

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 17, 2025 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:02 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, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Deborah Ortner, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow

Excused: Christopher Cabot

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

The Board welcomed new Board member, Deborah Ortner.

1. Swearing In Ceremony for New Board Members

It was decided that Judge Walther will attend a Board meeting at the first of the year to hold a Swearing in Ceremony for all new Board members at that time.

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the September 17, 2025, Board meeting. Agenda Item I.A.1 Swearing In Ceremony for New Board Members will be held in early 2026. The Agenda stands with the included change.

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 August 20, 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.

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. The Lorain County Prosecutor's office sent the revisions. Board Chair Jim Miller will review the revisions, and input will

be provided by the Board at the October 15, 2025, Board meeting before finalizing.

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 performance evaluation has not been completed. The appointed committee members are planning to meet following today's meeting.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of August:

1. Sara Camacho, DS Caseworker 8/11/25
2. Angela Hosier, DS Caseworker 8/25/25
3. Lisa Friend, DS Caseworker 8/25/25

No leaves for the month of August.

B. LCCS Connections Center

The LCCS Connections Center grand opening was held yesterday. The event was a success. Several Board members attended along with LCCS staff members and community partners. We are waiting for the fire inspection to be completed and then we will officially be able to hold visitations in the facility. The playground was installed. State and County IT departments were at the building today, as well as Spectrum. We now have Wi-Fi in the building and computers and printers are nearly ready for use. With the progress made today, installation of the security cameras, phones and card readers can be scheduled. Kristen Fox-Berki thanked the Board members that were able to attend the open house. The Board played a vital role in the opening of the Connections Center.

C. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Rania Assily offered to lead the subcommittee. She will meet with Christina Doran to share information about previous and future planning. Kristen Fox-Berki and Rania Assily will also schedule a meeting with Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator, Judith Padua.

D. THC Safety

At the beginning of this year, we started to notice a trend regarding small children ages 5 and under who have ingested THC. We have received a few reports in the last few years, but this year the flow of calls has become steadier. Since the beginning of the year, we have received about thirty (30) calls, mainly through hospital systems, reporting small children ingesting THC. This is happening throughout the State and the country. We want to educate the community and help them understand that the gummies in particular look like gummy bears. If they are left out, children see candy and they want to eat it. A brochure will be provided to parents and families to make them aware that if they are using gummies and have small children, or are aware of family and friends that do, to please be mindful. The flyer titled *A Parent's Guide to THC Safety* is distributed at community events. Kristen Fox-Berki shared a Chronicle

Telegram article sharing our message and educating the community on this important topic. Following the newspaper article, News 5 Cleveland contacted our agency requesting to do an interview; this interview was held yesterday. They will be adding to the story with information and interviews with local hospital systems and substance use treatment centers in the area and it will be aired once the segment is completed. Kristen Fox-Berki will notify the Board once the air date is received. The Board requested the handouts electronically to share with their own school systems and community members. Kristen Fox-Berki will send them. We have brought this topic to the attention of our association and other agencies are becoming more aware, including Poison Control. We are meeting with Lorain County Public Health to collect better data. Our database does not currently allow us to track data specific to this type of case, so we are collecting the data internally. More information is also needed locally, within the County.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

None.

Christina Doran was presented with a token of the Board's appreciation in recognition of her dedication to the children of Lorain County. She was appointed to our Board in March 2021, and she has remained committed throughout her term. She played an instrumental role in the foster care recruitment subcommittee and served as the Board Secretary. The Board thanked her for her time commitment and dedication to the Board and her support to the children and families of Lorain County, the agency and the community.

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 Kim Withrow to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried.

Kristen Fox-Berki, APA Leigh Prugh and Human Resources Manager, Amanda Pittner were asked to meet with the Board for Executive Session.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Deborah Ortner, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

VIII. Announcements

The Princess Ball is scheduled for Sunday, October 19, 2025, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. at the New Russia Township Lodge. About seventy (70) tickets have been sold so far, and

we have received some responses for sponsorships. There are 11-12 girls that have signed up for the VIP package, which is limited to 20.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Kim Withrow to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:01 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Deborah Ortner, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15, 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