

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2024 @ 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, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick, Mallory Santiago, Kim Withrow

Excused: Martin Heberling

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 August 21, 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 July 17, 2024, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

II. Public Comment

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any members of the public present, requesting to address the Board. Public comment was provided by former employee, Sasha Martinez.

III. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

None.

B. Unresolved Action Items

1. Levy Discussion

Jim Miller and Kristen Fox-Berki attended the July 19, 2024, Lorain County Board of Commissioners meeting and requested their approval to place the 1.8 mill renewal levy on the November 5, 2024 ballot. The Lorain County Auditor certified the filing, and it was submitted to the Board of Elections; Issue 25. The Board reviewed the levy language as it will read on the ballot, and the billboard proof that will be used to advertise the levy.

2. Policy 5.12 Executive Director's Performance

Board Subcommittee members include Lee Armbruster, Martin Heberling and Tamara Newton. The performance review was conducted and will be discussed further in Executive Session.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hire for the month of July:

1. Brittney Smith, DS Caseworker 7/1/24

Leaves for the month of July:

1. Kenni Tolliver, DS Caseworker 7/16/24
2. Pamela Thompson, DS Caseworker 7/19/24
3. Cynthia Hernandez, DS Caseworker 7/19/24
4. Ashley McMahon, DS Caseworker 7/25/24

Due to the limited number of employment applications received, the agency expanded the qualifications for the caseworker position beyond a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) to include a bachelor's degree in related fields.

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; she will resend with corrections. The required duties of a Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) are outlined in section 5153.19 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). They include:

1. Accept Reports & Investigate
2. Custody and Care
3. Placement
4. Foster Care
 - Find and procure certified foster homes and administer the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPIP).
5. Adoption
 - Administer Title IV-E adoption assistance funds and enter into agreements to make adoption assistance payments.

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

1. Case Management
 - Most agencies, including LCCS, provide case management services but there are a few that contract out to other entities.
2. Kinship Services
 - LCCS has had a dedicated kinship unit since 2017 to complete home assessments for kin identified as a possible safe placement.
 - LCCS provides some financial assistance to the County's Kinship Navigator Program.
3. Lorain County Public Health Services
 - LCCS has a long-standing contract to provide the required two-day physicals for children placed in our care.
4. OhioSTART Casework Services
 - OhioSTART is a State initiative serving families dealing with substance abuse by providing intensive services, incorporating a caseworker, a substance abuse agency and a Family Peer Mentor.
5. Case Aide Services
 - Case aides provide transportation and visitation support to families with children in care.
 - There is also a case aide assigned to our Independent Living program to provide youth with transportation to job interviews, appointments, etc.

6. Foster Care and Adoption Services
 - LCCS provides recruitment, assessments, and licensing for foster and adoptive parents. We could contract the services but choose to recruit and license our own foster parents.
7. Accelerated Safety Analysis Protocol (ASAP) Services
 - ASAP is a State initiative, prioritizing high risk cases. The trained case reviewer is alerted when specific referrals are received with alleged harm, agency history etc. An overview is completed, and the case reviewer meets with the caseworker and supervisor to discuss needed services.
8. Ombudsman Services
 - The Ombudsman position is a part-time position. The Ombudsman meets with individuals in the community, at the agency, or virtually, and then works within the agency to resolve the issues.

Board member Rania Assily requested Kristen Fox-Berki send the Direct Services Caseworker posting to share with Cuyahoga County Community College students.

C. Visitation Center

A walk-through was completed with several vendors including the security system for building entry, the camera company, and State IT staff. The blueprint/floor plan was updated to include their needs for data connections and sent to the architect to finalize. When this is done, Kristen Fox-Berki will meet with Dan Gross to review. Then the public bidding process will begin.

D. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Another meeting was held with the Lorain County Veterans Services Commission (LCVSC). An event will be held on November 21, 2024, from 6:00 -9:00 p.m. at Lorain County Community College (LCCC). The event will focus on foster care recruitment, as well as provide the community with information about the services provided by the LCVSC.

Foster Care Recruitment Coordinator, Judith Padua has attended several community events including services at area churches, presented to the Leadership Lorain County class 2024, El Centro block party, Main Street Lorain event, Puerto Rican Festival, International Parade, Crushers game, Corn Festival, Sunrise Rotary group and will be attending the Lorain County Fair and the Veteran's Race in November. Foster care recruitment is an agency endeavor, and several staff have volunteered to help with the events.

Summer Camps

During the week of July 22, 2024, LCCS youth had an opportunity to participate in Girl Power Camp and Operation Open Heart (OOH). Thirty five (35) boys attended OOH this year, staffed by current and retired local law enforcement and safety forces personnel. They camp at Mill Hollow Metroparks in Brownhelm Township but spend time each day traveling with lights and sirens to various activities and events. Fourteen (14) girls and young teens attended Girl Power camp this year, an internally run and agency staffed event, with sixteen (16) staff members volunteering their time. Both events were successful. Kristen Fox-Berki thanked the staff who volunteered.

Princess Ball

The Princess Ball will be held on Sunday, October 20, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Grand Ball Room at the Spitzer Conference Center at LCCC. This event helps to fund the levy. Kristen Fox-Berki asked the Board members to share the flyer with the community and on Facebook. There is also an opportunity to sponsor the event.

Board member Lee Armbruster inquired if the Friends of Children Services had the funding needed for the 2025 levy campaign; Kristen Fox-Berki confirmed there was enough funding available.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Policy 7.2 Program Audit and Results

Policy 7.2 states “the Executive Director will present to the Board all federal, state and local program audits, evaluations and reviews completed by non-agency entities on the performance of the agency within 30 days of receipt of the report.” Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation (CPOE) 12 Phase 2 Final Report, and acknowledged the report was received the day prior to the July Board meeting, which was greater than 30 days, as stated in the policy. The CPOE review was completed in person by a State reviewer. Fifteen (15) cases were reviewed; eight (8) foster care and seven (7) in-home cases. For each case, the reviewer met with the caseworker and supervisor to discuss strengths and concerns. There were a total of eleven (11) Direct Services Caseworkers that had their work reviewed. The focus of the reviews was on the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of the children in care. The reviewer shared that she was impressed by the work being done by LCCS staff. Although the review was overall very positive, we were given an opportunity to complete a Plan for Practice Advancement (PPA) to focus on a few areas of improvement. We are working with the State reviewer on the PPA and once we are all in agreement, the plan will be finalized. As a part of this process, the State will conduct a 6-month review, and another review after 12 months, regarding the areas identified.

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

MOTION: It was moved by Mallory Santiago, seconded by Kim Withrow to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

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

MOTION: A motion was made by Christina Doran, seconded by Andrew Lipian to approve the Personnel Summary Sheet. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

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

VIII. Announcements

None.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Kenneth Glynn to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:20 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

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

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18, 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