

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 12:30 p.m.
Go To Meeting Platform Only**

Board Members Present: Stephen Martynuska, James Stratton, Rick Petroski, Michael Stubler, Donna Gority, T. Grant Phillips, Amber Hatfield and Commissioner Bruce Erb

Board Members Absent: Christopher Cohn, Cindy Barton, John Allender and Susanna Tomlinson

Others Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Theresa Rudy, Jennifer Kensinger, Jamie Henry, Melissa Gordon, Kelly Popich, Lorrie Hetager and Nicole Germaux

MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order

Steve Martynuska, Chairperson, thanked Mike Stubler for chairing the June 4, 2020 Board meeting. Steve welcomed everyone and then mentioned the passing of Alice Quay, who was one of the founding members of The Arc of Blair County. Steve asked Jim to email members of the Blair County Social Services Advisory Board a copy of her obituary.

Steve brought the meeting to order.

1. Approval of June 4, 2020 Minutes

- *Motion by Rick Petroski to accept the June 4, 2020 minutes. James Stratton seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

2. Board Operations – Jim Hudack, Executive Director Blair County Dept. Social Services

Nominating Committee

- Jim stated that the Nominating Committee (Jim Hudack and Steve Martynuska) must meet to discuss the Board of Officers for the 2021 year, as well as, term renewals for some Board Members.
- Board Member terms expiring in December 2020 are Donna Gority, Bob Smith, John Allender and Mike Stubler. Jim will be reaching out to those members to see if they would like to serve for another three (3) year term.

COVID-19 Update

- Jim mentioned that the Department of Social Services is moving forward with daily operations, while heeding COVID-19 restrictions. Providers are continuing to use telehealth services with limited in-person interaction.
- Jim reported that there are numerous funding streams related to COVID-19. Discussions are happening on how to use these funds with little or no direction.
- Commissioner Erb touched upon the constraints of the eleven (11) million dollars CARES Act COVID-19 Relief fund that was awarded to Blair County. Applications will be available, by the end of August 2020, on the Blair County website (www.blairco.org). Please get in touch with Commissioner Erb if you have any questions regarding the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

3. Mental Health Committee Report – Chris Cohn

- No updates due to no meeting prior to Advisory Board meeting.

4. Developmental Programs Committee Report – John Allender

- No updates due to no meeting prior to Advisory Board meeting.

5. County Reports

Executive Director – Jim Hudack

- Jim reported that the FY 20/21 Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) Annual Plan has been submitted. Once approved, the annual plan will be posted on the Blair County website.
- Department of Social Services (DSS) is preparing to close out the last fiscal year.
- DSS will be receiving their Income & Expense (I&E) report by the beginning of September. Deadline for submission should be the end of September.
- A Legislative Breakfast is being planned for September 25, 2020. The basis of the breakfast is to speak with Representatives about DSS budget and community needs.

MH/COD –Theresa Rudy

- Theresa reported that no award letter has been received for the first five (5) months.
- HSBG 1st Quarter Payment allocation was received.
- Theresa stated that the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) and Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Administrators have been working on getting the (2012/2013) 10% cut in the budget restored.
- Theresa reported that in February she had worked on strategic planning with UPMC Altoona Student Assistance Program (SAP) Liaisons. Due to COVID-19, the plan will have changes. Theresa and Judy Rosser, Executive Director of Blair County Drug & Alcohol, will be facilitating the SAP District Council meeting on August 17, 2020. More frequent meetings will be taking place.
- Theresa updated the Board on Social Services' recent staff changes. Jean Cupp replaced Lindsay Dempsie as the Department's new Fiscal Specialist. Lindsay Dempsie returned to Social Services as the Department's Fiscal Officer, filling the vacancy left by Jackie Saylor.
- May is Mental Health (MH) event, which was rescheduled for September 9, 2020, will be canceled.
- SAP Networking Day, normally held in November, will be canceled.
- Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk will be held as a Remembrance Path at Lakemont Park on September 13, 2020 from 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Theresa will email out the flyer.

Mental Health – Ken Dean

- No updates.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Melissa reported that since June the Intellectual Disabilities (ID) Program has been meeting with facility-based Day Program providers to look over their reopening plan. There is one (1) day program provider that has not reopened yet. So far, things are going well.
- The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is constantly sending out updates and issuing new guidance to the point that is hard to keep up.
- Melissa praised providers for how they have adapted to the constant changes over the past several months. SASMG is meeting with their providers twice a month.

Early Intervention – Kelly Popich

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Kelly reported that Early Intervention (EI) Tele-Intervention are still the preferred mode of services in the "Green Phase".
- The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has approved some face to face services for children, if there are categories of identified need and if the providers and families agree. Also, there must be policies and procedures in place.
- Kelly stated that one of newest policies is that not only do staff have to wear masks in the home, but also families of children over the age of two (2) have to wear masks in the home. There are some exceptions to that policy. If families are not agreeable to wearing masks, tele-intervention will be offered.
- The County has been following all of the guidance from OCDEL. Each Agency has developed their own policies and procedures, in addition to, the County's policies and procedures.
- Kelly reported that the majority of EI contracts have been signed and submitted to the Commissioners.

- Kelly stated that EI's FY 20/21 1st Quarter Allocation has been received, but the FY 19/20 final payment has not been submitted to EI. Also, EI is still waiting to hear about their first re-budget with a possibility of a second re-budget.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy included a report in the Agenda Packet.
- Missy talked about the CARES - Rent Relief Program that helps tenants and landlords with rent relief. Missy detailed eligibility requirements in her packet update.
- Missy reported that Blair County was awarded \$140,000 Federal Housing Assistance Program (HAP) Cares Act Funds to use for COVID-19 related HAP services provided March 15, 2020 through November 30, 2020.
- Missy reported that another project being worked on is a Landlord/Tenant Mediation Program. Missy highlighted details in her packet update.
- Missy shared updated Housing the Homeless numbers spanning March through late July 2020:

Housing the Homeless Numbers

- *Over 101 households were housed in that timeframe.*
 - *Out of the 101 households, 138 individuals were housed (107 adults/31 children).*
 - *Out of those 101 households to date, 72 households were placed in permanent housing.*
- Food has been distributed to those in need in the hotels.

6. Ex-Officio Reports

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Sara McConnell

- Theresa read over the updates that were included in the Agenda packet.

CONTACT Altoona – Nicole Germaux

- Nicole stated the CONTACT Altoona is not open to the Public. If you would need to meet with Nicole, please contact her to schedule an appointment.
- Contact numbers were high due to COVID-19 concerns and fears of the aging population, but those numbers are going down.

Number of Calls per Month breakdown:

- May: 26 Inbound
58 Outbound
 - June: 21 Inbound
33 Outbound
 - July: 17 Inbound
17 Outbound
- Nicole reported that Online Training is being set-up and hopefully will be complete by mid-August. Nicole will send out more information when available.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- No updates

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Most ID providers are open. Last agency to open is scheduled for mid-August.
- Providers who are open are required to check in weekly with the Southern Alleghenies Service Management Group (SASMG).
 - Info provided on the following:
 - PPE Supplies
 - Updates to policies/procedures/protocols
 - Capacity numbers/current average attendance
 - Any new identified risks
 - Any guidance from SASMG

- Support needed from the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) or Health Care Quality Unit
- Any staff or supported people who test positive for COVID-19
- In response to a question asked by Steve about how licensing reviews are being conducted, Melissa Gordon answered that licensing reviews are being conducted remotely, as well as, on-site.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- No updates.

Open Forum:

- Steve offered, on behalf of the Board, a “thank you” to the Blair County Commissioners for their lead during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Steve, also, commended Jim, Jamie and their staffs for meeting the many needs of all the residents of Blair County.

Steve closed the meeting and thanked everyone for participating.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at The Arc, 431 Jackson Ave., Altoona or Virtual Meeting

The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 9:00a.m. at CONTACT Altoona or Virtual Meeting

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting