

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

A. Roll Call

Present: Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Mallory Santiago

Excused: Kim Withrow

Absent: Tawana Jackson

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the March 20, 2024, Board meeting. No additions or changes made.

C. Review and Approve Minutes

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Minutes submitted for the February 21, 2024, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to approve the February 21, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Mallory Santiago
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

II. Public Comment

Board Chair Jim Miller noted a member of the public, Sheri Latessa, is present and wishes to address the Board. Ms. Latessa indicated that she was present to address a specific case but upon review of the Guidelines for Providing Public Comment at LCCS Board Meetings, realizes she cannot provide specific case information in a public forum, and will pursue further action regarding her interactions with children services at the State level.

III. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

1. LCCS Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

The Board agrees to form a Board Foster Care Recruitment Subcommittee to help the agency achieve the strategic planning goal regarding foster care recruitment. Board Chair Jim Miller requests Board Secretary Christina Doran to lead the subcommittee and encourages Board members to join.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of February:

1. Amelia Sas, Scan Clerk 2/12/24
2. William Wooten, Case Aide 2/26/24
3. Karrie Shimer, Case Aide 2/26/24
4. Emily Kolb, DS Caseworker 2/26/24
5. DeAvion Anderson, DS Caseworker 2/26/24

Leaves for the month of February:

1. Laurie Luda, DS Caseworker 2/1/24
2. Amber Gaikwad, FBC Placement Caseworker 2/2/24
3. Nicole Krejci, DS Caseworker 2/23/24

B. Visitation Center

Kristen Fox-Berki confirmed with the architect that the floor plans can be finalized, and we are ready to move on to the next phase. There is no further update to provide.

Child Protection Oversight & Evaluation (CPOE)

CPOE is completed by Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) every several years. This is a compliance review focused on safety, permanence, and well-being. They randomly pull direct services and foster care cases. We had our entrance conference on Friday, March 15, 2024, and the reviews are scheduled to begin in April 2024. Kristen Fox-Berki will provide an updated to the Board once the reviews are completed and the results are received.

Hero for a Day

The Hero for a Day event is scheduled for Sunday, May 19, 2024, at the Amvets Post #32 pavilion in Elyria. Please see Kristen Fox-Berki for sponsorship forms if needed.

April 8, 2024, Total Solar Eclipse

The agency is planning to close the office on April 8, 2024, for the solar eclipse, but will have staff on call to respond to emergencies. No objection noted from the Board.

V. Fiscal Reports

A. Policy 6.3 Annual Budget (Presentation)

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the 2025 Annual Budget and invited Director of Fiscal Affairs, Jessica Basinski to share information and answer

questions.

2024 Expenditures

- **Personnel**- there was a reduction to Workers Comp expenses.
- **Office Supplies and Agency Equipment**- there was an increase due to the vehicle purchase this year.
- **Vehicle and Travel**- there was an increase, mainly due to the increase in the IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate, as well as the increase in travel costs.
- **Services to Clients & Their Families**- there was an increase due to the increase costs for Purchase Board and Care. We will have seven (7) children transitioning from group homes upon their graduation. We are also actively working to move children out of congregate care.
- **Facilities**- \$1 million was allocated for the Visitation Center which includes the renovation, rent, utilities, etc.
- **Other**- there was an increase mainly due to the Allocations to FCFC. Jessica Basinski noted we receive the funds and then pay them out, so there are no additional expenses incurred.

For 2025, the Ending Fund Balance is projected to be just over \$2.5 million which is low and would not be enough to carry over until the first 2026 levy collection in March 2026. We are actively looking at cost cutting measures to ensure we have the necessary funds until the first 2026 levy collection is received. This includes removing from the budget the proposed positions from the previous personnel plan that were not yet filled, which will save a little more than \$850,000. The main factor for the decreased carryover from 2024 to 2025 is the increase in the number of children in care, which is now a little more than 200 children. There is also an increase in placement costs. The per diem rates have increased significantly, by 128%. One of the goals for the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan is to increase the number of foster homes. Achieving this goal will have a direct impact on lowering the per diem rates. For foster homes, the lowest per diem rate, for infants, is \$37 per day. The highest foster care per diem rate, for children with more complex needs, is \$47 per day. The highest per diem rate for residential centers and group homes is \$845 per day. The goal is to increase the number of foster homes and move the children from group homes and residential centers into foster homes. Board member Rania Assily suggested developing a program with interfaith organizations/ churches to build up the agency's network and assist with housing, food, daily care for children, etc. Children in residential centers and group homes do often have behavioral challenges and the direct/daily care of children does require an extensive screening/homestudy process. The Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator is actively working with churches and faith-based organizations to recruit foster parents. Board members are encouraged to join the Board Foster Care Recruitment Subcommittee to help with recruitment efforts.

Board member Roberto Davila noted the Board voted on a one-time levy reduction in 2023 to withhold the taxpayer's collection of funds, totaling approximately \$600,000.00. We receive two levy payments annually, one in March and another in August. Since 2021, there has been a 64% increase in the number of children in custody. In part, due to the State implementing the Kinship Guardian Assistance Program (KGAP). Through this program, the State provides funding to kinship

caregivers, but the child(ren) must be in agency custody. Since 2020 when the Board voted to provide a subsidy to our kinship caregivers, the State has increased their funding and programs for kinship caregivers. We will work internally to assess the kinship subsidy funds the agency provides vs. the eligibility for State funding, prior to the Annual Budget approval by the Board in April.

Board member Roberto Davila inquired about the impact of the Visitation Center on the Annual Budget; \$1.5 million was already factored into the 2024 and 2025 budget for expenses related to renovations and ongoing expenses. Levy funds do account for approximately 52% of the agency's revenue and it would have a significant impact on levy funding should the levy fail. However, the community has shown a great deal of support when voting for our levy, and we are hopeful this will continue. It is difficult to control the number of children in care and the cost of placements. By law, we must take referrals, address concerns, and when appropriate petition the court for custody. There are services and funding available to our clients and kinship caregivers through ODJFS. We are currently providing LCCS staff with a training on the programs and services JFS provides. Further discussion on the Annual Budget will be held at the April 17, 2024, Board meeting.

1. Policy 4.1 Pay Scale- Non-Bargaining

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Non-Bargaining Pay Scale.

2. Policy 6.3a Contracts and ODJFS Required Contracts w/ Child Placement Agencies

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with:

- a) the ODJFS Master Contracts with Child Placement Agencies.
- b) the list of Contracted Professional Services, including the cost and a summary for each service.
- c) the master contract list including all companies and providers, with the term begin and end date and the approximate annual amount for each contract.

3. Policy 6.3b Personnel Plan

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the 2024-2025 Personnel Plan.

4. Policy 6.3c Major Purchases

Tabled.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. LCCFFC Contracts

Kristen Fox Berki provided the Board with a list of Lorain County Children and Families First Council (LCCFFC) contracts. Previously the LCCS Board would approve the contracts for LCCFFC as they were established. Moving forward, the contracts will be presented to the LCCS Board on an annual basis for approval. If there are any changes in the contract amounts, they will be presented to the Board at that time for approval.

MOTION: A motion was made by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to approve the LCCFFC contract list. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Mallory Santiago
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

VII. Executive Session *(to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law)*
None.

VIII. Announcements
None.

IX. Adjourn
MOTION: It was moved by Andrew Lipian, seconded by Martin Heberling to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:44 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Mallory Santiago
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

Minutes Prepared by:
Kimberly Kassam, Administrative Supervisor

Approved by:
Christina Doran, Board Secretary