

Board Minutes

November 24, 2009

The regular meeting of the Board of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services was held on November 24, 2009. Board members in attendance were: Clair Kollar, Chairperson, Richard Buckler, Susie Fowler, Ronald Pope, George Ennis, Bennett Connelly and Leisha Wood. Also present were Ella May Russell, Director; Kathleen O'Brien, Executive Director, Walden Sierra, Inc and Gary Lynch, Assistant Director, Walden Sierra, Inc.. Absent: Judy Gilman and James Farrell

Minutes

The minutes from the October 27, 2009 meeting were approved with corrections.

Education Session:

Walden is a community partner with the Department of Social Services. Walden started in 1973 with a crisis hotline. Through the years they grew as they listened to the needs in the community and developed services or service links.

Walden recently opened Hope Place in Lexington Park. Lexington Park has a high need and a large population of homeless with barriers of transportation. Hope Place provides a setting to start a relationship with the homeless and the community in Lexington Park. Computers have been placed by DSS so that customers can apply for Food Stamps and/or Medical Assistance on line. Walden is speaking with banks to provide assistance in helping with credit repair for customers and provide finance literacy. It provides homeless individuals a place to shower, eat and link with community resources. Walden is in partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS), churches, and Three Oaks Center in bring integrated services to the homeless population.

Hope Place is located on FDR Blvd in Millison Plaza, this location is within walking distance of the DSS Lexington Park Office. Presently averaging 7-9 referrals from DSS each day with a high activity rate of homeless coming out since the opening day. The Health Connections Van is scheduled to stop at Hope Place which will bring access to primary care.

Walden is working with local businesses that have issues with the homeless population. This is another step to reducing barriers and strengthening partnerships in the community.

Chairperson's Report

Christmas Caring

Proposed that each Board member contribute \$15 to sponsor a Christmas basket for a family. Board Members present agreed.

Proposed that the Board follow the schools in inclement weather. If schools are cancelled the Board meeting will also be cancelled.

Director's Reports

Adoptions

Our Adoptive Family of the Year are Mr. and Mrs. Ferko who adopted five children.

Audit

The agency received the draft report from the 2008 review to see if we implemented corrective actions from the November 2005 to October 2007 audit and has until December 1st to reply to findings.

Personnel

The agency has had multiple trainings in domestic violence and substance abuse for social work staff in the last month.

Ella Somerville, Assistant Director for Operations and Child Support, is retiring at the end of December. Ms. Somerville started her career with the State 39 years ago as a home maker (aide).

Budget Cuts

Board of Public Works made budget savings by not filling vacant positions and salary savings. They also made cuts to Victim of Crime Services (under DHR); eliminated Social Work Bonuses; reduced homeless funds; no vehicle replacements; reduced State travel funds. Cuts will continue in Legislation.

Health Share

The Holiday House Tour for Health Share will be held Sunday, December 6, 2009. This event is a major fund raiser for Health Share.

WARM Nights

Kerry Miciotto is the agency representative on the WARM Nights committee. There are also students from St. Mary's College working on the committee.

Emergency Assistant to Families with Children (EAFC)

The agency will be requesting additional funds from DHR. With the present economy funds have been expended quickly.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:25
The next meeting will be on January 26, 2010