

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2019

The regular scheduled meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held on Tuesday, February 26, 2019 in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Annette Wood, Vice Chair
Tom Hedderich
Anthony Branch
Wanda Brown
Richard Buckler
Katie Paul

Also Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director

I. Call to Order

- Order was called at 5:30PM.

II. Establish Quorum

- A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order at 5:30PM.

III. Approval of Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the January 22, 2019 minutes
Minutes are approved.

**IV. Education Session
Budget Information**

SMC DSS is considered to be a small – medium size DSS agency. The State budget is \$10.1 million in which \$7.9 million consists of employee salaries. This budget is controlled by DHS.

There are \$1.8 million in discretionary funds. There is an operating budget of \$400,000 and \$80,000 for transportation.

The county budget which was submitted in early January is \$451,237. Because the board is an Advisory Board, it is not responsible for approval of the County budget.

Alexis reviewed the budget handouts prepared for board members and stated that among other things, the county budget provides funding for several positions within DSS as well as funding to provide burial assistance for those who meet specific qualifications. A

portion of the overhead goes to management costs. There was a proposal to increase the salary of the Family Support worker as this is a low salary position but the proposal was denied. The family support position does not carry a caseload but is an essential part of the Services unit. The county funds three (3) child support positions in which they receive a 66% reimbursement from the Federal Government. Funds from the legal position which was recently filled allowed for flexibility with hiring temporary positions within the agency.

Michael Blackwell motions to approve the County budget. There is a second. The motion is passed.

V. Director's Update

Legislative Bills

Current bills affecting DSS will be shared with the Board.

HB 142 – I'm Alive Today App for smart phones

Description – A parent involved in certain child welfare cases would be required to check-in with this app. If the parent does not check-in as agreed it would trigger a CPS investigation. The app does not provide value in the event that the parent does not answer as well as it does not give authority to enter a residence.

Strategic Plan

The 2020 SMC DSS Strategic Plan will be completed and presented to staff by next month. A select group of employees along with Executive Staff have worked together to create the plan.

SNAP / Government Shut Down Update

There are Federal guidelines stating there can be no more than 40 days between benefit issuance dates. DHS will issue all benefits to eligible customers on March 6th.

The Rotary Club will hold a meeting on March 18th to discuss moving forward with plans for a SMC Food Bank. They will meet with the County Commissioners as they are in need of operating money and technical support.

Social Work Appreciation Month

The County Commissioners will present DSS with a proclamation on March 12th at 9am. Alexis invited the board to attend.

On March 26th there will be an all staff training titled "A Trauma Attuned Workforce" followed by a pot luck luncheon. Alexis has invited the board to attend. There is a suggestion that the regularly scheduled board meeting planned for the 26th may be able to be held in the afternoon.

VOCA Grant

The VOCA grant is a \$250,000 regional grant in conjunction with the Health Dept. to help meet the needs of children with mental health issues. Alexis reached out to the local offices to look at the data from another standpoint. The grant could potentially build on an already existing number of over 1000 children.

The topic of children in foster care placed out of the county is brought up and how we are handling bringing children back to the county. Foster parent recruitment? Can the board assist?

There is only 1 treatment foster care agency in SoMD. A meeting with them to talk about what it would take to get more homes in SoMD may be beneficial and is a significant piece to supporting the families DSS serves.

VI. Chair Report

Michael Blackwell has received positive feedback from the article in the Enterprise. MASSB annual conference will be held October 23-25th at the Holiday Inn Solomons. Fundraising – Old Town Pub has fundraising opportunities on Thursdays

VII. Adjournment

- Call for adjournment was made and seconded which carried at 6:20pm.

Generated by N. Sacks