

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 Tuesday October 25, 2021.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Annette Wood
Jeffrey Gibson
Anthony Branch
Cynthia Brown
Richard Buckler
Alicia Stack

Also, Present:

Jennifer Neff, Assistant Director

- I. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order 5:30pm
- II. Establish Quorum
 - a. A quorum was established
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. A motion was made to accept the September 2021 meeting minutes. Second motion.
Minutes approved

Director Report

Assistant Director Jennifer Neff is presenting on behalf of Director Alexis Zoss

The agency has put a focus on recruitment of resource parents for both children and adults as both kinship or adoptive families. There are currently 20 resource homes and 74 children in care. There are 5 Project Home providers and 6 adults in care. The agency has been building on trauma informed resource training which will be provided quarterly the first of which was completed this month. During the first training, parents had breakout sessions with a provider giving them the opportunity to discuss challenges they may be facing as well as individual support. A total of 9 families including 14 children were in attendance.

SMC DSS staff attended and had a display table during an event at Ann Marie Gardens teaming up with Calvert County DSS employees to provide information to the public on becoming foster care and adult providers.

SMC DSS has sent out flyer information for 4 months on the Val Pack coupons. From this we have had 2 interests for children and 4 for adults.

DSS has had a recent case involving a home which is uninhabitable for the family. The household consists of a father and 4 children. The mother is deceased. To avoid placing the children in foster care, the agency has been hoteling the family. The home requires extensive repair. The children suffer from high anxiety. There is an adult child also in the home with 2 children of her own and is expecting a third child. The children do not want to leave their father. The agency has reached out to three contractors regarding repair of the home. The first estimate was \$100k. The home needs the sub-flooring replaced to make it safe to live in which is very costly. This may be an opportunity for the board to assist with donated funds. Christmas in April can be explored as an option as well.

The board currently has approximately \$1000. Michael will reach out to MASSB to find out how to retrieve the funds.

Q – Is there a possibility of replacing the home vs extensive repairs?

This is a possibility depending on the rising cost in the housing market.

Habitat for Humanity may be a resource.

Christmas Caring – Make sure the family receives a form to submit for gifts

Q – What is the length of stay for hoteling?

There is currently a plan in place for a possible ERAP extension

Medical Respite – Update

The group met today, there may be an opportunity for a grant which is due December 7, 2021. Request for nursing oversight would be expanded. Both Dr. Michaels and Dr. Brewster are on board with the plan.

“Soft Opening” possibility

The building is approximately 70% complete

Chair Report

Dr. Walthour has mentioned the “Circles” idea; will follow up with Alexis for details

MASSB meeting is this Friday – Update will be sent out next Monday

Fundraising potentials – Still working on contacts

Legislation concerns / updates – We will write to delegation if there are any topics of concern

There will be no meeting held in November or December 2, 2021

Other Items of Discussion

Community Resource Day is Friday

Expungement event took place via phone and Zoo; There has been changes made to expungement laws

Cases are off of case search if not nol-prossed and have been deleted if the state is not perusing

Motion to adjourn – 2nd

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm

N. Sacks