

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 March 23, 2021 via teleconference.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair

Adam Dyson

Alycia Stack

Cynthia Brown

Annette Wood

Richard Buckler

Terry Prochnow

Anthony Branch

Also, Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director

- I. Call to Order
  - a. The meeting was called to order 5:31pm
- II. Establish Quorum
  - a. A quorum was established
- III. Approval of Minutes
  - a. A motion was made to accept the February 2021 meeting minutes. Second motion.  
Minutes approved

**Director Report**

DSS was asked to participate in the recent NAACP Education committee presentation which discussed how children in Title 1 schools who are served in social services cases have fared through the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you to Annette for contributing information from the school system. DSS Family Preservation staff were surveyed as to how many of the children in their caseloads are enrolled in virtual learning, how many youth are doing well and how many are struggling. There was a total of 28 families included in the survey which consisted of 47 children who attend Title 1 schools.

43% of the children are in the Lexington Park Elementary School district.

68% of the children are enrolled in virtual learning and are attending more than half of the allotted school time.

14 youth are doing well academically

10 youth are not doing as well

12 youth are struggling either emotionally or socially

There are several grandparents who have taken care and custody of grandchildren and are struggling with technology.

Many of the children could benefit from a more formal mentoring program.

FLOW is offered through the school system.

Data tells us that 32% of kids are not enrolled in virtual learning. Staff have been asked to focus on these children and ensure that they get enrolled. We recognize that many of these families have been struggling with several stress factors.

Annette – The NAACP presentation went well. The plans for summer school are coming along.

Anthony – Do we know what the enrollment numbers were pre-pandemic?

Alexis – Not at this moment.

Annette – Many families moving through transitions causes attendance to drop off and will then pick back up.

Michael – Dr. Smith has talked about student performance during the pandemic. Has this information been shared with him?

Annette – That is unknown at this time. PPW data is tracked daily

Q – What makes a Title 1 child's family eligible for DSS services?

Alexis – Every family receiving SNAP in the Lexington Park area are also eligible to receive free school lunches as well as other benefits throughout the pandemic.

Michael – The Rotary may be interested in assisting children attending Title 1 schools with books. Dolly Parton books are once a month books that are kept by the child(ren).

Annette – Title 1 does have funding for families living in shelter situations. These children sometimes have very little belongings when the family moves forward to permanent housing. A book to keep could be very meaningful to children in these situations.

Michael – We will talk more offline; the board may also be able to assist with the funding

### **Chair Report**

The trustee manual will be completed next month for review.

Alicia – The courts have re-opened moving from Phase 2 to Phase 4. Cases are staggered but moving through. There is a large backlog of criminal trials.

Alexis – Eviction Moratorium will be lifted at the end of this month

Last week it was announced that an additional amount of almost \$4million will be granted to SMC for eviction prevention. Cynthia, Lanny, Dennis and DSS are working together to obtain the funds. The guidelines are very flexible; not a lot of eligibility criteria with up to 15 months of assistance provided. These are the most flexible funds seen in quite some time.

Richard – FY22 Budget – How would it be described? Anything new?

Alexis – We do not expect any changes

Michael – Review of the You Tube session with DSS budget request is available for viewing

Terry – State inspection is tomorrow for approval to offer more services and expand testing; running booths; BMI clinics, church outreaches; The number of positive cases has declined. BMI clinics plug in an individual's information and provide a letter for vaccine eligibility. There is an obesity crisis, people are not seeing their doctors. The goal is to get people vaccinated who qualify.

Motion to adjourn – 6:14pm

Motion second

N. Sacks

Motion to adjourn: 6:13pm

N. Sacks