

Board Minutes October 25, 2006

The regular meeting of the Board of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services was held on Wednesday, October 25, 2006. Board members in attendance were: Clair Kollar; Erika Patregnani; and Judy Gilman. Also present was Ella May Russell, Director.

Erika Patregnani, in the absence of a Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Minutes

Approval of the minutes from the June 27, 2006, meeting was tabled due to the lack of a quorum.

Education Session

No Education Session was presented.

Chairperson's Report

No Report

Director's Report

Strategic Plan

The agency is in the process of updating and finalizing its strategic plan. Thomas Hania, Assistant Director for Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement, will present the completed strategic plan a future Board meeting.

Staff Retreat

The agency sponsored a staff retreat on September 19th, at Camp Maria. The theme was "A Day of Rejuvenation." Activities included: Tai Chi; yogi; massage; reflexology; fishing; kayaking; reading; cards; board games; soft ball; etc. The day was a great success and staff feedback was tremendously positive.

Local Management Board (LMB)

The Office of Children at the State level, asked St. Mary's County LMB to take the lead in developing a pilot program in the Tri-county area to prevent residential placement of children. The plan was presented to the County Commissioners last week.

The plan is a tri-county pilot for children with mental health disabilities—families can voluntarily place children to receive services. The goal is stabilizing the family and getting services for both the child/children and the families. The major piece to this pilot was the creation of a Crisis bed facility, where children can be placed for 60 to 90 days to develop a plan to work with the family. This placement allows time for assessment of the parents and children and gives the families breathing space. Parents paid child support when children are placed. A ribbon cutting ceremony took place last week for the facility. The facility presently has three beds and they are already full, efforts are being made to gain more beds. The facility is located in town houses in Prince Frederick. The cost is \$91,000 each for three years from three State agencies--- Department of Human Resources; Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, Department of Juvenile Services. This was done through cooperation at the local and State levels.

Presently detailed information on the families participating needs to be gathered. There are little to no resources for children with these issues. We need to know how we can intervene earlier before children and families reach this point.

Personnel

The agency is presently experiencing major vacancies. The Child Protective Services supervisory position is vacant at this time and we are actively pursuing recruitment from Ohio. Velea Kelly, Leonardtown Team Leader and Wrap Around, left the agency for Asbury Nursing Center. The Team Leader position requires a Masters in Social Work. The following positions are also open—child support worker; paralegal; family investment worker.

Yvonna Brown, Assistant Director for Family Investment and Child Support and Bob Frere, Program Specialist for Temporary Cash Assistance and Purchase of Care both sustained injuries and at this time we are unsure when they may be able to return to work.

Ernesto

The agency opened shelters for Ernesto. The agency experienced a tremendous increase in customers affected by the storm at the same time as 85 PC's where hit with an automation virus which was State-wide, creating a backlog in Family Investment.

Child Advocacy Center

The agency is beginning the planning for a Child Advocacy Center. These are places where sexually abused children can meet with law enforcement, doctors, social workers, etc. to tell their stories once. It promotes a close integration among the professionals involved and enables us to better provide services to children and families.

Adjournment

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

The next meeting to be announced.

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie S. Abell