

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 19, 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, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow

Excused: Rania Assily, Andrew Lipian

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director and Judge James T. Walther

1. Swearing In Ceremony for New Board Member

Board member Martin O'Donnell was sworn in by Judge James T. Walther. Judge Walther invited all Board members to attend an adoption hearing; sharing that it is an uplifting experience.

B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the March 19, 2025, 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 February 19, 2025, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve the February 19, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

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

None.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.1 Pay Scale- Non-Bargaining

Due to pending union contract negotiations, and because the non-bargaining pay scale coincides with the bargaining unit pay scale and pay raises, it will be further reviewed once the union contract is finalized and approved.

B. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hire for the month of February:

1. Alexandria Stanziano, DS Caseworker 2/24/25

Leaves for the month of February:

1. Anne Rucker, Referral Specialist 2/7/25
2. Tiana Mitchell, DS Caseworker 2/7/25
3. Mallory Fox, DS Caseworker 2/14/25

C. Visitation Center

Construction is moving at a quick pace. The walls are up, the server room is ready and floor coverings and paint colors were selected. A walk-through was completed on Monday March 17, 2025, with a furniture company to assess the needs for furnishings and items for the visitation rooms, taking our current inventory into consideration. We received approval for one of our grant applications so far, for \$10,000 from Lorain County Public Health, to offset the cost of the outdoor playground area. Three playground options were provided, and one was selected. We would also like to have a basketball hoop installed in the outdoor play area for the older children if possible. There is no current time frame identified for completion of the renovations. Based on the current progress thus far, we could be in the building by late summer.

D. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

Family Recruitment Coordinator, Judith Padua has been working diligently on recruitment efforts. She continues to collaborate with the Lorain County Veterans Service Commission (LCVSC) and Tri-C Westshore campus as well as attending community events and will be attending the Lorain County Township Association meeting tomorrow, March 20, 2025, at the Brighton Methodist Church, to reach the rural communities within Lorain County. So far in 2025, five (5) new foster families were licensed, and another four have expressed interest. The agency can always use more foster homes and will continue with recruitment efforts.

Board member Roberto Davila inquired about the status of LCCS staffing. Kristen Fox-Berki shared there are a few vacancies but overall, the agency is in a much better place with filling vacant positions.

V. Fiscal Reports

A. Policy 6.3 Annual Budget Presentation

Director of Fiscal Affairs, Jessica Basinski was invited to present the 2025-2026 Annual Budget. The document contained the Actual 2023-2024 budget amounts, original projections for 2025, Revised 2025, Revised #2 2025 and Projections for 2026.

- The total Revenue increased from \$23,888,709 in 2023 to \$26,293,938 in 2024.

Notable changes from Revised 2025 to Revised #2 2025

- Vehicle and Travel- the vehicle budget increased due to recent repairs and the increase in gas mileage.
- Services to Clients and their Families- the budget was decreased as expenses shifted.
 - Purchased Board and Care increased.
 - Professional Services increased.
- Visitation Center increased to include the additional \$250,000, approved by the Board at the February 19, 2025, Board meeting, for expenses not included in the renovation contract.
- With the changes to the 2025 Budget, the Expenses for Revised 2025 are \$28,533,326 and the Expenses for Revised #2 2025 increased to \$29,273,546.

2026 Budget Projection

- Personnel- Salaries could change based on the determined amount for pay raises through contract negotiations.
- The Ending Fund Balance for 2026 is projected to be around \$6,420,676.
- There was a significant decrease in the Ending Fund Balance from 2022 to 2023. In 2024 we slowed down the rate at which the carryover was depleting compared to 2022-2023. We will continue to monitor the budget closely to avoid this trend for 2025 and 2026.

1. Policy 6.3a Contracts

The Board was provided with the master operational contract list.

- Kristen Fox-Berki informed the Board that the current contract with the Prosecutor's office has not been finalized. Through this contract LCCS pays the salaries for four (4) Assistant Prosecuting Attorney's (APA's), a clerical assistant and a portion of the paralegal's salary. The total APA contract cost in 2024 was a little over \$400,000. For 2024, the cost of the salary increases for the prosecutor's office was split; we paid the cost of six (6) months of the salary increases and they paid the other six (6) months. The contract cost for 2025 is expected to increase to \$500,00 - \$600,000. We will advocate to share the cost of pay increases again. Jessica Basinski will be meeting with their fiscal department to gather more information.
- The Visitation Center contracts are listed separately, and include the alarm system, monthly rent payments through the Lorain County Commissioners, lawn care and the architect.
- The Sheriff's Deputy will be moved to the visitation center to oversee family visitation. He will have his own office. The Administration

Building has a deputy assigned to the building, but not specifically to LCCS. He is available and does assist when needed. There are also several deputies at the Justice Center if needed.

ODJFS Required Master Contracts with Child Placement Agencies

The Board was provided with the list of private foster agencies, residential treatment centers and group homes with which LCCS may place a child during 2024 and 2025. ODJFS requires each Public Children Services Agency to have an ODJFS approved Master Contract with each entity.

Contracted Professional Services

The agency also contracts with individuals and agencies that provide specialized services for Counseling, In-Home Parent Coaching, Music Therapy, Psychological Assessments for Children in LCCS Custody (no testimony), Psychological & Parenting Assessments of Adults (with testimony), Mentoring and MEPA Assessments.

2. Policy 6.3b Personnel Plan

The 2025-2026 Personnel Plan is also included in the Annual Budget. The personnel plans are completed annually. In the past, the personnel plan has indicated a need for adding positions or expanding programs. This year the personnel plan will focus on succession planning, as well as staffing needs for the visitation center. There are three (3) retirements planned in 2025 within the senior leadership group.

- There were two (2) Direct Services Manager positions open due to one resignation and one retirement. Both of those positions are now filled. They will work with the current manager until her retirement to adjust to their new roles over the next few months.
- One of the FBC managers is retiring. This position will be posted in July to allow time for the current manager to work with their replacement before her retirement.
- The Director of Operations position will be left vacant at this time, with a plan to fill the position in the future. A Public Relations Coordinator will be added (a current function of the director position) in the spring to allow time for the new hire to shadow and learn key employment tasks. This position is responsible for levy fundraising and outreach in the community

Over the past year, some positions were placed on hold as they became available:

- a. 1 Scan Clerk
- b. 1 FBC Caseworker
- c. 1 Fiscal Account Clerk
- d. 1 Case Aide
- e. 1 Direct Services Supervisor
- f. 2 Administrative Assistants

There is no plan to recruit or fill these positions at this time, except for one or two Administrative Assistants, which will be needed as support staff for the

visitation center. Board member Martin O'Donnell asked for clarification regarding the positions on hold; they are currently in the budget for 2025.

3. Policy 6.3c Major Purchases

Major purchases, also included in the annual budget, are listed at the bottom of the Personnel Plan. In the annual budget, the purchase of two vehicles is included with a projected total cost of \$60,000. Copiers/printers will be replaced in 2025 with a budget not to exceed \$75,000.

MOTION: It was moved by Tamara Newton, seconded by Kim Withrow to approve the 2025-2026 Annual Budget. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. Children and Families First Council (CFFC) Contract Approval

LCCS is the administrative agent for the CFFC, therefore, all CFFC contracts must be approved by the LCCS Board. CFFC does have their own budget, which covers all their contract costs.

LCCFFC FSY25 Master Contract List

A master contract list was provided. Kristen Fox-Berki noted that the providers for Family Support items and Respite services vary based on individualized MOU. Because of this, the amounts listed for both services are not to exceed amounts. CFFC does have the funds to cover all the contracts listed.

Provider Agencies

The Board was provided with the list of agencies that LCCFFC may place during 2025 and 2026. As the administrative agent, LCCS is required to approve the Master Contract with each entity.

Board member Martin Heberling inquired how LCCS utilizes Genesis House, a confidential shelter for women and children. LCCS has received referrals from Genesis House. They have their own services and their own groups, which now includes a group for men. We provide information about Genesis House to clients when needed, and sometimes we are involved with the same families.

MOTION: It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Dan Gross to approve the CFFC Master Contract List, and contracts with Provider Agencies. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

Kristen Fox-Berki offered, and the Board expressed their interest in continuing with staff presentations to learn more about the agency. Another presentation will be provided at the April 16, 2025, Board meeting.

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

None.

VIII. Announcements

None.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Kenneth Glynn to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:42 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick, Kim Withrow
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16, 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