

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 16, 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, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

Excused: Martin Heberling, Andrew Lipian, 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 April 16, 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 March 19, 2025, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

MOTION: It was moved by Kenneth Glynn, seconded by Dan Gross to approve the March 19, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
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

1. Policy 4.1 Pay Scale- Non-Bargaining

Union negotiations continue. The non-bargaining pay scale will be developed once the union contract is completed and approved.

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. LCCS Staff Presentation- FBC Kinship/Foster Care

Presenting Staff Members:

1. Lisa Hatcher, FBC Support Supervisor
2. Nicole Schindler, FBC Kinship Supervisor
3. Bectoria Stafford, FBC Support Caseworker
4. Carmen Toro-Wooten, FBC Kinship Caseworker

Presentation Highlights:

The Family Based Care (FBC) department works in collaboration with Direct Services. FBC support caseworkers provide support to the licensed foster caregivers and the children placed in their homes. When a child cannot safely remain in their home, we will look for the least restrictive placement setting by searching for collateral contacts that could include relatives or other community members that are currently involved in the child's life, such as teachers, coaches, family friends and others. A handout was provided to show placement settings, from least to most restrictive. Before placing a child with a kinship caregiver, a home study is completed. The caseworker will assess the home, interview household members, get to know the individuals caring for the child(ren), and talk with them about how the agency can help the caregiver to feel supported throughout the process. The caseworker will assess their needs such as daycare, food assistance, and provide them with community resource information available to them. After the case closes, they will continue to provide caregivers with the support they need to maintain the child(ren) in their home. The Board was given a flyer with a QR code that provides caregivers with resources, support groups, financial information, etc. Some financial assistance resources for caregivers include Ohio Works First (OWF), Kinship Supports Intervention (KSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KGAP). To receive KGAP, the kinship caregiver must complete the home study process. The child(ren) will remain in the agency's custody during this process. After the caregiver is licensed, the child(ren) must reside in their home for six (6) months before they can file for legal custody. Once they have filed for custody, negotiations take place with the State regarding their rate, and we connect them with community resources such as OhioKAN (Kinship & Adoption Navigator), the grocery project through Clearview Church, support groups, food pantries, the foster care closet, among others.

Kinship Data:

- In 2024, 200 home study referrals were made and 192 were completed and approved.
- 10 Interstate Compact (ICPC) home study requests were received and assigned.
- 12 Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) home studies were completed.
- 33 families were licensed through KGAP.
- Caseworkers averaged around 6 home study referrals per month, per caseworker. Each home study takes about 45 days to complete.

When a kinship home cannot be identified, children are placed in a licensed foster home. When possible, caseworkers will place the child(ren) in a foster home within the same community so they can remain in their current school, and place siblings together. LCCS currently has 58 licensed foster caregivers, 27 of whom have children

in their care. LCCS has caseworkers that license our own foster homes, and then each foster home is provided with their own support caseworker, to work with them on their licensure throughout their time as a foster parent. The support caseworkers are trained assessors through the State of Ohio and will continue to assess child safety. Foster parents are provided with supportive resources such as a book club, private Facebook group and monthly learn and connect sessions. We are always looking for new foster families. The LCCS staff presenters thanked the Board for their commitment and support through their Foster Care Recruitment Subcommittee. The agency continues to collaborate with community partners. We receive a tremendous amount of support from various community groups that will provide backpacks with stuffed animals, art items, blankets and other comfort items, holiday donations, blankets/quilts, hats/gloves, etc. We have partnered closely with Clearview Church in Columbia Station. They have a grocery project to provide to pantry items to our kinship caregivers. This year they made Easter baskets for the children placed in kinship homes.

B. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for the month of March:

1. Kevin Arocho, Scan Clerk 3/10/25
2. Christina Rodriguez, DS Caseworker 3/10/25
3. Ronnetta Spencer, DS Caseworker 3/10/25

Leave for the month of March:

1. Xiomara Yochum, DS Caseworker 3/14/25

C. Policy 7.14 Client Grievance

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Ombudsman Quarterly Report from January 1, 2025, through March 31, 2025, including the number of Grievances Filed, Public Complaints, Telephone Calls, Emails, Walk-ins, New Requests for Ombudsman Services (Includes 2 Grievances), Pending Requests from Last Quarter, and New Requests Resolved within this Quarter (Includes 1 Grievance), and summarized the nature of the complaints:

- Visitation & Placement of children (4)
- Conflicts with caseworker (3)
- Case plans and reunification progress (3)

D. Visitation Center

The renovations are progressing quickly. They are currently on target to have everything completed in July. We are working on the furniture order and finalizing the details. Once the interior is completed, the next phase is to install the playground and repave the parking lot. It was decided that the building will be renamed as it is more than a visitation center, and includes a daily living area, computer skills lab and kitchen area for the Independent Living department. Please submit name suggestions to Kristen Fox-Berki.

E. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

LCCS continues to collaborate with the Lorain County Veterans Service Commission (LCVSC), and plan to attend an upcoming Crushers game to promote foster care recruitment. We attended the township meeting and it was well received. Rania Assily provided Kristen Fox-Berki with a contact that is opening two homes in the

Cleveland area, for youth ages 14 through young adulthood, to help the children in care prepare for adulthood. Her biggest barrier to opening, is staffing. Kristen Fox-Berki plans to meet with her to provide her with support, education and ideas.

V. Fiscal Reports

A. Policy 6.1 Quarterly Financial Update

Kristen Fox-Berki presented, and the Board reviewed the Lorain County Children Services Revenue, Disbursements and Cash Fund Balance as of March 31, 2025.

Revenue:

The total Revenue for January – March 2025 is \$7,898,791.06. This includes our first levy payment for 2025.

Expenditures:

The total Expenditures for January – March 2025 is \$6,180,673.23.

The Beginning Fund Balance for January – March 2025 is \$13,743,997.80 and the Ending Fund Balance is \$15,462,115.63.

- The total expenditures are at 21.1% for the quarter, which is under-budget.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

1. LCCS – Prosecutor Contract Approval

The contract with the prosecutor's office is renewed annually. We employ four (4) Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys (APAs) assigned solely to LCCS, two (2) secretaries and one half (½) of the time for a paralegal. Last year we paid \$405,000.00. This year the amount will be \$516,000.00. This includes annual 3% raises for each employee. We cover the average cost of 2 ½ APA's, 2 secretaries and ½ of the paralegal. The prosecutor's office is covering a portion too, in the amount of \$148,202.73. They handle all court filings and represent the agency in custody and juvenile court hearings as well as other court systems and spend time preparing the caseworkers if they are called to testify.

MOTION: It was moved by Christina Doran, seconded by Dan Gross to approve the Primary Agreement and the Supplemental IV-E Agreement between LCCS and the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Kenneth Glynn, Dan Gross, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
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 Christina Doran, seconded by Roberto Davila to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried.

APA Leigh Prugh was asked to meet with the Board for Executive Session.

Roll Call Vote

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

VIII. Announcements

None.

IX. Adjourn

MOTION: It was moved by Thomas Patrick, seconded by Lee Armbruster to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:38 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

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

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 21, 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