

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)
Wednesday, September 17, 2024, 7:00pm-8:30pm
Fairfax County Government Center

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Providence District, Laura Martinez, Chair
Mount Vernon District, Raymond McGrath, Vice Chair
Braddock District, Jessica Du Bois
City of Falls Church, Sue Armstrong
Mason District, Julian De Phillips, Secretary
Sully District, Jose M. Garzon
City of Fairfax, Andre Lee
Hunter Mill District, Marcia McDevitt

Absent:

At-Large, Noah Abraham
Springfield District, Hillary Hogan

Positions Vacant:

Dranesville District
Franconia District

Staff Present:

Michael Becketts, DFS Director
Melanie Fenwick, DFS Staff Support
Sandra Slappey Brown (Virtual), Assistant Division Director, Children, Youth, and Families Division
Janet Bessmer, Director, Fairfax-Falls Church Children's Services Act Program

Meeting Opening

Chair Laura Martinez called the meeting to order at 7:00p and performed the roll call. A quorum of members was confirmed.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the August 17, 2024, meeting approved with no changes.

Director's Announcements:

- Director Becketts announced several leadership changes. DSVS Division Director, Toni Zollicoffer has been selected for the Chief Equity Officer role and is leaving the Department of Family Services. Marika Hannem, Deputy Director of Operations, is retiring but will return part-time. Her replacement is Marie Gibbon, who will start on October 7th.

- Sue Armstrong will take the ASSB's role in the Homelessness Continuum of Care (CoC). No objections, there is consensus from the ASSB on her selection for the role.
- A role is open for the ASSB to nominate a member to CCFAC. The ASSB will wait for members to consider and for vacancies to be filled before deciding.

Chair's Announcements:

- Chair Martinez highlighted the need for nominations for ASSB Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary in November. Chair Martinez and Vice Chair McGrath have indicated they will not seek nominations for 2025.

Performance Data and Discussion:

- Sandra Slappey Brown answered questions on budget performance measures for Children Youth and Family (CYF) Services.
- Member Garzon asked for clarification about the definitions used for response times. It was noted that R1 or P1 is a 24-hour response, R2 or P2 is 48 hours, and R3 or P3 is 40 business hours. This is determined through a system called Structured Decision Making (SDM).
- Chair Martinez inquired about the 2023 actuals for "cost per" measures. This involves dividing the budget by the case count, making it a simple calculation. There might be some updated data available from the finance department.
- Vice Chair McGrath noted the actual value for child abuse complaints accepted and asked if there is an accounting for the reduction and if there is any granularity in the data related to the severity of the case. Ms. Brown explained that FY24 was lower than the estimate, which was a good outcome and did not further stretch response resources.
- Member De Phillips asked about the relationship between DFS and FCPS and guidance around reportable conditions. Director Becketts responded that DFS no longer consults on cases before reporting to preserve the SDM process and encourage the full process in cases where abuse or neglect is suspected. A training toolkit for use in other organizations is also in development.
- Chair Martinez asked about the falling outcomes in the Parenting Education Program (PEP). It was noted that some data entry issues have been identified in a manual process, but this does not account for the full decrease. There is a current effort to evaluate this reduced metric. The Director also noted due to an increase in Child Protective Services demand and vacancies; staff from other CYF program areas were deployed to support CPS.
- Vice Chair McGrath asked about the decreasing rate of children exiting foster care, after which several elements of the foster care program were discussed.
- Member Armstrong shared a note from a prospective foster family regarding their positive experience as foster care applicants.
- Janet Bessmer shared an overview of the Children's Services Act (CSA) and answered questions about CSA performance indicators. She noted before the act was created, there was a high degree of simplifying cases and solutions. However, there are many factors important to the health and welfare of each child and the approach to care should be coordinated across all factors.
- CSA funding is available for services for children that are served in other ways, such as PPS or CPS, without entering foster care if avoidable.

- Chair Martinez asks if these services are available for undocumented residents. Dr. Bessmer noted services are available for all residents.
- Member Garzon asks about primary avenues for a child into CSA programs. There is a “no wrong door” approach, which often involves a service plan or court referral.
- Member Du Bois asked about the provider network and requirements. There is a requirement to look at insurance first. Medicaid is also an option. Capacity, provider networks, and other factors can impact the availability of required services. It does average a third of the annual cost per child in foster care.
- Sandra Slappey Brown notes that we are successful in Fairfax County using upstream services to keep kids out of foster care, the lowest rates in the nation, and take significant steps to avoid separating children from their families.

District Updates:

- Member Armstrong noted the Knox Food Pantry at Knox Presbyterian Church is moving within the same building. The pantry serves zip codes 22042, 22044, and 22046.
- Vice Chair McGrath pointed out that there was a discussion of restrictive property deeds with Supervisor Stork and Supervisor Lusk which may result in a request to review Fairfax County’s Deeds for restrictive language.
- Chair Martinez asked Director Becketts for an update on the basic income pilot. Director Becketts noted an interim report and a presentation that can be provided to ASSB by the next meeting.

Adjourned:

Chair Martinez adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Next ASSB Meeting:

Wednesday, October 16, 2024, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm, Virtual