

October 23, 2007
Board Minutes
St. Mary's County Department of Social Services

Board Minutes

The regular meeting of the Board of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services was held on October 23, 2007. Board members in attendance were: Clair Kollar, Judy Gilman, James Farrell, and Darlene Johnson. Also present was Sarah Mead, Program Specialist for Foster Care and Adoptions, and Ella May Russell, Director

In the absence of a quorum no business was conducted.

Minutes

Minutes from the September 25, 2007 meeting were not approved in the absence of a quorum.

Education Session – Sarah Mead, Foster Care and Adoption

November is National Adoption month. The agency has four children who will be adopted on November 21st. A celebration is planned.

The agency presently has 94 children in care and 26 licensed foster care homes. Presently, 26 of the children in Foster Care have a plan for adoption, 7 need homes. It is especially hard to place special needs children or large sibling groups. Foster parents are involved in the day-to-day lives of the children—doctors, schools, agency meetings. There are supportive services for the foster care families such as—daycare and respite care paid for by the agency.

The Foster Care program is governed by strict Federal laws with definite timelines. Family reunification is the objective. When that is not possible, a plan is developed based on the child's needs and reviewed by the Foster Care Review Board. The Review Board makes recommendations to the Court based on this plan. All parties—children, parents, the agency—have an attorney.

The agency's foster care homes are dual licensed as both foster care and adoptive homes. A large number of adopted children are adopted by their foster care families. The State has contracted with a professional photographer to take pictures of children around the State who are in Foster Care; these photos comprise "The Heart Gallery." The Heart Gallery travels around the State and has been successful in finding adoptive homes for children. The agency presently has two children in The Heart Gallery. The Maryland Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is a state-wide database that matches potential adoptive families with children. The agency has a staff person who sends pictures and resumes' of children ready for adoption to child welfare supervisor in the State to locate potential adoptive families.

In Foster Care the Field of practice is the "Family Decision Making" model, which Sarah Mead has been trained in. This practice is based on bring everyone together and see how the home can be made safe and prevent removal or reunification of children. Anne Arundel county has been using this model and have reduced the number of children coming into care for the last month.

Chairperson's Report

No report

Director's report

Budget

The Department of Human Resources reduced the local budget by \$51,342.00. The reductions were in advertising, equipment repairs and maintenance, and \$3000 from attorney fees.

Personnel

The agency has eight positions waiting approval, six family investment positions, and one clerical and administrative aide. Two family investment staff recently left—one for a higher paying job and one to return to family in North Carolina.

We have two candidates for a FI Supervisor position and will be making a decision this week.

New Business

No new business.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20

The next meeting will be November 27, 2007. There will be no December meeting.