

Department of Social Services Advisory Board Meeting

March 24, 2022 @ 6:30 PM – First Floor Conference room

Manassas Regional Airport
10600 Harry Parrish Blvd
Manassas, VA 20110

Social Services Advisory Board members present: Yajaira Balcarcel, Benjamin Berger, and Damita Gilliam Frye. A quorum was not present.

Members Absent: Larry Cain, Katherine Hawkins, Brenda McMahon and Cristina Mehrabani

Staff present: Anita Brown, LaTanya Buckhalter, Michele Childs, Catrina Ewen, Kimberly King-Anderson and Kalisha Spence.

Others: None

Call to Order: At 6:37 pm, LaTanya Buckhalter, Interim Social Services Director convened the Social Services Advisory Board informational meeting held on Thursday, March 24, 2022.

Public Present: None

Additions to Agenda: None

Welcome: Members and DSS staff took this time to introduce themselves.

Review of Minutes:

The approval of the September 2021 and January 27, 2022 minutes were deferred to the May meeting due to quorum not being present.

Presenter(s): Kalisha Spence, Family Service Specialist III

The Services Programs consist of several programs within the realm of Social Services. These programs encompass Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS), Adult Services, Foster Care, and Adoption. The programs themselves are broken down even further to encompass programs within their main scope. For example, CPS has several components within, there is CPS on-going, Family Assessments, Investigations, and Prevention/In-home services.

The Services unit has been very busy and with COVID restrictions being lifted, the workers can get back out into the Community. Recently this included working with MC Police Vitality Officer Rodriguez at the Community education program conducted at Manassas Baptist Church. In March, the CPS team will be attending the Hugs and Kisses program presentations at the Manassas City Elementary Schools. To further the Department's commitment to community outreach, attendance at the Farmer's market is planned to answer inquiries and provide informational handouts.

Foster Care - Kinship care is the full-time care and nurturing of a child by a relative or someone who has a significant emotional relationship with a child not born to them. Kinship care is often looked to when children must be separated from their parents, either voluntarily or by court order;

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Why is it important?

When children are raised by kinship caregivers, they experience greater continuity of care and family preservation. Children living with kin have a sense of permanency, nurturing, safety, and well-being. Kinship care also assists in maintaining the family's culture, traditions, values, and goals, and kinship placements help children maintain connections not only to family members but often to their schools and communities.

Foster/Resource Parent – The Department is always recruiting potential foster/resource parent(s). Many are interested, but few are chosen. To become a foster/resource parent, the interested participants must undergo training and background checks. A Foster/resource parent must be willing to work with and sometimes even mentor the parent of the child. The primary goal is always to return home if possible. This can be a hard concept to accept. Developing Foster/Resource parents in the community, allows the child to remain in the area they know and are familiar with.

DIRECTOR REPORT:

At the March 28, City Council meeting, a proclamation designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month will be read. Anyone wishing to attend is invited. The time is 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The City is taking part in a regional effort to collect donations of hats, gloves, socks, coats, and blankets for the Ukraine refugees. Donation boxes can be found throughout the City and there is one located at the Social Services office @ 9324 West Street.

Recently at a

The Department continues to experience staff shortages.

- Director position closed on February 4, 2022.
 - Benefit Programs Specialist – 3 applicants selected, 2 declined, 1 scheduled to begin April 11, 2022. Advertisement for vacant positions will begin on March 25, 2022.
 - Human Service Assistant – position closed March 18, 2022
 - Family Service Manager – interviews took place on March 17th and a candidate was selected.
 - Family Services Specialist I- interviews took place on March 15 & 16th. A candidate was selected.
 - Utilization Review Analyst – interviews took place but no candidate was selected.
- Recruitment will be done again.

- Housing Program Specialist – both the full-time and part-time positions have been filled.

The City has hired a company, Segal Group to do a market study. The results were presented to City Council. The study looked at 78 benchmark positions throughout the organization to assess how the city compensation compared with the Northern Virginia area. The City's goal has been to be within 95% of the market rate for all positions. The study compared the city with 14 surrounding localities including Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William. Over the

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results reflected the city as a whole is only 90% of the market and they would like to be at 95%. The study revealed that an adjustment needs to be made to the city's pay scale. Also included in the FY23 proposed budget was a merit increase for all employees. City Council has requested more information. Their goal is to try to get the pay scale up to a comparable 95% of surrounding localities and would like to get it done in this fiscal year. This information is available online on the City's webpage.

At a recent Social Services Director meeting, the subject of staffing shortages was felt in residential placement facilities. This creates a problem for the facility in that they cannot accept placements even if they have the room, they don't have the staff to provide services.

The public health emergency that was declared due to COVID is scheduled to end soon. The state did say they would give agencies a 60-day notice before the end. If the public health emergency was to end on 4/30/22, agencies would still have 60 days to notify clients of the closure of extended benefits they have been receiving due to COVID. After COVID: Office hours have returned to 8:30-5:00, Monday through Friday. Staff are still teleworking but are coming into the office 2-3 days per week on alternating days.

Benefits:

Public Assistance programs consist of SNAP (food assistance), Medicaid, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), Child Care Assistance, and Virginia Initiative for Education and Work program (VIEW).

There have been several waivers in place due to COVID that are going to affect those receiving benefits. For example, when a client receives TANF, they are automatically referred to the VIEW program and must participate to continue to receive assistance. Under the VIEW program, the client must be either working and/or receiving training/education. When the waiver was put into place, it put a hold on this requirement. Another training program is SNAPET. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAPET) is part of the Commonwealth's Workforce Development System. This is a multi-component employment and training program designed to assist SNAP recipients in their employment and training needs. The goal of SNAP ET is to assist SNAP recipients with opportunities that will lead to paid employment and decrease dependency on assistance programs. The waiver also affected the work/training requirement for this program as well.

At this time the state has extended an "interview waiver" that is due to expire on April 30, 2022. This waiver allows faster processing of new SNAP and renewal applications as well as TANF renewals. The waiver temporarily eliminates the requirement for an interview.

Currently, the agency is averaging 210 new applications each month.

There is a waiver from the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) for Medicaid clients. What this waiver does is it places a pause on renewals and does not allow workers to close cases for any reason other than the client permanently leaving the state, requesting the case to be closed, or an increase in coverage.

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All clients receiving benefits will receive a 60-day notice of the waiver expiration. It is after 60 days, that program requirements will go back into place and clients will have to comply to continue to receive benefits. Workers are already notifying clients of potential changes once the health emergency is lifted.

By the numbers:

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cases-86

SNAP (Food Assistance) cases –1147

Medicaid cases – 5500 cases and 11,000 individuals

Child Care – cases- 112

VIEW – 49 clients

Refugee cash assistance – 10 cases with 18 clients.

Crisis assistance ended on March 16, 2022.

Cooling assistance begins in June and ends in August.

Services:

Including Fostering Futures, the agency has 20 children in Foster care. Fostering Futures is the children who are over the age of 18.

Prevention services – a family is referred to the agency for a Child Protective complaint but does not meet the statute to reach the level to open up a case. The goal of Prevention Services is to strengthen families by ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children.

These services are designed to:

- Prevent the occurrence (or reoccurrence) of child abuse/neglect from any caretaker
- Prevent out of home care (including the prevention of foster care)

Services are determined by:

- Degree of trauma experienced by the child and family
- Level of intervention by LDSS

Benefits of providing prevention services to families in a strength-based, trauma-informed system that promotes protective factors include the following:

· Families who identify their problems and seek help through prevention are more likely to benefit quickly from services and their children are less likely to be at risk of abuse and neglect and out-of-home care

· Early involvement with the family reduces the likelihood of abuse and neglect occurring, maintains permanency for the child in their family, and preserves sibling groups

CPS ongoing and In-Home care for families providing interventions and services to families that:

· Address child safety and risk factors;

· Preserve families by maintaining children safely in their own homes or with relative/kin caregivers in their communities.

· Prevent further abuse or neglect by strengthening the family’s capacity to protect and nurture their children.

· Provide interventions and services are provided in a manner to reduce or eliminate re-traumatization to children and families.

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- Delivers interventions and services within the context of the family's own community culture and the child's current living arrangement.

For March alone, the agency received 35 referrals and 40 in February.

Adult Services and Adult Protective Services – Services are provided to any person 60 years of age or older, or any person 18 years of age or older who is incapacitated and who resides in the City.

Customer Service

The Customer Service staff are the first point of contact for the agency. Any client coming into the agency whether to apply for services or bring in the documentation is seen by the Customer Service staff. The Customer Service staff is currently down 1 worker. For Feb and March to date:

- 838 clients coming into the office
- 711 verifications

CARE Funding:

The City received \$500,000, to assist city residents who were experiencing financial hardships due to COVID. Through this funding, city residents received assistance with:

- Rent
- Mortgage
- Utility
- Burial
- Childcare

To date, a little over \$254,000 has been expended in assistance. Documentation for these expenditures has been submitted for the grant. The program is no longer a COVID program but has become a local program that will continue to assist city residents who have been affected one way or another by the pandemic. The local program will end on June 30, 2022. If all the remaining funds are not expended by June 30, it was suggested to give the funds to ACTS or SERVE. These organizations would then utilize the funds to continue to serve city residents in need.

The City has a utility assistance program called Operation Roundup. City residents may have seen the advertisement on their utility bills. If a resident decides to round up their bill to the dollar, the funds rounded up are then placed in a special fund to assist those in need with their utility bill.

Housing

Both the full-time and part-time positions in housing have been filled. Currently has 305 vouchers leased up. Again the housing program serves both Manassas City and the City of Manassas Park. The City's Housing Choice Voucher program received 10 emergency vouchers to serve the homeless or in danger of being homeless individuals/families. Referrals

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for the emergency vouchers come to the program through Prince William County's Coordinated Entry. 5 of those vouchers have been leased up and 5 issued after going through 23 people. Serving this group of individuals is difficult. They often don't have their documents for eligibility determination so it often proves challenging.

Currently, there are 2,200 people on the waitlist. The last time the waitlist was open was in 2014 and it will be several years before it will be open again. For anyone experiencing homelessness or know someone who is or about to be homeless, they can contact the Prince William County Coordinated entry program. The **Coordinated Entry System (CES)** is a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access.

The CES team will quickly identify, assess, refer, and connect households to resources based on their strengths and needs. Through this process, people experiencing homelessness can access the crisis response system, in a streamlined way by contacting one telephone number.

CES number is (703) 792-3366 (TTY: 711).

CES's New hours of operation are Monday - Friday 8:30 am-5:30 pm

The line will be closed on Weekends and Holidays

Children's Services Act (CSA)

Currently, 51 youth are being served under CSA and approximately \$821,000 has been committed for services. Services provided are private day educational and residential placements, substance abuse programs, sexual offender therapy, mentoring, and counseling services. For youth in foster care, CSA can pay for parent coaching, foster care basic and enhanced maintenance, clothing, and daycare, medical/dental expenses. There are also discretionary funds for foster care youth and therapeutic supervised visitation services. The bigger part of committed funds is for youth who have IEPs are in private day educational placements.

OLD BUSINESS:

The annual report was presented on February 28, 2022.

Volunteers needed:

Parent Representative

· The Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT) meets monthly on the third Wednesday at 3:30 pm. Meetings are in person.

Private Provider Representative

· The Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT)

Interested persons must be residents of the city to be considered for the parent representative. The private provider representative can be anyone who provides services like mental health, physical therapy, etc. These two volunteer opportunities are appointed by the City Council

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and anyone can apply through the Boards, Committees, and Commissions page on the City website.

NEW BUSINESS:

On Monday April 28, 2022, City Council will present a proclamation for the designation of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. If anyone is able to attend that would be great. Council convenes at 5:30 pm.

The agency will be setting up a booth at the Farmers Market on April 7, 2022. Weather permitting. The staff will be on hand to hand out brochures and provide information about

Next scheduled in-person meeting May 26, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Brown