

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2019

The regular scheduled meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held on Tuesday July 23, 2019 in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Adam Dyson
Annette Wood
Tom Hedderich
Terry Prochnow

Also Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director – via conference call
Meagan Ricker – Foster Care Supervisor
Natara Strother – PRIDE Trainer

- I. Call to Order
 - Called to Order 5:30pm
- II. Establish Quorum
 - A quorum was established 5:30pm and called to order 5:30pm
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A correction was made to the June meeting minutes regarding the closure of the library meeting rooms – Correction made – Minute approved
- IV. Directors Report
 - DSS has been training on the Practice Model initiative, most recently regarding Engagement. In order to for the board gain a clear understanding of child welfare systems, specifically the Adoptions unit, Meagan Ricker, Foster Care Supervisor and Natara Strother, PRIDE trainer, have been asked to share information through data regarding the adoption division.
 - Megan Ricker has been supervising foster care staff for two years. Prior to this she was an adoption case manager. Over the past three years, DSS has had 25 successful adoptions. Fifteen of these were with pre-adoptive foster parents, ten were with family. The average age at time of adoption is three years old. Twelve percent of the 25 were sibling groups. There are six projected adoptions for the current FY. Substance Abuse Newborns (SEN) are reported by the hospital through Child Protective Services (CPS). Case example – a mother gave birth to a SEN, she has 2 previous children who were adopted, mom was not prepared for the newborn and presented as wanting to give custody to the state. Mom had minimal involvement. Nine (9) months into care the father was identified. The father consented to the adoption. About 90% of parents have post adoption contact. When an adoptee reaches out to the state for information on biological parents, the confidential intermediary is contacted to verify the adoption occurred in St. Mary's County, the CLEAR system is researched for information on public record. If the adoption occurred out of state, that particular state / county are to be contacted.

- The annual foster parent appreciation event will take place August 22, 2019 at the Pier restaurant in Solomon's Island. Board members are invited to attend.
- Natara is the agency resource parent trainer /coordinator. She recently attended the North American Council on Adoptable Children in Las Vegas. The agency currently has 55 children in foster care and there are 15 resource parent households. The conference spoke on behavioral modification plans, attachment connect before correct. Understanding the hierarchy of need – different techniques were discussed that Natara would like to incorporate into our resource family training. The agency currently has a 70% reunification rate. There are no therapeutic foster homes in St. Mary's County. These homes are identified for a higher level of behavioral needs. Local Directors have been meeting to discuss the need for local therapeutic foster homes. There are currently 10 in the local area including St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles and PG Counties.

V. Chair Report

- The board has a new member, Alycia Stack, who will be attending beginning in September.
- MASSB Conference is taking place Oct. 24-25 in Solomons Island. Registration forms can be forwarded to Nicki.
- Leonardtown Elementary School has not had good attendance with the free lunch program and are looking for ways to improve this. SMC PS are interested in Adam's transportation discussion and will take a look at the plan for next year.
- St. Mary's County will soon be getting a food bank. They have been given a 5 year location at the UHAUL building on Great Mills Road. There may be volunteer opportunities
- Kerry Miciotto's retirement event was a success. Michael attended on behalf of the board.

VI. New Business

- The board will not meet in August. Meetings will resume in September.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:05pm

N. Sacks