

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The regular scheduled meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held on Tuesday September 24, 2019 in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Annette Wood
Anthony Branch
Cynthia Brown
Richard Buckler
Adam Dyson
Katie Paul
Terry Prochnow
Alycia Stack

Also Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director

- I. Call to Order
 - a. Called to Order 5:30pm
- II. Establish Quorum
 - a. A quorum was established 5:30pm and the meeting called to order 5:30pm
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. A motion was made to accept the July 2019 minutes. Second. Minutes accepted
- IV. Introduction of Members
 - a. Each board member introduced themselves

Director's Report

On August 22nd the agency hosted it's annual Resource Parent Event at the Pier restaurant in Solomon's Island. It is hopeful that moving forward this event will also include Kinship providers. In attendance was SMC DSS Foster Care/ Out of Home staff, foster parents, Maryland State Liasion for Resource Homes Arnie Eby and guest speaker author Rob Scheer. Rob has appeared on the Ellen Degeneres show. Ron went into length about his experience growing up in the foster care system. He was both compelling and dramatic when speaking of his journey to success despite many difficulties. He has adopted four children who were in the foster care system as well as created a non-profit called Comfort Cases based upon his experience of entering foster homes as a child with his belongings in a trash bag. The bags contain age appropriate items, personal items and pajamas amongst other items. A copy of Ron's book titled *Forever Families* is given to each board member.

The annual DSS staff retreat was held September 19th at Camp Maria. This was an opportunity to kickoff the agency's wellness program. The guest speaker focused on wellness activities for both work and home. There were group sports, lunch catered by Thompson's seafood, yoga, zumba, Wine & Design (minus the wine), and flu shots provided by Walgreens among various other activities available to staff.

A Board Orientation was held September 20th. One of the slides in the presentation, What We Are Proud Of, was based on customer services surveys. The agency has placed a focus on improving customer

service and in doing so we have created a Customer Care Team (CCT). The team is the first point of contact for answering all incoming phone calls. In August, 80% of calls were handled by the CCT which drastically reduced the number of transfers to case managers. The CCT can now give callers the information they are requesting without transferring the call elsewhere. The CCT answers calls from 8am – 5pm Monday thru Friday.

Chair Report

The new Food Bank now has a website (feedstmarys.com). The site allows guests to sign up for newsletters and promotes awareness as well as other useful information. The Lexington Park Rotary has contributed \$50,000. The food bank is for distribution to faith ministries, etc it is not for direct customer pick-up.

MASSB – Registration is almost complete. Terry, Michael and Alycia will be attending.

MD Charity Campaign will run October thru December

State employees can opt for a payroll deduction or one time donation

MASSB is a charitable organization for employees to choose – Specify St. Mary's County

Fundraising Specific Project –

Independent Living Youth Worker, Dani Walker, has approached the idea of donations to assist older youths in care. A barrier faced by the agency is that there are no therapeutic foster homes in St. Mary's County. These homes are specific to adolescents who display more severe behavioral issues. Currently, 13 out of the 14 youths reside outside of SMC. Often, when in therapeutic care, the adolescents are not connected to family and the case manager becomes the main connection of stability and intensive support. These youth often have significant struggles with many barriers including income and transportation. There is a current budget of \$2700 for 2020 to support these youth. That is an average of \$199 per youth per year. There is unfortunately too often a poor outcome for these youth. The question is raised if the board would like to participate in individualized fundraising to assist in the support of these youth. The board agrees. It is suggested to introduce a story to create a sense of empathy for donations. Could DSS fund the printing and mailing? The cost is approx. \$150. Michael Blackwell will donate \$50. Alexis will provide the story for review. Calvert County takes on several fundraisers throughout the year. Alexis will reach out to Director Amye Scrivner about how they approach staff.

This will be included in next month's board agenda.

Other Items

SMCPS is reaching out to students to address homelessness

SMC HD is working on vaccinations for children

The library is hosting an expungement event in October

Alexis attended the Closing In ceremony for the new library and Garvey Senior Center. It is planned that the library will be open in 6 months.

ID's will be issued to board members

Call to adjourn, second, meeting adjourned at 6:18pm

N. Sacks