

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 11:30 AM
BlueJeans Conference Line Only**

Board Members Present: Stephen Martynuska, Rick Petroski, Matthew Dumm, Donna Gority, Bob Smith, Becky Aungst, Commissioner Bruce Erb

Board Members Absent: T. Grant Phillips, Mike Stubler, Chris Cohn, Susanna Tomlinson, James Stratton and Amber Hatfield

Others Present: James Hudack, Theresa Rudy, Missy Gillin, Melissa Gordon, Kelly Popich, Lorrie Hetager, Aimee Burns, Erin Kay, Jamie Henry, Maria Brandt and Jennifer Kensinger

MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order

Steve welcomed everyone and brought the meeting to order. Steve also thanked everyone who donated money to the H.O.P.E. Drop-in. A copy of the thank you note from Pam Townsend, Executive Director of the H.O.P.E. Drop-In, was included in the meeting notice.

1. Approval of December 2, 2021 Minutes

- *Motion by Aimee Burns to accept the December 2, 2021 minutes. Bob Smith seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

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

- Jim explained that today's meeting was held virtually due to the recent rise in COVID cases.
- Jim welcomed and introduced, newly appointed DSS Advisory Board member, Becky Aungst.
- Becky shared, with the attendees, that she recently retired from Skills, after thirty-three (33) years of service in the Intellectual Disabilities (ID) field.

3. Mental Health Committee Report – Theresa Rudy

- A report was included with the agenda packet.
- Theresa commented that there were not any motions, from that meeting, to be brought forward to the Board to approve.

4. Developmental Programs Committee Report – Steve Martynuska

- A report was included with the agenda packet.
- Steve stated staffing shortages were discussed.

5. County Reports

Social Services Executive Director – Jim Hudack

- Jim reported that the Income & Expense (I&E) report was submitted to the Department of Human Services (DHS) in December 2021. DHS did have one (1) question, which was answered. Now, DSS is waiting for final approval.
- DHS did approve DSS's retained funds plan. Those funds are in the process of being distributed to their recipients. Allocated funds have to be used by June 2022.
- As of yet, DSS has not received approval of the Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) Annual Plan, which was submitted in July 2021.
- Jim announced that the Leadership Coalition is planning a Legislative Breakfast for May 2022.
- Jim, also, addressed the workforce capacity issue that has hit Social Service and Human Service programs hard. Another impact has been the loss of institutional knowledge, due to hiring someone new, who has less experience, to fill a vacated position.

- Becky suggested, perhaps, Blair County mental health and intellectual disability providers meet to collaborate on targeted trainings to help new staff learn the fundamentals of the position at a faster pace.
- Steve asked the attendees to contact him with any ideas on how to orient Sheetz employees on working with individuals who have intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD).

MH/COD –Theresa Rudy

- Theresa stated that Amy Marten-Shanafelt, Blair HealthChoices Executive Director, is facilitating a workforce development workgroup to address the staffing crisis. The next meeting is February 4, 2022. If interested in participating, contact Theresa.
- Theresa discussed the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (CMHSBG) projects that will continue through June 2023:
 - Project 1: Expansion of Mobile Crisis
 - Project 2: Expansion of the Student Assistance Program (SAP)
 - Second quarter of year one (1) has been completed.
 - No funds were used in the first quarter.
 - Mobile Crisis Updates:
 - Mobile Crisis expenditures: \$45,000
 - Through October 1 – December 31, 2021, Mobile Crisis served 174 unique individuals. A total of 345 unique individuals were served since July 1.
 - 31% of the individuals served were between ages five (5) and seventeen (17).
 - 103 individuals (out of the 31%) were between the ages of ten (10) and (17).
 - Several full-time staff positions are open.
 - SAP Updates:
 - SAP expansion project is targeted to the Altoona and Hollidaysburg School Districts elementary, middle and parts of junior high schools.
 - During the 2nd quarter, 184 unique individuals were served. A total of 242 students were assessed. 165 were elementary age and 63 were junior high age.
 - Through November 2021, 502 individuals were encountered.
 - At present, the numbers are comparable to 2019/2020 statistics.

Mental Health – Ken Dean

- No updates reported.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- A report was included in the packet.
- Melissa reported The Pennsylvania Person/Family Directed Support Waiver (P/FDS) waiver cap increased from \$33,000 to \$41,000.
- The Community Living Waiver cap has increased from \$70,000 to \$85,000.
- The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) will be increasing rates in The Home and Community Services Information System (HCSIS) on February 15, 2022.
- Out for review with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is wavier changes. One proposal is to expand eligibility for children under the age of 22 with a developmental disability due to a complex medical condition. Other proposals include participants remaining on a waiver for 180 days while hospitalized, as well as, delivery of services while hospitalized. Another change will be to home accessible adaptation. Medical assistance will pay for home modifications that they did not pay for previously. If approved, the roll out would begin April 1, 2022. Proposals can be found online at myodp.org.
- Steve asked if the number of available waivers would decrease. Jamie responded it would not reduce the number of allocated waiver opportunities.

Early Intervention – Kelly Popich

- A report was included in the packet.
- Kelly reported that Blair County met their 2021 family survey return rate of 25% with 58 responses. In addition to answering questions, families were, also, able to offer recommendations.

- The 2021/2022 online, twenty question family survey will be open from February 1 until June 30, 2022 with 25%, once again, being the target goal return rate. Incentives, for staff and families to participate, may be offered again this year.
- Kelly reported that she received the Determination Summary report for the Early Intervention/Toddler Program, which drives EI's improvement plan. Kelly stated that EI met the requirements in all areas, except for compliance. Two areas of direct need are transition planning and children having their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) on time. Any areas that do not meet The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) 100% requirement for compliance will need to be included in the improvement plan. Overall, EI's percentages were pretty good.
- Kelly stated that Week of the Young Child (WOYC) will be held April 2nd through April 8th. Virtual events will be happening during that week. An in-person celebration is being planned for May 2022 at Lakemont Park. Communications will be sent out from Denise Adams from the United Way Family Resource Center.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reported Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP) has distributed over 4 million dollars in rental and utility assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which continues through September 2022. To date, 687 households have received assistance.
- BCCAP is continuing to house the homeless in hotels/motels. In January 2022, BCCAP provided over 200 lunches to those housed in hotels.
- Missy shared information on a new, temporary assistance program, Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), which helps income eligible families pay overdue water and wastewater bills. Applications are being accepted through the Blair County Assistance Office.
- Missy announced another program, Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund, which will provide financial assistance to homeowners for qualified mortgage and housing-related expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications can be submitted on the Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund (PAHAF) website at www.pahaf.org.
- Missy stated that there is also available funding for veterans. More information can be obtained by contacting the James E. Van Zandt Medical Center.

6. Ex-Officio Reports

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns

- An update was included in the agenda packet.
- Aimee reported that she has completed the NAMI Smarts for Advocacy program.
- NAMI will be doing an “In Your Own Voice” presentation at the Hollidaysburg Area High School on February 17, 2022 for their Health & Wellness Fair.
- NAMI Education Day will be held the 2nd Monday, every month, at the H.O.P.E. Drop-In Center.
- The Family Support Group and NAMI Connection Recovery Group (Peer Support) continue to meet bi-weekly on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. at the H.O.P.E. Drop-In Center.
- Planning continues for the NAMI Conference to be held April 21, 2022 at the Altoona Grand Hotel. Ten (10) vendors are already signed up. Fourteen (14) vendor tables remain. There will be three (3) speakers: Dr. Emily Lasinsky, Dr. Don Talbot and Anna Hooten, MSW.
- Family to Family course will resume, again, in March 2022 using ZOOM.
- A Peer to Peer course will be scheduled for mid-May or early June 2022.

CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay, Administrative Assistant

- Erin reported that total number of November call were 2,660 and total number of December calls were 2,710.
- COVID related calls to CONTACT Altoona have doubled in number.
- Total calls for half the year are at 16,300.
- CONTACT Altoona will celebrate its 40th anniversary on September 1, 2022. One original volunteer remains on the Board.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- Maria reported that The Arc has been busy with programs and classes.
- The Arc of Blair County will be having a Winterfest this weekend. One activity will be a scavenger hunt.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lorrie reported that providers had until January 31, 2022 to comment about rate changes.
- Lorrie stated that she heard that the rate increases, which was scheduled for February 15, are on hold.
- Several providers are due for Provider Qualification this year.
- Lori reported that Charlie Lansberry with the Learning Community stated that employment is still strong. The following providers, Sheetz, Maybrook and Antique Depot, are open-minded and accommodating to people working at their sites.
- Lori shared a positive story that Tawney with Gannister Station told about a man who does not do well in day settings, stays at home, and does not like to leave his bedroom. A staff person named Terry helped him connect with people at the Dollar Store.
- Lori reported that UPMC Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies (BHA) Adult Center for Exceptional Learning (ACEL) has been hosting a tour of the center for Penn State nursing students and residents from Allegheny Family Physicians, which has been a positive experience.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- No updates.

Open Forum:

- Aimee reported that BEN Blessed Homeless Ministry will be hosting a Superbowl party for the homeless community at the Overflow Church, 127 5th Ave., Altoona, beginning at 5:00 p.m. on February 13, 2022.

Steve thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 11:30 a.m. at Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA (Formerly 120 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg)

The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA (Formerly 120 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg)

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2022 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting