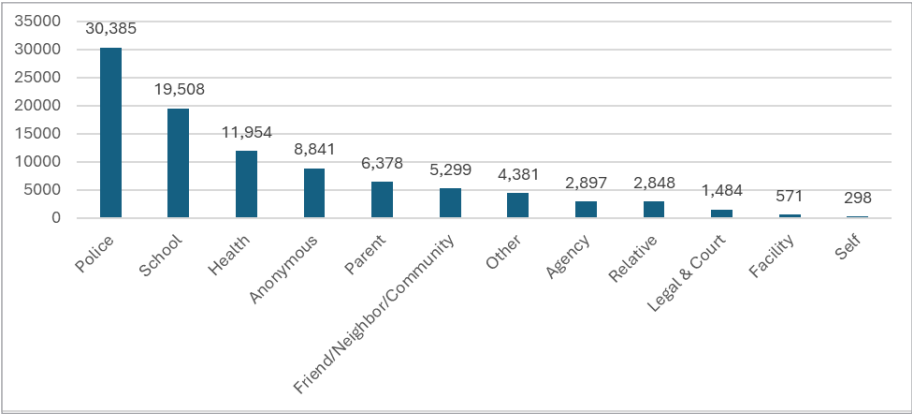




Police Were the Source of Most Reports to the NJ Child Abuse Hotline in 2024

A total of 30,385 child abuse and neglect referrals to DCP&P came from police. Of these referrals for abuse and neglect, 1,075 or 3.5% were substantiated or established. For all referral sources for both abuse and neglect, only 2,270 of 94,844, or 2% of CPS referrals made in 2024 were established or substantiated (*Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024*).

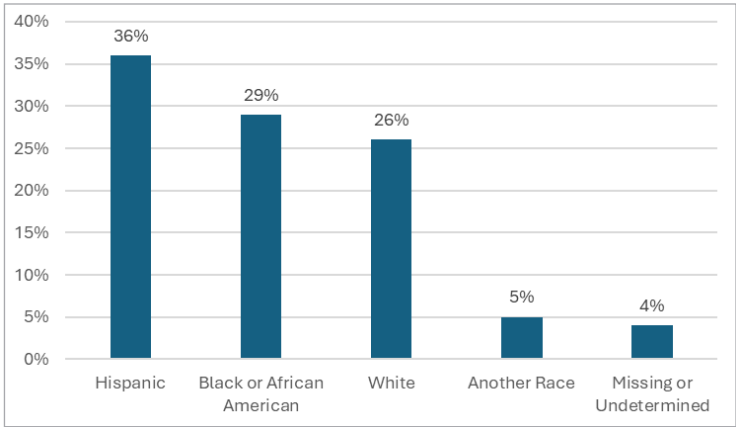
Chart 5: Referrals to DCP&P Hotline by Source in 2024



The Majority of Children Referred to DCP&P in 2024 Were Hispanic

Most of the children referred to DCP&P in 2024 were Hispanic at 36%. Combined with African Americans and children of other races, 70% of children referred to DCP&P are non-white. (*Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024*).

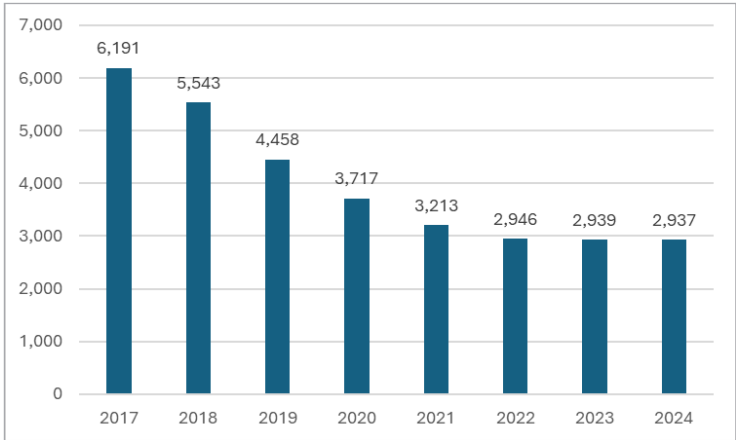
Chart 6: Percentage of Total Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals to DCP&P by Race in 2024



Number of OOH Placements in 2024

The number of children in OOH placements in New Jersey has decreased steadily from 2017 and has remained steady since 2022. In 2024, New Jersey had 2,937 children in OOH placements (*Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Child Welfare Data Hub, 2024*).

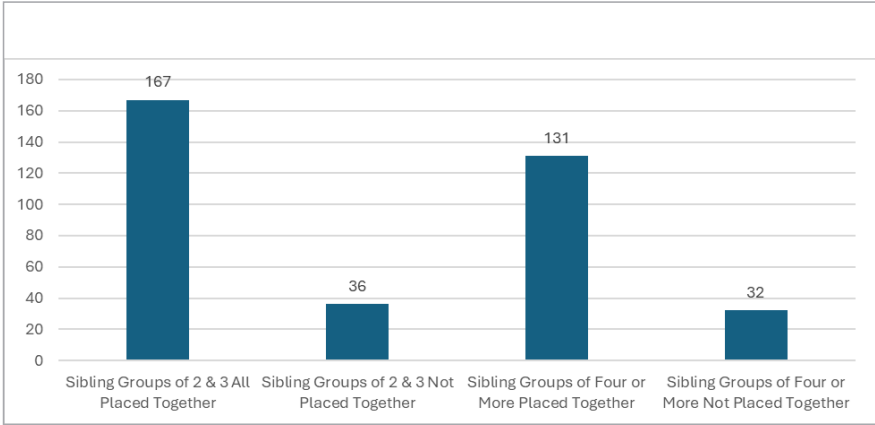
Chart 7: Number of Children in Placement in NJ Over Time



Most Sibling Groups Were Placed Together in 2024

In 2024, 298, or 81% of sibling groups were placed together with the same resource family or kin (*DCP&P, siblings placed together, 2023*).

Chart 8: Number of Sibling Groups and Whether They Were Placed Together in 2024





NJ CPAC RECOMMENDATIONS

Each year, NJ CPAC considers the available data as well as lived experiences from those previously involved with the child welfare system to draft recommendations for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches in New Jersey. These recommendations are published annually in this report as mandated by the Child Placement Review Act (N.J.S.A. 30:4C-50, et seq.). NJ CPAC makes the following recommendations:

1. Additional effort is needed to recruit and retain CPR board volunteers. Currently, only seven out of the 21 counties in New Jersey have the minimum number of volunteers required to constitute a board as required by the statute. NJ CPAC recommends that court staff connect with community organizations and engage in other forms of interpersonal outreach to spread awareness about the CPR program and volunteer opportunities.
2. NJ CPAC recommends that DCP&P, the AOC, and other organizations that provide training for professionals who work in child welfare emphasize the importance of lived experiences.



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