

**The Blair County Department of Social Services
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 11:30 AM
Blair HealthChoices, 81 Holliday Hills Drive, Hollidaysburg**

Board Members Present: Commissioner Burke, Becky Aungst, Donna Gority, Kyle Siskon-Leonard and Matt Dumm

Board Members Absent: Chris Cohn, Steve Martynuska, Rick Petroski, Mike Stubler, Dana Melton, Sue Franco, Susanna Tomlinson and Amber Hatfield

Others Present: Tricia Johnson, Lorrie Hetager, Erin Kay, Missy Gillin and Jennifer Kensinger

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Call to Order

- Donna Gority welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

2. Public Comment

- No public comments were received.

3. Approval of February 1, 2024 Advisory Board Minutes

- *Due to lack of a quorum, the approval of the February 1, 2024 advisory board minutes will be tabled until the June 6, 2024 Advisory Board meeting.*
- *Donna did ask for a correction to the February 1, 2024 Open Forum comments. Wise Women should be written as WISE Women, because it stands for Women Involved in Scholarship and Empowerment. That correction has been made.*

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

- Tricia stated, at this time, that no clarification has been received as to whether Board member, Matthew Dumm, would like to continue as the Board Secretary. If he chooses not to, the Board already voted at the February 1, 2024 meeting for Sue Franco to step into that position. Updates will be made at the June 6, 2024 Advisory Board meeting.
- The current Advisory Board by-laws were emailed out to the members prior to the meeting for their review. It was decided for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to update the by-laws and to email them out to everyone two weeks prior to the June 6, 2024 meeting. The “updated” by-laws will then be discussed at the June 6, 2024 meeting. Any amendments being made need two-thirds (2/3) membership present to amend the by-laws. All amendments shall be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for approval.

5. Mental Health Committee Report

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Kyle reported that Center for Community Action (CCA) will be reopening the application process for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2 (ERAP 2) for two days, April 8th and April 9th.
- Kyle added that the Warming Center has officially closed for 2024.
- No recommendations or motions were made that needed Board approval.

6. Developmental Programs Committee Report

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Donna stated that a presentation was given on the Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU).

7. County Reports

Social Services Director – Tricia Johnson

- Tricia reported that the DSS fiscal department is 95% caught up.
- DSS is still looking to fill its Mental Health Program Specialist position. The job listing has been reposted on the PA State jobs website today, April 4 and will remain up for two weeks. Trish and Cindy may reach out to applicants, who applied on the County web-site, but did not apply or take the State civil service test on the State site, to urge them to complete those steps.
- Tricia reported that DSS is working on their Emergency Behavioral Health (EBH) county team. Tricia needs to complete two classes, scheduled for April 29, to become a credentialed EBH member. Tricia is completing a week's long training on Incident Command System (ICS) 300 and 400, so that she can get certified to hold a role similar to Jim Hudack's, former director of DSS.
- Tricia is now a voting member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).
- Blair HealthChoices is working with Lt Kermit Alwine, Blair County Sheriff's Office, on Crisis Intervention Training (CIT).
- Trina Illig, Grants Coordinator for Community Development, is overflowing with applications. The need is greater than the funding she has available.
- Tricia and Cindy attended the Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services (PACA MH/DS) 2024 Spring Conference from March 6 through March 8.

Mental Health – Tricia Johnson

- A report was distributed prior to the meeting.
- UPMC Altoona psychiatrist, Dr. Antonowicz is retiring. DSS will be able to use the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) evaluator for competency evaluations, until UPMC replaces Dr. Antonowicz. Normally, OMHSAS conducts competency evaluations on incarcerated individuals, but can complete them on individuals who have criminal charges, but are not currently incarcerated.
- DSS is in discussion with the Garrett Lee Smith team about a new grant opportunity in Blair county.
 - **May is Mental Health Events:**
 - Mental Health Night at the Curve (May 30, 2024)
 - Light It Up Green (Month of May) – Hollidaysburg, Altoona and Tyrone areas to display green lights and ribbons.
- Other events include Annual Out of the Darkness Walk (September 8, 2024) and Suicide Prevention Summit (September 25, 2024).
- Crisis Milieu, a space within the Crisis Center where individuals can talk with clinicians and/or peer support specialists, is open Monday thru Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Intellectual Disabilities – Jamie Henry

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Tricia reported that the waiver termination for The Empowering Lives Foundation is complete. All individuals impacted have transitioned or are in the transition stage of receiving services.

Early Intervention (EI) – Kelly Popich

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Tricia reported that DSS is working with Kelly on creating an Infant Mental Health committee to bring together providers to work together to address the gaps being identified.

Quality Assurance & Housing Coordinator – Missy Gillin

- Missy reiterated that CCA will be reopening the application process, for two days, for the ERAP 2 program. Individuals can contact CCA for assistance or apply on the PA COMPASS web-site.
- Missy reported that TEAMeffort will, once again, be coming to Blair county over the summer to do light construction/repairs on homes/properties in the community.
- Missy stated that she has spoken with Lt. Alwine about CIT training and there is discussion of offering the course online so that law enforcement can complete the course work at their own pace.

9. Ex-Officio Reports

CONTACT Altoona – Erin Kay

- A report was included in the agenda packet.
- Erin reported that the Altoona Mirror has non-profit spotlight each month and they have asked CONTACT Altoona to be April's.
- Volunteer training begins Monday, April 8th. Five participants are signed up to take the training. Erin did complete a shortened training for two Penn State students from the Psychology department, which would make a total of 7 volunteers once all training is complete. As listed in the agenda packet, there will be three presenters coming in.
- CONTACT Altoona is participating in the Highmark for a Healthy Community as a fundraiser for them on Saturday, June 15, 2024. A flyer was included in the agenda packet.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) – Aimee Burns

- A report was included in the agenda packet.

The Arc – Maria Brandt

- Maria was not in attendance.

ID Providers – Lorrie Hetager

- Lorrie asked the attendees to support and urge the inclusion of \$217 million in state general funds proposed in the 2024-2025 Executive Budget to increase fee schedule rates for Intellectual Disabilities and Autism community services. These state funds will be matched by \$266 million under the prevailing Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP).
- Lori also asked everyone to reach out to our state representatives to support S. 1332 Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act. This bill requires the Office of Management and Budget to consider establishing a separate category within the Standard Occupational Classification System for direct support professionals for data reporting purposes. It unanimously passed the Senate. It will go to the House next, then to the President to become law.
- IM4Q (Independent Monitoring for Quality) is recruiting for monitors. Annual IM4Q Training is scheduled for July 23rd and 24th. It will be virtual training.
- Center for Community Resources promoted Jen Snyder as a team lead. She started in this position 3/25/24. She will review plans and attend in-person meetings.
- North Star Support Services is hiring two new support coordinators. Connie Curfman is the new receptionist.
- One of our Agency of Choice families have supported their daughter through volunteering at the Humane Society. She recently assisted with two surgeries.
- ACEL recently hired a new van driver/Direct Support Professional (DSP) to help get people out into the community. Three people went to Rocky Gap and one person won \$650. People are getting to weekly Zumba and bowling.
- UPMC is working to develop a career ladder to help attract and keep people in the field of developmental disabilities.
- Providers are asked to complete the 2023 National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities State of the Workforce Survey. This is due 6/30/2024.
- Lori recommended a training from Zero Suicide Institute called Counseling on Access to Lethal Means. There are no CEUs for this 2-hour course, but you do receive a certificate of completion.
- Becky asked if there was a way that the Board could advocate to the State about workforce issues such as recognizing direct support professionals (DSP) as a career, so that the pay equals the amount of work and responsibility. Commissioner Burke stated that there is support for this type of movement. She added that the State Representatives are willing to meet and discuss specific issues.

Blair HealthChoices/Community Cares – Amy Marten-Shanafelt

- Amy was not in attendance.

Open Forum:

- Tricia pointed out that today, April 4, 2024 is the last day to register for the NAMI Conference.

The next Social Services Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, June 6, 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, May 2, 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, May 2, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. at SASMG training room, 157 Lakemont Park Blvd. or Virtual Meeting