

**FAUQUIER COUNTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**  
**August 17, 2020**

Approved

**Attendance:**

Advisory Board: Paul McCulla, County Administrator; Janelle Downes, Director, Human Resources; Frank Finn, FCPS; Beth Foddrell, PATH Foundation; Erin Kozanecki, Director, Deputy County Administrator; Shel Bolyard-Douglas, Director, DSS

Other: Laura Brown, DSS Program Manager; Mimi de Nicolas, DSS Program Manager; Kathryn Johnston, DSS Administrative/Accounting Manager; Erika Visnevskaja, DSS CSA Coordinator; Mittie Wallace, DSS Program Manager; Barbara Cook, DSS Senior Program Assistant

The meeting began at 4:06 p.m. in the DSS Janet Shannon Conference Room. A quorum was reached with Mr. McCulla, Ms. Douglas, Ms. Kozanecki and Mr. Finn physically present. The other attendees participated virtually.

The minutes for the February 24, 2020 meeting were approved with no changes.

**Public Comment**

No public attendance.

**County Updates & Comments – Paul McCulla**

Mr. McCulla formally welcomed Ms. Douglas to the Advisory Board as the new DSS Director. He welcomed Mr. Finn who had retired but is returning to assist the School Board in a limited capacity to include serving on this board.

Mr. McCulla related that county staff have been working through budgetary and program implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple departments are collaborating to explore the establishment of learning cottages in four county regions to facilitate virtual instruction for students. Teams are researching free or reduced internet access rates from Comcast or other providers for student learning. He is also working with neighboring counties on creating a learning center at Verdun Adventure Bound.

He stated the normal budget review process is being pushed to mid-October when there is more data on state and county revenues.

Ms. Kozanecki stated that she and Ms. Douglas will be participating in a webinar on the Cares Act and hope to learn more about how funds can be utilized.

**Program Updates**

**Administrative Support – Kathryn Johnston**

Ms. Johnston discussed the FY21 budget allocation and the expected reimbursement amount from the state. She stated that while staff overall are largely teleworking, most administrative staff are onsite to best support the agency. She mentioned an issue with several agency vehicles being in the shop creating availability problems.

### **Adult Services and Domestic Violence Advocacy – Mittie Wallace**

Ms. Wallace reported increases in APS reports, requests for companion services and in long term care screenings. Since March, APS reports are averaging 1.9 per day. She is teleworking one day a week and staff are teleworking on a rotating basis. Face to face meetings with clients are still taking place as mandated. A challenge with COVID is the inability to get clients admitted to a nursing home, requiring increased home monitoring visits.

Staff are providing PPE equipment and training to home companion providers. Ms. Wallace suggests the budget be reviewed to consider an overdue pay increase to the companion providers, especially due to the COVID-19 risk.

The group discussed her revelation that due to pandemic lock-downs in the nursing homes, there is a statewide issue regarding APS staff being unable to personally investigate APS reports at the facility. Mr. McCulla will approach the District Health Director about loosening the restriction for APS staff conducting investigations.

Domestic violence cases are up considerably. Since March DV/SA has had 138 new clients (82 adults and 56 children). The DV unit has completed two virtual trainings on Trauma Informed Care for our allied partners. Three support groups are now operating and each has gone virtual. Staff members are talking to schools about how to deliver the Safe Dates training to students in a pandemic world. A recent county dress down day raised \$1500 for the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program.

She continues to conduct weekly APS and DV/SA team meetings.

### **Benefits - Laura Brown**

Ms. Brown stated that almost all staff are teleworking full time, and that the adjustment went well due to having had part time teleworking and accommodating work processes already in place. Although the state made temporary changes to push benefit renewals back and keep benefits in place for recipients, the push-back date is approaching, and along with new renewal dates, this is expected to create a double workload for current and previous renewals. The requirement for an interview with new SNAP applicants was waived and hopefully that change will continue into the fall. The number of new benefit applications appears to be rising again perhaps due to the end of national unemployment payments. These circumstances are increasing workloads and Ms. Brown appreciates the funding for overtime pay, but feels there will still be an inability to meet all requirements leading to the agency being out of compliance. Every effort and resource will be used to complete the renewals, but unfortunately the volume is high and other tasks are also in place for the fall that will need attention.

Other challenges being faced include recurrent system issues of late, upcoming Medicaid open enrollment period, the fuel season beginning in October, the state's new workforce training mandate, state's push to place child care applicants and not use a waitlist, anticipation of more shelter and utility requests, staff absences, acclimating to new Title IV-E system, and changes in quality control monitoring that might become mandated.

Mr. McCulla acknowledged the enormous increase in workload and thanked Ms. Brown and her staff for all they are doing.

### **Children's Services Administration – Erika Visnevskaja**

Ms. Visnevskaja discussed the pressing need for resolution over the 4 weeks of disputed day placement charges. It is vital the county attorney's office completes their efforts, so that we may submit all FY20 Day Placement expenditures for state reimbursement by the deadline. Mr. McCulla will speak to the county attorney about the urgency.

She reported on current case category numbers. FY 2020 payments for community based services and foster care are above projections but these services keep children in the community. SPED WRAP spending was under budget because normal service offerings have been limited by the pandemic.

The private provider representatives on CPMT and FAPT are new, since the previous representatives have completed their terms of service. Both new members are working out well and already contributing to their teams. FAPT is meeting virtually without problems and in fact there is a parental preference for the virtual format so the change could become permanent.

An OCS spring audit was partially conducted electronically. An onsite or virtual follow up is likely upcoming, however the dates are as yet unknown. An internal audit of records has shown an improvement and almost perfect compliance with all required case forms being completed.

Ms. Visnevskaja expressed her admiration and appreciation for the pivot in service offerings by the community based and out-patient providers and partners to adapt to the pandemic requirements. The group discussed day placement providers' willingness to provide non-virtual services.

#### **Family Services – Mimi de Nicolas**

Ms. de Nicolas reported that the CPS and Foster Care teams have been able to continue all services during pandemic restrictions. Teleworking staff remain in constant contact and staff meetings are held twice weekly. There has been no change to CPS reporting levels, but that could change when students return to classrooms since most reports are generated from the schools. Five families recently completed virtual Foster Parenting Training. In-service training has also moved to a virtual format. Case volumes remain steady. Parental visits had been all virtual but now some in-person visits are happening onsite, with all parties signing a pandemic liability release. Staff are working to ensure that foster parents are available to foster COVID-19 positive children. The state has created waivers for foster families and placements with relatives.

A new trend is that of families desiring to be released from custody of troubled teens, seemingly influenced by stay-at-home orders and reduced activities outside the home. Mr. Finn mentioned the schools' mental health service programs and will provide the written outreach plan to DSS.

#### **Announcements & Board Member Comments**

Ms. Foddrell welcomed Ms. Douglas to the Board.

Ms. Douglas reported that DSS staff has had four COVID-19 exposures with two of those testing positive. She commended the county's processes to track staff and visitor attendance for contact tracing.

The group briefly discussed the need to explore potential partnering between DSS and EMS personnel for assistance during removals in APS/CPS investigations.

Ms. Douglas also mentioned hopes to implement the CARES ACT emergency funding by early September. This funding will assist families who aren't eligible for normal benefits but are in need

due to pandemic related circumstances. She stated that the routine "State of the Agency" review for a new directorship will be scheduled with VDSS soon under a condensed virtual format.

Mr. McCulla reiterated the importance for all county employees to telework as much as possible and to comply with all pandemic protocols to protect the workforce and their families. He commended DSS for maintaining service levels with a high percentage of teleworkers, thus being an example to other departments.

He also thanked Ms. Cook for her 15 years of service to the agency and county as she retires this month. A formal proclamation of appreciation is forthcoming.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm**

**Next Meeting Date: Monday, October 19, 2020**