

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 11:30 AM
Fort Roberdeau, 383 Fort Roberdeau Rd, Altoona**

Board Members Present: Stephen Martynuska, Chris Cohn, Donna Gority, Robert Smith, Commissioner Bruce Erb

Board Members Absent: Cindy Barton, T. Grant Phillips, James Stratton, Rick Petroski, Michael Stubler, Matthew Dumm, Amber Hatfield, Susanna Tomlison,

Others Present: James Hudack, Theresa Rudy, Melissa Gordon, Kelly Popich, Lorrie Hetager, Aimee Burns, Amy Marten-Shanafelt, Brenda Basal, Missy Glunt, Steven Karns, Pam Sheehe, Erin Kay, Steve Wicks, Ken Dean, Cindy James, Jennifer Kensinger and Missy Gillin

MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order

Steve brought the meeting to order.

Glenn Nelson, Fort Roberdeau Director, gave a brief history overview of Fort Roberdeau and extended an invitation for meeting attendees to take a tour of the fort, after the conclusion of the meeting.

Self-Introductions were made.

1. Approval of June 3, 2021 Minutes

- *Motion by Aimee Burns to accept the June 3, 2021 minutes. Chris Cohn seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

2. Board Operations – Jim Hudack, Executive Director, Department of Social Services

- Jim noted that COVID cases are on the rise, once again, and that necessary precautions may be reinstated due to that fact. Jim advocated for everyone to get the COVID vaccine.
- Jim is to contact Steve Martynuska about the Nominating Committee, in regards, to officers for next year's board. Also, Jim will contact those board members, whose term is expiring, to see if they would like to be reappointed. Jim asked for attendees to refer, to him, anyone who they may think would be interested in serving on the board.

3. Mental Health Committee Report

- No MH Committee meeting was held since the last Advisory Board meeting.

4. Developmental Programs Committee Report

- No Developmental Programs Committee meeting was since the last Advisory Board meeting.

5. County Reports

Social Services Executive Director – Jim Hudack

- Jim reported that the Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) 2021/2022 was submitted to the state on July 26, 2021. After review, Social Services will be notified of any revisions that may need to be made.
- Jim stated that the State budget was passed without giving any increase to human services.
- Jim praised Cindy James, CASSP Coordinator, for writing and receiving a \$3,000 suicide prevention grant. Jim, also, thanked Missy Gillin, Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator, for spearheading the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) administered by Blair County Community Action Program (BDAP).

MH/COD –Theresa Rudy

- Theresa stated that a \$1,000 allocation was received for the “988” suicide prevention/mental health hotline, which will be implemented in July 2022.
- Theresa reported that the county was asked to apply for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (CMHSBG) for the following projects: Student Assistance Program (SAP) and Mobile Crisis.
- Theresa said that there will also be funds allocated to mental health and drug and alcohol through the American Rescue Plan.
- Theresa added that 15 contracts are completed.
- The Income & Expense Report (I&E) will be coming out September 1, 2021 and will need to be completed by the end of September.

Mental Health – Ken Dean

- An update was included in the packet.
- Ken reported that the Emergency Behavioral Health (EBH) team has been called out 4 times in the past 3 weeks for suicides. Ken said that they are looking for volunteers for the EBH team.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Melissa reported that Quality Assessment & Improvement is starting back up with self-assessments due by the end of October 2021.
- Melissa praised their providers during this challenging time.
- Melissa also addressed the staffing crisis and asked for any ideas on how to combat it.

Early Intervention – Kelly Popich

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Kelly stated that Early Intervention (EI) got a temporary 3% rate increase from the American Rescue Plan.
- Kelly reported that the Quality Enhancement Plan was submitted and approved.
- Kelly reported that EI had a requirement to enter the Professional Development Registry, which is a website that will track staff qualifications.
- Kelly stated that the Program Determination Data Review process has begun. Reports are sent to the state and federal governments.
- The Family Survey, which includes COVID questions, is out and to be completed online. EI needs a 25% survey return rate.
- All 2021/2022 EI contracts are finalized and the infant/toddler family waiver agreement has been renewed.
- Provider monitoring has been completed.
- COVID mask mandates were lifted and all mitigation efforts were ended. Virtual services are still an option for families.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reported that the 2021/2022 Fiscal contracts are in place.
- The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), administered through Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP) will continue through September 2022. BCCAP has distributed 1.1 million in assistance to various tenants and landlords. An application is available on the PA Compass website. BCCAP can also help with the application.
- Missy reminded the attendees of the existing Landlord/Tenant Mediation Program implemented through Family Services. To date, there has been only one mediation.
- The American Rescue Plan will offer funding opportunities to homeowners.

6. Ex-Officio Reports

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns

- An update was included in the agenda packet.
- Aimee stated NAMI currently has 2 support groups, Family Support Group and NAMI Connection Recovery Group, which meet at the HOPE Drop-In Center.
- A virtual Family-To-Family Course began on July 29 and will continue every other Thursday for a total of 8 meetings.
- Amy said the “In Our Own Voice” program is to return. 2 facilitators are trained. NAMI is looking for volunteers for this program.
- NAMI will have a table at the Out of the Darkness Walk on September 19, 2021.
- Amy reported that NAMI is receiving an influx of crisis calls for children.
- NAMI is also updating their website. Contact Aimee if you would like something added to the NAMI website.

CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay, Administrative Assistant

- Erin reported that CONTACT Altoona Fall Volunteer Training is full.
- Erin stated that COVID calls have dropped, but may increase due to the recent surge in new cases.
- Incoming calls have increased since NAMI posted CONTACT Altoona, on their site, as a national helpline.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- No updates.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lorrie reported that September 12th-18th is Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Week.
- Staffing crisis continues for all providers.
- The Incident Management Bulletin was effective 7/1/2021. The primary categories and secondary are new and will take a while to get accustomed to.
- Risk Management Group worked on Best Practice for Back-up Plans.
- Quality Assurance Group will begin working on a Direct Support Professionals handbook. This will include a glossary and FAQ's.
- The Learning Community continues to receive food donations weekly and include all providers to share with the people they support.
- Virtual Teams Training: A three part, forty minute session Fall Prevention Intervention will be held 8/4, 8/11 and 8/18 (Geisinger and HCQU)
- Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence Against Older Adults and People with IDD (A training by Family Services and SASMG) will be held 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on 8/18 & 8/25.
- Weis Market Cook-Along Webinars: 8/19/21 (Peach Basil Bruschetta) & 9/21/21 (Chicken Tacos) 9/21/21.
- Human Trafficking Training (Central PA HCQU) will be held 9/28/21 to work with individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Development Disabilities. Registration is limited to 100 people.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- Amy reported, as of July 1, Blair Healthchoices took some of the services off of the alternative payment arrangement (APA) for providers, but some services remain on APA like Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS).
- Amy stated that the regulations that were put in place during the COVID pandemic are set to expire September 30. Telehealth regulations were relaxed as a way to still deliver services while in-person services were suspended. Telehealth may continue to have expansion, as to who may utilize it.
- Amy announced 3 programs that may be initiated by September 1, 2021:
 - Urgent Care Model (Crisis/ER) – resolve issue by getting a same day or next day appointment with a psychiatrist. This would extend to both adult and children.
 - Community Based Intervention Treatment – a team, comprised of a case manager, nurse & psychiatrist, actively engaging with folks to help them stabilize. This would extend to folks coming out of the hospital, as well as, the state hospital.

- Enhanced Outpatient Program – provides intensive therapy (appointments for folks more than 1 time a week). Supportive teams also consists of a case manager, nurse & psychiatrist.
- Amy reported that through the System of Care (SOC) grant, Blair Healthchoices was able to have 2 staff members, Heather Savino and Ryan Hollen, trained in the Trauma 100 Series.
- Amy addressed workforce development. Blair Healthchoices wants to form a group to create a strategic plan to work with area high schools and colleges to look at what trainings, connections and support they can provide for the workforce coming out.
- The HOPE Drop-In building renovations are complete. Also, HOPE Drop-In has a new web-site.

Open Forum:

- Commissioner Erb thanked everyone for their hard work.
- Jim Hudack announced that the contracts for the shelter construction were awarded August 3, 2021.
- Aimee Burns stated that NAMI is looking for people to be on the planning committee for the 2022 NAMI Mental Health Conference.
- Cindy James reported that Blair County has 5 children in residential treatment facilities (RTF), but the numbers will, most likely, be increasing due to the volume of referrals.
- Cindy stated 2 Garrett Lee Smith trainings are planned for September. There will also be 2 suicide prevention billboard campaigns.
- Cindy announced that there will be a Zumbathon on September 10, 2021. Cost: \$20. Money raised goes to suicide prevention. The annual Out of the Darkness Walk is September 19, 2021 at Lakemont Park.
- Steve Martynuska announced that he has been working with Sheetz, on a pilot program, to hire people with intellectual disabilities. To date, 6 people have been hired to work in their stores.

Steve closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 11:30 a.m. at Blair HealthChoices, 120 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA or Virtual Meeting

The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at CONTACT Altoona or Virtual Meeting

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting