



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

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

**In Attendance:** Denise Acosta, Robert Childs, Helene Elko, Alec Frank, Kathleen McCarthy, Maylan Nicholson, Olga Papa, Eileen Song, Tiffany Spearman, Robin Watson, Joshua Wilder

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

**Children and Youth:** Donna Domiano, Ellen Dymond, Kelly Gaughan, David Gaugler, Caitlyn Holland, Georgine Meyers, Jillian Thomas

**Office of Human Services:** Lynn Hill

**Welcome** – Chairman Wilder welcomed everyone to the November meeting. He also welcomed new Advisory Board Member Alec Frank. 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 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** – October meeting minutes accepted by Secretary Song, seconded by Member Acosta, all in favor.

**Director's Report** – Acting Director Gaughan introduced herself to Member Frank. She noted there are currently 43 vacancies and they have been interviewing for the caseworker positions. She stated that the agency is trending in a good direction as there are many candidates. The vacant supervisor position has been posted. After a permanent Director is in place, other leadership positions will be posted. The Request for Proposals Bidders Conference was held with much participation. Staff are hoping to start reviewing proposals next week. The agency is looking at evidence based programs for intensive services to get children home quicker. Currently the agency has 397 children in care. This number is down from last year. The agency is working on initiatives to reduce children in placement as well as the unhoused population. This population is largest in the last 6 years. There are many referrals from the community for temporary housing and hotels as families are unable to locate affordable housing. The agency has been funding housing and spending at a high rate. They are looking at creative efforts to help people. The agency is referring families to community providers for assistance and collaborating with services to assist families. This is a crisis in the county right now. Member McCarthy asked how many families is the agency dealing with. Manager Thomas noted that there were about 40 families in hotels with 30 of those families without child welfare issues.

Secretary Song asked the Board to be involved. She would like to set up an interim committee to discuss this. Maybe an awareness campaign or fundraiser would be appropriate. Member Acosta noted that there are many families at the Kirby House with this issue. There is one room available at the Kirby House if needed. She noted that Luzerne County residents take preference. She can do an intake with families at hotels. There is a screening process. Many families staying at hotels are content and do not want to leave since Children and Youth is paying for it. The agency needs to classify between homeless and those that are not. Children and Youth wants to assist families before they are evicted. Chairman Wilder suggested co-chairs for the committee to look at homelessness, fundraising or community awareness. Many families are moving in with grandparents. Clients that are in hotels are referred to Dinners for Kids. When clients do get housing they may need things for their home. Acting Director Gaughan also suggest basic items like paper towels, toilet paper, cleaning products, etc. Vice Chairwoman Nicholson suggested a grocery store gift card drive for food, formula and diapers. Acting Director Gaughan noted the agency is still working with consultant Beverly Mackereth on new protocols and procedures, how to handle cases with children 0-5 years of age, teaming, case reviews, rapid response times, teaching new staff to be supportive and offering community services.

**Fiscal Update** – Fiscal Officer Holland noted that next week the 2023 budget will be presented to Council on Tuesday. Quarter 1 is due the same day. It is contract/RFP season so the agency is working on this right now. She feels confident in the agency's budget.

### **Committee Reports**

1. **Events and Fundraising**– Chairman Wilder noted that November 17<sup>th</sup> is the Adoption Celebration. Also the cost for the Staff Holiday Luncheon at Appletree Terrace on Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at noon is \$27 per person. If anyone would like to attend please drop a cash payment in an envelope at the reception desk with a note to please give envelope to Georgine Meyers. RSVP for the Staff Holiday Luncheon is due by November 16<sup>th</sup> please with money due November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Ms. Meyers is sending the invitation to all Advisory Board Members.
2. **Strategic Planning and ByLaws** – No report this month.
3. **Recruiting and Community Advocacy**- Member Acosta noted that in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Program there is a coat drive currently underway for new and gently used coats. Please drop off at the Kirby House. The November 20<sup>th</sup> event is to give out food at the Coal Street Park by the Weinberg Partnership from 12pm-4pm. December 18<sup>th</sup> at Coal Street Park is a toy and clothing giveaway.

**Old/New Business** – Chairman Wilder has been discussing committees with each Board Member. The Program Committee will be Chaired by Member Watson next year. Chairman Wilder asked OHS Director Hill for clarification on the Program Committee. Secretary Song asked if at the Adoption Celebration, that the Board Members could be introduced. OHS Director Hill offered that someone from the Board could speak. She also encouraged Board Members to attend events on their own and introduce themselves. Member Acosta noted Advisory Board Members need to get out in the public and let everyone know who they are and what they do. Ms. Meyers will get Advisory Board Members their ID Badge for 2023.

**Final Questions/Comments** – No additional comments.

**Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn by Vice Chairman Nicholson, seconded by Member Acosta, all in favor.

**NEXT MEETING:** Next meeting December 14, 2022.