

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 11:30 AM
Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg**

Board Members Present: Commissioner Erb, Becky Aungst, Steve Martynuska, Rick Petroski, Susanna Tomlinson, Matt Dumm, Dana Melton and Susan Franco

Board Members Absent: Donna Gority, Chris Cohn, Bob Smith, Mike Stubler and Amber Hatfield

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

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

- Rick Petroski welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Self-Introductions were made.

2. Public Comment

- No public comments were received.
- Steve thanked Commissioner Erb, who did not run for reelection, for his many years of service to the County.

3. Approval of October 5, 2023 Advisory Board Minutes

- *Motion by Sue Franco to accept the October 5, 2023 minutes. Susanna Tomlinson seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.*

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

- Tricia reported that talent bank applications for board reappointment were received from Mike Stubler, Donna Gority and Matt Dumm. Bob Smith declined to seek reappointment. Tricia told the attendees to encourage anyone, who may be a good fit as a board member, to fill out a talent bank application.
- Voluntary monetary donations were accepted, during the meeting, for the United Way Toasty Toddler program.
- The Social Services Annual Board report was distributed at the meeting. Rick commented how well-written and informative the report is.
- Social Services is still in need a Mental Health Program Specialist.
- Tricia also thanked Commissioner Erb, on behalf of the Department of Social Services, for his help and guidance over the years.
- Tricia announced that the Human Services Block Grant Annual Plan, which was submitted to the State for their approval in September, has been approved, for the second year in a row, without any requests for revisions.

5. Mental Health Committee Report (Cindy James)

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- No further comments were made.

6. Developmental Programs Committee Report (Susanna Tomlinson)

- Due to a lack of quorum, the Developmental Programs committee did not meet in November.

8. County Reports

Social Services Director – Tricia Maceno

- Tricia reported that she attended a regional 911/988 collaboration meeting in October. For 988, there are thirteen (13) call centers in PA. 92% of the calls to 988 are able to be resolved over the phone without the individual needing further help from law enforcement or emergency services. Blair

County calls are routed to the Butler County call center. Most county answer rates are coming in at above 85%, but for some reason, Blair County calls are being answered at a 64% rate.

- Sue asked what the difference was between 911 and 988. Tricia answered that the 988 number is for a mental health crisis.
- A question was asked what the difference was between 988 and CONTACT Altoona. Erin explained that CONTACT Altoona is not for mental health crisis calls, but for situational calls.
- Maria asked what the funding source is for 988. Commissioner Erb stated that 911 funding comes from taxes on cell phones and that a portion of that goes to 988.
- Maria asked what happens to the 988 calls that do not get answered. Tricia stated that the calls are rerouted to another call center.
- Maria asked if a family member could call 988 for another family member. Tricia answered that if the family member is sitting next to them that it would be a 988 call, but if they are not that it would be a 911 call. Cindy added that if it is a true emergency that the 988 call center will call 911.

Mental Health – Cindy James

- Cindy stated that she has a meeting with the Crisis Center staff next week. A date for an open house for the Crisis Center will be determined. Also, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has released national guidelines for behavioral health crisis care. A workgroup will begin next week to discuss those guidelines.
- Cindy is working on getting Safe Schools meetings back up and running.
- DSS is continuing to partner with the Garrett Lee Smith Zero Suicide Program.
- Cindy is planning to have a training in 2024 with the UPMC Emergency Department (Mental Health) doctors.
- Virginia Christy, CASSP Coordinator, is getting a lot of referrals.

Intellectual Disabilities – Melissa Gordon

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Melissa reported that SASMG is finishing up their Quality Assessment and Improvement monitoring of their 11 providers, 3 of which were given a corrective action plan (CAP), which will have to be remedied by the end of January 2024.
- In the past calendar year, SASMG has had 3 new providers.
- Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) were recognized for all their hard work in September.
- Nursing Forums will begin in 2024. Nursing agencies will meet to discuss regulations and any issues that they may be having. There will, also, be Certified Investigator Forums.
- A newsletter will be relaunched that will be going out to families and stakeholders.
- SASMG redistributed job duties within their office and created an Education and Outreach Coordinator position to be able to have more engagement with the community and stakeholders, as well as education and trainings for providers in the area.
- Melissa explained the difference between a support broker and a support coordinator.
- SASMG's Education and Outreach Coordinator, Jeanne Bilek can do trainings.

Early Intervention (EI) – Kelly Popich

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Kelly discussed the EI data that was included in the annual board report.
- The new EI Family Survey will begin in February 2024.
- Kelly stated that the State is conducting a rate study of EI providers, which is not mandatory, but would be beneficial, if they participated.
- Kelly will be responsible for EI monitoring of all providers, service coordination unit and evaluators, which will be completed by June 30, 2024.
- Kelly reported that the Community Resource Fair held in October was well organized and well attended.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reported that Center for Community Action (CCA) has requested that the application process for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2 (ERAP 2) reopen from December 11, 2023 to December 13, 2023. Funding is limited.
- Missy stated that the H.O.P.E Drop-In daily numbers have increased from the average of 40 individuals to 80 individuals.
- The Family Emergency Shelter apartments are all rented. Last week, the shelter area was completely full.
- A warming center is going to open from January through March at the Overflow Church in Altoona. It will mostly be operating with faith-based volunteers, but more volunteers are needed. Trish added that this will be an adult only warming center.

9. Ex-Officio Reports

CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Erin clarified that CONTACT Altoona callers are anonymous, but volunteers are trained to get personal information, if the need arises.
- October Incoming calls: 578
- October Outgoing Reassurance calls: 1,924
- Erin stated that CONTACT Altoona is looking to increase their volume of reassurance calls. Individuals can be self-referred or referred by a family member. A doctor does not have to refer them.
- Only two missed shifts from July 2023 through October 2023. Usually when a shift is missed, CONTACT Altoona does not know about it until after it happens. Those calls are not rerouted.
- In recent months, COVID calls have increased.
- CONTACT Altoona's biggest fundraiser, 12 Days of CONTACT Christmas is in full swing. 764 tickets were sold.
- CONTACT Altoona collected items for the Family Resources Toasty Toddler program.
- Erin and her daughter walked in the Altoona Christmas parade to promote the Let's Move Into Kindness Blair County Campaign.
- Leadership Blair County will be visiting on Friday, December 8, 2023.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Aimee reported that Support Groups now meet at 6:30 pm instead of 6:00 pm at the Wright Place Building.
- Support groups are, also, being held at Blair HealthChoices and at the Blair County Prison. Commissioner Erb thanked NAMI for coming into the Prison.
- NAMI Keystone will be offering more leader training in the upcoming fiscal year.
- "The Power of Creativity for Children and Families Mental Health" is wrapping up its 11 week course on Friday, December 8. Another session will begin in January 2024.
- NAMI Blair County Annual Conference will be April 25, 2024 at the Blair County Convention Center.
- WTAJ TV station reached out to NAMI to help them put together a mental health series.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- Maria stated that The Arc of Blair County is quite busy.
- Maria reported that employment will be the big focus in 2024.
- Legislative visits will be made to address some concerns.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lorrie asked the Board member attendees for ideas on how to get the area school districts to be more actively involved in the Transition Council.
- Lorrie reported that Selective Contracting, now called Performance Based Contracting, will start with residential providers in January 2024. Support Coordination Organizations will be starting 2025. Day

Providers will be added in the future. This process will rate providers on a series of data that has been collected over the last few years.

- Lorrie will share the Healthy Outcomes Newsletter for December.
- Lorrie attended Training on HealthCare Disparities in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities with focus on the Fatal 5.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- Amy was not in attendance.

Open Forum:

- No further comments were made.

Rick thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 1, 2024 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, January 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg, PA

The next Developmental Programs Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting