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**MINUTES OF LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD**  
**Regular Meeting Held December 13, 2023**

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The regular meeting of the Lucas County Children Services Board was held at 705 Adams Street, 3:00 P.M. in person and via Zoom.

Members Present: Dr. Cowell, Ms. Easterly, Ms. Gagnon, Rev. Dr. Perryman, Mr. Ridi, Ms. Vasquez, and Mr. Walrod

Member(s) Absent: Ms. Arnold, Ms. McCollough, and Mr. Schinharl

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Ms. Vasquez called the December 13, 2023, regular meeting of the LCCS Board to order. Roll Call was taken. A quorum was present.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES**

- Bryce Briggs – Data Analyst
- Ursula Akers – Records Clerk
- Lillian Cardona – Social Program Caregiver Coach

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA AND NOVEMBER 2023 LCCS BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Ms. Vasquez asked if any items were to be removed from the Consent Agenda. None were removed.

Ms. Vasquez read the Consent Agenda into the minutes:

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Minutes from November 15, 2023, LCCS Board of Trustees Meeting
- Services and Programs Meeting Minutes (12/6/23)
- Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes (12/4/23)
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and additional finance documents attached (12/5/23)

Ms. Vasquez asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Rev. Dr. Perryman made a motion for approval. Ms. Cowell seconded. Ms. Vasquez asked those in favor of the motion to signify by stating aye, and those opposed, nay. The motion unanimously carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Building Update:**

Kelly Dinkens gave a brief update on the Summit Street building. The new address looks to be 301 Adams Street, Toledo, OH 43604. The bids for construction have closed and the IT and infrastructure updates are ongoing. They are estimated to be completed in May/June 2024. An inventory has been conducted on the furniture and what will be needed for the move. Kelly asked to make sure LCCS employees read the records retention policy and purge any unneeded paperwork before the move.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. McCollough would be the only board member whose appointment would be expiring at the end of the year.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

- Ms. Vasquez gave a shout out to Rev. Dr. Perryman as it was his birthday.
- Ms. Vasquez also touched on the ongoing placement crisis and having that stay on the agenda every month.
- Ms. Vasquez stated her expectation that a media campaign in 2024 would precede a levy campaign in the fall.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Executive Director Report—Randy Muth LCCS Child Placement Statistics

|                          | Current Month | Previous Month |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Agency Foster Homes      | 297           | 301            |
| Subsidized Adoptions     | 1,143         | 1,146          |
| Purchased Boarding Homes | 189           | 170            |
| Institutions/Group Homes | 25            | 28             |
| Relative Placement       | 445           | 473            |

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTIVITIES

### Placement Crisis in the State

The placement crisis is not limited to Lucas County. It is present all over the state. Literally all of Ohio's 88 public children services agencies have been affected to some degree. Some more severely than others.

Ohio's child welfare trade association, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) and the Ohio Children's Alliance have taken a leadership role in attempting educate and engage the State with respect to the placement crisis which has been affecting Ohio and the rest of the nation as we exit out of COVID. Regrettably, the State did not take a significant interest in addressing this placement or treatment crisis until the creation of the new Department of Children and Youth (DCY) formed by the passage of the State's biennial budget bill (HB 33) in July of this year. At the request of the Director of that new department, Kara Wentz, a workgroup of child welfare professionals came together under the direction of PCSAO to develop recommended State-level strategies to address this crisis.

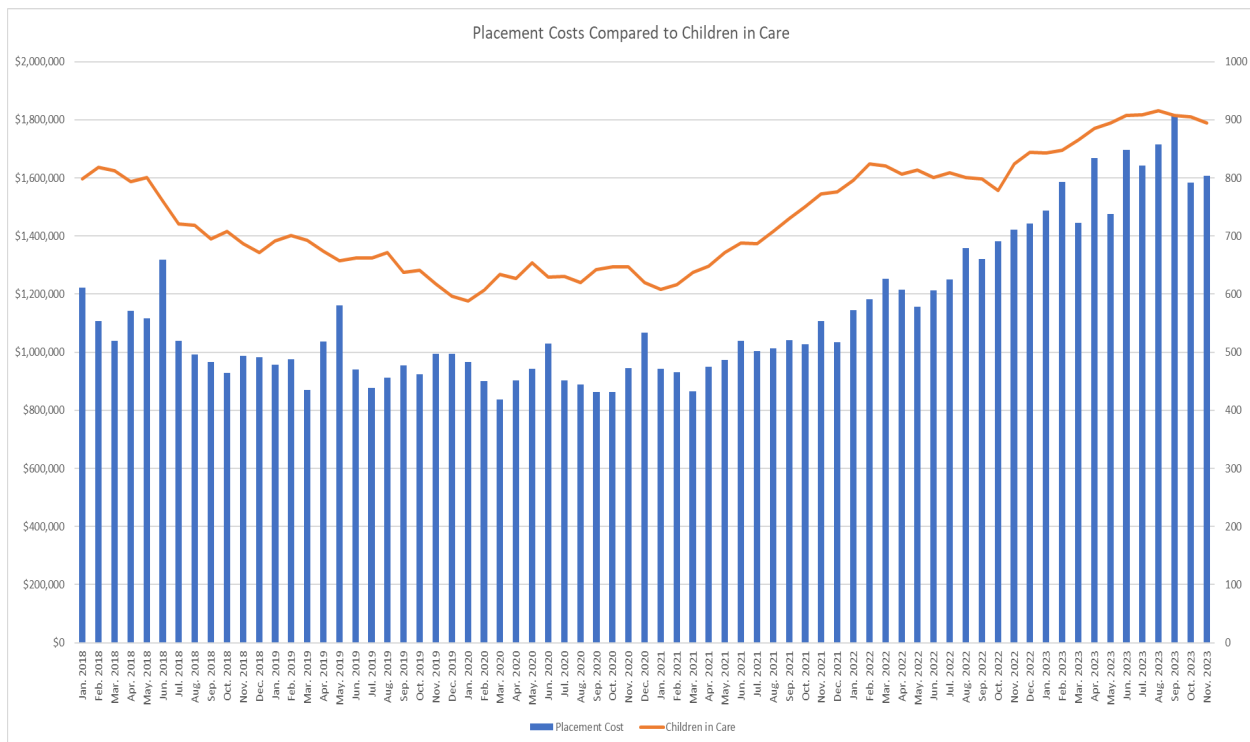
After several stakeholder meetings, meetings with the workgroup and meetings with PCSAO Trustees, DCY announced that it would be preceding with four short-term solutions. Unfortunately, none of the recommendations made by the workgroup were included in those four solutions. After careful consideration of the state-proposed solutions, PCSA Directors and stakeholders have determined that none of the four are likely to be of significant help. This conclusion was communicated to Director Wentz through a memo drafted in October of this.

Director Wentz stated that she is open to other supports (“menu services” as she termed it) that are needed. As such, county-level stakeholders are committed to continued advocacy for solutions which we will be of real help. However, based on my participation in these state level discussions, I believe that it is probably overly optimistic to think that the State will come forward with any meaningful solutions in the foreseeable future. As such, I have instructed our social services leadership team to operate under the presumption that only local solutions are likely to be available to us.

### LCCS and the Placement Crisis

The national and state-wide placement crisis has had a significant impact upon Lucas County Children Services. We are encountering significant challenges in securing timely, appropriate, and available placements for some of the most traumatized children in the county who have high acuity needs. This, combined with a shortage of community alternatives, viable treatment homes, and other placement options due to staff shortages, has led to increased length of stay and an overall increase in the average point-in-time custody counts.

As demonstrated in the Table below, we are currently seeing: (1) more children in care than in recent history, (2) higher monthly placement costs than at any other time in LCCS history, and (3) significantly higher costs per child.



To put this in context, at any given point in 2019, we averaged 633 children in care. For the first eleven months of 2023, that number has grown to an average of 889. We peaked at 916 children in care on August 15 of this year.

Of course, more children in care means higher placement costs. Below are the total placement costs for each of the last five years:

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 2018 - \$12,838,377 | 2021 - \$11,929,032 |
| 2019 - \$11,596,993 | 2022 - \$15,341,899 |
| 2020 - \$11,109,645 |                     |

We have already spent \$17,726,943 through November of this year. We will probably finish 2023 spending \$19,400,000.

Finally, we are also seeing increases in the average cost per child per month. The best we've done in this regard occurred in October of 2018 when we saw an average cost of care per child per month of \$1,311. The most we have spent in this respect occurred in September of this year when we spent \$2,004 per child. This represents an increase of 53 percent.

Donna Seed, Deputy Director; Chanda Beal, Director of Social Services and I will be making a presentation to the full Lucas County Family and Children First Council regarding the state and local status of the placement crisis and how members of the Council can positively impact the issue. This will occur the next regular meeting of the full Council currently scheduled for 10:00 am on Friday, December 15, 2023.

**Impact of the Placement Crisis on LCCS Solvency**

In January of this year, former Chief Fiscal Officer, Ebony Jackson, presented a series of separate five-year projections. These projections were drafted with the 2023 approved budget, her fiscal forecasts and five separate scenarios regarding the new building. The closest of Ms. Jackson’s building scenarios to what actually happened was scenario Number 2.

In that scenario, Ms. Jackson projected that we would finish CY 2025 with a reserve of a little over \$4,000,000 and be fiscally solvent through the majority of 2026. In August of this year, the Agency’s Fiscal Responsibility Committee drafted updated projections using the same historical information as did Ms. Jackson. However, instead of using the 2023 budget, we used 2023 projections based upon six months of actual expenditures.

In that scenario, the Fiscal Responsibility Committee projected that we would finish CY 2025 with a deficit of \$7,745,242.

Finally, I have updated Ms. Jackson's projections by using 2023 actual expenses through November of this year. When plugging in the revised updated 2023 expense projections, Ms. Jackson's projections reveal a deficit of \$5,030,525 in CY 2025 – slightly more optimistic than the Fiscal Responsibility Committee's projections earlier in the summer.

The conclusion of these scenarios are recapitulated in the table below:

| PROJECTION                                               | Year-end Balance |             |               |                |                |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                                          | 2023             | 2024        | 2025          | 2026           | 2027           | 2028           |
| Ms. Jackson’s Original Projections                       | \$12,797,952     | \$8,573,633 | \$4,065,696   | (\$621,531)    | (\$5,415,606)  | (\$10,245,592) |
| Fiscal Responsibility Committee in August of 2023        | \$10,360,311     | \$2,305,741 | (\$7,745,242) | (\$18,883,107) | (\$31,226,330) | (\$45,084,725) |
| Ms. Jackson’s Original Projections with Recent 2023 data | \$10,646,825     | \$3,504,456 | (\$5,030,525) | (\$13,883,003) | (\$22,499,573) | (\$30,763,069) |

As we close out this year, the three major areas that trended negatively for us in 2023 are:

1. **Placement Costs** – In December of last year, Ms. Jackson was predicting we would spend \$15.4 M on placements in 2023. This which was probably based upon the fact that we finished 2022 spending approximately that much. Then, she projected a five percent reduction each year in subsequent years. Therefore, it appears that she anticipated that **placement costs had peaked at the end of 2022**. However, we now know that it did not. As demonstrated above, with 11 months in books, we’re on pace to spend \$19.4 M in placement costs. That equates to \$4.0 M more than she anticipated. And that increased amount carries forward in subsequent years.
2. **Health Insurance** – Ms. Jackson used the historical average of a 2% increase in healthcare costs for each year in her projections. She could not have foreseen that the reality would be that we would have to budget

for a 10% increase in health care costs each year for the next three years. That amounts to an increase of \$870,000 in 2024 alone. When you look at the difference between Ms. Jackson's 3-year projections and the Fiscal Responsibility Committee's 3-year projections for health care, that increase amounts to \$3.7 M over that same 3-year period.

3. **Building Costs** – as stated, the closest of Ms. Jackson's building scenarios to what actually happened was Scenario 2. Unfortunately, even though Scenario 2 was the closest, it still underestimated the actual cost by \$300,000 per year (for ten years).

### **Building Move**

The building is progressing relatively on track. The response period for bids for construction have closed. All the bids were under budget except for the technology updates and electrical which were over budget. Currently it is looking as if the building is \$200,000 over the estimated. Lindsay Szymczak, Senior Project Liaison, has instructed to reduce attempt to reduce this overage in any way possible. The build-out began in early November. They anticipate the upper floors to be completed by April/May 2024 and the first floor to be completed in May/June 2024. Estimated move remains the end of May or beginning of June 2024.

We have assigned "Move Coordinators" for each department (23 of them). The coordinators will be the department liaison all things related to on the move and will be helping get each department organized and cleaned up for the move. They have had their kickoff meeting and will meet regularly between now and the move. The list of move coordinators has been distributed to all staff in order for the staff to know who to contact with department-specific questions or concerns.

Ms. Szymczak, Ms. Dinkens and Ms. Culley are working on conducting an inventory of the furniture currently in the Summit building to determine what will be staying and to determine and what will be needed from our current building.

Currently, we are working with staff to dispose of unnecessary paper business records in accordance with our records retention policy. The ultimate goal is to be completely paperless, but, in the interim, we do not want to have to move or leave behind any trash or broken items, documents which are not required to be maintained and any donated items that have not been distributed.

### **ADVERTISING**

Working with partners at WTOL and Buckeye Broadband, LCCS conducted two successful digital advertising campaigns. The first, through WTOL, asked viewers to become foster parents. The campaign over-delivered on streaming commercials (finding a phone belonging to a person who matches our criteria. and sending the viewer the commercial). Our display ads did very well; people clicked on them at a better-than-average rate.

The second campaign was implemented through Buckeye Broadband. The campaign was targeted at college students informing them of career opportunities in child protection. It received more than double the national average of clicks, Most encouraging, the campaigns had 22 unique conversions ,15 of which came from inside Toledo. This means that 22twenty-two people viewed the campaign, and later came to our building. Distribution was also strong on several streaming services.

PCSAO recognized LCCS for its success in holding legislative ride-alongs. LCCS had three state representatives and a legislative aide join LCCS workers out in the field.

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**DONATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS**

The LCCS holiday gift drive is well underway. The iHeartMedia Toyathon Dec. 2 at the Franklin Park Mall resulted in nearly 300 toy donations. The WTOL-TV drive-thru drop-off event Dec. 7 proved to be another success with thousands of toys donated from throughout the community. The LCCS drive will receive about one-third of the stuffed animals donated by the annual Teddy Bear Toss held by the Toledo Walleye at a Dec. 8 hockey game. The Owens Corning gift drive netted 950 donations, including toys, coats, and winter gear. There are just over 40 other holiday drives occurring to benefit LCCS in Dec.

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**IN THE MEDIA**

|                                                                                |                                                                                                           |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| WTOL, wtol.com<br><i>The Blade</i> , blade.com<br>WTOL, wtol.com<br>BCAN, BCSN | National Adoption Day<br>(Randy Muth interviews)                                                          | 11-6-2023  |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                                                 | Gift of Joy kickoff (zoo)<br>(Julie Malkin live interview)                                                | 11-19-2023 |
| <i>The Blade</i> , blade.com                                                   | LCCS holiday gift drive begins                                                                            | 11-21-2023 |
| <i>The Blade</i> , blade.com<br>WTOL, wtol.com<br>WTVG, 13abc.com              | Community Bike Build<br>(Kevin Milliken interviews)                                                       | 11-26-2023 |
| YES-FM                                                                         | LCCS holiday gift drive<br>(Kevin Milliken interview)                                                     | 11-27-2023 |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                                                 | LCCS holiday gift drive toy room<br>(Kevin Milliken interviews)                                           | 11-27-2023 |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                                                 | Leading Edge: holiday gift drive<br>(Kevin Milliken interview)                                            | 12-3-2023  |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                                                 | Your Day: holiday gift drive<br>(Julie Malkin interview)                                                  | 12-5-2023  |
| WTOL, wtol.com                                                                 | WTOL drive-thru drop-off event<br>(Randy Muth, Julie Malkin, Kevin<br>Milliken interviews throughout day) | 12-7-2023  |

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There was no need for an executive session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Walrod.  
Seconded by Ms. Easterly.  
The meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Perryman".

Rev. Dr. Perryman  
Board Secretary