

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

WARREN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

465 W 15th Street, Suite 100, Front Royal, Virginia 22630

November 18, 2021

The Advisory Board met in the Training Room of the Warren County Department of Social Services on November 18, 2021, with the meeting called to order at 4:01 PM by Ms. Brandon.

Members in Attendance: Lorraine Brandon and Stephen Jerome

Present for the Department: Jon Martz, Director; Michelle Smeltzer, Community Liaison; Mikki Ewanish, Administrative Services Manager; Lisa Look, Fiscal Assistant; Amanda Jenkins, Administrative Secretary; Brooke McClung, Job Developer; Eric Jones, Benefit Programs Supervisor; Shelissa Lewis, Foster Care/Adoption Supervisor; Lucy Riffey, APS/AS Supervisor; and Renee Pearson, Support Supervisor

County Officials: Walt Mabe, Warren County Board of Supervisors

Guests: Linda Selover, Community Member

Approval of Minutes

Having no revisions to be made, a motion was made by Ms. Brandon to approve September 16, 2021 minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comments

Ms. Selover wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas and said she would see everyone next year.

Advisory Board Comments

There were no comments from Board members at this time.

UNIT REPORTS

Services

Prepared by April White, Shelissa Lewis, and Lucy Riffey – Family Services Supervisors, reflective of October 2021. Presented by April White.

Permanency

Foster Care Cases	13 cases with 17 children total
Fostering Futures	1 child scheduled to re-enter program
Adoption Cases	4 children available for adoption
	1 child with a signed Adoption Assistance Agreement
KinGap Cases	1
ICPC Requests	3
Resource Families in Approval Process	3
Resource Families in Re-Approval Process	0
In Home Cases (Prevention)	7

Child Welfare

Referrals Received	67 referrals/36 accepted
Family Assessments	73 Current as of 11/1/21
Investigations	25 Current as of 11/1/21

Adult Services

Guardianship Cases	116
Adult Service Cases	9
Adult Protective Services Reports	28
Adult Protective Services Reports Accepted	22

Notes of Interest

Mr. Martz reported that the 67 child welfare referrals were just from the month of October. Mr. Mabe asked Ms. White what “extreme recruitment” was. Ms. White informed the Board that extreme recruitment is a program where DSS partners with family-finding groups that specialize in difficult-to-place kids. Mr. Jerome inquired about KinGap, and Ms. White reported that KinGap is when a relative may want to take in a child but may not have the training or financial means to do so. KinGap allows these families to take in the child by making them a foster parent so they get the financial, social, and psychological support they may need. Mr. Jerome asked if KinGap is similar to guardianship, and Ms. White replied that KinGap was more of a permanent solution. When a family goes through KinGap, the child becomes eligible for adoption by that family. They will also be provided post-adoption resources they may need after the adoption has taken place. Ms. White said she would provide brochures at the next meeting with more information regarding KinGap.

Eligibility

Submitted by Kristen Strosnider and Eric Jones, Benefits Program Supervisors, reflective of October 2021. Presented by Eric Jones.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Applications</u>	<u>Cases</u>
SNAP	110	1,981
Medicaid (F&C)	97	4,168
Medicaid (ABD/LTC/SSI)	27	1,344
TANF	29	77
Child Care	15	60
Fraud Referrals	0	4
Auxiliary Grant (AG)	0	9
IV-E		

Notes of Interest

Eligibility has met the State requirements for eight (8) consecutive months. The State requires Medicaid to be processed within 45 days or less. The Eligibility unit has processed applications in ten (10) days or less at least 40% of the time.

Administration and Support

Prepared and presented by Renee Pearson, Administrative Office Manager, reflective of October 2021.

	<u>October</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Phone Calls	1,457	13,995
Lobby Visits	1,211	8,752
EBT Cards Dispersed	110	952

Notes of Interest

Ms. Brandon wanted to know what EBT stood for. Ms. Pearson stated EBT is Electronic Benefit Transfer. This is the card that the SNAP benefits are loaded onto. Mr. Martz stated that some of these cards are issued at the DSS office due to being lost or misplaced. Ms. Pearson indicated that having the ability to issue cards at the office is important for cases that have been expedited, which allows the clients to have their benefits within seven days. A card that is mailed out can take up to ten days.

Community Liaison

Prepared and presented by Michelle Smeltzer, Community Liaison.

Community Development Block Grant (Housing)

October - \$4,760.39 assisting 15 people

Ministerial Fund Spending

October spent - \$2,974.90

October received - \$607.50

Food Distribution

October - 15 clients served

Job Developer

New clients/referrals for the month of October: 15

Clients met/actively working with to find employment in the month of October: 12

Jobs offered/accepted: 5

Notes of Interest

Ms. Smeltzer reported that DSS received a community block grant to house people who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless. In order to qualify for this grant, we ask if the client is eligible to work for them to meet with our Job Developer. Clients are also asked to meet with centralized intake where they can receive help for housing. Ms. Smeltzer said the Department is willing to pay for their motel stay as long as they are working and making progress.

For the ministerial fund, some churches donate monthly, some donate quarterly, and others donate a few times a year. These funds are used to help pay utilities, co-pays on medications, birth certificate fees, driver license fees, and rent in some cases. Mr. Mabe questioned if the food distribution included the food Ms. Smeltzer donated to him to hand out. Ms. Smeltzer replied that it should; she normally includes those numbers in her overall count. Mr. Jerome inquired if housing was available. Ms. Smeltzer replied that permanent housing was not available, and the clients do not typically qualify for permanent housing. The grant is to help people get on their feet to find a job, pay their hotel stay, or find an apartment. Mr. Martz stated that DSS received a \$35,000 grant through the Continuum of Care.

Ms. McClung reported she actively works with the clients to find them employment even after they have left the office. Mr. Martz asked for some insight of what happens once a referral is received. Ms. McClung stated that there is an intake form that goes over their personal history and their work history. This includes their address, phone number, birth date, if they are bilingual, if they have any certifications, if they have any felonies, and whether or not they have transportation. Ms. McClung informed the Board that the clients are provided a release form, which gives her permission to apply for jobs for the client. Ms. McClung reported that transportation is a huge barrier in our area. If the client does not have transportation, then employment must be within walking distance of where they live. Ms. McClung said she has helped thirty-one (31) people since September 1st, and twelve (12) of those clients have received employment. Mr. Martz reported there was a couple hiking the trail who had nothing. Within three days of coming into our office, the clients had benefits, a job, and a place to stay. Mr. Martz stated that you do not have to have receive any other services to work with our Job

Developer. Mr. Mabe asked if DSS worked with interns. Mr. Martz replied the Department has hired the past two interns who worked at the agency full-time. Mr. Jerome asked how the Job Developer position is funded. Mr. Martz responded that it is funded like all other positions, both the State and County fund this position. Mr. Jerome asked if this was a position that all Departments of Social Services have. Mr. Martz said no, most of the agencies that have this type of position are called deviating agencies who follow their locality's Human Resources policies. Mr. Mabe reported that he spoke with our intern who was well trained and a very pleasant person. Mr. Martz stated that Joly has been an intern since May and has accepted a position with the Department beginning December 15th. Mr. Martz stated the Department believes in hands-on training so staff is more prepared and experienced to handle their positions.

Introduction of new Assistant Director

Mr. Martz reported that Christie Lawson has accepted the position of Assistant Director. Ms. Lawson has been out of the office sick and will be present at the next meeting. Ms. Lawson has been with the Department for about seven years.

Director's Report

Mr. Martz reported that Ms. Lawson taking the position as the new Assistant Director provided an opportunity to rearrange the services unit. Ms. White was our Permanency Supervisor and is now our CPS Supervisor. Ms. Riffey is our new Adult Services/Adult Protective Services Supervisor. Ms. Lewis was our Senior Permanency worker and is now our Permanency Supervisor. Mr. Martz stated that our benefit unit is fully staffed. We are rearranging people in our benefits unit to make sure there is a balance of experienced and new workers in each unit. We are also trying to equalize case load size. Mr. Jones and Ms. Strosnider established training that has been more beneficial than previous training. This includes in-house trainings and sitting with someone who is working the program. This is a gradual process that has made much stronger workers. Mr. Martz stated we are also looking to make changes in the support unit.

Mr. Mabe asked how much DSS is digitizing its paperwork. Mr. Martz replied the Department keeps its paperwork due to some of the software not working efficiently. The overflow room is filled with paperwork that we are working on purging. The current server needs to be replaced, but the State is not allowing localities to have their own server. Ms. Look is working with our State partners to get that information to a safe place. Last month we had an off-site retreat. Guest speaker Catherine Pemberton provided training on Bridges Out of Poverty, and we had a yoga instructor come in who taught us techniques on how to reduce stress at work. Mr. Martz reported that he went over Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at the off-site retreat. This retreat is held once a year.

Rockland church is providing Thanksgiving meals, and they received fifty-seven (57) applicants from our agency. We are partnering with the Girl Scouts to gather toys for our clients. We are also doing a gently used toy drive where a table will be placed in the lobby and clients can take what they need. Ms. Smeltzer has been working with the Rotary Club of Front Royal to provide Coats for Kids. The Doc Smith program has had 163 people sign up, and they will be accepting up to 175 applications. Mr. Mabe reported Loaves and Fishes has gone to the Blue Mountain

area three times now. The first time there was only one person, the second time there were three people, and the last time there were thirteen.

County Administrators Report

Dr. Daley was not able to attend the meeting. There was not a County Administrator's report at this time.

New Business

Mr. Martz reported that Dr. Daley has another meeting on the same day of the Board meetings. Mr. Martz recommended moving the Board meeting to a different day of the month so Dr. Daley will be able to attend the meeting. Mr. Martz is going to get some days together that would work with Dr. Daley and send them to the Board to vote on. Mr. Martz reported that some of the Board members' terms are coming to an end. Mr. Martz will submit a request for approval for reappointment for the ones who wish to serve another term to the Board of Supervisors in the December meeting. Mr. Martz is going to get with Emily Ciarrocchi, Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, to get copies of the Board members' letters to confirm ending term dates.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business for discussion, Ms. Brandon motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM. The next meeting will be determined at a later date.

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X  _____