

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 12:00 PM
The Arc, 431 Jackson Avenue, Altoona
BlueJeans Conference Line**

Board Members Present: Stephen Martynuska, James Stratton, Rick Petroski, Michael Stubler, Susanna Tomlinson, T. Grant Phillips, Amber Hatfield, Chris Cohn and Commissioner Bruce Erb

Board Members Absent: Donna Gority, Cindy Barton, John Allender, Bob Smith

Others Present: Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Jennifer Kensinger, Jamie Henry, Melissa Gordon, Kelly Popich, Lorrie Hetager, Maria Brandt, Sara McConnell and Nicole Germaux

MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order

Steve thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to order. Self-Introductions were made.

Statement from Dr. Phillips

Dr. Phillips, UPMC Physician, stated that there is good scientific data to back up the claim that wearing masks helps stop the spread of COVID-19. As a health care provider and community member, Dr. Phillips, encouraged everyone to wear a mask while out in public.

1. Approval of August 6, 2020 Minutes

- *Motion by Mike Stubler to accept the August 6, 2020 minutes. Chris Cohn seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

2. Board Operations – Jim Hudack, Executive Director Blair County Dept. Social Services

Nominating Committee

- Jim reported that Social Service Advisory Board Members Donna Gority, Bob Smith and Mike Stubler, whose 3 year terms are expiring in December 2020, would like to be reappointed to the Advisory Board. John Allender, who recently retired from the Altoona Area School District (AASD), does not want to be reappointed.
- Jim stated that the AASD recommended Matthew Dumm as a potential Advisory Board Member. Matthew Dumm took John Allender's position with the AASD.
- Jim requested the Advisory Board members to make a motion to move Matthew Dumm's name forward to the Commissioners for approval to begin his term on January 1, 2021.
 - *Susanna Tomlinson made a motion to recommend Matthew Dumm's name to the Commissioners for approval to serve as board member, for a three year term, for the Social Services Advisory Board beginning on January 1, 2021. Rick Petroski seconded the motion. All approved. Motion Passed.*
- Jim stated that the December 3, 2020 meeting may possibly be held in a new location, Blair HealthChoices in Hollidaysburg.

3. Mental Health Committee Report – Chris Cohn

- An update was included in the packet.

4. Developmental Programs Committee Report – Steve Martynuska

- An update was included in the packet.
- Steve highlighted some of the addressed topics from the Developmental Committees September 3, 2020 meeting to include all home and community based services were required to use

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) as of 7/1/2020; Early Intervention (EI) was approved to do some face to face services; The 2021 Summer Employment Initiative will receive \$10,000 from the Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) retained funds.

5. County Reports

Executive Director – Jim Hudack

- Jim reported that there is a possibility of budget cuts.
- Jim stated that a Legislative Breakfast was held on September 25 with our State Representatives, State Senator and County Commissioners.
- The 2019/2020 Income & Expense (IE) Report was submitted to the state.
- Jim reported that there has been no word on the 2020/2021 HSBG Annual Plan that was submitted two months ago.

MH/COD –Theresa Rudy

- No updates.

Mental Health – Ken Dean

- Ken reported that the foundation for the Reentry Coalition is being built rapidly. Discussions are happening to incorporate the Stepping-Up Initiative into the Coalition.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Melissa reported that all Day Service Programs are opened. Southern Alleghenies Management Group (SASMG) gathers data from the providers weekly and then reports back to the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) weekly in regards to their services.
- Melissa stated that only two people have tested positive for COVID-19.
- SASMG continues to work remotely when possible.
- SASMG has meetings with providers twice a month.
- Skills of Central PA Vocational Facility and Residential Program relocated to the WTAJ Building. Their Cortland Avenue and Chestnut Avenue locations are closed.

Early Intervention – Kelly Popich

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Kelly reported that families must meet OCDEL's criteria to receive face to face services. Mask requirements and health screenings are some of the requirements to receive face to face services.
- Tele-intervention is still the preferred method of service.
- Kelly stated that all of Early Intervention's (EI) contracts are finalized.
- EI's first re-budget has come through with a possibility of a second re-budget.
- A full verification is scheduled for the Spring of 2021. At this time, it is to be a virtual visit. The state can review records, contracts, budget information, etc.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reported that the Rent Relief Program administered through Blair County Community Action Program (BCCAP) expired on September 30, 2020, but there is legislation, in progress, to try to get the program extended through October 31. 17 applications were processed successfully out of 150 that we received. Most applications could not be processed due to lack of required documentation from the tenants.
- Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) was awarded \$140,000 in CARES Act Funding to use by November 30, 2020. The HAP's CARES Act Providers, BCCAP and Family Services, used the funds to assist with case management, the emergency shelter and domestic violence.
- Missy reported that the Landlord Tenant Mediation Program is moving forward. So far, 7 volunteers, including Chris Cohn and Amber Hatfield, have signed up to train to be mediators. The training is to take place in November. The program goal is to divert potential evictions from going through the court process.

- Through October 26, 2020, The Family Resource Center (United Way of Blair County) is accepting donations of hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, coats, as well as, monetary donations for their Toasty Toddler Program.

6. Ex-Officio Reports

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Sara McConnell

- Sara reported that NAMI is continuing to adapt programs so that they can be utilized online.
- Mental Health (MH) 1st Aid is now a six (6) hour course instead of an eight (8) hour course with virtual or blended virtual/in-person training.
- Sara reported that she will be leaving her position as Executive Director with NAMI to oversee a Trauma Grant for the IU. Sara asked the attendees to refer anyone, who may be interested in the Executive Director position, to her.

CONTACT Altoona – Nicole Germaux

- Nicole reported that CONTACT Altoona had 336 incoming calls and 2,218 outbound calls for the month of September.
- Nicole brought copies of the publication, “Ageless for All Seasons” for anyone who was interested in taking one. CONTACT Altoona was featured in the magazine.
- Nicole stated that the average duration on outbound calls is two minutes while incoming calls average nine minutes.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- Maria reported that The Arc is trying to do as many programs as possible.
- Trainings are on hold due to COVID-19.
- Plans are underway for next year.
- Maria stated that The Arc is planning on amping up their youth programs (Teenage and Transition Age). Maria has major plans that she is working with area school districts on, as well as, developing employment opportunities. Maria will update in a future meeting.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lori reported that providers continue to check in weekly with SASMG and provide updates on PPE, updates made to policies and procedures due to COVID, the current average attendance, new risks, any support needed from their office, ODP, DOH, or the Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU), and any staff or people supported who have tested positive for COVID.
- Any person supported or employee who tests positive must be entered into the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST) site.
- Providers continue to meet twice a month virtually with SASMG.
- Providers selected to participate in the Quality Assessment and Improvement Interim (QA&I) Process had to submit information by September 30th to SASMG. Information required included Quality Management Plan, Policies and Procedures, Staff Training and Progress Notes.
- In-home and Community Support Providers and Agency with Choice Providers are required to use Electronic Visit Verification to meet the requirements of the 21st Century Cures Act. Information required includes the following: person receiving the service, person providing the service, type of service, date of service, location of service delivery, time service begins and time service ends.
- HCQU (Sandy Corrigan) recognized Direct Support Professionals for all their hard work.
- HCQU/Blair County Risk Management has a nice resource showing the signs and symptoms of cold/flu/COVID/allergies. Lorrie to email that resource to Jen to send out to everyone in an email.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- No updates.

Open Forum:

- Steve reported that he recently signed a contract to be a consultant with the Sheetz Corporation. Sheetz is starting an initiative to hire 5 to 6 individuals with developmental disabilities to work in Blair County stores.
- Dr. Phillips commended the various programs areas connected with Social Services for helping individuals in need. He stated that there is evidence that the people he sees within his practice are benefitting from those services.

Steve closed the meeting and thanked everyone for participating.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at Blair HealthChoices or Virtual Meeting

The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 9:00a.m. at CONTACT Altoona or Virtual Meeting

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting