

The Cleveland County DSS Advisory Board met on Monday, April 25, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.

Board members present: Mary Accor, Deb Hardin, Lendra Phillips, Denise Wright, Allison Gragg, and Betsy Wells

DSS staff present: Katie Swanson, Sherry Vess, Misty Merritt, Alice Wilson, Destiny Davidson, Andrea Power and Annette Pendergraft

County Attorney present: Chuck Wilson

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:

Chair Accor called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR APRIL 25, 2022, DSS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING:

Chair Accor presented the proposed consent agenda for the April 25, 2022, DSS Advisory Board meeting for consideration.

Motion: A motion was made by Denise Wright with a second by Betsy Wells to approve the proposed agenda for the April 25, 2022, DSS Advisory Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

CITIZEN RECOGNITION:

No citizens requested to appear before the Board.

CONSENT AGENDA:

A. Minutes

The Clerk to the Board emailed the minutes from the March 28, 2022, meeting to Advisory Board members prior to the April 25, 2022, meeting.

B. Personnel Report

The Clerk to the Board emailed the personnel report to Advisory Board members prior to the April 25, 2022, meeting.

Director Swanson updated the board on current vacancies within the agency. We currently have an Administrative Assistant I position open, 4 Child Support Agents II positions, 1 IMC I position, 12 IMC II positions, 1 PA III-Clerical position, and 1 SW III-Adult position.

C. Executive Summary

The Clerk to the Board emailed the Executive Summary to Advisory Board members prior to the April 25, 2022, meeting.

Director Swanson spoke about the graphs that were included in this month's advisory packet. The graphs are for Child Support Collections, Open Cases in Child Support, Program Integrity, Unemployment Statistics, Number of children receiving subsidized childcare, Number of individuals receiving Work First, Total Medicaid Recipients, and Medicaid Applications Processed. These graphs will now be included in the advisory board packet along with the executive summary. The graphs will hopefully provide a clearer interpretation of items listed on the executive summary.

D. Wear Blue & DSS Appreciation Day

Pictures were shown of DSS staff members, human resources and Advisory Board members wearing blue for Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month. The Board was also shown a few pictures from the DSS Appreciation Day at Hannah Park. The day was a huge success.

CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION:

Chair Accor presented the consent agenda for the April 25, 2022, DSS Advisory Board meeting for adoption.

Motion: A motion was made by Allison Gragg with a second by Lendra Phillips to approve the consent agenda for the April 25, 2022, DSS Advisory Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA:

A. Update on Retention and Staffing Strategies:

Director Swanson introduced Sherry Vess who presented the retention and staffing update for DSS. Part Time positions have been proposed as a solution to the staffing issues. DSS currently employs individuals through PSU staffing and with a 38% mark up on top of their hourly rate it would be more beneficial to hire permanent, part time employees to take on some of the workload. A hiring event was recently done where they targeted individuals that we believe would be a good fit for these positions. Why are part time employees a good option compared to an individual hired through PSU or an individual hired as a full-time employee?

- There are difficulties with recruitment of staff through a temporary staffing agency, such as cost.
- We have short term needs in processing the expected recertifications that are just starting to come back into DSS post COVID and energy applications.
- There would be cost savings on benefits the County provides.
- DSS would have more flexibility to cover based on needs.
- Formation of a safety net.

Director Swanson spoke about how targeted recruiting is necessary due to the training involved with these positions. She also explained to the board that this is a new endeavor for DSS as opposed to other county organizations that have already employed part time help.

What actions can we take to aid in this process?

- We can conduct hiring events to expedite the interview process.
- We can target retirees who may be available for limited hours.

Part Time positions that have been approved for this fiscal year are for (4) IAT-Social Workers and (6) IM Techs for Energy.

We have also requested approval for the fiscal year of 2022/2023 funding for (6) more part time IAT-Social Workers and (8) IMCII-FNS workers.

This would make a total of 24 part time workers within our agency. Six part-time energy positions were just posted, and we are hopeful that the success rate around these part-time positions will be substantial.

B. DSS Co-Location Building Update:

Sherry Vess presented the update on the co-location process between DSS and the Health Department. Beam Construction is currently on target with the time frames for the co-location. We are hoping there aren't any delays but that is possible due to supply issues that have been occurring. Our estimated move in date is at the end of 2022 or early 2023. A couple of pictures were presented of the new building under construction to the board members, as well as the blueprints for the updated building. Sherry also presented the fabrics and colors and how they are associated with different departments for DSS. Modular, L-shaped workstations will be installed for Economic Services, Child Support, and Child Welfare social workers; however, workers will take clients into private rooms for their interview. It is felt that the workstations will promote a team environment and is typical in most DSS locations. Ms. Swanson discussed that the idea of interview rooms was created for the safety of all DSS employees and the clients. Co-location events are being planned for the summer months to help employees from both DSS and the Health Department with the transition into one location.

C. Vote on DSS Advisory Board Meeting in May:

Director Swanson presented to the board that our next advisory meeting is scheduled for Memorial Day. Katie did give the option to change the date to May 23, 2022 or cancel the May meeting and resume in June. Chair Accor did ask what the pleasure of the board was at that time.

Motion: A motion to cancel the advisory board meeting scheduled in May was made by Betsy Wells and a second was made by Deb Hardin. The motion carried unanimously.

BOARD REPORTS:

A. Child Protection/Fatality Team:

Chair Accor did present Lendra Phillips with the board report for Child Protection/Fatality Team. Ms. Phillips stated that the team met on April 21, 2022, with three new cases and two old cases that were discussed, and all cases were closed at this meeting. The two cases that had been left open were done so to help bring awareness to the community for ways of discussing what methods we can do to help reduce suicide. There is someone training to do a presentation to the community to help educate the public on this matter. Ms. Phillips talked about QPR which is a training on suicide prevention and stated that CCHD is currently training on QPR within their agency. Ms. Swanson did also say that the numbers show that the suicide rate in Cleveland County has increased. Ms. Accor stressed how important it is for people to listen when someone reaches out for help. Ms. Swanson also stated that all child deaths under the age of 18 in Cleveland County are reviewed by this team. The next meeting is on May 19, 2022, at 12:00 PM and child protection will be discussed at this meeting. The child protection and fatality teams are state mandated teams that fall under federal rule.

B. NCACBSS

Chair Accor did present Betsy Wells with the NCACBSS report. Ms. Wells said that their April 1, 2022, meeting took place in Raleigh, NC at NC State. The meeting was an in-person meeting. Ms. Wells did present a PowerPoint about the association at the conference and what it does and what each county pays each year for a membership fee. The Executive Committee is made up of Betsy Wells, President, Mary Accor, 1st Vice President, Clayton Gaskins, 2nd Vice President, Tara Fikes, Secretary and Jim Sides is the Treasurer of the board. The association is spread over 5 regions and each region has 3 directors. Carla West with DHHS started the presentation off and members of the board spoke during the conference on how being a part of BSS helps them and their community members. One of the members spoke about what your duties are as a member, another spoke on how elected officials and DSS can work together for the better good of their county.

Ms. Wells informed every one of the upcoming SSI Conference that will be held in Hickory, NC for the dates of August 3 through 5 where Director Swanson will be making a presentation for DSS.

C. Commissioners

Chair Accor presented Commissioner Hardin with Cleveland County Commissioners. Commissioner Hardin stated that she did not have anything to update the board on since they are currently in the middle of budget updates.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Chair Accor asked if there was any other business to discuss.

Destiny Davidson reminded everyone of Sound the Alarm on April 29, 2022, at 2:00 PM. The event will be held at DSS and the County Administrative Building to raise awareness for child abuse prevention.

ADJOURN: 5:11 PM

There being no further business, Chair Accor called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Lendra Phillips made the motion, with a second by Betsy Wells that the Cleveland County Advisory Board meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.

The next DSS Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for June 27, 2022, at 4:00 PM.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Andrea Power, Clerk to Advisory Board
Cleveland County Department of Social Services