



Children's Services Advisory Board-Virtual Meeting

October 14, 2020

A meeting of the Children's Services Advisory Board of Manatee County, Florida, was held at the Manatee County Administrative Building, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205, Honorable Patricia M. Glass Chambers, First Floor on Wednesday October 14, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

This meeting was partially conducted via Zoom Communications Media Technology as allowed under Executive Order 20-69 issued by the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis on March 20, 2020.

Roll Call

Present: (In Person) Xtavia Bailey, Charlie Kennedy, Connie Shingledecker, Debbie Tapp, Jannon Pierce, Kimberly Kutch; (Virtually) Sandra Stone, Amy Diss, Gail Wynne, George Van Buren, Kelly Hunt, Rita Smith. **Absent/Excused:** None.

Also Present

County Staff: (In Person) Susan Ford, Kristi Hagen; (Via Zoom) Ava Ehde, Lawanda Timmons, James Slusser, Chris Handy-Honeycutt; Members of the Public (in person): Char Young, Laurel Lynch, Alexdrena Green, Tony Stephens, Kelly Stasurak, Senate President Bill Galvano (Via Zoom) Becky Canesse, Beth Clark, Carolyn McBean, Christina Speidel, Dawn Stanhope, Deirdre Guilloton, Derrick Randall, Elena Cassella, Holly Board, Jennifer Powers, Kim Ross, Melinda Thompson, Michael Wood, Wendy Williams, Michele Conn, Michele Wieser; there were also 6 unidentified Zoom call-in attendees.

Call to Order/Welcome

Xtavia Bailey, Chair called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Minutes for September 16, 2020, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Kimberly Kutch, **Seconded by** Connie Shingledecker, **Vote:** Motion passed (**Summary:** Yes = 11, No = 0, Abstain = 0).

Guardian Ad Litem Update

Toni Latortue provided an update on the local Guardian Ad Litem program: They are continuing to see numbers of removals increasing in our county, and the level of abuse has been notably worse in Manatee County during the pandemic. Currently in Circuit 12, 1198 children have been assigned guardian ad litem and 750 of those children are from Manatee County. Manatee County has the highest numbers of child removals. Currently the office has 201 active cases with volunteers who are serving 605 children. The office is currently seeking volunteers and are creating a speaker's bureau to recruit volunteers. Ms. Larortue asked the CSAB Members to spread the word that volunteers are needed and provide GAL with any suggestions for groups they could contact for potential volunteers.

Debbie Tapp recommended that GAL use the United Way platform to post about volunteer needs and opportunities.

Parenting Matters Program Updates

Katrina Bellemare provided a brief overview of the services their Chosen Families and Partners in Education & Support Programs provide and thanked the CSAB for their investment. Two parents from each program provided a statement on how the program has impacted their life. Ms. Wendy Williams stated how the Chosen Families program has helped her family to deal with anger issues, parenting tips, strategies, and counselors to speak with her two 7-year-old adopted girls. During COVID-19 the program has been impactful in their lives and she wished the services were available until her girls reached age 18. Ms. Michelle Conn thanked the CSAB for such a great program. Her family joined the program due to the child's sleep issues and has learned skills from the program. The program helped during the pandemic when this child was born and many services were shut down. This parent is involved with both programs and receives in-home visits. During the pandemic, her visits have been held outside to meet CDC guidelines and the needs of her family.

Kelly Hunt entered @ 3:12pm

Xtavia Bailey inquired about the program's biggest challenges faced during COVID-19. Ms. Bellemare stated they are serving more clients and serving them longer, helping parents start school and getting back into the family's home and following the CDC guidelines.

Debbie Tapp asked how their Musical Motion program has continued during COVID-19. Ms. Bellemare stated their activities are being held via online media and they are working towards opening up smaller in-person group sessions.

Children Legislative Update Q&A

Senate President Bill Galvano gave a legislative update for the State, COVID-19, the budget and reserves, and answered the following questions:

- Where do you feel the state is on Medicaid expansion? Response: It has been put on a back shelf because the House and Senate could not reach a compromise.
- What is the status of children's health insurance? Response: KidCare is funded and is a priority to the legislature. Wait and see who is chair of the committees directly responsible for those issues, and advocate with them.
- What work is being done to assist financially with the Agency with Persons with Disabilities to get children off the wait list? Response: He has advocated for that population and worked to keep the costs down for that program. Approximately \$270 million was appropriated this year to pare down the wait list.
- What can be done to close the digital divide, particularly now that virtual schooling has become more important and common place? Response: Digital schooling simply does not work and more efforts need to get the children back in brick and mortar schools. CARES Act provided \$70 million to school districts to provide broadband to as many children as possible.
- A sizeable sum of the Children's Services Dedicated Millage (CSDM) in Manatee is spent on child welfare. Can we expect any relief from the state budget on these types of services, including child welfare diversion, adoption preservation, Early Childhood Court, and supplemental cost of group home and shelter care, etc.? Response: Yes, we have appropriated for each of those line items. Going forward, people are going to have to advocate for funds in the budget for this.
- We understand that part of the intent on SB1326 is to ensure equitable funding across Community Based Care (CBC) Agencies over time; additionally, we understand the concept of

holding those CBC's whose funding is above their equitable share harmless so as not to abruptly disrupt their system of care. At the same time, what consideration is given, or should be given, to those CBC's whose funding is below their equitable share, such as the Safe Children Coalition (SCC) in our Circuit 12, who are unable to adequately invest in a robust system of care for the vulnerable, at-risk children and families they serve? As an example, the SCC receives \$22,804,190 core funding, while Citrus Health in Miami receives \$74,113,415. The analysis of 20-21 funding by removals shows cost per removal for Circuit 12 is \$32,671 for 698 removals while Citrus Health receives \$131,640 for 563 removals. Response: SB1326 was an important first step because it addressed both oversight and equity. An additional \$12 million was appropriated for the CBCs.

- The Children's Services Advisory Board has a vacant seat for the Judge of the Family Law representation. Recently a letter was sent to the Chief Judge requesting a sitting or retired judge be appointed to fill the seat, but the request was denied stating it was a conflict of interest. What can the Senator do to assist with this issue? Response: Although he understands the point of the Chief Judge for not appointing a sitting judge, he does not see a reason why a retired judge could not serve. He committed to have a conversation with the Chief Judge and attempt to get her to appoint a retired judge since there is no clear conflict of interest once they are retired.
- Many children under the age of 12 are going from the schoolhouse to the jailhouse. Back in 2002-2009, there was legislative dollars going to intervention, but now money only seems available for prevention. How will that be addressed by the legislative budget in the future? There are good programs out there. You just need to advocate for the money to focus on them. There is at least a much bigger focus on mental health now, which helps with this population.

Senator Galvano thanked everyone for the work being done. The members and staff expressed their appreciation to the Senator for providing the update, answering their questions, and for being so responsive to calls for help throughout his legislative career.

Nomination and Election of Officers

The current Chair and Vice-Chair have served two-year terms, which is the term limit for these positions. Chair called for nominations from the floor for the Chair position. Kimberly Kutch nominated Debbie Tapp. Nominations were closed. The Chair called for a motion.

Motion: To elect Debbie Tapp as Chair, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Kimberly Kutch, **Seconded by** Connie Shingledecker, **Vote:** Motion passed (**Summary:** Yes = 11, No = 0, Abstain = 0).

Chair called for nominations from the floor for the Vice-Chair position. Kimberly Kutch nominated Connie Shingledecker. Nominations were closed. The Chair called for a motion.

Motion: To elect Connie Shingledecker as Vice-Chair, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Kimberly Kutch, **Seconded by** Charlie Kennedy, **Vote:** Motion passed (**Summary:** Yes = 11, No = 0, Abstain = 0).

Staff Updates

Susan Ford presented the following staff updates:

- In response to 3rd quarter results report questions posed for agencies by the CSAB at the retreat, staff prepared a handout which included the results that were on the retreat slides, questions posed by members, and the agency response from the following: *Centerstone*,

Children's Community Action Team; Early Learning Coalition, Early Care and Education; Just for Girls, Girls Alternative Program for Success; Boys & Girls Clubs, Great Futures Start Here.

- Members were asked if there was any discussion of the information presented. Debbie Tapp asked about the reported numbers from Centerstone on the CAT Team. Susan explained that the agency had not been submitting cumulative numbers, so the numbers reported in response to the questions are the correct ones. Kimberly Kutch and Connie Shingledecker had additional questions and concerns for the Just for Girls – GAPS program reporting zero results through the 3rd quarter.
- Alexdrena Green was present and responded: Numbers for milestones have been reported for the 1st and 2nd quarter. During the 3rd quarter of their Agreement is when COVID-19 arose, when the girls were not attending the program in person and behavior could not be observed. The four milestones build on each other and the girls do not achieve the result until they have met all of the milestones. Kimberly Kutch stated she did not understand why the program was unable to report any results.
- Connie Shingledecker asked what tool the agency uses for verification; and Ms. Green responded that they use a 1-100 point tracking scale for each academic period of the school day; the student can earn up to 700 points per day. The agency had to shift their priorities to meet the need of the community due to no in person contact for most of the 3rd quarter. The agency placed their focus on food, shelter, transportation and broadband services during that time. Ms. Green was asked to provide a copy of the tool to staff so the CSAB could review for a better understanding.
- Debbie Tapp inquired on the milestones the girls must meet. Ms. Green listed the 4 milestones. The milestones are tracked each quarter.
- Via Zoom, Becky Canesse followed up and reinforced the explanation Ms. Green presented. She further stated the program was only closed one week during the pandemic and have been serving the girls in person or virtually since that time for food, support and education.
- As mentioned at the retreat, there was a program which were approved for funding that has not been meeting the priority which they applied under; the child welfare prevention priority. Staff has learned that after two years of services, Child Protective Services stopped making referrals to the program in mid-September because the program is serving low to moderate risk families and not those at high risk. As Hal Williams has repeatedly stated, as investors we ensure that program participants could not have had the same result with or without the program services. Through conversations with CPI, DCF and the Safe Children Coalition, staff determined that the investment was meant for high risk families because they are not likely to build the skills necessary to keep their family intact and lower the risk of child removal. Staff has been in contact with the CEO of Centerstone and has agreed to give them a 60-day contract to allow them to finish treatment with the current families they are serving or transition them to another program for services. Susan wanted to assure CSAB Members that the agency was complying with the terms of the contracts for the past two years, but the services rendered did not meet the boundaries of the services necessary to meet the child welfare prevention priority. Safe Children Coalition received CARE ACT funding to serve high-risk families through the end of December.
- Susan reported that James Slusser has resigned, and this will be his last CSAB meeting. He will be greatly missed by the agencies, our staff, and the CSAB. James reported he will be starting a new career with the Sarasota County School District as a middle school teacher at Booker Middle School.

New/Old Business

Susan Ford addressed the handout listing follow-up topics of discussion and action items on the investment process and inquired how the CSAB would like to approach this; through subcommittee meetings or adding some items to each meeting through February to address all the different items. Consensus of the board was to establish a subcommittee to review, discuss, and develop investment process procedures and guidelines for the full CSAB to review, discuss, and adopt for the upcoming year. Susan will send an email or Survey Monkey to get the interested volunteers, and then arrange the meetings.

Public Comment

Comment provided via Zoom:

Becky Canesse, Just for Girls, thanked James Slusser for being a great Contract Manager. He will be great in his next career as a teacher because he has a heart for children.

Next Virtual Meeting

November 18, 2020 – 3:00 pm, Bradenton Area Convention Center, 1 Haben Blvd., Palmetto FL 34221

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Approved

Debbie Tapp, Chair

Date