

**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Dale Moorefield, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2017**

Board Members Present

Mr. John Byrum; Ms. Barbara Presnell; Mr. Lance Barrett

Others in Attendance

**Mr. Dale Moorefield; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Elizabeth Huff;
Mrs. Susan Craig; Ms. Lynn Meeks; Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Mrs. Sheri Woodyard;
Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Mrs. Robin Penninger; Mrs. Ashly Collins; Ms. Jennifer Cavanaugh**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m. by Mr. John Byrum. An invocation was offered by Mr. Byrum.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Barbara Presnell made a motion to approve the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lance Barrett. Agenda approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Lance Barrett made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2017 meeting. Ms. Barbara Presnell seconded this motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Address

There was no public address. Mr. Dale Moorefield took this opportunity to introduce Mrs. Caroline Hedrick, the new Account Specialist II taking Ms. Lynn Meeks place due to her retirement. He also introduced the three Social Work Supervisors from the Foster Care area, Mrs. Robin Penninger, Mrs. Ashley Collins and Ms. Jennifer Cavanaugh.

Management Report

Ms. Meeks gave out a copy of the expenditure report for the Board to review. She shared that there is overspending in salaries and benefits due to an increase in overtime. This is being caused, in part, by the increase in the number of children in foster care and the number of hours it requires to meet their needs. There is underspending in operating expenses. There is overspending in the capped allocations, again due to the increase in the numbers of children in foster care. The Assistant County Manager is well aware of the overspending and our Department will continue to keep him posted on needs. Overall, however, the budget is being underspent. Ms. Meeks also shared that the budget for 2017/2018 is complete. There will be an increase in the salary and benefit area due to an increase in health insurance. There is an increase in operating expenses due to contracted services. Overall, there is an 8.9 percent increase from last year's budget. She also wanted the Board to be aware that the increases in Foster Care spending will continue because there are more children coming into care and staying longer. The budget will be reviewed in March by the County Manager's office and the Finance Director.

Mr. Dale Moorefield reported on the current vacancies in the Agency and informed the Board that the new Fraud Investigator would be coming to work on March 6, 2017. He explained all details regarding the vacancies.

Mrs. Elizabeth Huff shared with the Board that our Agency is on target and within compliance for processing for Medicaid applications and recertifications. She reported there were very slight changes in the Food and Nutrition Services numbers. She also reported that there were no significant changes in the Work First Family Assistance area and that applications and inquiries were up slightly in January. In the Day Care area, we are at 99 percent spending and the number of children being served has dropped slightly. The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is still open and will end March 31, 2017. Our Agency reverted \$40,000 from this program back to the State. The checks have averaged \$249 each and we have served just over 2000 families.

Mr. Scott Craver reported that Child Support has remained very consistent in collections. Collections exceed the amounts from last year at this same time. Ms. Cindi Houser received a Shout Out from the State for her large collection of \$10,000.

Ms. Katrina McMasters reported that the numbers in Child Protective Services are consistent. She also explained the new Management Report format and the fact that we are trying to capture new and better data so that the Board sees a clearer picture of the work going on in the Child Protective Services area.

Mrs. Susan Craig reported that the numbers in Foster Care are down very slightly and a new MAPP class started on Wednesday, February 22, 2017. She reported that in the Adult Services area, the number of reports is down slightly. We lost four wards due to death in January and were appointed to three new wards.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Employee Retirement/Recognition

Ms. Lynn Meeks is retiring effective March 1, 2017. She began her tenure with the Agency on December 7, 1992. She has given almost 25 years of commitment to the County and the Agency. She has played a key role in keeping our Agency as cost effective as possible with her knowledge and concern with services reimbursement. Her drive to get as much money reimbursed to the Agency through Federal and State reimbursement has been key for the workings of the Agency and Lynn has been crucial for continued good budgeting practices.

Ms. Meeks shared with the Board that she has been happy to serve here at DSS and that she cares about all the workers and about the people of the County. She shared her motto "Life is Good".

Mr. Moorefield shared with the Board that Lynn has stepped up and volunteered for new projects and one of those was taking of Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation. He also shared a letter that was received from Mr. Boyd Morgan, Director of Veterans Services for the County. It was a commendation for Ms. Meeks regarding her willingness to help any and all who needed help. She has served with great commitment to provide our services as cost effectively as possible and that has been good for our Department and the people of Davidson County. The Board and Director Moorefield expressed their thanks to Ms. Meeks and wished her well in her retirement.

Medicaid Transportation Mileage Reimbursement

In January 2012, the Board adopted and approved the IRS Medical Purpose Rate of 23 cents per mile for all our direct reimbursement of Medicaid Transportation Mileage. It was decided at that time to keep this rate concurrent with the IRS Medical Travel Reimbursement Rate. This rate was decreased in January 2016 to 19 cents per mile, which the Board also approved. The rate has again decreased to 17 cents per mile, effective January 1, 2017. Mr. Moorefield asked the Board to consider a rate decrease again this year.

Ms. Barbara Presnell made a motion to decrease the Medicaid Transportation Mileage Direct Reimbursement rate to coincide with that of the IRS to 17 cents per mile. Mr. Lance Barrett seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Record Destruction

DSS currently has 23 Interstate Placement of Children (ICPC) out of county home study records that can be purged/destroyed. These are home studies that our Agency provided for other counties and other states that were used in their placement decisions for children in their custody and care. The retention period for these records is three years. We are asking that the Board consider destruction of these records.

Mr. Barrett made a motion to destroy the ICPC files as requested. Ms. Presnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) Policy

As part of the Adoption Policy and Procedures for each county, the State requires that the MEPA Policy regarding recruitment and selection of adoption and foster parents be updated annually. The proposed MEPA policy has been provided for review and requested the Board

consider the adoption of the changed policy. The changes to the policy were explained by Mrs. Craig.

Mr. Barrett made a motion to adopt the MEPA policy with the listed changes. Ms. Presnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Foster Care/Adoption Updates

Recent policy and rule changes for Child Welfare Services have landed squarely on Foster Care staff. Caseloads are increasing and the projection is for that to continue due to substance abuse in homes and new policies in Child Welfare Services that are likely to create more children coming into DSS custody. Foster Care will now be available and extended to age 21, the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) has been added; additional requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Fostering Health and our Agency's involvement in the Partnering for Excellence (PFE) project are all creating more work and effort on the part of staff. These initiatives are good for our children in care, but they are bringing additional work and requirements to complete at a time when caseloads are growing.

The supervisors in the Foster Care area presented information for the Board and also shared a printout giving facts and trends in the Foster Care/Davidson County areas.

Ms. Jennifer Cavanaugh shared that caseloads continue to grow, with substance abuse being a major factor. As of this date, there are 165 children in the custody of our Agency. The demands placed on the staff for services provided to each child continue to increase as well. 82 children are placed outside of Davidson County, 9 outside of North Carolina. These create longer periods for seeing each child monthly, due to the amount of travel involved. Foster family recruitment continues, but we do not have enough foster families to care for all of the children coming into our care.

Mrs. Ashley Collins shared that the new MAPP class shows potential, in that 15 families have registered for the class. Already half of these have dropped out due to various reasons; including the length of time it takes to complete the class, the barriers each family may face and all of the things that would be required to ready a home for a foster child. The MAPP class is a five-month process and Davidson County imposes stricter guidelines than the State. Only families residing in Davidson County can be licensed through DSS. Each family must be re-licensed every two years and ongoing training is also required of each foster family. Most foster homes close after adoption of children due to having no more room available to foster more children.

Mrs. Robin Penninger shared that 95 percent of the children in DSS custody are there because of substance abuse issues in the home. Drug treatment for the parents is taking longer; therefore, children with the potential to return to their home are remaining in foster care longer. The children in care have been exposed to more traumatic and significant issues, which need to be addressed through therapy. Workers are "burning out" due to these increased issues. Nine workers have left the Agency since February 2016. It takes approximately 16 weeks to get new staff hired and the appropriate training completed before they can begin to take on a caseload. Workers are currently carrying a caseload of 20 to 25 children. The State recommendation is 10 children per worker. The Agency is trying to take care of staff, but the traumas and problems with the children in care are taking a toll on staff. Court is also very demanding, having to spend a great deal of time writing Court Reports that must show all efforts completed by the social worker on behalf of the child, as well as, the progress of the parents and the children. Judges' orders must be followed to the letter and

those have become increasingly more demanding as well as being time sensitive. The social workers average spending at least one day per week in court.

The mind shift and policy change from the State is very significant. Fostering Health, Every Student Succeeds Act, Guardianship Assistance Program, Foster Care 18-21 Program, Partnering for Excellence and Increased Work with Teens were explained in detail. All of these initiatives have the potential to be helpful, but the time involved for each worker sometimes becomes stressful and overwhelming. The Foster Care workers strive to do the best thing for each child in care; however, the increasing numbers of children in care mean that each worker will not be able to spend as much time with the child or the worker will have to spend extra hours at work to give the attention needed.

Discussion was also held about the methadone treatment facility in Lexington and the fact that it appears there have been very few successes from the program.

Mr. Barrett let the supervisors know that the information was very helpful and the presentation of the information was one of the best he has seen.

Ms. Presnell made a motion to move the meeting into Closed Session at 5:35 pm. Mr. Barrett seconded the motion. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

Closed Session:

No action was taken during closed session. The meeting returned to open session at 5:50 pm.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 28, 2017, at 4:15 p.m., first floor of Social Services in Lexington, Conference Room D.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 pm.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield