



Luzerne County Children and Youth Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time/Location: September 14, 2022/noon/ Conference Room 132 (MS Teams/Conference Call Meeting)

In Attendance: Denise Acosta, Robert Childs, Helene Elko, Kathleen McCarthy, Maylan Nicholson, Eileen Song, Joshua Wilder, Susan Roskos

Absent: Charlene Aben, Mary Agnes Kratz, Alex Milanes, Olga Papa, Tiffany Spearman, Dennis Gochoel

Children and Youth: Donna Domiano, Ellen Dymond, Kelly Gaughan, David Gaugler, Caitlyn Holland, Georgine Meyers, Brian Steve

Office of Human Services:

Welcome – Chairman Wilder welcomed everyone to the September meeting. Ms. Meyers took attendance and 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 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.

Approval of Minutes – Motion to accept and approve the July meeting minutes made by Secretary Song, seconded by Member McCarthy, all in favor.

Director's Report – Acting Director Gaughan introduced Acting Deputy Director David Gaugler, Acting Manager Brian Steve and Acting Manager Jillian Thomas. She noted that with the leadership turnovers, the agency did promote some interim leadership and welcomed them to the team. The agency has been working with consultant, Beverly Mackereth. The agency plans to extend the agency's work with her. She has been extremely helpful to the agency. She is facilitating case reviews for the agency, which is a deep dive into the cases and case practice. The agency is also looking into moving programs to all Evidence Based program so we have more quality programs for the families we serve. Ms. Mackereth is available 24/7 to the agency and assists the agency with troubleshooting. The Needs Based Budget is complete. The agency requested funding for Evidence Based programs and is now moving towards the Request for Proposal phase. The management team met with Judge Rogers and are looking to improve collaboration with the courts. Acting Director Gaughan and Acting Deputy Director Gaugler will be attending a Legal Roundtable meeting in a few weeks where all the counties come together and talk about programs and new initiatives. The management team also had a meeting recently with Jon Rubin from the Office of Children, Youth and Families in Harrisburg to collaborate on if we are moving in the right direction for full licensure. We would like to do community education with our educational providers. The agency is looking to contract out

some services such as foster homes and ongoing services. Casework vacancies are at about 45%. Interviews are taking place and there are many good candidates. The agency is unable to contract out placement search services so there are two resource unit workers that will remain. Acting Director Gaughan also noted that management is working on the supervisor salaries. Caseworker salaries are up but now there is a small gap between some workers and their supervisors. Member McCarthy asked what are the actions taken to acclimate the new caseworkers to the position so there is a better chance of retention. New workers shadow other workers. Management sent out a new worker expectation checklist. The agency hopes to advertise for a Caseworker 3 position once the supervisor salaries are situated. New caseworkers do not get cases while they are in the training program. Chairman Wilder feels he would like to wait until Administration feels the Advisory Board should step in to assist. Secretary Song asked if Lynn Hill was aware of the issues. Acting Director Gaughan noted that OHS Director Hill supports raises and any help would be good. The collective bargaining unit received base salary raises for the caseworkers, support workers and clerical. Raises did not include MOU or unrepresented employees.

Fiscal Update – Fiscal Officer Holland noted that the 4th quarter fiscal report was submitted and 2021-2022 is wrapped up. The agency is working on the 2023-2024 Needs Based Budget submission. The 2023 County budget is due mid November to Council. The fiscal office is also starting to work on the Request for Proposals and placement contracts. She noted that the agency is pretty close to the allocation. It was noted that the agency positions are reimbursable so if we do not have a position filled, the agency does not have those funds available for use elsewhere. Fiscal Officer Holland offered to create a spreadsheet.

Committee Reports

1. **Events and Fundraising** – Chairman Wilder noted that the committee would like the left over Holiday Party funds to be an emergency fund for Christmas gifts for children involved with the agency. Acting Deputy Director Gaugler noted that the agency still deals with Interstate Compact homes. Those homes are essentially children placed in a kinship home from another state and the agency will need gifts for those children. The Advisory Board was fine with this. Chairman Wilder noted that we really do not need to fundraise this year for the Adoption Celebration.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws** – No report at this time.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy** – Member Acosta noted that she is putting together a coat drive for children in our community and would like to start this mid October. She will send an email out to everyone about this. Chairman Wilder noted that this committee should set up a meeting.

Old/New Business – Chairman Wilder noted that the University of Pittsburg CWEL/CWEB program will be doing a presentation to the Board for the October meeting. He would like to increase this opportunity in Luzerne County and hoping a local university will partner with this program. The closest educational facilities for the program are Marywood or Bloomsburg. He would like to see Misericordia involved in this program. Manager Steve is the liaison with the program. If anyone has any questions, please let Manager Steve know. Chairman Wilder discussed the Advisory Board meeting format as some participants desire for the meeting to be in person. Children and Youth is on a hybrid work model. Not sure when the Board will return to in person meetings but when that point comes, he suggested a hybrid model for the Board. Those who want to come in person can come and those who would like to participate via MS Teams can do that. An initiative approved by OHS Director Hill is lunch with a

caseworker/staff. Not sure when this will start but if anyone wants to start doing this they can. It would be a casual bring your own lunch and get to know staff. It will be to mingle and see who staff are and what they do. The Board would need to see which members would be able to do this and we would need to see if staff have the ability to attend as everyone is very busy right now. It is a great gesture for whenever folks want to start this. Some would like to wait until after new booster and see if there is a COVID spike in the fall. Might need to have folks sign up for this. Member Acosta suggested doing this for the holiday. Maybe Thanksgiving or Christmas. Acting Director Gaughan noted that the agency is having a Christmas luncheon for staff at the Appletree Terrace in Dallas and the Advisory Board will be invited. Chairman Wilder will send out an email to Board Members to sign up for lunch with workers and then coordinate with Ms. Meyers to have staff sign up as well.

Final Questions/Comments – Chairman Wilder would like to set up a meeting to discuss supervisor salaries and Caseworker 3 positions. Acting Director Gaughan noted the agency would want to change some Caseworker 2 positions into Caseworker 3 positions. Member McCarthy discussed Advocating for Gun Safety. Member Acosta noted that when someone says negative things about C&Y that the Board should turn it around and point out the positives. Member McCarthy would like the image to be that the agency is the “go to” for protecting children. Chairman Wilder suggested that this could be something for the Community Advocacy Committee. Acting Director Gaughan noted that the Advisory Board is welcome to focus on campaigns and community advocacy as the agency cannot do this right now as we are not in a position to put on a campaign at this time due to staffing issues as child safety and assessing child safety is the priority for staff. Member Acosta noted that last Saturday she had an event that gave out book bags to children in the community. She also invited everyone to go to besmartforkids.org which addresses gun safety. They came to the event to educate the community about guns. She suggested in the future to have an event and have different organizations come to speak with families. Chairman Wilder suggested a committee meeting to discuss an attainable scope.

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn made by Member Acosta, seconded by Member McCarthy, all in favor.

NEXT MEETING: Next meeting October 12, 2022.