



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

**Date/Time/Location:** April 14, 2021/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

**In Attendance:** Denise Acosta, Nicole Buckman, Robert Childs, Dennis Gochoel, Maylan Nicholson, Olga Papa, Eileen Song, Joshua Wilder, Susan Roskos

**Absent:** Charlene Aben, Mary Agnes Kratz, Larry Marchetti, Alex Milanese

**Children and Youth:** Ceil Bartolai, Janice Bonner, Donna Domiano, Ellen Dymond, Kelly Gaughan, Deanna German, Caitlyn Holland, Lisa Koval, Georgine Meyers, Robin Ritsick, Sam John

**Office of Human Services:** John Alunni

**Welcome** – Vice Chairman Gochoel welcomed everyone to the April meeting. Ms. Meyers announced that folks 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. Ms. Meyers took attendance and asked all Members to announce which committee they are on so that Secretary Wilder can notate.

**Approval of Minutes** – March meeting minutes approved by Member Papa, seconded by Member Childs, all in favor.

**Director's Report** – Deputy Director German noted that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. All staff were provided with a pinwheel pin to wear, signs were being placed in front of the building and we encouraged everyone to wear blue to promote child abuse awareness. Staff continue to work remotely. The agency does have a receptionist daily as well as an assigned supervisor in the building. Clerical and fiscal staff rotate coming into the office. All staff have the ability to come into the office to get mail, fax, switch paperwork, etc. Visits resumed March 1<sup>st</sup> in the office. The agency received a Visitation Grant this year. This grant is utilized for worker recruitment/retention as well as visitation. The agency also applied for a National Foster Care Mini-Grant and, if approved, it will be used to hold a virtual panel presentation which would occur in May. The agency sent a letter of intent to apply for a Plans of Safe Care Grant that the State is offering counties to assist with educating the health care systems and rolling out the Plans of Safe Care, which has to do with children under the age of 1 affected by illegal and legal substances. The agency currently has 33 vacancies and continue to interview candidates on a regular basis. It seems the beginning of the pandemic there were about 20 vacancies. Many staff members have retired over the past year. The HR department is working to assist the agency in order to recruit and get people on board. Director Van Saun and Deputy Director German participated in the virtual PCYA conference held in March. The next conference is in

June and will also be virtual. The State is preparing for the Family First Prevention Act that will occur October 2021. They will hold meetings for all counties to participate in to learn how the Act will impact practices in the future. Member Childs asked when does the agency anticipate reopening for meetings. Deputy Director responded that nothing has changed with how the agency does business. Caseworkers are still going out on cases and out to homes. Children are being seen. The only difference is caseworkers used to go to the office between home visits and now they are working remotely between visits. They are following mandates and regulations. There are preliminary conversations on a feasibility study to look at hybrid vs return. Children and Youth is still running as normal in seeing families and completing jobs. GPS referrals continue to climb over past 6-7 months. Member Childs asked how it affects the in person meetings for the Board. Vice Chairman Gochoel noted that the agency is working in a mostly virtual environment so it doesn't make sense to have in person meetings at this point. County Council remains on virtual. The Board will have to see how things go but plan to continue virtual until end of the year. Vice Chairman Gochoel also noted that staffing has been a nemesis and he is hoping the Board can find a way to become better advocates and help.

### **Committee Reports**

1. **Events and Fundraising** – Secretary Wilder noted that he plans to have a meeting the second week of May. He will send out an email to see what day works best.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws** - Vice Chairman Gochoel stated that he feels there is a good strategic plan that has come together so far. He will present more next meeting. There are many good action items to work on. He would like three people to help with goals. ByLaws are completed and sent to Council so we are waiting to hear. He would like to craft a Vision/Mission Statement for the Board, discuss how the Board will run the monthly meetings and accomplish more business. Feel free to contact him.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy** - Member Acosta will be taking over as Chair of this committee. Chairwoman Song will contact Member Acosta. A meeting will be set up soon.

**Old/New Business** – Member Childs asked about the candidate waiting to come on the Board. He reached out to her. We are waiting for her paperwork. Secretary Wilder noted that Caseworker Appreciation Week in the first week of June. Will need to discuss at the next meeting any ideas for appreciation. Chairwoman Song asked about vaccination of staff. Ms. Meyers noted that OHS reached out to everyone to see who wanted a vaccination and provided information to those staff members.

**Fiscal Update** – Ms. Holland noted that there is an active audit and IV-E revenue audit going on in the fiscal department. The team is working out very well. She will provide an update when the audits are completed. Any questions, feel free to contact her or Chris Dalessandro.

**Final Questions/Comments** – Vice Chairman Gochoel noted that he will send out an invite to committee meetings and asked Members to step up. The Board is trying to have more robust committees and bring value to the agency. Secretary Wilder encouraged Members to join committees. The committees work hard to make things happen.

**Adjournment** - Motion to adjourn made by Chairwoman Song, seconded by Member Papa, all in favor.

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 12:00pm.**