

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

WARREN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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

November 17th, 2022

The Advisory Board met in the Training Room of the Warren County Department of Social Services on November 17, 2022, with the meeting called to order at 4:04 PM by Mr. Jerome.

Members in Attendance: Stephen Jerome, Robert Cullers, Hayden Ashworth, Lorraine Brandon

Absent Member: Brenda Wells

Present for the Department: Jon Martz, Director; Christie Lawson, Assistant Director; Michelle Smeltzer, Community Liaison; Mikki Ewanish, Administrative Services Manager; Lisa Look, Fiscal Assistant; Amanda Jenkins, Administrative Secretary; April White, CPS Supervisor; Renee Pearson, Support Supervisor; and Katie Colton, Benefit Supervisor

County Officials: No County Officials present

Guests: No Community Members present

Approval of Minutes

Having no revisions to be made, a motion was made by Mr. Cullers to approve the minutes from September 15th, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Advisory Board Comments

Mr. Jerome informed the Board the United Way district of Warren County and Shenandoah Valley are merging to help serve clients in our area. Mr. Jerome stated he would be serving on the board for the United Way.

Unit Reports

Services

Prepared by April White, Shelissa Lewis, and Lucy Riffey, Family Services Supervisors, reflective of October 2022. Presented by April White.

Permanency

Foster Care Cases	15 cases with 19 children total
Fostering Futures	1
Adoption Cases	9 children available for adoption (4 have identified families.)
KinGap Cases	0
ICPC Requests	0
Resource Families in Approval Process	3
Resource Families Completed Approval	1
Resource Families in Re-Approval Process	0

Child Welfare

Referrals Received	49 referrals/28 accepted
Family Assessments	55 open as of 10/31/22
Investigations	19 open as of 10/31/22
In Home Cases (Prevention)	21

Adult Services

Guardianship Cases	101
Adult Service Cases	17
Adult Protective Services Reports	31
Adult Protective Services Reports Accepted	30

Notes of Interest

Ms. White stated that when the agency closes a CPS case the agency must look to see if the client is considered at high-risk reoffend. VDSS would like 70% of those clients who are deemed to be at high risk be a part of the In-Home Program. Ms. White stated this can be difficult because it's a voluntary program. The state average is between 30%-40% while Warren County is at 68%. Mr. Martz stated the reason he believes our agency has been successful is because on the last CPS home visit the In-Home worker goes with the CPS worker and is introduced to the family. The In-Home worker goes over the benefits of joining the program and what the program has to offer. Mr. Jerome questioned if other agencies were handing out cards or sending letters instead of doing a face-to-face introduction. Ms. Brandon asked if adoptions had picked back up since COVID. Ms. White replied that adoptions were still happening during COVID. The Courts were mailing paperwork instead of having an in-person hearing.

Eligibility

Prepared by Desiree Minter and Katie Colton, Benefit Programs Supervisor's, reflective of October 2022. Presented by Katie Colton.

<u>Program</u>	<u>Applications</u>
SNAP	147
Medicaid (F&C)	102
TANF	24
Child Care	15
Fraud Referrals	1
Auxiliary Grant (AG)	0
Fuel	140
IV-E	0

Notes of Interest

Mr. Martz stated there will be a new water program we can refer clients too. This program will be a state program but worked by a contractor. Mr. Martz informed the Board that VDSS is having discussion about making the cooling and the fuel program year around instead of seasonal. Mr. Cullers questioned asked the agency to define the IV-E program. Ms. Lawson replied that it is federal funding provided for our kids that are entering foster care. Mr. Martz and Ms. Lawson stated that the application process is difficult.

Administration and Support

Prepared by and presented by Renee Pearson, Administrative Office Manager, reflective of October 2022..

	<u>August</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Phone Calls	1,484	13,050
Lobby Visits	1,145	9,848
EBT Cards Disbursed	112	887

Notes of Interest

Mr. Martz stated that on next year's budget list the agency is working on redesigning the front window.

Community Liaison

Prepared and presented by Michelle Smeltzer, Community Liaison, reflective of October 2022

Ministerial Fund Spending

October spent - \$1,414.45

October received - \$1,367.99

Food Distribution

October - 15 clients served

Job Developer

New clients/referrals for the month of October: 7

Total clients to date: 101

Total Businesses contacted to date: 74

Notes of Interest

Ms. Smeltzer informed the Board that the Sheriff's office is doing a coat drive for our agency. Ms. Smeltzer stated the Thermal Shelter will be located at the Presbyterian Church here in Front Royal and will open on Dec 17 through March 31st.

Assistant Director's Report

Ms. Lawson reported the Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee was a huge success with attendance of approximately 500 people from the community. The agency had 23 vendors participate in the event as well. Ms. Smeltzer stated the Warren County Parks & Rec Department was very impressed by the amount of participation from the community and would like to partner with DSS in future events. Ms. Lawson informed the Board the agency has hired 6 new employees. The agency currently has openings for 2 Family Service Specialists and 2 Benefit Program Positions. Mr. Martz included that the agency's hiring process is more focused on hiring the right people. Ms. Ewanish informed the Board that two of the agency's senior workers retired which allowed in-house staff the opportunity to apply and be promoted within. Mr. Martz informed the Board that Ms. Lawson completed the VDSS Excellence in Leadership training course. Ms. Lawson followed up by stating she learned some great tools and is excited to put them to use.

Director's Report

Mr. Martz reported to the Board the agency will be doing a toy drive for Christmas. The Public Health Emergency was initially supposed to end on Jan 11th which that has now been extended. The work requirement will be enforced for clients who receive TANF effective Jan 1st. Mr. Martz stated when the Public Health Emergency ends it will affect every program in our agency. The Eligibility unit will be busy with applications due to every case having to go through a renewal process along with client's cases being closed which may result in them reapplying. Mr. Martz stated the agency is developing a flow chart of a step-by-step model of pre-COVID procedure for the application process. A majority of the eligibility staff were hired during

COVID, so they are unfamiliar of pre-COVID procedures. Mr. Martz informed the Board that training and guidelines have been put into place to try to get everyone as prepared as possible.

Old Business

Mr. Cullers wanted to know if Mr. Martz had reached out to Shenandoah County regarding their senior support group. Mr. Martz replied he gave that information to Ms. Riffey and he would follow up with her.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business for discussion, Mr. Jerome motioned to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 PM. The next meeting will be held on January 19, 2023, at 4:00 PM.

X


Stephen Jerome-Chair of the Board

X


Jon Martz -Director of Social Services