



## Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

**Date/Time/Location:** February 9, 2022/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

**In Attendance:** Denise Acosta, Robert Childs, Maylan Nicholson, Olga Papa, Eileen Song, Joshua Wilder

**Absent:** Charlene Aben, Dennis Gochoel, Mary Agnes Kratz, Alex Milanese, Susan Roskos

**Children and Youth:** Ceil Bartolai, Chris Dalessandro, Donna Domiano, Ellen Dymond, Kelly Gaughan, Lisa Koval, Georgine Meyers, John Alunni, David Gaugler, Jillian Thomas, Brian Steve

**Office of Human Services:** Carl Ayers (Casey Family Foundation Representative)

**Welcome** – Chairman Wilder welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Meyers announced that participants on the phone will need to press \*6 to unmute to speak and all Advisory Board meetings are recorded in order to complete the meeting minutes. Please stay muted to reduce background noise which interferes with the meeting. If we hear excessive background noise, we will try to mute the person so please only unmute yourself to speak. Ms. Meyers took attendance.

**Approval of Minutes** – December meeting minutes approved by Member Childs, seconded by Secretary Song, all in favor.

**Director's Report** – Acting Director Alunni discussed the licensing status. The annual inspection concluded yesterday with an exit interview. Ms. Wagner from Regional said it went well and gave positive feedback. She noted there was a good wealth of information on the paperwork regarding in-home families. Areas of improvement included paperwork and engagement with families. The Corrective Action Plan will include citations on areas needing improvement. The Regional Office will review our plan. Acting Director Alunni noted that Carl Ayers is on site. Staffing is an area of concern. Initiatives are being put in place. Human Resources is targeting colleges/universities. The agency does have interns. Acting Director Alunni and Acting Deputy Director Gaughan plan to go to Penn State to talk to classes. Retention is needed and they are looking at how to make work easier. They recognize large caseloads and have set up support sessions with supervisors, management and Quality Assurance staff to help set priorities and how to assist the supervisors to delegate the work load. Acting Deputy Director Gaughan talked about the paperless workforce meeting. It went very well and included caseworkers, supervisors, Quality Assurance staff, IT, and clerical. They are also delving into the fatality/near fatality cases. Acting Director Alunni discussed the Act 33 meeting as there was a significant increase in 2021. The Regional Office is helping to find trends. They

had a meeting and good things coming out of this. Mr. Ayers shared the work he has been doing with the Organizational Assessment. He talked with a number of staff members and what they were experiencing. He reviewed agency documents and completed over 30 face to face interviews. He identified themes from those meetings in which he created recommendations from. He found 9 themes: 1. Internal culture of fear; 2. Current instability of leadership team; 3. Trauma informed language and support for staff (Secondary Vicarious Trauma); 4. Consistency with decision making through leadership direction; 5. Enhancing supervision; 6. Training; 7. Communication with how information is shared, when staff receive information, anxiety; 8. Workforce recruitment and retention/compensation/how to create a career path; 9. Building off strengths, continuous quality, expand Quality Assurance for quality control and quality improvement. Mr. Ayers determined 6 recommendations: 1. Stabilize leadership of agency; 2. Create and implement communication plan/staff input; 3. Provide leadership support for staff and make sure staff have skills training; 4. Address internal cultural issues; 5. Building full CQI system; 6. Complete thorough review of Needs Based Budget and align resources to where we want to go. Mr. Ayers also discussed improving the agency's relationship with the Regional Office, enhancing the visibility of leadership, identify internal agency functions that could be contracted out and transcription services for staff to do computer data via transcribing. Secretary Song thanked Acting Director Alunni and Acting Deputy Director Gaughan for the open communication. Member Papa noted she is happy to see a strategic plan to work with children. Deputy Director Alunni noted that the County Manager search continues. Ms. Crocarno wants that person to be in place so they have input as to who will be in the role of the C&Y Director. He also acknowledged that Manager Bartolai and Manager Koval are retiring from the agency March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Fiscal Update** – Mr. Dalessandro noted that the fiscal department is working on the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report and will submit to the State and the State will dictate funding received. This report is due February 15<sup>th</sup>. The 2021 financial audit is the most important audit and will be done remotely. May 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline. The fiscal department continues to do hybrid work. If any Board Member wants any reports or has any questions, they can contact Mr. Dalessandro.

### **Committee Reports**

1. **Events and Fundraising** - Chairman Wilder would like someone to take over this committee when there are more members on board. No report this month.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws** - Chairman Wilder noted that we are behind and there is more to do and he will touch base with Member Gochoel.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy** - Member Acosta talked about the Spring/Easter Awareness event she is planning on Public Square in April. She would like different organizations participating and providing awareness. She would like to set up a table and talk about the good things the agency does. She would like to give away baskets to the children. Chairman Wilder noted it would connect families with resources.

**Old/New Business** – Chairman Wilder noted they had good discussions with the Ad Hoc committee meeting. They discussed ideas on caseworker retention and invited everyone to participate. In addition, Vice Chairwoman Nicholson discussed the Education Committee. She reached out to Tony Greco. Secretary Song met yesterday to discuss how to develop a better relationship with school districts. She encouraged Member Papa and Member Acosta to help improve the agency's reputation. This is a good place to start. In regards to recruitment, Chairman Wilder noted that the Board needs more members. County residents do not know that the County Boards exist. He is reaching out to Judge Burke for Oaths as people may feel

intimidated or not sure who to contact. The Board is hoping to collect books for the reception area as well as coloring books and crayons. Vice Chairwoman Nicholson noted that February is “Act of Kindness” month and maybe could try to do something at school for this. Acting Director Alunni noted that the United Way is donating books for a Learn to Read Program. Vice Chairwoman Nicholson discussed tshirt sales status. Ms. Meyers will send out the order form to all staff. Secretary Song will contact the Chamber to broadcast to their channels. Chairman Wilder is reaching out to news organizations.

**Final Questions/Comments** – Ms. Meyers reminded all Advisory Board Members to send in updated head shots and return any paperwork from packets sent out in December.

**Adjournment** - Motion to adjourn by Secretary Song, seconded by Vice Chairwoman Nicholson, all in favor.

**NEXT MEETING:** Next meeting March 9, 2022.