

Lorain County Children Services

Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Board Secretary Rania Assily 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: Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick

Excused: Christopher Cabot, Dan Gross, Andrew Lipian, Jim Miller, Kim Withrow

Also Present: Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

B. Review Agenda

Board Secretary Rania Assily asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the September 16, 2026, Board meeting. The Results of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) will be added to Agenda Item VI.A, New Items for Discussion and Approval.

C. Review and Approve Minutes

1. July 8, 2026, and August 19, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes Approval

Board member Martin O'Donnell requested a revision to the July 8, 2026, minutes Under Agenda Item III.A.1. Levy. On page 3, under the 4th bullet point, the minutes should read "Board member Martin O'Donnell inquired about the *possibility in the future to examine* having a combined human services levy for Lorain County that would fund LCCS and JFS to provide the taxpayers with some relief."

MOTION: It was moved by Lee Armbruster, seconded by Roberto Davila to approve the July 8, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes, as amended. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

Board Secretary Rania Assily asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Minutes submitted for the August 19, 2026, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

Tamara Newton was invited to attend today's meeting, in recognition of her years of service on the LCCS Board, from July 27, 2022, through July 26, 2026. Kristen Fox-Berki recognized Ms. Newton for her dedication to the Board, the valuable input she

provided during her term, consistent attendance and the care and devotion she showed. She made a meaningful difference to the children and families in Lorain County. Tamara Newton thanked the Board and shared that her time on the Board, as well as her prior service as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) provided her with an opportunity to build relationships and make an impact in the community. She is hopeful the Board will continue to make a difference with the families and children we serve.

II. Public Comment

Board Secretary Rania Assily confirmed that there were no requests from the public to address the Board.

III. Old Business

A. Tabled Items

1. Policy 5.12 Executive Director Performance

Tabled.

2. Foster Care Per Diem

Tabled.

3. Contract Approval

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a copy of the Lorain County Children Services Contract for Psychological Services & Parenting Observation with Dr. Dawn Chandler-Holtz for August 10, 2026, to August 10, 2027.

MOTION: It was moved by Roberto Davila, seconded by Thomas Patrick to approve the LCCS Contract for Psychological Services & Parenting Observation with Dr. Dawn Chandler-Holtz. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

B. Unresolved Action Items

None.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves

New Hires for August:

1. Marco Barbee, DS Caseworker 8/3/26
2. Natalia Reyes, DS Caseworker 8/3/26

There were no leaves for the month of August.

B. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment

No update to provide.

Levy

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a fact sheet that talks about the agency, the LCCS Mission, the services LCCS provides, how to make a referral, and meaningful ways that the community can help. The fact sheet was distributed at the Lorain County Fair and can also be shared with the community as a guide to help voters understand the purpose of the agency. Kristen Fox-Berki also shared examples of the postcard mailers and the yard signs (*paid for by the Friends of Children Services*). The mailers will be sent to targeted consistent Lorain County voters. The levy will be advertised on four billboards throughout the county. There are several events in Lorain County that Kristen Fox-Berki will attend to provide information on LCCS. The levy will be advertised on social media and in the Chronicle Telegram, both in the newspaper and online. Rania Assily suggested sharing information about the levy on a Christian radio station, representing the Friends of Children Services, and offered to look into available programming on IHeart Radio or Spotify. We will be on WOBL, as well as the Russ VanWormer talk radio show. Roberto Davila shared that the Lorain City Schools had recent success passing their levy requesting an increase; one strategy was sharing testimonials of key individuals on social media. Rania Assily and Roberto Davila offered to do the same for LCCS. Rania Assily asked the other Board members to contact Kristen Fox-Berki if they would like to participate.

Princess Ball

The annual Princess Ball will be held on Sunday, October 11, 2026, at the Lorain County Community College Spitzer Conference Center. The Princess Ball flyer and sponsorship forms were provided to the Board. Kristen Fox-Berki asked the Board members to please forward the sponsorship forms to business owners or others that would be willing to sponsor.

CAN Meeting

The Board was invited to attend the Community Advisory Network (CAN) meeting on Friday, September 18, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

Celebrating Child Welfare Workforce Appreciation Month

September is Child Welfare Workforce Appreciation Month. In celebration, the All Staff meeting kicked off the event, highlighting staff accomplishments and agency-wide achievements. We held an “ice cream social” yesterday, and tomorrow is snack day.

V. Fiscal Reports

None.

VI. New Business

A. New Items for Discussion and Approval

LCCS participated in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), which is a federal review of records that is conducted for each state every 4 – 5 years to ensure conformity and assist states with achieving positive outcomes. There are eighteen (18) case categories under three (3) objectives- safety, permanency and wellbeing. Ohio’s review was held last year in October – December 2025. A selection of records

from our agency were reviewed. Following, the reviewers met with our staff and provided feedback. The final results from the CFSR were received in July 2026. There were a few areas for improvement; one was related to tracking and documenting medical, dental and mental health appointments for children in custody, including kinship and KGAP families. The necessary steps have already been taken to improve this area. Overall, the review was very positive. The reviewers recognized three (3) of our caseworkers for the exemplary work they did, achieving 100% across all areas. The caseworkers were Suzanne Becka, Amanda Swanson and Monica Svetz. Their practices will be incorporated into training to help caseworkers across Ohio with their work. Martin O'Donnell suggested the caseworkers attend the October or November Board meeting so that the Board can formally recognize their outstanding performance, and Thomas Patrick suggested a press release in the local newspaper. Lee Armbruster suggested having a staff of the month to highlight staff achievements. Kristen Fox-Berki shared that the agency has "Make a Difference" awards that are given by co-workers and management to recognize staff for various reasons. They are read aloud at the quarterly staff meetings and displayed in the staff kitchen.

A Home for Every Child

"A Home for Every Child" is a national initiative by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) aimed at ensuring there are enough foster homes for every child in the foster care system. The number of licensed foster homes in the state of Ohio has decreased, and the number of children in congregate care has increased. There are not enough foster homes. The initiative emphasizes prevention programs to strengthen families and keep them together when it is safe to do so. A State workgroup will start meeting with the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO); LCCS volunteered to be a part of the workgroup to help share new ideas, secure grant funding, expand prevention services and increase the number of foster homes.

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 Thomas Patrick, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 5:38 p.m. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Roberto Davila, Susan Nugent, Martin O'Donnell, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, 2026, 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:
Rania Assily, Board Secretary