

SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

February 28, 2022
4:00 p.m.

The Social Services Advisory Board held its February Board Meeting on February 28, 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, Allison Gragg

Others attending – Katie Swanson, Destiny Davidson, Sherry Vess, Chuck Wilson, 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: Danny Blanton made the motion, seconded by Allison Gragg, 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 January 31, 2022 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 January 2022 to Advisory Board members prior to today's meeting.

D. Introduction of New Deputy Director, Destiny Davidson

Director Katie Swanson introduced the new Deputy Director, Destiny Davidson, to the DSS Advisory Board and gave a welcome to Ms. Davidson.

CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION

ACTION: Allison Gragg made a motion, seconded by Danny Blanton, vote passed unanimously by the Board to, *approve the proposed agenda*

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Building Updates, Sherry Vess, Business Officer II

Ms. Vess reported that a contractor, Beam Construction, has been selected to begin work on DSS's future move within the Health Department building. The work is slated to begin next Monday. A planning meeting to discuss phasing and setting up will take place on March 1, 2022.

Ms. Vess hopes to have some floor plans from our architects, Talley & Smith, to present to the Board at the next meeting.

The plan is to conduct this in two phases. Child Support and Economic Services will go in the first phase and then the rest of the organization should be ready to move by the end of the year.

B. Data Key Indicators and Comparisons, Katie Swanson, Director

Director Swanson discussed some data key indicators with the members of the Board. Her summary is as follows:

In 2018, there were 240 Children in custody. That number slowly went down. In 2019 there were 220 children in care. For our size county at that time, we still had more kids than other counties of a similar size. The work being done around this is to carefully look at the petitions we're filing to make sure that they're appropriate, and that we've done everything we can for children to remain in their homes. We also have done a lot of work on the back end for children to get permanent placement sooner. By doing that in 2020, we went down to 180 children in care.

Because of COVID, we did not get as many reports, so last year we hit a low of 149 and are now likely moving to about the right number, which represents 170 to 180 kids in care. Compared to other counties of similar size, that seems to be more in line with where we should be.

We started an adoption team in 2018 because we weren't seeing the number of adoptions compared to other counties. From 2018 to 2019, there was a huge increase in adoptions. We have reached about 27 cases of adoption, and that's about right for us. We get adoption incentive money. They give us a number that we should meet, which is the goal, and then we want to look at anything over that. While adoption is the most secure permanent decision for children, we're working towards reunification first, so adoption is the last resort.

Regarding Adult Protective Services, Director Swanson wanted the board to be aware of the fact that even though 14 through 19 cases doesn't sound like that much in APS, we currently only

have two APS workers. This represents a lot of increased caseloads. In January 2022, we saw our highest number of adult cases, which was 32. This is highly above the trend, and we are tracking that closely. We are also determining whether or not we need another position to cover those types of cases.

C. Recognition of Black History Month, Katie Swanson, Director

Director Swanson expressed her thanks to Board Chair, Mary Accor, who allowed DSS to interview her for Black History Month. Ms. Accor was one of four people we highlighted across the county. The staff very much appreciated reading and learning about Ms. Accor's and other community citizen's contributions to our county.

BOARD REPORTS

A. CHILD PROTECTION/FATALITY TEAM

Ms. Lendra Phillips reported that they had their meeting on February 24, 2022 and they had two old cases to discuss. They also had seven new cases because they had not met in January. The Board and the team decided to close all cases except for one. They decided to leave one open pending for more information on that case.

Next month they will hold the Child Protection Team meeting, where they will have much to discuss, including quite a few infants born with health issues. Ms. Phillips will update the Board at the March 2022 meeting.

B. NCACBSS

Ms. Wells reported that the NCACBSS was unable to meet in January because of snow and ice, so that meeting was rescheduled for February the 18th. They met Burlington, NC with directors from across the state. Ms. Wells stated that two counties joined their association, and they wanted to provide some training and general knowledge about their association. Ms. Wells also reminded the Board that people are welcome to join for \$300 a year.

The NCACBSS will meet in person at McKimmon Conference and Training Center in Raleigh, NC on March the 25th. They will be sending out a flyer regarding accommodations and itinerary. It will be an opportunity for regular board members from out of state to come and find out about the association, and to meet its officers. It is an excellent resource to learn information concerning what's going on in DSS across the state and nation.

An invitation has been sent for our new Secretary of the HHS to come and speak to NCACBSS in person. More information will be sent soon. There is no cost to board members who come whose counties are in the association. For others, the cost will be \$30. The event will start at 9:30 with coffee and donuts, followed by training and then lunch. Hopefully the Secretary will be the speaker at lunch and they will be able to spend some time going over some of their goals.

The agenda will be coming out soon, as well.

There will be a special rate on for attendees if guests wish to come in and spend the night in the state's capital. Since NCACBSS did not have Social Services Institute, this will be a meeting to discuss what they are planning to do with the Directors' Association for the Social Services Institute in Hickory on August 3,4 and 5.

Ms. Wells expressed hope that Board members would put this on their calendars and try to attend.

Ms. Wells stated that this event will be both entertaining and educational for participants.

C. COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hardin reported that their yearly work session took place Thursday and Friday of last week. They discussed capital planning and DSS going to the health department. These are exciting, positive steps. They also discussed the Justice Center which will eventually be the jail, the sheriff's offices and the new courthouse all together. One thing they learned when they were discussing public safety is how we're trying to do more to make sure that our whole demographic is covered. We opened an EMS satellite station in Casar. The first day of operation, they got a call regarding a pediatric seizure. Paramedics were able to arrive within two minutes, prior to the ambulance, and they began treatment on the child. For a rural area, that was astonishing rapid response, and something we can all be grateful and proud of.

ADJOURN

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

Mary Accor, Chairperson
Cleveland County Social Services Advisory Board

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