



Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time/Location: April 13, 2022/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

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

Absent: Charlene Aben, Helen Elko, Mary Agnes Kratz, Alex Milanes, Susan Roskos

Children and Youth: Donna Domiano, Kelly Gaughan, Caitlyn Holland, Georgine Meyers, John Alunni, David Gaugler

Public: Beth Hartman

Welcome – Chairman Wilder welcomed everyone to the Advisory Board meeting. Ms. Meyers announced that anyone on the phone will need to press *6 to unmute to speak and all Advisory Board meetings are recorded in order to do 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 – March meeting minutes approved by Secretary Song, seconded by Vice Chairwoman Nicholson, all in favor.

Director's Report – Acting Director Alunni discussed the status of the Casey Family Foundation assistance by Carl Ayers. He will be returning May 17th to discuss his communication strategy as communication was a prevalent theme. He will focus on strategic planning with the new Director. The draft report from Mr. Ayers will be on the website when it is received. Acting Director Alunni also gave a staffing update. He has been going out to colleges to meet with social work field students and discuss internships. Acting Director Alunni and Acting Deputy Director Gaughan are working on retention/recruitment initiatives for several months. They hope to share more information in the near future. Acting Director Alunni discussed truancy efforts. He has been working with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit and inform them on how the agency operates. Truancy with other mitigating factors are cases we get involved with but “truancy for the sake of truancy” cases are ones that need support and wrap around services. Acting Director Alunni discussed meeting with PACHSA, PCYA and AOPC and doing in person networking and talked to other counties about issues. Children and Youth relies on system partners. At PCYA Acting Director Alunni, Acting Deputy Director Gaughan and Fiscal Officer Dalessandro met with the Northeast Regional Office and other Northeast Counties. They had a conversation on common themes and areas of need. The State does not license group homes anymore so they are looking for community based services to support

children in need. Ms. Hartman asked about truancy and a discussion prevailed. Everyone also discussed the Fairweather Lodge Model and the possibility of looking more at this for youth transitioning. The Act 33 Workgroup continues to meet and other counties are looking at replicating this workgroup. The Paperless Workforce Group continues to meet and discuss how to make this process operational. Some job duties will change. It will change caseworker record keeping and make it a more efficient means of record keeping. Right now it is being piloted. The Act 33 Workgroup (fatality/near fatality) is at a point of implementing some of the recommendations. This is an ongoing group.

Fiscal Update – Ms Holland noted there are auditors on site. The final report should be completed in late May. When received it can be shared with the Board. May 15th will be the quarterly report due date.

Committee Reports

1. **Events and Fundraising** – Chairman Wilder plans to start fundraising for the Children’s Holiday Party. Everyone is welcome to assist. He hopes to meet in May.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws** – Member Gochoel noted that he, Chairman Wilder and Member Acosta met last week.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy** – Member Acosta discussed the Spring Event. This was done in the community despite the weather. Walmart donated bikes. Children and families came out. She thanked all those who helped and donated. The event was a success. Next she is planning a Friends and Family Day with a Back to School drive. She invited everyone to come out and introduce themselves to the families and let them know who we are and what we do. Chairman Wilder encouraged everyone to get out to community events and participate.

Old/New Business –

1. Act 33 Hearings (Board Participation) – Chairman Wilder noted that these meetings are very intense and motivates the group to try harder. He appreciates the opportunity to participate in these meetings.
2. Fiscal Reports – Chairman Wilder noted that fiscal reports could be streamlined and done quarterly when there is more information or when they might have important information to give. We understand how busy their department is.
3. Child Welfare Appreciation – Chairman Wilder noted that he is would like to assist with Child Welfare Appreciation events. Please let the Board know if anything is needed to support the staff.
4. May Meeting – Chairman Wilder noted that County Council will be getting a report on Children and Youth so he would like to have Board Members schedule 90 minutes for the next meeting if there are any questions.

Final Questions/Comments – Ms Hartman noted that families are not having their side of story heard. People need to be aware that things can be misinterpreted and it turns into a nightmare. She is trying to see how she can help families. Secretary Song noted we need community families to join the board and thanked Ms. Hartman for participating. Chairman Wilder thanked Ms. Hartman and everyone for attending the April Board Meeting.

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

NEXT MEETING: Next meeting May 11, 2022.