



Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time/Location: February 10, 2021/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

In Attendance: Denise Acosta, Nicole Buckman, Robert Childs, Dennis Gochoel, Alex Milanes, Eileen Song, Joshua Wilder, Susan Roskos

Absent: Charlene Aben, Mary Agnes Kratz, Larry Marchetti, Olga Papa

Children and Youth: Ceil Bartolai, Janice Bonner, Ellen Dymond, Kelly Gaughan, Deanna German, Caitlyn Holland, Lisa Koval, Dave Maslowski, Georgine Meyers, Robin Ritsick, Joanne Van Saun, Sam John

Office of Human Services: John Alunni, Lynn Hill, Jerrod Gutowski

Welcome – Chairman Song welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Meyers took attendance, stated that participants on the phone will need to press *6 to unmute to speak, and announced that all Advisory Board meetings are recorded in order to do the meeting minutes. Chairman Song welcomed the newest Advisory Board Member, Nicole Buckman. Everyone introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes – December meeting minutes approved by Member Wilder, seconded by Vice Chairman Gochoel, all in favor.

Director's Report – Director Van Saun noted it takes a village to support the children and families in our community and thanked everyone for bringing their expertise to the Board. She was on a call with the State. They announced they will provide assistance for our Plans of Safe Care and releasing funding for youth to help during this period of COVID to assist with housing and any other needs. The Visitation Grant will hopefully be released next week. The agency is still working remotely. Some staff come in for a limited period of time to do any necessary things such as copying. There were 7 employees that tested positive for COVID and 1 employee passed away. Several that were exposed were quarantined. Staff are doing their best and the agency is doing what it can to keep staff safe. There are 30 vacancies currently and everyone is working in an expedient fashion to get more staff on board. Visits are virtual as per court order. The order expires February 28th and the agency is waiting to hear if it will be extended. If not, the agency is preparing to have visits in the office. The Safety Committee is looking to combine the Risk and Safety Assessment in order to make a more comprehensive assessment and reduce paperwork. Director Van Saun continues to participate in the Case Management System meetings to discuss a single software system for across the state. Chairman Song asked about vaccinations and technology for visitation. Director Van Saun responded that some staff have started to receive COVID vaccinations. As it becomes available the information is shared with

staff. Families that did not have technology for visitation were provided with technology. Deputy Director German noted that there have been meetings with hospitals on the Plans of Safe Care. Hospitals are being educated on this. Several counties have been meeting to work together to develop policies and procedures for Safe Care. Internally the agency is working on the new law on Family First Prevention Act which will be implemented in October. Deputy Director German thanked all the Advisory Board Members for the donation of hats, gloves and scarves which were given out to families in need. Gifts were provided to all the children involved with our agency. Chairman Song thanked everyone who donated to the hats, gloves and scarves which allowed them to purchase almost \$500 of these items.

Committee Reports

- 1. Events and Fundraising** – Secretary Wilder will submit a brief report on money raised so everyone is aware. The Adoption Celebration and the Foster Children’s Holiday party are the two fundraisers that the Advisory Board assist with. They also provide assistance with planning as well. Member Acosta noted that she does things for children in her community. She is planning something for August and invited C&Y staff to attend. Director Van Saun will send staff to talk at the event and also set up a recruitment table for anyone interested in becoming caregivers to receive information. Chairman Song would be interested in an Advisory Board table to talk about what they do. Member Acosta will be handing out book bags and supplies at this event for children. This event (Families and Friends Day) will be across from the Coal Street Park.
- 2. Strategic Planning and ByLaws** - Vice Chairman Gochoel discussed the proposed ByLaws. He received input and will review. He will talk with Member Milanese and prepare the proposals for the different sections so they can send out to everyone to get approved. He discussed the Board Member surveys and the four strategic areas: Improving the system of governance (being more effective as a Board and clarify the Board’s purpose), implementing a robust board member training and engagement program (need to be a better educated Board Member in order to become better advocates), solidifying the agency relationships (get fundraising under control, support and recognize staff, understand the leadership of the agency and what is needed) and establishing a board identity outside of the agency (strengthening the relationship with County Council, prepare Executive Summary Report, increase community identity and communication with legislators). Next step is to back up with actionable goals and arrange into a time line over the next 3 years. Any questions on the ByLaws, please send to Vice Chairman Gochoel. He will email everyone about some committee meeting dates.
- 3. Recruiting and Community Advocacy** - Chairman Song was not able to do much the past two months. They did the hat/gloves drive and are putting together a summary of accomplishments for 2020. She will get a draft out to everyone in the next month or two. She asked if anyone would like to chair this committee to please contact her. There was also good PR with Ruth Corcoran from the Times Leader in December. Member Childs noted that he contacted Sharon Lawrence about membership and she indicated there were 40 Board appointments with some appointed to C&Y so they are working on the appointments. Chairman Song noted things are going slowly and to be patient. Ms. Meyers noted there were two additional appointments to the Board and we are waiting on clearances and the Oath to be completed. Director Van Saun appreciated the publicity in December and noted that education is important. Chairman Song noted she received Member Milanese’s email and that the Board cannot be advocates and education the community if the Board doesn’t fully understand what the agency does. Attending 10 day meetings and Act 33 meetings has been

very helpful so she asked that when Board Members are requested to attend these meetings to please make an effort to attend so you have a better understanding of the work of C&Y.

Old/New Business – Chairman Song asked Ms. Meyers to talk about the agenda. Member Milanes was asking if it went out to everyone. Ms. Meyers noted that the agenda is standard and is posted on the County website. It is a general agenda since it is not put together until the Executive Meeting which is held right before the Advisory Board meeting. Member Milanes discussed streamlining the meetings.

Fiscal Update - Ms. Holland noted that they are submitting their year end report and preparing for the audit.

Final Questions/Comments – Chairman Song noted that we try to do an educational presentation at the meetings but due to time restrictions we will have to push off to another meeting. Member Milanes noted anyone can reach out to him about modification with the ByLaws and he will contact Vice Chairman Gochoel to develop the draft.

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn by Secretary Wilder, seconded by Member Childs, all in favor.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 12:00pm.