

Board Minutes

January 30, 2006

The regular meeting of the Board of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services was held on Tuesday, January 30, 2006. Board members in attendance were: Monika Williams, Chairperson; Erika Patregnani; Clair Kollar; Maureen Johnson. Also present was Ella May Russell, Director and Cathy Zumbun, Assistant Director for Program Performance and Oversight; Dawn Dent, Finance Officer; and Jeanne Schmitt, Assistant Director for Services.

Monika Williams, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:20 pm. A quorum was not established and no board business was conducted. Presentations were given as scheduled.

Education Session

STS Service

Cathy Zumbun, Assistant Director for Program Performance and Oversight, reported on the progress of extending the STS bus service hours from 6 AM to 11 PM Monday thru Saturday and possibly Sundays by July 2006, for the Lexington Park, Great Mills, Wildewood routes. A survey of employers supported the need for this service. Employers felt it would help with workflow and enable them to keep people in jobs that have unreliable transportation or no transportation.

County Budget

– Dawn Dent, Finance Officer, presented the proposed County budget submission. The budget had an overall 2.3% increase for step increases, cola's, and Burial services.

Chairperson's Report

– MASSB

Chairperson, Monika Williams, reported that she and Mr. Melvin McClintock attended the Spring MASSB meeting. Discussion at the MASSB was centered on "differential response." Erica Patregnani, as the legislative liaison for SMCDSS Board, reported she would be taking part in a teleconference on January 31st concerning "differential response." Other agenda items will be Child Welfare Accountable Act, election of Recording Secretary, and other issues. Ms. Patregnani requested input from the Board and Mrs. Russell.

Mrs. Russell clarified the differential response concept. Child Protective Services is incident driven. With differential response, agencies will respond differently to suspected child abuse reports by accessing the family, family history, the event, the threat to the child and the willingness of the family to cooperate with services. The success of the concept will be based on the expertise of the person(s) assessing. In the late 90's there was a pilot county and the evaluated feedback brought a favorable response. Families felt less threatened by the differential response approach. The approach develops a system that is less punitive—different response for different incidents. The belief is to protect children not nail parents.

Ms. Patregnani inquired as to how St. Mary's County handles CPS matters. Ms. Schmitt, Assistant Director for Services, explained the process as follows. If a report of suspected abuse meets criteria it is investigated, if it meets most of the criteria a safety assessment is done with the family to determine if an investigation is warranted, and if it meets some of the criteria a comprehensive assessment is done and the social worker will offer services to the family based on the assessment. This approach is a type of differential response and at present St. Mary's County is the only county in Maryland who uses this approach.

Mrs. Russell responded on the Child Welfare Accountability Act with a brief history. The Child Welfare Accountability Act was introduced last year and did not pass. It is expected to be introduced again this year. The bill introduced last year would have ground the agencies to a halt. It was all tracking there would not have been time to do the work that needs to be done. Work has not been done to identify resources, the legal system, police, sheriff, mental health, states' attorney, etc. all need to be on the same page in order for it to work.

It was agreed that Ms. Patregnani would present the need for a committee to develop partnerships and define differential response during the teleconference.

Director's Report

Network of Care Community Guide

Network of Care is an extensive database for county services and information. It is a partnership between the LMB and County Government funded by the Maryland Governor's Office for Children. The database is updated regularly by Trilogy. The Local Management Board met with the County Commissioners; Christopher J. McCabe, Secretary of DHR; and Arleen Lee, Maryland Governor's Office for children, for a kick off event. This is the first of its kind in Maryland. The website is www.stmarysnetworkofcare.org.

MACO

Mrs. Russell attended the MACO meeting. Up coming issues and the budget surplus were the main topics.

Budget Hearings

The Budget Hearings for DHR will be held in the House Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

Personnel

The agency has filled two positions—Thomas Haina, Assistant Director for Quality Assurance and CQI and Marsha Tidler, Contracts Manager.

Mr. Haina transferred from Charles county DSS and Ms. Tidler joined us from Catholic Charities.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

The next meeting will be held March 27th.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie S. Abell