

St. Mary's County
Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2018

The regular scheduled meeting of the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services Advisory Board was held on Tuesday, January 22, 2019 in the board room of the Joseph D. Carter building.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Annette Wood, Vice Chair
Adam Dyson
Cynthia Brown
Tom Hedderich
Anthony Branch
Terry Prochnow

Also Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director
Charles Wood, Assistant Director for Family Investment

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 November 27, 2018 minutes
Motion was and seconded and carries unanimously.

IV. Introduction of New Board Members

- Anthony Branch – Senior Management Analyst with the MIL Corporation – Retired Civil Servant (NAVAIR)
- Tom Hedderich –Sergeant, Criminal Investigations Division, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office
- Terry Prochnow – Director, Public Health Preparedness & Response Division, St. Mary's County Health Department

V. Education Session

Charles Wood, Assistant Director for Family Investment gave an overview of the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, aka Food Stamps) program as well as the current effects of the Government shutdown.

Dependent on individual household circumstances, eligible customers receive benefits for either 6 consecutive months or 1 full year. Customers receiving 6 months of benefits will recertify, or renew, their eligibility during the 5th month of benefits. Those eligible to receive for 12 months will recertify, or renew, their eligibility during the 11 month of benefits. Following program compliance, customers recertifying during the 5th month are required to submit a mail in form to determine continued eligibility. Those who are eligible for 12 months of benefits and those recertifying the last 6 months of benefits are required to do a Face To Face interview to determine their continued eligibility.

There are situations in which either the agency or the customer have made an error which can result in either an Underpayment of benefits in which the due benefits are issued to the customer or an Overpayment in which the customer is responsible for repayment of benefits to which they were not eligible. If there is a situation of fraud, this could potentially mean that the customer is not eligible to receive benefits for 3 – 6 months to a lifetime.

ABAWD – Able Bodied Adults Without Disabilities

The ABAWD policy was put back into effect in St. Mary's County in January of 2016. Recipients are required to work at least 80hrs. per month, participate in a qualifying education or training activity at least 80hrs per month or comply with a workfare program (unpaid work through a special State approved program).

775 Redeterminations were received and needed approval by 5pm on Jan. 16th in order for customers to receive February benefits. The State issued all February benefits on January 18th. Benefits will not be issued again in February. New applications are in limbo. The State is looking into the possibility of contingency funds to assist.

There were approx. 130 cases that were not completed and almost 100 cases currently pending. Applications will continue to be processed and eligibility letters will be sent to customers. There is a concern for customers being able to make their benefits last throughout the month of February. Approximately 4800 children are recipients of SNAP benefits. TCA (Temporary Cash Assistance) and TDAP (Temporary Disability Assistance Program) are not affected. There is speculation that food pantry's and food providers will be in high demand. Director Zoss met today with community providers to discuss the anticipated need. The majority of providers feel that they have support from their parishioners. The Rotary Club stated that for approx. a year they have been working on trying to bring a food bank to SMC. There is a committee meeting scheduled for next week to get a handle on what the demand will be. Terry asked how this might affect furloughed employees who have medical coverage costs deducted from their pay. Alexis stated that there is a state wide conference call tomorrow and this may be a topic of discussion.

VI. Legislative Update

Alexis stated that there are currently a few bills that DHS is watching carefully

Kinship Caregiver Bill – High Priority – Redefines that definition of Kin adding people who are non blood related but play an important role in a child's life

Tech Bill – Allows CPS to share data with DJS (Department of Juvenile Services)

Safe Haven Bill – Currently Safe Haven does not require a provision that family is notified. This bill would change the parameters about confidentiality. Controversial

VII. Other Items

Michael Blackwell has sent a draft of the letter to the Enterprise to board members for review. The intention is to raise attention regarding the work of SMC DSS. He has requested that members review the letter and send feedback / changes to him by Tuesday so that edits can be made.

VIII. Adjournment

- Call for adjournment was made and seconded which carried at 6:30pm.

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