

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Melissa Fischer called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. via Microsoft Teams. Public can participate by joining with a Video Conferencing Device: 682042763@t.plcm.vc, Video Conference ID: 118 487 865 9, or Call In (Audio Only) by Dialing (614) 721-2972, Phone Conference ID: 913 304 79#.

A. Roll Call

Present: Melissa Fischer, Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Kenneth Glynn, Tracy Green, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Mallory Santiago, Rob Weber
Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

- **Swearing in Newly Appointed Board Members, Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller and Rob Weber**

Judge Walther invited the Board members to join an adoption hearing, pending consent of the family members involved.

Oath of Office: Judge James T. Walther swore in Board members Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller and Rob Weber, appointed as Board members effective February 17, 2021. Judge Walther welcomed and congratulated the new Board members and expressed his gratitude for being invited to officiate the Swearing in Ceremony.

Board Chair Melissa Fischer shared a brief history of the LCCS Board, welcomed the new Board members and provided each Board member with an opportunity to introduce themselves.

B. Review and Approve Agenda

Board Chair Melissa Fischer asked if there were any additions or changes to the Agenda submitted for the February 17, 2021 Board Meeting. No additions or changes made.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Mallory Santiago to approve the Agenda. Motion carried.

C. Review and Approve Minutes

Board Chair Melissa Fischer asked if there were any additions or changes to the Minutes submitted for the January 20, 2021 Board. No additions or changes made.

MOTION: It was moved by Kenneth Glynn, seconded by Mallory Santiago to approve the minutes. Motion carried.

II. Public Comment

Board Chair Melissa Fischer noted that there was no one from the public participating via phone conference wishing to address the Board.

III. Executive Session (to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law)

MOTION: It was moved by Rob Weber, seconded by Mallory Santiago to move into Executive Session to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law. Motion carried.

A Roll Call was taken prior to Executive Session. Melissa Fischer, Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Kenneth Glynn, Tracy Green, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Mallory Santiago and Rob Weber were present.

IV. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

• Board Officers

Melissa Fischer would like for the Board to nominate and elect new Board officers. The current Board Chair is Melissa Fischer and the Board Secretary is Mallory Santiago, both effective January 1, 2018. Mallory Santiago indicated that she is willing to maintain her position as the Board Secretary for another term. Further discussion is tabled until the March Board meeting.

• Policy 3.4 Public Comment

Policy 3.4 was developed to provide the public with the opportunity to address the Board during monthly Board meetings. Beginning in May 2015 the Board made a commitment to hold Board meetings across the County in order to make the meetings more accessible to the public. However, this effort did not yield the intended results and the Board resumed holding meetings at the Lorain County Administration Building in November 2017.

Kristen Fox-Berki reviewed the draft Guidelines for Public Comment form with the Board. Ms. Fox-Berki researched other counties' practices regarding public comment as requested by the Board and submitted the draft guidelines to the civil prosecutor and it was approved. Regarding the research with other county agencies, our draft guidelines aligns with theirs, specifically regarding the language addressing comments to be directed to the Board Chair, a 3-minute time limit, not allowing minutes to be given to someone else to extend the time and if two or more individuals are speaking on the same topic the Board Chair can designate one individual to speak for the group.

The Board discussed potential barriers that the public may have in providing the Board with advanced notice of their intent to address the Board during a meeting. The Board holds value in making the process inclusive for everyone. The Board agrees that they would allow public comment without advanced notice if the person wishing to address the Board follows the guidelines.

Discussion held regarding virtual meetings vs. in-person meetings, security measures and ways to adhere to the guidelines while still allowing some flexibility. The guidelines could be available for someone that is not able to reach out prior to the Board meeting to review and sign in the moment prior to the meeting to inform the Board that they would like to make a public comment. Furthermore, if someone chose to speak during public comment without notifying the Board prior to the meeting, the Board feels that they should allow the public comment if the guidelines are being followed. For public comments related to a private or confidential matter, specific to a case or otherwise, it would be appropriate to ask them to contact the Ombudsman.

Kristen Fox-Berki will amend the first bullet point of the draft guidelines to make it more inclusive, allowing for more flexibility on behalf of the Board. The Board agrees to post the guidelines once this amendment is made.

Per Policy 2.2, the Board policies will be reviewed and updated by April 1st every odd year. Melissa Fischer requests that the Board members review the Board policies in preparation for the March Board meeting.

B. Unresolved Action Items

• Integrated Services Partnership (ISP)

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a brief update regarding ISP. Melissa Fischer indicated that this is an important topic for the Board and requested the new Board members to review past minutes and other documents available to them on the Board Only site in preparation for ongoing discussions.

The ISP Executives held a special session on January 29, 2021 to review the role of the Family & Children First Council (FCFC) in Lorain County, the strengths and weaknesses of ISP and FCFC, the pros and cons of merging or keeping them separate and an overview of State initiatives that affect the various systems within ISP. The identified options include (1) keeping ISP and FCFC as separate entities and (2) create a ‘bridge’ between them or (3) merge ISP and FCFC into one entity, which would include disbanding ISP. The next ISP Executives meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 19, 2021 to continue with this discussion. Kristen Fox-Berki will provide the Board with an update at the March Board meeting.

V. Executive Director’s Report

A. Policy 6.1 Monthly Financial Update

Kristen Fox-Berki presented, and the Board reviewed the Lorain County Children Services Revenue, Disbursements and Cash Fund Balance as of 01/31/2021.

Discussion topics:

- Revenue:
 - The main source of revenue for January 2021 is FCM/IVE Waiver (monthly) reimbursement.
 - State CWS/SA funds (quarterly) were received ahead of schedule in December rather than January.

- Expenditures:
 - Expenses are significantly lower in January than in December because December included an extra pay period and a quarterly Hospitalization/Dental payment. The expenditures for January are average.
- The ending fund balance for January was \$19,687,801.38.

Per Policy 6.2, The Board shall approve the agency’s budget by April 30th annually for the following calendar year. Melissa Fischer requests that the new Board members familiarize themselves with the various line items before the March Board meeting and invited them to contact her or Director of Fiscal Affairs, Jessica Basinski with questions regarding funding sources. Melissa Fischer shared with the new Board members that the Board approved a kinship subsidy in August 2020 for kinship caregivers and the Board is proud as an organization to support the kinship caregivers for Lorain County.

Kristen Fox-Berki will be presenting to the Budget Commission on March 8, 2021. The overview will include:

- Unplanned revenue we received for CY2018, CY2019 and CY2020 and the decrease in projected costs, totaling \$6,718,624.00. This is lower than the unplanned revenue and decrease in projected costs for the previous three years (\$8,620,544.00).
- During the three years referenced above, the State provided allocations to the child welfare agencies that were not received previously. These were unexpected and added to our carryover. Currently, we are not aware of any additional allocations coming from the State.
- Carryover playing a role in our decision to only ask for a renewal levy.
- The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), implemented October 1, 2020 and how IV-E funding will change, potential impact of the QRTP and impact from the loss of the waiver. For the last full year of the waiver, October 2018 through September 2019 we received \$3,487,518.30 and for the period October 2019 through September 2020, through traditional IV-E reimbursements, we received \$775,106.83. This is a loss of \$2,712,411.47. We are awaiting notice from the State regarding an allocation through a certainty grant related to lost revenue because of the waiver ending. To date we have not received this information.

B. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of January:

- Anastasia Williams, Direct Services Caseworker, 1/4/21
- Amy Loch, Direct Services Caseworker, 1/19/21
- Damaris Sejjo, Direct Services Caseworker, 1/25/21

Leaves:

- Marlon Leek, Direct Services Caseworker, 1/29/21

C. Policy 4.5 Personnel Policy & Procedure Manual w/ Travel Reimbursement Policy

Per Policy 4.5 the Executive Director will present the agency's Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual, to include the agency's travel and reimbursement policy, annually in February for Board approval upon enactment, new policy creation or policy amendments. No changes have been made to the manual since last approved by the Board.

Kristen Fox-Berki shared with the Board that the contract extension with Travel World expired and the travel agency dissolved. Due to the pandemic, the bidding process was put on hold. Kristen Fox-Berki is requesting that the Board approve a 9-month agreement with Elaine Shores, former travel agent for Travel World as she is familiar with our process, providing time for the pandemic to stabilize and the agency to complete the bidding process.

The Board expressed that they would like the bidding process to be completed now and will agree to a 90-day agreement with Elaine Shores to allow time to complete this process. If the bidding process cannot be completed within 90 days, Kristen Fox-Berki will notify the Board and they will consider a month-to-month extension of the agreement. Kristen Fox-Berki will send the agreement with Elaine Shores to the prosecutor's office for approval.

MOTION: It was moved by Tim Carrion, seconded by Tracy Green to approve a 90-day agreement with independent contractor Elaine Shores to provide travel agent services for LCCS, effective today, February 17, 2021. Motion carried.

Additional Discussion Topics:

Kinship Support Program (KSP)

For decades, LCCS has recognized the importance of keeping children with family whenever possible as a preferred method over placing children in foster care. In August 2020 the Board approved a \$300 per month, per child subsidy for kinship caregivers, using levy funds.

At the end of December 2020, Governor DeWine signed an order asking Job and Family Services to create a rule to provide kinship caregivers with an approved home study \$10.20 per day, per child for children in the agency's custody. This order was a direct result of a lawsuit in Kentucky, also filed in Ohio among a few other states. As a result of the Governor's order, the Kinship Support Program (KSP) was developed, but is not fully implemented. Prior to this, the State was not providing support to kinship caregivers. KSP does not allow kinship caregivers with temporary custody of the child to receive the payment, excluding most of our kinship families because we consider placing the child in the least restrictive setting as best practice, with the court granting custody to a kinship relative whenever possible with the agency holding protective supervision. Kristen Fox-Berki requested guidance from the prosecutor's office and they concur that we will not be changing our practice. LCCS will continue to provide our monthly kinship subsidy to all kinship caregivers regardless of who holds custody.

We identified and sent letters to the kinship caregivers through our agency that are currently eligible for KSP. These monthly payments are fully paid by the

State. We are working with the State TAS to clarify some of the concerns we still have regarding this new program. Kristen Fox-Berki will continue to keep the Board updated.

Family & Children First Council (FCFC)

Kristen Fox-Berki met with County Administrator Tom Williams today and he requested LCCS to consider becoming the administrative agent for the FCFC, which is not an uncommon practice among other counties. The current administrative agent is the Lorain County Commissioners. Ms. Fox-Berki expressed to Mr. Williams that she would be open to considering his request and requests the Board's feedback. Kristen Fox-Berki would like to reach out to other agencies gather information about their current practices. There would be a financial impact on LCCS if the agency were to choose to take on this responsibility.

Melissa Fischer shared that the Mental Health Board has also served as the administrative agent for FCFC in the past, among other entities. The Board would like more information on how it would be structured with LCCS as the administrative agent for FCFC, and the number of county children services agencies providing this service throughout Ohio. Kristen Fox-Berki will research and further discussion will be held at the March Board meeting.

County Administrator Tom Williams shared with Kristen Fox-Berki that some safety improvements will be made at the Administration Building, but suggested that there could be an option for LCCS to move to the building that houses Lorain County Job and Family Services on North Ridge Rd., providing more space and security. Kristen Fox-Berki agreed to tour the building. Further discussion will be held at the March Board meeting.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

None.

VII. Announcements

None.

VIII. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Kenneth Glynn to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:48 p.m. Motion carried.

The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

Minutes Prepared by:
Kimberly Kassam, Administrative Supervisor

Approved by:
Melissa Fischer, LCCS Board Chair