

**The Blair County Department of Social Services  
Advisory Board Meeting  
Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 11:30 AM  
Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg**

**Board Members Present:** Commissioner Erb, Mike Stubler, Chris Cohn, Becky Aungst, Steve Martynuska, Bob Smith, Rick Petroski, Matt Dumm and Susan Franco

**Board Members Absent:** Donna Gority, Dana Melton, Susanna Tomlinson and Amber Hatfield

**Others Present:** Tricia Maceno, Cindy James, Melissa Gordon, Jamie Henry, Kelly Popich, Missy Gillin, Lorrie Hetager, Erin Kay, Aimee Burns, and Jennifer Kensinger

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**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome and Call to Order**

- Mike Stubler welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Self-Introductions were made.

**2. Public Comment**

- No public comments were received.

**3. Approval of August 3, 2023 Advisory Board Minutes**

- *Motion by Bob Smith to accept the August 3, 2023 minutes. Susan Franco seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

**4. Board Operations – Tricia Maceno, Director, Department of Social Services (DSS)**

- Tricia announced that Cindy James is now Social Services Mental Health Program Coordinator, replacing Theresa Rudy who retired in August.
- Tricia reported that Tracy Fitzpatrick resigned from her MH Program Specialist position with DSS.
- Tricia stated that an ad has been posted for Social Services CASSP Coordinator position and once that position is filled the open MH Program Specialist position will be advertised.
- Four Board Members are up for reappointment. Trish will send out an email along with a county talent bank application for them to fill out, if they would like to continue serving on the board.

**5. Mental Health Committee Report (Cindy James)**

- The Mental Health Committee report was included in the agenda packet. Cindy added that Theresa had reported that the mobile crisis and SAP grants officially closed in June 2023.
- DSS will be looking for new grant opportunities to help fund MH services.

**6. Developmental Programs Committee Report (Susanna Tomlinson)**

- The Developmental Programs Committee report was included in the agenda packet.
- Melissa Gordon stated that in recognition of Direct Support Professional (DSP) Appreciation Week, SASMG asked all providers to provide at least two names of deserving DSPs. The nominated DSPs received gifts such as gift baskets and gift cards.
- Charles Lansberry, The Learning Community, did a presentation for the DP Committee.

**8. County Reports**

*Social Services Director – Tricia Maceno*

- Tricia reported that DSS is actively seeking funding opportunities to include forensics to build a better partnership with the Blair County Prison.
- Tricia stated that several committees/sub-committees are discussing how to help the homeless population find shelter, such as warming stations, as the weather grows colder.
- A Veterans Coalition, led by Craig Swineford, is in the works.

### *Mental Health – Cindy James*

- The county had several Suicide Prevention events during September. Some of the events held were the Out of the Darkness Walk, Ascension Movie, Penn State Altoona Training, 1<sup>st</sup> Suicide Prevention Summit and an Altoona Curve event.
- Tricia added that there was a press release for the, Blair County originated, Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale App. Jim Hudack, former director of Social Services, was in attendance.

### *Mental Health – Ginny Christy*

- Ginny was not in attendance.

### *Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon*

- Melissa reported that SASMG is in the middle of their Quality Assessment and Improvement monitoring of their 11 providers. Once the monitoring is completed, Melissa will review all the reports to see what areas, if any, may need remediation. If a provider does not remedy their situation to SASMG's satisfaction, the case will be elevated to the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP).

### *Early Intervention (EI) – Kelly Popich*

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Kelly reported that EI just received its results from the 20 question EI Family Survey. The category that EI received the lowest percentage on was “Encourage to connect with other families”. Kelly will give a more complete update at the next meeting.
- Kelly stated that the Infant/Toddler program is doing a rate study from August 2023 to June 2024. Hopefully, this rate study will pave the way for provider rate increases across the state.

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

- Missy reported that Center for Community Action (CCA) is processing over 150 applications submitted for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP 2). A little over 1 million dollars in funding remains. If any funding remains after those applications are processed, CCA may reopen the application process.
- United Way is accepting new coats, hats, scarves, gloves, mittens or monetary donations for its annual Toasty Toddler program. Social Services is a drop off location for those items.
- The Family Shelter is still having issues with no-shows upon intake. 3 out of the 4 shelter apartments are rented. A majority of the individuals applying to live in the apartments had no income, which is a requirement.

## **9. Ex-Officio Reports**

### *CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay*

- A report was distributed during the meeting.
- Erin has 2 applicants for Fall volunteer training which starts October 9.
- CONTACT Altoona had a table at the Suicide Prevention Summit.
- CONTACT Altoona will have a Plinko gameboard at the Hollidaysburg Pumpkin Fest on Saturday, October 14. They also will be selling popcorn.
- CONTACT Altoona is selling Boscov passes for their Friends Helping Friends Day on Wednesday, October 18.
- CONTACT Altoona is participating in the CommUNITY Resources Fair being held on October 24 at the Jaffa, as well as, competing in the Battle of the Backpacks.
- CONTACT Altoona is also a drop off location for Toasty Toddler items.
- Erin is working on the 12 Days of CONTACT Christmas fundraiser.

### *NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns*

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Aimee reported that NAMI was able to move into a larger space at their new location at the old Wright school building. Address is 1808 11<sup>th</sup> St., Room 306, Altoona, PA 16601.

- Amy announced that NAMI received \$35,000 instead of the original \$30,000 amount for their new creativity and mental health program for children and families. The program has been well-attended.
- Support Groups will now be meeting at NAMI's new location at 6:30 pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the month.
- Support Groups held at Blair HealthChoices will begin October 16.
- Prison Support Groups are going well.
- NAMI also participated in the Out of the Darkness Walk and Suicide Prevention Summit.
- NAMI will be working on a calendar to schedule various NAMI courses for the next year.

#### *The Arc – Maria Brandt*

- Maria was not in attendance.

#### *ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager*

- Lorrie reported that providers celebrated Direct Support Professional Week. The DSP stories that were submitted by providers were shared with leads at ODP and the DP Committee. SASMG did a Facebook Live giveaway of prizes to DSPs. Crossroads gave all their employees \$100 bonuses.
- October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month and Disability Employment Awareness Month.

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

- Amy was not in attendance.

#### *Open Forum:*

- Missy added that she is helping the Sheriff's Office coordinate Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), which will be held in January and May of 2024.
- Tricia stated that the Emergency Behavioral Health (EBH) roster is being reviewed to identify who would like to remain on the team. EBH is a team of individuals who would be called out to an incident where counseling may be needed.
- Steve asked the attendees to pick an agency to donate money to for the upcoming holiday season. Prior recipients were H.O.P.E. Drop-In (2021) and Family Services Emergency Shelter (2022). Mike Stubler made a motion that United Way's Toasty Toddler program be the recipient of those voluntary, monetary donations for 2023. Sue Franco seconded the motion. All approved. Motion was passed. Donations will be accepted at the next DSS advisory board meeting on December 7, 2023.

Mike Stubler thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

**The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday October 5, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. at Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA**

**The next Mental Health Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA**

**The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting**