The Cleveland County DSS Advisory Board met on Monday, January 30, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

Board members present: Chair Allison Gragg, Mary Accor, Lendra Phillips, Deb Hardin, and Danny Blanton

DSS staff present: Destiny Davidson, Ali Wilson, Sherry Vess, Andrea Power, Misti Merritt, Tisha Browder, Tamara Hardy, Jasmine Scott, Tracy Tolbert, Justin Cook, and CJ Benson

County Attorney present: Chuck Wilson

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:**

Chair Gragg called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR JANUARY 30, 2023, DSS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING:**

Chair Gragg presented the proposed consent agenda for the January 30, 2023, DSS Advisory Board meeting for consideration.

**Motion: A motion was made by Mary Accor with a second by Lendra Phillips to approve the proposed agenda for the January 30, 2023, DSS Advisory Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

**CITIZEN RECOGNITION:**

No citizens requested to appear before the Board.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. Minutes

The Clerk to the Board emailed the minutes from the November 28, 2022, meeting to Advisory Board members prior to the January 30, 2023, meeting.

**Motion: A motion was made by Mary Accor with a second by Deb Hardin to approve the minutes for the November 28, 2022, DSS Advisory Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

1. Personnel Report

The Clerk to the Board emailed the personnel report to Advisory Board members prior to the January 30, 2023, meeting.

Chair Gragg had the board look over the vacancy report and asked if they had any questions. No questions were presented. We currently have the following vacancies in Child Welfare: (4) Social Worker III, (1) Social Worker Supervisor II, (3) Social Worker Supervisor III, (6) Social Worker IAT, (1) QA Social Work Supervisor. In Income Maintenance: (3) IM Caseworker III, and a Economic Service Program Manager. In Clerical: (1) Processing Assistant III, (1) Administrative Assistant I, and (1) Administrative Assistant II. In Child Support: (1) Child Support Agent II position.

1. Executive Summary

The Clerk to the Board emailed the Executive Summary to Advisory Board members prior to the January 30, 2023, meeting.

Chair Gragg asked that the board members look over the Executive Summary as presented. There were not any questions presented about the executive summary.

**CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION:**

Chair Gragg presented the consent agenda for the January 30, 2023, DSS Advisory Board meeting for adoption.

**Motion: A motion was made by Betsy Wells with a second by Deb Hardin to approve the consent agenda for the January 30, 2023, DSS Advisory Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

**REGULAR AGENDA:**

1. Year in Review

Chair Gragg introduced Misti Merritt with our Year in Review. Misti highlighted a few things that we began in 2022 in the organization. The County has focused on training over the past year, and we have also started a comprehensive team building within our agency. We have revamped our new hire orientation to improve better understanding of the agency. Child welfare has started a speed interviewing process to help in recruiting vacant social worker positions. We are proud to say that we had no audit findings on our all-County audit as well as the DHHS audit, which is a great accomplishment. We have also incorporated some morale dollars to distribute among the different departments in the agency to allow the supervisors and staff to help with planning events within their departments. Mary asked how success is being measured. Misti explained that we have had positive feedback through word of mouth and emails expressing that staff has appreciated the chance to collaborate in a fun and exciting way while also accomplishing the tasks that they have throughout the day in their jobs. Misti talked about the MOU and the fact that we have met or exceeded all our metrics. Misti also pointed out that Child Support state goals are being exceeded as well.

1. Co-location Update

Misti Merritt introduced Tracy Tolbert with the co-location update. Tracy talked about that Child Support was the pilot for the move to the Health Department building. Child Support moved into the new location in November. They have been good partners at the new complex and staff enjoys being at the new building. The collaboration that is attainable in the new child support environment has been a great success. Mary asked how the new environment deals with client confidentiality. Tracy explained that child support is a secure location and all clients are interviewed in separate interview rooms to protect client information. Mary also asked how redirection of clients has been going. Tracy also explained that a blast fax was sent out to all the clients and if anyone has gone to the social services building they are redirected, but this has been a very seldom occurrence. Justin Cook from the Child Support department spoke about his experience with the new location. Justin explained that Child Support was a close team before the move, but they are now even closer. The remaining DSS team is hopeful to move in mid-March. We are waiting on supplies for phones and internet that have been on backorder.

**BOARD REPORTS:**

1. Child Protection/Fatality Team:

Chair Gragg introduced Lendra Phillips with the Child Protection/Fatality Team report. Lendra reported that CPFT had their meeting, and they have one open case that was discussed. DSS is currently involved, and the children have been removed from the home. There are services in place to provide for those children. The team discussed if there was anything that could have been done ahead of time to help, but they did not find anything that could have changed the situation. The next meeting is scheduled for February.

1. NCACBSS

Chair Gragg introduced Mary Accor with the NCACBSS update. Mary talked about the meeting that was held in December for NCACBSS. Nine members were present at their last meeting. An SSI review was presented by Kristi Nickodem, and Sharnese Ransome called in and shared things that are coming down from the legislature. Two representatives for DHHS from Raleigh were present to assist with any questions centered around Medicaid Managed Care Tailored Plans and the delay of that plan until April 1, 2023. Ray Jefferies, 1st Vice President for NCACBSS was recently elected to the NC House, representing House District 2. He has been a strong advocate for DSS and other initiatives impacting the citizens of North Carolina. Medicaid expansion was discussed which would help to ensure access to affordable health insurance coverage for North Carolina at this meeting as well. There are many benefits of Medicaid Expansion among those being increased access to mental health and substance use treatment, would help build a healthier workforce for NC, and would protect more than 14,000 uninsured veterans and their families. The next NCACBSS Board meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2023.

1. Commissioners

Chair Gragg introduced Deb Hardin with a commissioner update. Commissioner Hardin explained that there would be a farewell event at the LeGrand Center on January 31, from 2:00 PM until 4:00 PM for our exiting County Manager, Brian Epley. Interim County Manager, Todd Carpenter will begin February 1. A process for recruiting a new County Manager is in place.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

Chair Gragg asked if there was any other business to discuss. Danny Blanton asked how far adoptions are behind at this time. He expressed that he has received calls with concerns on timelines for adoptions. Tisha Browder spoke about the steps that must take place for the adoption process. Tisha is over Child Permanency at DSS. Tisha explained that when a Judge has decided that a child is eligible for adoption, the order just be signed and clocked by the Clerk of Court. Once that has been done there is a 33 day waiting period that must take place for possible appeals on the Judge’s ruling. If no appeals have taken place, DSS will start their assessment. A child must have been in the home for 90 days before we can start this preplacement adoption assessment. We would like to have everything complete for an adoption within 6 months, but this is contingent upon the ability to collect all the information that is needed within that time frame.

**ADJOURN: 4:52 PM**

There being no further business, Chair Gragg called for adjournment of the meeting.

**Motion: A motion was made by Deb Hardin with a second by Danny Blanton to adjourn the January 30, 2023, DSS Advisory Board meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

The next DSS Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2023, at 4:00 PM.