

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 April 27, 2021 via teleconference.

Member's Present:

Michael Blackwell, Chair
Adam Dyson
Alycia Stack
Annette Wood
Richard Buckler
Tom Hedderich

Also, Present:

Alexis Zoss, Director

- I. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order 5:33pm
- II. Establish Quorum
 - a. A quorum was established
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - a. A motion was made to accept the March 23, 2021 meeting minutes. Second motion.
Minutes approved

Director Report

Last year I was elected as the Vice Chair of the State Directors group (MASSD). This position includes chairing the annual conference. For the first time this year's event took place virtually. The planning committee came together, and St. Mary's County lifted the conference. The event was a 2-day conference which was a 4-month planning project. Thank you to Nicki for keeping the planning together and to Charles for his data and information management. Six weeks ago, we received a human resources article of an expected turnover rate after the pandemic. The state has remained relatively stable. The agency is starting to receive some resignations – 1 Social Work Supervisor and 2 in Foster Care. The HR department remains busy bringing in new staff.

American Rescue Plan

Funding coming into Maryland with an impact on Human Services

\$1.9 trillion – American Rescue Plan

An additional \$6.3 million will be allocated to the Child Abuse Prevention Program in Maryland

\$18 million will be allocated for Pandemic Emergency Assistance through the TANF and Work programs

Emergency Rental Assistance - \$46 billion across the country

\$76 million to Maryland

\$4.5 million to St. Mary's County for Phase 1

Funds are received directly through the US Treasury with very little eligibility criteria

- For example, a household of 1 earning \$56,000 yearly income or less who has received unemployment or reduction of income or a risk of homelessness will be eligible
- Household of 4 - \$80,000 yearly income or less who has received unemployment or reduction of income or a risk of homelessness will be eligible
- Household of 7 - \$100,000 yearly income or less who has received unemployment or reduction of income or a risk of homelessness will be eligible

Community Mental Health Block Grant - \$28.1 million

Substance Abuse Prevention Block Grant - \$27.5 million

State and Local Aid provides \$350 billion for pandemic related expenses and financial needs – Maryland is expected to receive \$3.87 billion with an expected \$2.3 billion to local governments

This is a time of hope and renewal to support new and existing programs

Q – What is the top priority for spending funds?

A –

1. Planning with partners (County Government, Three Oaks Center, SMC Housing Authority) for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). All applicants will come through DSS first. We are currently planning on how this will be handled.
2. Kinship Care - Families who may be struggling and cannot stay together and children are placed with family vs coming into foster care.
3. Child Advocacy Center – Services and programs are in place and we can begin to build on those advocating for mobile crisis assistance

Annette – Informal kinship is huge, there are many children living with relatives

Alexis – A more formal approach will be looked at over the next 6-12 months

Adam – Congratulations to Alexis on her appointment at the state level

Congratulations to Michael Blackwell on the ribbon cutting of the new library facility.

Next Monday will begin full working hours at the Leonardtown library. We are still working on the process for Lexington Park branch

Chair Report

The rough draft of the Member Handbook has been completed. We will review it during next month's meeting;

Adam has agreed to extend his term on the board;

Opportunity at the library to apply for funds for a mobile library, we are hoping to get a letter of support from DSS and the Health Department by June 1st. Possibly do some partnering together at the senior center and neighborhoods without Wi-Fi.

Next month's meeting will take place in person in the Russell Conference room with the option of calling in.

Richard - Officers terms are ending June 30th. We may want to start thinking about this for the June meeting.

Alicia – Recently represented a foster family in court for an adoption in which the biological mother and foster parents were present together.

Richard – The housing market still has a low inventory of sales and rentals available

Motion to adjourn – 6:04pm

Motion second

N. Sacks