

**The Blair County Department of Social Services  
Advisory Board Meeting  
Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.  
Go To Meeting Platform Only**

**Board Members Present:** James Stratton, Rick Petroski, Michael Stubler, John Allender, Donna Gority, T. Grant Phillips, Sue Tomlinson, Robert Smith and Christopher Cohn

**Board Members Absent:** Amber Hatfield, Cindy Barton, Stephen Martynuska and Commissioner Bruce Erb

**Others Present:** Jim Hudack, Melissa Gillin, Theresa Rudy, Jennifer Kensinger, Jamie Henry, Kelly Popich, Amy Marten-Shanafelt and Sara McConnell

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*MINUTES*

*Jim Hudack welcomed everyone, read a statement about how the public meeting would be conducted and asked for roll call of all the “Go To Meeting” participants.*

**Welcome and Call to Order**

Mike Stubler, Vice Chairperson, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

**1. Approval of February 6, 2019 Minutes**

- *Motion by Donna Gority to accept the February 6, 2019 minutes. Rick Petroski seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

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

- Jim reported that the 20/21 Human Services Block Grant (HSBG) Annual Plan is being developed.
- 20/21 HSBG Annual Plan 1<sup>st</sup> Public Hearing is June 4, 2020 at Noon via “Go To Meeting” Platform.
- Commonwealth of PA has passed a 5 month budget. Blair County is flat funded. Another 7 month budget will be passed later in the year.

**3. Mental Health Committee Report – Chris Cohn**

- A copy of the MH Committee meeting minutes was attached to the Agenda packet.
- The meeting was conducted as a conference call.
- Chris gave a condensed overview of the MH Committee meeting highlights.
- Theresa stated that no motions were brought forth to the MH Committee.

**4. Developmental Programs Committee Report – John Allender**

- A copy of the Developmental Program Committee meeting minutes was attached to the Agenda packet.
- The meeting was a virtual “Go To Meeting”.
- John reported that there were no motions brought forth to the DP Committee.

**5. County Reports**

*Executive Director – Jim Hudack*

- Jim reported that program areas have adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue operations.
- Blair County is entering the “Green Phase” of Governor Wolf’s Reopening of PA plan on June 5, 2020.

*MH/COD –Theresa Rudy*

- Theresa mentioned the UPMC Access Center COVID-19 Behavioral Health Hotline Phone Number: 814-889-2684 (COVI). Hours of operation: Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m. To date, 7 individuals have called and only 1 required referral has been made.
- Communications with Agencies happening routinely. Some are submitting written reports periodically.
- Agencies/Providers looking at the balance between transitioning back to face to face services, as well as, looking at continuing some telehealth.

- Theresa discussed the details of a new Telehealth Bulletin that was released in February, as well as, another Telehealth bulletin that was released in Mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Mental Health – Ken Dean*

- No updates.

### *Intellectual Disabilities – Jamie Henry*

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Jamie reported as the County transitions back to daily operations, ID provider day programs and vocational training will resume. SASMG is working with providers to develop a plan for each of the facilities to ensure the safe return of those services.
- Jamie reported that the Summer Employment Program was suspended due to COVID-19. Funding, supporting that initiative, will be reallocated by the Leadership Coalition.
- SASMG is still encouraging remote work and telehealth, but has resumed in person meetings with a limited number of attendees.

### *Early Intervention – Kelly Popich*

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.
- Kelly reported that service coordination unit & provider monitoring has been completed for the fiscal year. No improvement plans are required for the providers or the unit.
- Once again, EI referrals have started to increase after declining significantly during the initial COVID-19 pandemic.
- Kelly stated that EI received, on 6/3/2020, guidance from our state Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) for each County EI/Infant/Toddler/Preschool to have their own plan, in accordance with Governor Wolf's process to reopen PA, to resume face to face for early intervention (EI) services.
- A plan must be devised before face to face can resume. Kelly is working with providers and surrounding counties for input. Telehealth services will continue until a plan is developed.

### *Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin*

- Missy included a report in the Annual Board report.
- Missy shared updated Housing the Homeless numbers:

#### **Housing the Homeless Numbers**

- *38 households being housed in hotels.*
- *Out of 38 households, 55 individuals are being housed.*
- *Out of the 55 individuals being housed, 44 are adults and 11 are children.*
- *7 hotels are being used as housing.*
- *Max date of stay is until June 30, 2020.*

#### **Year to Date (March 2020 until Now) Numbers**

- *70 households have been housed.*
- *Out of 70 households, 104 individuals have been housed.*
- *13 households/individuals are pending for permanent housing.*
- *Currently, 30 households have already moved into permanent housing.*

- Food has been distributed to those in need in the hotels.

#### **Upcoming Challenges**

- Missy stated that pending evictions will become an issue once the moratorium is lifted in July.
- A Landlord survey, that was conducted, reflected that there are a number of pending evictions.
- A workgroup, which includes Judge Doyle and former Magistrate Craig Ormsby, will meet to discuss a mediation program that will help with eviction processes, as well as, avoiding involvement of the court system.

## 6. Ex-Officio Reports

### *NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Sara McConnell*

- Sara stated that NAMI is still providing services remotely.
- Transition to Face to Face services planned to resume at an undetermined date.

### *CONTACT Altoona – Nicole Germaux*

- A report was included with the Agenda packet.

### *The Arc – Maria Brandt*

- No updates

### *ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager*

- No updates

### *Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt*

- Amy reported that Blair Healthchoices (BHC) is in communication weekly with providers.
- Providers have done an exceptional job with accommodating all members with telehealth and, if needed, face to face services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Amy detailed Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) and Gap payments.
- BHC is monitoring the hospitalization census, which has not dropped significantly. Spikes have not been seen either.
- Amy noted that a survey has been sent out statewide to members to gather information about experiences with telehealth so the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) can determine how to move forward with utilization of telehealth once the emergency declaration is lifted. Amy will share Blair County's results once received.

### **Open Forum:**

- No further discussions.

Mike Stubler closed the meeting and thanked everyone for participating.

**The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at The Arc, 431 Jackson Ave., Altoona or Virtual Meeting**

**The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 9:00a.m. at CONTACT Altoona or Virtual Meeting**

**The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 11:30a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting**