

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

APRIL 18, 2018

A meeting of the Children's Services Advisory Board of Manatee County, Florida, was held at the Manatee County Administration Building, 1112 Manatee Avenue West, Manatee Room, Bradenton, FL 34205 Wednesday, April 18, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kimberly Kutch, Xtavia Bailey, Richard Aubry, Jeremy Giddens, Joanne Hibbs, Sharon Jefferson, Pierrette Kelly, Sandra Stone, Debbie Tapp, Melanie Teves Bell, George VanBuren. **Absent Excused:** Gina Messenger. **Also Present:** County Staff: Cheri Coryea, Deputy County Administrator, Susan Ford, LaWanda Timmons, James Slusser, Chris HandyHoneycutt, Deric Hanson. **Members of Public:** Nathan Scott, Kristin Olsen, Becky Canesse, Andi Watson, Char Young, Laurel Lynch, Katrina Bellemare, Michael Wood, Dora Santana, Bridget Harry, Mark Barnabey, Carlene Lemley, Beth Clark, Tim Polk.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Kimberly Kutch, Chair called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Minutes for February 21, 2018, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Joanne Hibbs, **Seconded by** Pierrette Kelly **Vote:** Motion passed (summary: Yes = 8, No = 0, Abstain = 0).

The order of the items on the agenda were shifted to accommodate late arrivals.

CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM ADVOCATE REPORT

Nathan Scott, Child Welfare System Advocate for Circuit 12, presented an informational overview on child welfare and how the system works locally. The report included information about the local agencies that work together in the system, how reports of abuse or neglect get from the Florida Abuse Hotline to Child Protection Investigators, and the required follow-up that occurs. In Manatee County, the Sheriff's Office handles investigations and are charged with determining if the child is safe, in imminent danger, and what action must be taken based on Florida Statutes. The Community Based Care provider for Manatee County is the Safe Children Coalition, which oversees case management, placement, adoption, and other aspects on ongoing child welfare services. Nathan provided an overview of the Family Safety Alliance which covers Circuit 12; and continually seeks to make positive change in the child welfare system.

Sharon Jefferson entered @ 3:10 pm

Melanie Teves Bell and Dr. George VanBuren entered @ 3:12 pm

Nathan also reviewed his roles and responsibilities as our Child Welfare System Advocate. In his position, he monitors the child welfare system, which includes a working knowledge of reasons for trends in the number of child removals, length of time children are in out of home care, and worker turnover. There are concerns over the distribution of funding for Community Based Care providers and Child Protection Investigations, determined by state legislation, and the high turnover rates resulting in a lack of an experienced workforce. Key components are prevention, research best practices, and achieve better outcomes, such as the following:

- Early Childhood Court, an evidence-based practice, targets children who were removed from the home between the ages of birth to age five. The parent must appear in court every thirty days, as opposed to the usual six month appearances, and receives intensive services including psychotherapy to work through their own issues in preparation for reunification with their children.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

April 18, 2018

- First 1000 Days, a new collaborative initiative, which is designed to improve access to prenatal, newborn, and early childhood development care for families in our community who need it most. Science shows that 80% of human brain development occurs during this critical life period. Babies who don't receive proper healthcare, nutrition, early childhood education, and other key resources begin life at an immense disadvantage.
- Handle with Care, just launched this month, is a system to allow the Manatee Sheriff's Office to provide information to teachers and school officials about hardships children are facing outside of school. For example, a child whose family member was arrested the night before, or a child has been removed from their home. This information is shared with the child's school so they know to handle the child with care and not add to their trauma.

MANATEE YOUTH AT RISK STAFFING TEAM

Kim Kutch provided information about the at-risk staffing team, piloted in Sarasota County with great results, now being introduced into Manatee County. The Manatee Youth at Risk staffing works with Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, the managing entity, along with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The goal of this team is to reach children before they get to DCF and DJJ. This is for schools and community providers to identify a youth with a history of Baker Act, severe psychiatric issues, or significant juvenile justice charges. Anyone may refer a child that meets the criteria, which was developed by the Sarasota staffing team. Manatee Children's Services Child Advocacy Center has helped start a Manatee staffing team and minor changes have been made to the eligibility criteria for use of the services. An offer was extended to Melanie Teves Bell, due to her extensive background in mental health, to represent the CSAB on the Manatee team; and Melanie accepted.

JUST FOR GIRLS OST PROGRAM FY17-18 FUNDING

The following handouts were provided to the members: 1) a timeline of events involving funding agreements between Just for Girls and Manatee County (labeled Just for Girls timeline); 2) a funding recommendation letter from Allen Donahue to Just for Girls dated July 12, 2017, signed and dated July 18, 2017 by Becky Canesse attesting to the agency's wishes to proceed with contracting for the services indicated in the FY2018 funding application for GIRLS Stepping Up to Success program; 3) the proposed FY17/18 Agreement for Non-Profit Agency Services for the GIRLS Stepping Up to Success program; 4) an email dated January 25, 2018 from Cheri Coryea to Becky Canesse in response to meeting with Ed Hunzeker, County Administrator; 5) an email dated February 6, 2018 recap of phone call between Cheri Coryea and Becky Canesse; and 6) a document labeled, Excerpts from email to Cheri Coryea 02/12/18, which listed items and responses regarding the Agreement for Non-Profit Agency Services for the GIRLS Stepping Up to Success program.

Becky Canesse (Executive Director of Just for Girls), Tim Polk (President of Just for Girls), and Mark Barnabey (Just for Girls Board Member) were provided ten minutes to introduce the item. Ms. Canesse introduced board members and staff present, and read a prepared statement, which had been provided as a handout. A summary of the statement is as follows: Just for Girls (JFG) holds 4 prevention licenses, one at each center through the DCF. JFG has an emphasis in pregnancy prevention, dropout prevention, substance abuse prevention, and the prevention of juvenile delinquency and childhood suicide. JFG agrees with the safety and standards that Manatee County has set forth to assure proper stewardship. It is our highest hope that we can move forward with a contract that allows all girls to participate in our programs, even if they do not have a willing or able parent to sign them out every day. These girls are the abused and neglect 'at-risk' girls that need us the most. JFG exempt status was pending upon an administrative appeal, when county contract expired, the hearing was no longer needed due to the contract no longer being enforced. Therefore, DCF restored JFG child care licensing exemption, reaffirming our continuing and current status as an open access, drop-in services provider, exempt from childcare licensing. JFG does not require parent signature for participation. Proposed options: A) Reconsider the county's policies for *all* OST programs to become licensed, to be forced to contract with ELC, and to restrict services from those children who don't have a parent or guardian willing and able to always sign them out every day; B) Allow JFG to continue serving *all* latch-key girls through its longstanding drop-in, open-access services with a contract that does not jeopardize those opportunities for the girls who need us most; C) Restore Day of Service unit definition for billing

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

April 18, 2018

purposes, client signatures for verification, direct-service vs. direct-supervision in defining teacher to student ratios; D) Refrain from creating policies that cause children to suffer consequences for the shortcomings or absences of their parents; E) Recognize that not all OST programs fit the same profile and broad definitions. Some are more like daycares, and others are more prevention education based and gender specific; F) Results must not exclude any children from services with narrow, restrictive policies requiring parent signature every day in order for children to participate. Imagine how many children would miss school if parents were required to sign them in and out every day; G) Renew our commitment to *all* children regardless of their background or family situation. Every child matters and deserves equal access to award-winning programs.

The following is a summary of questions asked by CSAB members, and the responses by Ms. Canesse. Those questions which were asked and answered more than once have been summarized rather than repeated in the following summary:

- What is the age of the girls you serve? *The girls are school-aged; 5-17.*
- Who picks them up at the end of the day? *At the end of the day, most of the parents do pick them up. They volunteer to do that. There are a few, who over the years have walked or rode bikes home, had an older sibling or someone else who would come and pick up the child and walk them home; but not always is there someone available.*
- Are the majority of the girls in the program ages 5-9? *Most are elementary age; ages 5-12; majority are under the age of 12.*
 - Kim Kutch: The age breakdown shown in the 2017 JFG Annual Report is as follows:
 - 59 % (between the ages of 5 – 9)
 - 31 % (between the ages of 10 – 12)
 - 9 % (between the ages of 13 – 15)
 - 1% (between the ages of 16 – 17)
- If a child's parent must complete an enrollment form for the program, that is not open-access, because you must get the parent's permission. Are the girls required to be enrolled in the program? *We have an enrollment packet that parents sign before the child can begin to come. What we have come down to is that everything we do is fine; the problem is in the County contract that requires parent signatures and direct supervision, which supersedes parental supervision, in their interpretation of supervision. We can simply say direct service for calculating child to staff ratios.*
- DCF offered to give JFG a pre-license tour of the facility and you declined? *Yes. We're not interested in being coming licensed. DCF wanted to look at our facility and what cost might be involved in retrofitting the physical aspects of the building, measurements for sinks and toilets, and square footage of rooms and things. It wasn't of interest to us because we don't think licensing is in our best interest or the best interest of the girls who need our open-access to continue.*
- For open-access, they can come and go as they please without adult supervision? *Yes.*
- Wasn't there staff to student ratios assigned? *Yes.*
 - Staff provided clarification that staff ratios were stated for each location on the application. Staff to child ratios are included as a requirement on the OST Standards, as is direct supervision of the children in the program.
- You are busing girls from twenty schools coming from zip codes 34203, 34205, 34207, 34210, 34212, 34219, 34222, 34243, 34251 to your three facilities in zip codes 34208, 34209 and 34221 and serving several different zip codes 34208, 34209, and 34221. How are these girls walking home? *Most of the parents are coming (to the centers) and getting them. They voluntarily do that; that's the difference. We don't require it, but they do it. The county, in their contract, is requiring parents to sign them out. Most of the parents do pick them up. There are a few exceptions over the years; and it's those few we are going for. I (Becky) think it's safer for a child to be with us, instead of being home alone or alone on the street.*
- What percentage of your parents sign their children out? *The majority do.*

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

April 18, 2018

- What is your opposition to the license? *The barrier with the licensing is the loss of services for these latch-key children who don't have a parent willing or able to come in to sign them in and out of the program.*
- How many latch-key children with no willing parents are there? *It changes from year to year depending upon new people moving in and who is enrolling. It's much lower than the majority of the parents who do come and pick their children up. Each individual child really matters; these are the ones that are at the greatest risk. We do have enough structure and enough safety and standards in place that we can offer them so much when we have them with us that they won't get if they are not allowed to come because they don't have a parent to sign them in and out.*
- Do you have policy in place if a 5-year-old child leaves; or are they able to come and go as they please? *We have policies that allow children to come and leave if their parents are wanting that. Most of the parents do come in and sign them in and sign them out, voluntarily. If the child is below the legal age, we would be obligated to report neglect if there is no parent picking them up when we are ready to close.*
 - Kim Kutch, DCF representative, responded to clarify; there is no "legal age" referenced in Florida statutes for allowing a child to be left unsupervised.
 - Jeremy Giddens, criminal justice representative, responded: Parents are going to have to be involved either way.

The following statements are responses and concerns expressed to the JFG presentation by CSAB members; and Cheri Coryea, Deputy County Administrator as the County's representative.

Pierrette Kelly: When at Anna Maria Island Community Center, we voluntarily became licensed to provide a program with higher standards. We had no issues with parents not allowing children to come because they didn't want to come in to sign them in and out of the program.

Kim Kutch: What you are describing does not sound like open-access. In addition, you signed the letter stating you accepted our recommendations for the proposed program. I never knew JFG wasn't licensed based on proposals submitted for the OST program. In the future, I'm going to have to look more closely at every program and have many different questions due to this situation. It is not fair that your agency can come ask for change from what you proposed, while the other programs aren't able to do that.

Cheri Coryea: When this board reviewed the funding application and recommended funding for this program, it was based on the application submitted by the agency. JFG then signed a letter of acceptance of that award and agreed to contract for the services as presented in the application submitted for FY17-18 for the Stepping Up to Success program. It is then the responsibility of the County to create a contractual agreement with the agency to carry that out. The County has never contracted with any provider, including JFG, for an open-access program. The signature requirement of the parents is a check and balance for us providing the payment for service, and it is included in the safety requirements of the OST Standards approved by this board. These are requirements for all seven OST programs we contract with.

Until now there has never been any indication by JFG that this program is open-access. The *Florida Administrative Code* indicates the license exemption criteria for an open-access program, as follows: "a program that operates for a short period of time; allows children to enter and leave without adult supervision, does not provide transportation for field trips; does not serve meals except via USDA After School Meal Program; and program takes no responsibility for the supervision of children." That does not match the program recommended by the CSAB nor does it represent the program we've historically been working with. County staff were pulled into the disagreement between JFG and DCF. The County staff did not go seeking this issue on licensure. These are local dollars and local funding criteria that is reviewed by this board, and this is where we are. We have never seen the terms 'drop-in' or 'open-access' in any of JFG's funding applications.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

April 18, 2018

Ms. Canesse responded: *The difference is whether it's supplemental to the parents or if it supersedes parental supervision. JFG has been receiving funding from the county for this very program for decades. It was recommended by the CSAB for level funding to continue the services we have been providing, which were described in great detail in the application. The open-access status was never asked about; licensing was, and we responded accurately to that.*

Kim Kutch voiced her concern: I have been a part of this committee for years and have never known your program to be open-access. If I did, I would have had an issue with that; especially in serving someone who is 5 years old and allowing them to come and go at will.

Motion: The County staff will make no changes to the proposed contract that has been prepared for Just for Girls, Stepping Up to Success OST program for FY17-18 in response to the agency's request to do so., **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Jeremy Giddens, **Seconded by** Pierrette Kelly. **Vote:** Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 10). **Yes:** Debbie Tapp, Jeremy Giddens, Joanne Hibbs, Kimberly Kutch, Melanie Teves Bell, Pierrette Kelly, Richard Aubry, Sandra Stone, Sharon Jefferson, Xtavia Bailey. **Excused:** Gina Messenger. *George VanBuren exited @ 4:46 pm.*

STAFF UPDATE

Homestead Exemption – Cheri Coryea explained there will be an additional Homestead Exemption for property owners proposed on the November ballot. The County is expecting it to mean a \$9 million decreased in our 2020 General Fund budget. The exact amount the additional exemption will have on the Children's Services budget is unknown at this time. *Jeremy Giddens exited @ 5:10 pm.*

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Debbie Tapp asked the staff for the status of the funding cycle. Cheri Coryea responded that the county is still in legal negotiations with the vendor, but hoping the software purchase will be finalized by the end of the week. County staff should know within the next seven to ten days what the new timeframe will be for the process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday May 16, 2018, Manatee Room of the County Administrative Complex, 3:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

APPROVED:



Kimberly Kutch, Chairman

May 16, 2018

Date

EACH MEETING OF THIS BOARD IS RECORDED. THESE RECORDINGS ARE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT THE COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT UPON REQUEST.