

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)
Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 7:00pm-8:30pm
Fairfax County Government Center

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Providence District, Laura Martinez, Chair
Mount Vernon District, Raymond McGrath, Vice Chair
At-Large – Chairman’s Office, Noah Abraham
City of Fairfax, Andre Lee
Dranesville District, Ben Zuhl
Sully District, Jose Garzon
Springfield District, Hillary Hogan
Mason District, Julian De Phillips, Secretary

Absent:

Franconia District, Latriece Prince-Wheeler

Positions Vacant:

City of Falls Church
Braddock District
Hunter Mill District

Staff Present

Michael Becketts, DFS Director
Melanie Fenwick, DFS Staff Support
Arogya Singh, Budget Manager

Meeting Opening

Chair Martinez called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. A quorum of members was confirmed.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February 21, 2024, meeting approved with one change.

Director’s Announcements

- A DFS report on the Status of Women & Girls in the county was commissioned in partnership with the University of Virginia. The presentation will be held on March 22 (note email sent with details) and will be broadcast on Channel 16.
- A county reconciliation is occurring related to Boards and Commissions in future years.

FY25 Budget

- Arogya Singh, Budget Manager, discussed the FY 2025 advertised budget. The advertised budget is a “budget proposal” or “first step” and there is a lot of discussion and work ahead to get to an approved budget by May 7. Mr. Singh described the proportion of the revenues to be allocated to schools, DFS, and other organizations, highlighting the following information related to DFS –

For DFS, the FY 2025 Advertised Budget proposes the following major additions:

- \$4.0 million to support compensation for County employees, including performance/merit/longevity increases, a 2 percent market rate adjustment, and recruitment and retention efforts that will reduce pay compression and align the county's pay structures with the market.
- \$3.3 million to support contractual increases for service providers.
- \$0.4 million in Healthy Minds Fairfax to support year two of a two-year phase-in for a behavioral health system navigation program for children and families.
- \$0.2 million to support a 5 percent increase in Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance rates approved at the state level.

\$3.6 million in DFS budget reductions is also included. Each agency was asked to identify a prioritized list of potential budget savings. The reductions to the DFS budget included in the *FY 2025 Advertise Budget* reflect program flexibility and efficiencies resulting from staff innovation and changed business processes. **As a result, no adverse impact is anticipated on DFS operations and no positions are included.** However, as the Board of Supervisors considers the proposed budget, there could be discussion about additional budget savings opportunities.

- Chair Martinez asked for clarifications on the impact of reductions across program areas. Dir. Becketts clarified that many services are funded through CSA dollars from Federal sources, and services are not expected to be impacted by reductions.
- Member Garzon asked for clarification on the distinction between the reductions and an overall cut. Dir. Becketts clarified the source of revenue increase and overall increase in budget.

Budget Testimony

- Chair Martinez provided background on last year's budget testimony from the ASSB. Melanie Fenwick explained the process for BAC members to provide budget testimony. Up to two speakers are permitted to testify on behalf of the board. Last year we concentrated on the issue of housing, despite the separation between DFS and that funding.
- Chair Martinez explained that the board discusses key points to include in the testimony and DFS staff support drafts the testimony for the board to review and edit. The board agreed key points to include are appreciation for the continued funding of key services and desire to see no additional cuts, appreciation for the consideration to maintaining staffing, staff compensation and increased contract rates for service providers as it's a positive impact on the ability of the department and human services system to provide services and attract talent.
- The board also agrees to include information about the Medicaid unwinding and impact to the safety net system as individuals roll of Medicaid.

Chair's Announcements

- Recommendations from questionnaire provided by consultant Kristy Dooley were shared and discussed. This provided insight into how ASSB members perceive their role and the responsibilities of the board.
- Strategic planning next steps were discussed and will include a planning session in April, and a half day workshop during the summer. The Board agreed to planning discussion at the April meeting and future activities will be decided at that time.

District Updates

- Chair Martinez raised a previous topic related to compensation for court appointed attorneys and noted that small increases are occurring but that neighboring states are outperforming us in this category.
- Member Noah Abraham provides an update on Continuum of Care board. The CoC board is developing a strategic plan and discussing how the board will determine the use of Federal funds from Housing and Urban Development related to homeless services. The next meeting is March 27.
- Member Ben Zuhl asked about selection of service provider from CCFAP and what happens when the organizations are not selected. Dir. Becketts provides an example of deselection and loss of funding in such a case, in one example DFS picked up the cost until funding could be restored. Dir. Becketts explained an approach where DFS seeks to purchase services directly from providers that may have a risk of losing funding so that there can be continuity.
- Dir. Becketts provided an update on Medicaid unwinding and positive news on our status. 93% complete for the cases related to the Medicaid Unwinding. 80% done with suspended or overdue cases, working through at a rate of 3% per week, looking to reach 90% by late April. The auto-closure process has been implemented by the state, which continues to close cases where individuals have not submitted applications. This 10% of cases may represent individuals that no longer need or are no longer eligible for Medicaid.
- Chair Martinez asked about free clinic services for undocumented people. Dir. Becketts describes the health safety net as administered by the Health Department, FQHC's and other private and public partners. Member Noah Abraham asked about Medicaid closure notifications. Dir. Becketts explained the process through the State in which you cannot close cases without manually intervening and contacting the individual.

Adjourned:

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm

Next ASSB Meeting:

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm; Government Center Conference Room 4/5