

SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

January 31, 2022
4:00 p.m.

The Social Services Advisory Board held its January Board Meeting on January 31, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in person and via Zoom due to COVID-19 precautions.

Members attending – Mary Accor, Deb Hardin, Denise Wright, Danny Blanton, Lendra Phillips, Betsy Wells

Others attending – Katie Swanson, Sherry Vess, Ali Wilson, Chuck Wilson, Peter West, Misti Merritt, Annette Pendergraft

CALL TO ORDER

Mary Accor, Chair, called the meeting to order and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

AGENDA ADOPTION

ACTION: Betsy Wells made the motion, seconded by Denise Wright, and unanimously approved by the Advisory Board to, *approve the proposed agenda.*

CITIZEN RECOGNITION

None registered to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes

The Clerk to the Board emailed the Minutes from the November 29, 2021 regular meeting to Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

B. Personnel Report

The Clerk to the Board emailed the personnel report to Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

C. Executive Summary

The Clerk to the Board emailed the Executive Summary for November 2021 and December 2021 to Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION

ACTION: Denise Wright made a motion, seconded by Betsy Wells, vote passed unanimously by the Board to, *approve the proposed agenda*

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Date/MOU/Key Indicators Comparisons

Misti Merritt, Management Analyst discussed the MOU data, which is data that the state looks at and expects from us each year at the county level. We work each to meet those requirements. From data collected, we exceeded MOU expectations on both county and state levels.

In Child Support, based on federal metrics, we had 40% of cases that received a payment for arrears/percentage of child support paid. We had 50% for child support cases under order, including cases of children born out of wedlock. As of the end of 2021, we were at 55.99%.

Total collection's goal for the year was 9.3 million. We are well over halfway there and anticipate meeting and exceeding that goal. On average, Child Support collects between \$500,000- \$600,000 per month. For the past couple of months, they have collected over \$700,000. 1 month was close to \$800,000.

In Economic Services, applications processed for emergency and non-emergency energy programs were at 98% and 99%. This includes crisis intervention and low-income energy. Even with the increased caseload and increased application rate, we have well exceeded our timeliness for that.

In Child welfare, the only metric being measured currently at the federal levels is foster care visits. We are exceeding that. There are other metrics looked at but they are not actually signed into the MOU.

In key indicators, we look back for a five-year period or four-year period to assess child support collections. We're at 9.8 million of total collections for 2021. The amount dipped a little bit in 2019 and then picked back up in 2020 and 2021. This can be attributed to COVID and the intercepts. Key indicators give us a good idea of how we're trending with collections over the past several years. In Child Support, if you meet the goals, you can expect that your incentive goal is going to increase the next year. That is the state's way of challenging each county to do better. Next year we'll likely be expected to collect closer to \$10 million

Medicaid needs has increased our number of recipients. At a county level, it is being discussed how we can decrease these needs as a county by helping our community to become more self-sufficient. We are currently not taking anyone off due to waivers because of COVID. While there are people who wouldn't meet this requirement anymore, we're not allowed to reevaluate them, so they are not being taken off the program at this time. This causes numbers to be inflated beyond what they normally would be. Once waivers are gone and we go back to reevaluating, we'll be able to develop a clearer picture of this metric.

We are going to spend some time over the next three to five years focusing on how to reach out and build programs and other ways to help the unemployed and the aging populations.

As of now, FNS was distributed in millions. There was a huge jump in 2021, because of COVID. The increases amount does include the pandemic benefits.

For two years, COVID delayed revisiting clients' financial statuses and needs. Now many are coming due at the same time. We are really having to think through how we're going to meet that demand, but with a strong team, who pulls together on these types of situations, we feel confident that we can navigate this incoming volume of work.

Going forward, DSS would like to start introducing some of this data on a regular basis, to help our Advisory Board look at the numbers and see trends in a different way than what is seen with the executive summary.

B. 2021 in Review

Katie Swanson, Director, highlighted for the Board the DSS 2021 Year in Review. A large part of 2021 was focused on staff development. Even though DSS experienced a hard year of turnover, Dr. Swanson believes this would have been worse had we not really focused on our staff throughout the whole year. One of the things that was done was a series titled, "Lunch with the Director". This was open to any staff who wished to come and just have a good meal and informal conversation. Some of those conversations led to quality feedback and small positive changes which supported our staff.

The other event was a 10-month leadership training with our supervisors and managers that was very successful. Participants graduated or will be graduating from those programs. 2022 opportunities will focus on team building across the organization, in addition to a Director's Academy which will include Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The new Health & Wellness Committee at DSS has been helping people focus on wellness on a monthly basis. Some of that includes eating and exercise but it is also centered on mental health and emotional well-being.

Onboarding new hires has improved, as well. We are focused on security training on day one, with follow-up on new hires in order to improve retention. Misti Merritt has also added a technical hiring manual which covers all the little things one needs to know as a new hire at DSS.

TCP, Tim Clock Plus, was a successful launch, and improved efficiency and accuracy across our timekeeping system. This is especially helpful as 1/3 of our staff continue to work remotely. The discarding of a paper timekeeping system has proved to be more fluid and allows us to be more productive.

The screening and hiring process has been restructured for best fits and finding better candidates. We want to find the right fit for our organization based on our county values, which will grow the potential for strong leadership and better personnel across the board.

Audits across departments have received good scores, with continual improvement being a part of everyday processes. This goes hand in hand with strong training programs as laws and requirements change frequently during a pandemic.

In September, we began a sponsorship program for our foster children. This has been a very successful endeavor with over \$10,000 in donations in our first three months. Those dollars are dollars we would not have been able to spend out of our budget but will fit the needs for adults and families in the community.

Lastly, Director Swanson shared some photos from different events celebrated at DSS throughout the year. The point being that we do our jobs to the best of our abilities to help our community, while taking time to just enjoy each other's company and to simply have fun together. In a COVID world, this is not always the easiest thing to plan and to carry out, but it is important for all of our staff.

BOARD REPORTS

A. CHILD PROTECTION/FATALITY TEAM

Ms. Lendra Phillips did not have a report for the Board this month, as their meeting was affected by the inclement weather.

B. NCACBSS

Ms. Wells stated that the weather also impacted their January board meeting. Originally, they had planned to have the meeting on the third Thursday and Friday, but had to cancel due to the weather.

They are still planning to have a board member business meeting on March 22, 2022, and are working to get this organized. The venue will be either in the Raleigh or Greensboro locations. Ms. Wells will update the Board when this is determined.

Ms. Wells also gave an update on the newsletter, which will be going out soon. Because of the newsletter, we now have a county that was not a member of our association reaching out seeking information to join us.

Due to weather, members have had to communicate via Zoom, so that they would not have to travel to Burlington in hazardous weather. While they appreciate the technology, they enjoy meeting in person. A meeting was held to continue conversations regarding Covid, and to ensure that all protocols are being met for in person meetings.

C. COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Commissioners had to delay one of their meetings due to the inclement weather, and they recessed to reconvene. They moved the meeting from Tuesday to Thursday, because of public hearings and small grants' presentations.

The county is starting on another shell building, and working with DSS on plans for their move to the Health Department. Bids have been submitted and will be considered by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Hardin reminded the Board that if people cannot attend in person, that their meetings are live streamed and available for post-viewing on YouTube.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the DSS Advisory Board at this time, Danny Blanton made a motion, seconded by Betsy Wells, and unanimously adopted by the Board, to adjourn the meeting. The next regular meeting of the DSS Advisory Board is scheduled for **February 28, 2022.**

Mary Accor, Chairperson
Cleveland County Social Services Advisory Board

Annette Pendergraft, Clerk to the Board
Cleveland County Social Services Advisory Board Clerk