

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, August 20, 2025 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:00 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, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

Excused: Dan Gross, Andrew Lipian, Deborah Ortner, Kim Withrow

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

Kenneth Glynn and Christina Doran's Board terms expired on August 15, 2025, and they were not reappointed. The Board will invite them to the September Board meeting to thank them for their service to the agency and the community.

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the August 20, 2025, Board meeting. Policy 1.2 Board Officers will be added under Agenda Item VI.A, New Business, New Items for Discussion and Approval, to elect a Board Secretary. The Agenda stands with this change included.

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 July 16, 2025, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

II. Public Comment

Board Chair Jim Miller confirmed that there were no requests from the public to address the Board.

III. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

1. Policy 4.1 Pay Scale- Non-Bargaining

Tabled until union negotiations are completed.

2. Policy 5.14 Annual Management Plan

A Management Plan is completed annually. The three priorities for the 2025-2026 Management Plan:

1) Utilization of data to ensure practice standards and decision making

This priority is led by the Direct Services and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Managers, to improve documentation of face to face contact with families. A resource guide will be created to monitor

compliance and maintain consistency in practice. The CQI department utilizes the data generated through the State system, SACWIS to create reports which can then be utilized by caseworkers and supervisors.

2) Evaluate the efficiency of operations at the Connections Center

Construction and planning have been completed. The next step is to evaluate and assess operations, ensure roles and responsibilities are consistently followed, visits are occurring safely, safety concerns are addressed timely, and assess the needs of the IL department.

3) New Timekeeping System

A few months ago, Kristen Fox-Berki presented the contract to the Board for the new timecard system, TimeClock Plus (TCP). The previous system has been used for several years and no longer meets our needs. The fiscal and human resources departments have been meeting with consultants to plan for onboarding and training. The target date to implement the new system is September 21, 2025.

3. Policy 7.14 Client Grievance

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Ombudsman Quarterly Report from April 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025, including the number of Grievances Filed, Public Complaints, Telephone Calls, Emails, Walk-ins, New Requests for Ombudsman Services, Pending Requests Resolved from Last Quarter, Pending Grievance Resolved from Last Quarter and New Requests Resolved within this Quarter.

Overarching types of complaints for this quarter include: (1) disagreements regarding suitable caregivers for the children, (2) complaints about caseworkers and supervisors not returning phone calls timely, and (3) interactions between agency staff and families.

B. Unresolved Action Items

1. Policy 5.6 Executive Director Contract

The current employment contract for Executive Director, Kristen Fox-Berki expires on November 10, 2025. Kristen Fox-Berki is working with the Lorain County Prosecutor's office to make the necessary changes to finalize the contract.

2. Policy 5.12 Executive Director Performance

Board Chair Jim Miller appointed three (3) members of the Board to review the employment contract and conduct a performance review. Board committee members include Roberto Davila, Rania Assily, and Andrew Lipian. The group plans to meet to review the Executive Director's performance. Roberto Davila will contact Jim Miller regarding next steps.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of July:

1. Richard Hardy, DS Caseworker 7/14/25
2. Caitlyn Mularchik, DS Caseworker 7/14/25
3. Tori Byrd, DS Caseworker 7/28/25

Leaves for the month of July:

1. Kaitlynn Horsley, OhioStart Caseworker 7/7/25
2. Adelle Hartman, DS Supervisor 7/18/25
3. Gregory Dailey, DS Caseworker 7/23/25

B. Policy 7.1 Present All Programs and Services Not Required

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a comprehensive list of programs provided by the agency. The required duties of a Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) are outlined in section 5153.16 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). They include:

1. Accept Reports & Investigate
2. Custody and Care
3. Placement
4. Foster Care
5. Adoption

Services LCCS offers that are not required by the Ohio Revised Code:

1. Case Management
 - Provide case management for all ongoing services.
2. Kinship Services
 - A dedicated kinship unit was established in 2017. The KGAP program was implemented most recently, to license kinship caregivers as foster parents, to provide them with financial assistance through the state and federal government. Financial support is provided to the County's kinship navigator program, to assist them in providing needed services to our community's kinship families.
3. Lorain County Public Health Services
 - We have a long-standing service agreement with Lorain County Public Health to complete our 2-day physicals for children in care.
4. OhioSTART Casework Services
 - OhioSTART (Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma) is an intervention program that brings together caseworkers, behavioral health professionals and family peer mentors to help families that are struggling with child maltreatment and substance use disorder. OhioSTART began in 2017 as a pilot project and is currently in 57 counties in Ohio. LCCS recently received OhioSTART certification.
5. Case Aide Services
 - Case aide services are instrumental in providing transportation and visitation support to families who have children in our care. This unit has one dedicated supervisor and four case aides. In addition, there is one Independent Living (IL) case aide that transports IL and emancipated youth to meetings, groups, activities, interviews, appointments etc.
6. Foster Care and Adoption Services
 - LCCS employs caseworkers to recruit, train, license and support our foster caregivers and adoptive families. Once licensed, a unit of support

caseworkers provide the necessary support to the licensed caregivers when children are placed into their homes.

7. Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP) Services

- ASAP is a State initiative that prioritizes high risk cases. The ASAP Coordinator reviews these identified cases, then meets with the assigned caseworker and supervisor to determine how to proceed to manage risk factors and increase child safety.

8. Ombudsman Services

- LCCS employs a part-time Ombudsman to accept and process complaints and grievances from clients as well as the public. The Ombudsman will meet with all individuals involved including clients, members of the public, and staff members.

C. LCCS Connections Center

The renovations are nearly completed, the building is furnished, and visitation rooms are set up. We are optimistic and hopeful to begin visits in the new building next week. The case aides have been monitoring visits for the last several weeks in the community until the building is ready, and it has been challenging for all involved to get the children where they need to be. Kristen Fox-Berki reached out to staff to assess their comfort level with holding visits at the Connections Center before the Wi-Fi is connected and card readers for building access are installed. Case aides are currently using their agency cell phones as hot spots to access the State system while monitoring visits in the community and would continue to do so at the Connections Center until the Wi-Fi is installed which could take a few more weeks, or longer. Keys could be used temporarily until the card readers are installed. Although these are inconveniences, staff would prefer to hold visits in the new building. We have received our occupancy permit, but we are still working on getting the fire extinguishers and smoke detectors updated. The leak in the roof has been fixed. The playground will be installed the first week of September. The landscaping project was completed on August 14, 2025. Kristen Fox-Berki thanked Board members Roberto Davila, Rania Assily and Chris Cabot for their help with the landscaping. The County maintenance department offered to water the plants.

In addition to renovation costs through the competitive bidding process, the Board approved an additional \$250,000 for expenses. Approximately \$226,000 has been spent so far. There could be some unforeseen costs to get the Connections Center completely ready. Kristen Fox-Berki is asking the Board to approve an additional \$25,000 just in case it is needed.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve an additional \$25,000 for Connections Center costs. Motion carried.

Martin O'Donnell asked for clarification regarding the ownership of the building, and their contribution to the added expenses. The building is owned by the Lorain County Visitor's Bureau, and LCCS is leasing the building for \$4,500 per month. The Lorain County Prosecutor's office approved a contract with the Visitor's Bureau, in collaboration with LCCS and the Lorain County Commissioners. There is a bond outstanding on the building, which the County is paying. The rent pays for the bond. The cost to repave the parking lot was estimated to cost around \$52,000. We are still

exploring other options rather than repaving. Kristen Fox-Berki will follow up with Dan Gross for estimates to fill in the potholes, or an alternative solution. The drainage issue was resolved by the Lorain County Engineer's office. ESP Brewing Company has offered to allow staff to utilize their parking lot during the day while their establishment is closed.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

We would like to have a grand opening to make it official and invite community partners to attend. The LCCS Connections Center grand opening is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

D. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Christina Doran was an active participant on the foster care recruitment subcommittee, but her Board term has expired. Rania Assily has agreed to assist with recruitment/community events. Rania Assily will contact Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator, Judith Padua within the next few weeks to discuss.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Policy 1.2 Board Officers

With Christina Doran's Board term ending, a new Board Secretary must be appointed for the remainder of her term. Board Chair Jim Miller requested volunteers for Board Secretary; Martin Heberling volunteered.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

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

MOTION: It was moved by Tamara Newton, seconded by Thomas Patrick to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried.

APA Christina Mendoza and APA Leigh Prugh were asked to meet with the Board for Executive Session.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

VIII. Announcements

The Princess Ball is scheduled for Sunday, October 19, 2025. Ticket sales have begun. Ads for the event are posted on Facebook and Instagram. Kristen Fox-Berki reminded the Board to reach out to community members and business owners for sponsorships. Board members are also invited to volunteer to help on the day of the event.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:16 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 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:
Martin Heberling, Board Secretary