

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, October 20, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Vice 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, Tim Carrion, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Tracy Green, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller

Excused: Mallory Santiago

Absent: Rob Weber

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

B. Review and Approve Agenda

Vice Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Agenda submitted for the October 20, 2021 Board meeting. No additions or changes made.

C. Review and Approve Minutes

Vice Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Minutes submitted for the September 15, 2021 Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

II. Public Comment

Vice Board Chair Jim Miller noted that there was no one from the public present and wishing to address the Board.

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

None.

IV. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

- **Policy 2.2 Annual Policy Review**

Tabled until the November Board meeting.

- **Policy 8.2 Strategic Plan Update**

Tabled until the November Board meeting.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

V. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 6.1 Monthly Financial Update

Kristen Fox-Berki presented, and the Board reviewed the Lorain County Children Services Revenue, Disbursements and Cash Fund Balance as of 09/30/2021.

Discussion topics:

- Revenue:
 - The total Revenue for September is \$1,500,530.66.
- Expenditures:
 - The total Expenditures for September are \$2,111,868.71.
 - The beginning fund balance for September is \$24,586,602.49 and the ending fund balance is \$23,975,264.44.

B. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

There are no new hires to report for the month of September.

Leaves:

- Jamiese Myers, Direct Services Caseworker, 9/3/21
- Elizabeth Nuti, Direct Services Caseworker, 9/10/21

C. Family First Legislation

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board and reviewed a presentation on the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Presentation Discussion Topics:

- FFPSA was signed into law February 2018, to be implemented by October 1, 2021. Some states chose to implement prior to the deadline. The State of Ohio chose to wait until October 1, 2021.
- Focus on preventative services to keep children safely in their own homes and reduce the number of children in foster care.
- Focuses: Prevention, Residential, Kinship and Other
- Before/After Family First Act
- Two prongs- prevention services and residential care
 - Prevention Service Areas- Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Mental Health and In-Home Parent Skill-Based Programs
 - Residential treatment centers are identified with a new term, QRTP's (Qualified Residential Treatment Programs), which must be certified and provide six months of aftercare to every child leaving a residential placement.
- The Court's Oversight Role. The Courts are involved in the QRTP Process.

Other Discussion Topics:

Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Funding

The CAC, located at the Nord Center, is Lorain County's identified center to conduct child sexual abuse interviews. Interviewers must be trained, and the position requires a special certification. Over the last few years there has been a lot of discussion with the prosecutor's office, LCCS, law enforcement and the CAC about forensic interviews, and since August 2019, a qualified LCCS employee from the CQI department has been conducting the interviews when law enforcement was not able to do them. Prior to that,

law enforcement officers and our staff were trained, but over time, the number of qualified individuals decreased. This past year the CAC's grant funds decreased, causing them to downsize and decrease staff. Law enforcement, the Nord Center/CAC, LCCS and the prosecutor's office agree that an identified person is needed to conduct the interviews. Kristen Fox-Berki indicated to the Board that the designated LCCS staff member that has been covering the interviews on an interim bases is needed in other areas and it is time to find a full-time replacement. Ms. Fox-Berki is asking the Board's permission for LCCS to fund the employment of one (1) forensic interviewer to conduct interviews for the entire County of Lorain for a period of three (3) years, at an estimated cost of \$96,000 for salary and benefits. The agency allocated \$250,000 per year for 2020 and 2021 for a new CAC facility, but this is no longer going to occur. If approved, Kristen Fox-Berki will contact the prosecutor's office and request their assistance with creating an MOU with the Nord Center. LCCS would not employ the individual due to a conflict of interest. Nord would create the position description, hire and employ the individual, then invoice LCCS for the cost of their salary and benefits. There is enough need for a full-time position.

The Board asked for clarification regarding LCCS's conflict of interest. Because LCCS investigates the allegations, and sexual abuse cases often result in criminal charges, LCCS would be named as a legal party in those instances. If LCCS employed the interviewer for the entire county and the case went to court, the APA would see that as a conflict of interest.

Seventy-five to eighty percent (75%-80%) of the forensic interviews take place at the CAC. The other 20%-25% is conducted at the police departments. Physical examinations are also conducted at the CAC, and must be done within 72 hours. Generally, the interviews are conducted during business hours.

MOTION: It was moved by Jim Miller, seconded by Tim Carrion to enter a contract with the Nord Center for three (3) years, estimated to be \$300,000.00. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Tracy Green, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

• **Board Officers**

The Board reviewed the current Board members' terms; several are expiring on December 31, 2021. The Board Chair and Board Vice Chair will require new appointments before the end of the year, to begin in January 2022. Christina Doran will remain the Board Secretary for one more year. Jim Miller asked the Board members to notify him directly if they do not wish to be reappointed. This request will need to be made to the County Commissioners within the next month or so.

- **Foster Parent Coaching Program**

Some of the children services agencies throughout the State are implementing a similar program where seasoned foster parents coach and mentor new foster parents. Foster parents are great resources for one another through shared experiences. This program could improve the quality and retention of foster parents, provide support, lower the number of placement disruptions and advocate for the children. Foster parent mentors are required to meet certain qualifications such as no prior corrective actions, maintain good standing with the agency, and having prior placements. Based on prior statistics, there would be approximately 22 eligible new families per year, for an investment of around \$12,000 per year. The funds would be included in the Direct Services to Children line item of the budget. Kristen Fox-Berki is asking for the Board’s approval to provide this program to eligible foster parents.

For first year foster parents, retention is a little under 3 years. However, LCCS provides an opportunity for foster parents to dually license for foster and adoptive parent status, and some families will close their license after adoption.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Tim Carrion to approve the Foster Parent Coaching Program. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Tim Carrion, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Tracy Green, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

- **Caseworker Degree Requirements**

Employers continue to struggle with staff retention. LCCS is also experiencing an increase in resignations and a decrease in applicants. The caseworker position requires a master’s degree in Social Work (MSW/MSSA), limiting qualified candidates. As a result of conversations internally and an ongoing assessment of staff retention, Kristen Fox-Berki would like to expand the requirements to include a master’s degree in related fields, such as counseling, social work, juvenile justice, etc. Before implementing this change, it would require a review of the collective bargaining agreement and working with union leadership. The Board indicated that they are in support of this change. Discussion held.

VII. Announcements

None.

VIII. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Andrew Lipian to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:55 p.m. Motion carried.

The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 17, 2021 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