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**MINUTES OF LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD**  
**Regular Meeting Held November 15, 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:** Ms. Arnold, Ms. Gagnon, Ms. McCollough, Rev. Dr. Perryman, Mr. Ridi, Ms. Vasquez, and Mr. Walrod

**Member(s) Absent:** Dr. Cowell, Ms. Easterly, and Mr. Schinharl

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Ms. Vasquez called the November 15, 2023, regular meeting of the LCCS Board to order. Roll Call was taken. A quorum was present.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES**

- Laurie Crouse – Fiscal Manager
- Kelly Veler – Information Processing Release
- Leanna Tatum – Security
- Nicole Mallory – Family Visits
- Tonya Brecht – Family Visits
- Nickolaus Keller – Programming
- Joshua Lawless – Caseworker Trainee Graduate
- Deanna Moyer – Caseworker Trainee Graduate
- Joshua Shoemaker – Caseworker Trainee Graduate
- Michelle Thornton – Caseworker Training Graduate
- Danielle Gregory – Family Visits
- Brittany Dorn – Account Clerk
- Kourtney Kelly – DFS Supervisor
- Terrie Janowski – Records Clerk
- Amy Miller – Caseworker Trainee
- Sierra Avalos – Caseworker Trainee
- Katie Henderson – Caseworker Trainee

**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//23)
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and additional finance documents attached (12//23)

Ms. Vasquez asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Arnold made a motion for approval. Ms. Gagnon 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:**

Shelby Cully gave a brief update on the Summit Street building. The lease has been signed, and the preconstruction has begun. The contracts and subcontracts for the construction and moving company have been finalized. LCCS has gone through the current building and the new building to determine what furniture is needed and what LCCS will need to bring over. The building committee meets regularly to ensure this move will be successful and timely. As of now, the move dates look to be May of 2024.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- The budget Presentation was given by Sam Olaniran. PowerPoint was presented. Ms. McCollough made a motion to accept the 2024 budget. Mr. Ridi seconded. All in favor
- Resolution 0923 regarding the purchase of a 2024 Van was voted on and approved. Ms. Arnold made the motion to approve, with Dr. Rev. Perryman seconding the motion. All board members were in favor.
- Resolution 1123 regarding the donation account was voted on and approved. This resolution would allow \$40,000 to buy Christmas presents for children in care. Ms. Gagnon made the motion to approve, and Ms. Arnold seconded. The board unanimously voted to approve.
- Dress Code Policy 493 was brought before the board. This policy will be attached to the minutes. This will require employees to dress in business appropriate attire. Ms. McCollough motioned to approve this policy, and Mr. Walrod seconded the motion. The board unanimously voted to approve.
- Social Media Agency Use Policy 1001 was brought before the board. The policy will be attached to the minutes. Dr. Rev. Perryman motioned to approve this policy, with Ms. Arnold seconded. The board unanimously voted to approve.
- Social Media Personal Use Policy 1005 was brought before the board. This policy will be attached to the minutes. Ms. Arnold motioned to approve this policy, with Mr. Walrod seconded. The board unanimously voted to approve.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The December Board Meeting was voted on to move the Board meeting up a week to accommodate the holidays. All board members voted to move this meeting to December 13, 2023. This meeting will take place in the CLC.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Executive Director Report—Randy Muth**

## LCCS Child Placement Statistics

|                          | Current Month | Previous Month |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Agency Foster Homes      | 301           | 311            |
| Subsidized Adoptions     | 1,146         | 1,154          |
| Purchased Boarding Homes | 170           | 194            |
| Institutions/Group Homes | 28            | 27             |
| Relative Placement       | 473           | 476            |

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTIVITIES

### Calendar Year 2024 LCCS Operating Budget Approval

Throughout the past three meetings, the Finance Committee has reviewed the proposed budget and how the budget, if approved, would affect our ten-year projections based on three alternative sets of assumptions:

- Worst of the realistic scenarios
- Administration's Best guess
- Best of the realistic scenarios

After much discussion, on Tuesday, November 7, the Finance Committee voted to recommend to the full Board that the proposed CY 2024 budget be approved as drafted.

### Placement Crisis

PCSAO has taken a leadership role in attempting to 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.

However, PCSAO has described this as more of a "treatment crisis" rather than a placement crisis. They say this because approximately 25% of the children that come into the custody of a child welfare agency do so primarily due to mental health, developmental disabilities or, autism, or juvenile justice diversion rather than some form of abuse or neglect.

We know that the children who come to us with mental health issues as the primary risk factor are presenting with more complex needs and are further into dysfunction than before the pandemic. Unfortunately, the Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Juvenile Justice systems are facing significant challenges in meeting the needs of these families. Some of these challenges include:

- A national youth mental health crisis exacerbated by COVID

- Lack of staffing in the mental health field overall and facilities in particular
- Deinstitutionalization in other systems over decades: reduction in child psychiatric hospital beds, move to community-based services in DD, reduction in juvenile incarceration
- Lack of treatment/therapeutic foster homes willing to take placement of older children with complex trauma and acute behaviors – this is particularly problematic in Lucas County
- Hospital “boarding” issues: children wait days/weeks/months in ERs because psych beds are filled, and children in those beds have nowhere to step down
- Youth in residential are not stepped down when therapeutic goals are met
- Lack of mental health parity in insurance
- A lack of community-based alternatives to residential treatment

Ohio's child welfare agencies are often viewed as the system of last resort. Our enabling statute, R.C. 5153.16, states that ". . . the public children services agency shall . . . cooperate with, make its services available to, and act as the agent of persons, courts, the department of job and family services, the department of health, and other organizations within and outside the state, in matters relating to the welfare of children. . . ." Therefore, when other systems fail, it becomes child welfare's legal obligation to step in and make its services available to these families. This is why, on a statewide level, we have seen between 500 and 800 youth each year spend at least one night (oftentimes more than one night) in the lobby of a child welfare agency.

Regrettably, the State did not take an interest in addressing this placement or treatment crisis until the creation of the new Department of Children and Youth formed by the passage of the State's biennial budget bill (HB 33) in July of this year.

At the request of the new Department, a workgroup of child welfare professionals came together under the direction of PCSAO to develop State-level strategies to address this crisis. Those strategies include:

- Establishing short-term, crisis stabilization beds
- Provide concrete, tangible support to PCSA staff when children are sleeping at the agency.
- Expedite the review and decisions for the State-level MSY program.
- Conduct a residential capacity study to determine if Ohio has enough beds for the need and if the beds are appropriate for the need.

The recently appointed Executive Director of the new Agency, Kara Wentz, attended two informational sessions with this workgroup of child welfare professionals in August and September. She received the information presented above.

At the invitation of PCSAO, Director Wentz attended the last PCSAO Trustees meeting held on October 4 to update the Trustees on the progress the State is making to define and address this crisis. Director Wentz participated in a further update session with PCSAO Trustees on November 6, 2023.

Director Wentz stated that the new state department intends to move forward quickly with short-term solutions such as:

- Data review with state care team and master facility planning

- "Bed board," which is an online residential bed registry intended to facilitate timely admission to facilities with available beds. The tool would be maintained in real-time and would permit agencies to search possible placements based on availability and acceptance criteria
- Telehealth
- Substitute pool," which would be state-level employees who could assist PCSAs when a child is sleeping at the agency.

Unfortunately, PCSAO and directors in the field advanced none of those solutions. Nevertheless, the Director stated that she is open to other supports ("menu services," as she termed it) that are needed. We, again, emphasized the need for:

- crisis stabilization services & supports (including beds),
- a residential capacity study,
- DYS/courts to be part of the state care team and solutions,
- Respite options
- Leveraging the capital budget to provide additional funding to local agencies in fiscal crisis
- State support for the solutions that those of us in the field believe will most likely address this crisis.

Based on my participation in these state-level discussions, I believe 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 will likely be available to us.

### **Social Services Leadership Team**

Chanda Beal, formerly the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) manager, has been promoted to Director of Social Services. Her promotion is part of an integrated strategy designed to implement comprehensive adjustments in clinical service delivery necessary to rapidly and urgently respond to the placement crisis facing LCCS.

Ms. Beal, as the Director of Social Services, will oversee and direct the day-to-day operations of the four social services departments: Assessment, Family Services, Family and Community Engagement, and Placement.

This will free up time for Donna Seed, as Deputy Director, to focus on identifying the underlying causes influencing the below metrics:

- Why LCCS has 40% more children in care in comparison to its historical average
- Why LCCS has 63% more children in care per 1,000 of the base population than the State average
- Why LCCS has the second highest rate of custody when compared to population than any other metro or major metro county in the State
- Why LCCS length of stay has increased compared to LCCS historical averages and exceeds the current State average.
- In consultation with the DEIS office, why LCCS had pronounced disproportionality at many decision points in the child welfare system, impacting overall custody numbers

Once those underlying influences have been identified, Ms. Seed will implement the necessary service delivery adjustments and ensure that those adjustments are being implemented as intended. Further, she will work with the Case Review and Quality Assurance departments to determine whether the adjustments have the desired effect. She will implement the appropriate course corrections with exceptional dexterity if they are not.

Amy Galvan, current Manager of the Family Services Department, has requested, and I have approved, a lateral transfer to fill the position vacated by Chanda. This means that we must post and select a manager for the Family Services Department before Amy transfers over.

### **“In Their Shoes” Ride-Along-Campaign**

LCCS again participated in the PCSAO initiative, “In Their Shoes,” to familiarize our State and federal leaders with the issues affecting child welfare in Ohio. The first of these ride-along took place on October 10, when we welcomed Erica Krause, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown’s Northwest Ohio liaison. Ms. Krause wanted to see programs like Ohio START in action, so after Ms. Krause and I had a brief meeting, caseworker Shawn Myers took Ms. Krause on a home visit, followed by a tour of Empowered For Excellence and then went to the Halo Project House to see two clients and tour of the facility. Ride-alongs also occurred with State Representatives Josh Williams, Elgin Rogers, and Michelle Grim. Thank you to caseworker Myers for being an outstanding ambassador for this agency.

### **DONATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS**

LCCS holiday gift drive officially gets underway on November 17 alongside WTOL and iHeartMedia. The following collection events are scheduled:

|                    |                |                          |                                |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Saturday, Nov. 18  | evening        | Live Music event         | Leroy & Margarets (Toledo SBH) |
| Sunday, Nov. 26    | 10 a.m.        | Community Bike Build     | Jerusalem Twp. Fire Dept.      |
| Saturday, Dec. 2 1 | 0 a.m.-2 p.m.  | iHeartMedia Toy-a-thon   | Franklin Park Mall             |
| Monday, Dec. 4     | 5-7 p.m.       | Caregiver Holiday Party  | Toledo Zoo                     |
| Thursday, Dec. 7   | all day        | WTOL Drive-thru drop-off | WTOL parking lot/studios       |
| Friday, Dec. 8     | 7 pm Teddy     | Bear Toss                | Toledo Walleye hockey game     |
| Saturday, Dec. 9   | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | Shred-for-a-Toy          | Monroe St. Burger King         |

The toy room will open Monday, Nov. 27. There have been a number of early donation drives/deliveries in order to stock the toy room in its first week of operations. If you come in contact with anyone wanting more information on the gift drive, please send them to: <https://lucaskids.net/holiday-gift-drive>.

LCCS is nearing the fourth anniversary of its partnership with Connecting Kids to Meals. Caseworkers have delivered more than 15,000 nutritious and shelf-stable snack bags provided by CKTM since an experiment started in December 2019. CKTM has used the partnership to obtain grants to cover the cost since its inception. On the LCCS end, not only do the snack bags help families, but they also help to get the caseworkers in the door to check on the well-being of the children served by the agency.

The East Toledo-Oregon Kiwanis Club made ten care bags for children LCCS serves at its October monthly meeting. The bags are part of a year-long, statewide project by the Ohio Kiwanis president to help foster children. The local club bought the ingredients for the bags then invited LCCS to give a presentation on foster parenting and the agency’s prevention work.

LCCS has distributed more than 200 winter coats so far this fall to children on caseload. The majority of the coats came from an Ohio Governor's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives partnership with Operation Warm. Others were leftovers from last winter's donations. Efforts are underway to obtain hundreds more coats to keep kids warm during the upcoming winter months. Every donated coat saves LCCS voucher dollars for other programs and projects.

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**IN THE MEDIA**

|                                                |                                                          |            |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| WTOL, wtol.com<br><i>The Blade</i> , blade.com | LCCS Trunk or Treat                                      | 10-14-2023 |
| <i>The Blade</i> , blade.com                   | CASA Courage Awards<br>(two LCCS caseworkers honored)    | 10-18-2023 |
| Toledo Area Parent                             | Joys of Toys toy drive<br>(City of Toledo SBH toy drive) | 10-21-2023 |

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Ridi made a motion to go into Executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Ms. Arnold seconded the motion.

Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Dr. Cowell, Ms. Easterly, and Mr. Schinharl.

Ms. McCollough made a motion to come out of Executive Session. Mr. Ridi seconded the motion.

Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Dr. Cowell, Ms. Easterly, and Mr. Schinharl.

There was no business coming out of the executive session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Vasquez  
Board Chair