

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4th Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

A. Roll Call

Present: Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell

Excused: Lee Armbruster, Deborah Ortner, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow

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 October 15, 2025, Board meeting. Martin O'Donnell requested the Board discuss Therapy Dogs; this will be added to Agenda Item VI.A New Business. 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 September 17, 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. This will be discussed further in Executive Session.

2. Policy 5.12 Executive Director Performance

Further discussion in Executive Session.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of September:

1. Jace Cudlin, Scan Clerk 9/8/25
 2. Angela Isom, DS Caseworker 9/22/25
- Leaves for the month of September:
1. Patti Jo Burtnett, Director of Operations & Special Projects 9/1/25
 2. Sara Camacho, DS Caseworker 9/17/25
 3. Jaclyn Telep, OhioSTART Caseworker 9/19/25
 4. Crystal Allen, DS Caseworker 9/29/25

B. Policy 7.14 Client Grievance

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Ombudsman Quarterly Report from July 1, 2025, through September 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.

At the Board's request, Deborah Bailey explained her process for investigating and addressing Ombudsman complaints with the individual submitting the complaint, as well as with LCCS staff members that are mentioned in a complaint.

C. LCCS Connections Center

The Connections Center is now open. The case aides and their supervisor, the Independent Living staff and their supervisor, a manager, the Sheriff deputy and a front desk staff member are now operating out of the new building. The parking lot was repaired and lined, the dumpster was moved to provide extra parking, the playground was installed, the appliances were delivered and installed in the IL area, the alarm system is now functioning, the fire system was installed, the horn strobe installation is in progress, and the AED machine was delivered. The Knox Box will be installed to allow the fire department access to the building in an emergency. We are working with two sign companies to have the current sign removed and a new sign installed. We are currently under budget and with the sign estimate, we should meet our goal to remain under budget. Feedback from staff working at the Connections Center has been positive and the families are enjoying the new building. The County IT department is working on a firewall issue. Once this is resolved, the card readers and desk phone installation can be completed.

D. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Kristen Fox-Berki and Rania Assily scheduled a meeting with Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator, Judith Padua. Further updates are forthcoming.

V. Fiscal Reports

A. Policy 6.1 Quarterly Financial Update

At the Board's request, Director of Fiscal Affairs Jessica Basinski presented, and the Board reviewed the Lorain County Children Services Revenue, Disbursements and Cash Fund Balance as of September 30, 2025.

Revenue:

The total Revenue for July – September 2025 is \$10,377,588.83.

- The main sources of revenue were State, Federal, Levy, and MSY funds.

Expenditures:

The total Expenditures for July – September 2025 is \$6,980,500.50.

- Salaries, PERS and Medicare are low because salaries are expected to increase with annual raises once the union contract is finalized.
- We have not received anything to pay toward Workers Comp, but it is expected to come out during the next quarter.
- Under Office Supplies and Agency Equipment, repairs were made to agency vehicles, and we paid for the new timecard system.
- The Gas Mileage Reimbursement is low because expense checks were not issued in September. The next quarter will reflect four months instead of three.
- Purchased Board and Care increased for August and September, mainly due to the cost of one specific child in agency custody with placement costs of approximately \$50,000 per month. This child is no longer in our care.
- Connections Center costs reflect the payment for the remainder of the project. Equipment expenses include the second half of the furniture payment as well as the new copier and appliances.
- Under the line item titled Other, allocations to CFFC are reflected, as well as tax settlement fees.

The Beginning Fund Balance for July – September 2025 is \$12,197,497.92 and the Ending Fund Balance is \$15,594,586.25.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Policy 1.2 Board Officers- Nominations (vote in December)

The Board will provide nominations for the next Board Chair and Vice Chair at the November Board meeting. The elections will be held at the December Board meeting, for two-year terms beginning in January 2026.

2. Therapy Dogs

A resident contacted Board member Martin O'Donnell to offer the opportunity to provide therapy dogs at the Connections Center for family visits. Martin O'Donnell will provide contact information to Kristen Fox-Berki to consider.

MOTION: It was moved by Christopher Cabot, seconded by Dan Gross to approve Kristen Fox-Berki to gather more information on therapy dogs and report back to the Board. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell
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 Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried.

Kristen Fox-Berki and Kevin Shebesta from Clemans Nelson were asked to meet with the Board for Executive Session.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

MOTION: It was moved by Dan Gross, seconded by Martin Heberling to increase Executive Director, Kristen Fox-Berki's salary by 3% effective November 10, 2025. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

Kristen Fox-Berki's contract expires on November 10, 2025, but it has not been finalized. Ms. Fox-Berki is asking the Board to consider a few changes to the current contract. This will be discussed further at the next Board meeting in November.

MOTION: It was moved by Andrew Lipian, seconded by Martin Heberling to extend the Executive Director contract, as is, for one additional month, until December 10, 2025. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

Board Chair Jim Miller will provide copies of the current contract to the Board at the November Board meeting. The contract changes will be discussed during Executive Session under Personnel Matters.

VIII. Announcements

None.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:29 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Rania Assily, Christopher Cabot, Roberto Davila, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 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