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**MINUTES OF LUCAS COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES BOARD**  
**Regular Meeting Held May 15, 2024**  
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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. Gagnon, Ms. McCollough, Mr. Meyer, Rev. Dr. Perryman, Mr. Ridi, and Ms. Vasquez

Member(s) Absent: Ms. Easterly, Mr. Schinharl, and Mr. Walrod

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Dr. Cowell called the May 15, 2024, regular meeting of the LCCS Board to order. Roll Call was taken. A quorum was present.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES**

- Kristen Straffolino – Clerical Assistant
- Madison Rivera – Clerical Assistant
- DeShanna Alexander – Fiscal Manager0

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA AND APRIL LCCS BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Dr. Cowell asked if any items would be removed from the Consent Agenda. None were removed.

Dr. Cowell read the Consent Agenda into the minutes:

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Minutes from April 17, 2024, LCCS Board of Trustees Meeting
- Services and Programs Meeting Minutes (5/1/24)
- Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes (5/6/24)
- Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and additional finance documents attached (5/7/24)

Dr. Cowell asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Vasquez made a motion for approval, which Mrs. McCollough seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Building Update:**

Mr. Muth gave a building update. Last month the state couldn't give with certainty a move in date with regards to the state network. With Ms. Cully's advocacy they said that the network would be up and running by the first move date of June 13<sup>th</sup>. The third-party moving company that has been chosen will be dropping off move crates and a packet to everyone along with a welcome mat on the first day in the new building. These should make the move quick and smooth. LCCS anticipates moving 360 people in a staggered schedule. With the move LCCS anticipates that Family Visits and Case Reviews will be down about five working days. Any questions regarding the move should be brought to Ms. Cully or Ms. Dinkens.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- None

## CHAIR'S REPORT

Dr. Cowell has been coming to this building since 1976, even before it was inhabited by Lucas County Children Services.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### LCCS CHILD PLACEMENT STATISTICS:

|                          | Current Month | Previous Month |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Agency Foster Homes      | 328           | 308            |
| Subsidized Adoptions     | 1,118         | 1,120          |
| Purchased Boarding Homes | 195           | 189            |
| Institutions/Group Homes | 16            | 17             |
| Relative Placement       | 377           | 396            |

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTIVITIES

The LCCS directors team is working to gather information about the agency to submit to the Citizens Tax Levy Review Committee. This group screens requests to the county commissioners to place tax issues (levies) on the November ballot.

LCCS has written and submitted four grant applications to the One Ohio Recovery Foundation, hoping to receive a share of this year's disbursement of opioid settlement money. Lucas County is set to receive \$2.4 million of the \$51 million that will be available statewide. The four grant proposals total nearly \$2.1 million worth of funding requests over a three-year grant period.

DFS supervisor Kari Vebenstad received the Ohio START Supervisor of the Year award at the recent Ohio START Summit. Kari was recognized for her outstanding leadership in how her casework team interacts with substance abuse-involved families.

## Levy

The LCCS Directors' team is working to gather information about the agency to submit to the Citizens Tax Levy Review Committee. This group screens requests to the county commissioners to place tax issues (levies) on the November ballot. We spent \$1.75 M in placements in April. That is about \$150,000 more than we used in our levy projections and about \$320,000 over our monthly budgeted amount. This caused some concern (as it should) with the Finance Committee yesterday. It is important to understand that trends in our field, especially in placements, are not set on a monthly basis. There are many factors that impact our month placement costs. Nevertheless, the Finance Committee was concerned that the 1.5 mill increase would not be sufficient if placement costs continue to rise at the same rate which they have over the last 2.5 years. That is a legitimate concern.

Our levy projections built in this uncertainty by seeking a funding increase sufficient to sustain 7.5 years of solvency assuming placement costs peak at current levels and increase at a rate consistent with normal inflation (3-4%) and contemplating a straight renewal of our 1.85 mill, 10-year levy in 2027. It is that upcoming levy that is the safety valve in case placement costs have not peaked. If they have not, we will have opportunity to correct at that point. Further, we will have twice as much actual experience with

FFPSA then as we have now and we will have a better idea as to whether the local and state mitigation strategies have been effective and, if so, to what degree.

I have calculated how much placement costs could rise with us still being solvent by the end of 2027. Those calculations are reflected in the attached spread sheet. Even if placements rise by 17.25% each year until 2027, we should be okay.

### **OhioSTART Supervisor of the Year – see attached pictures (I'm not a professional photographer)**

DFS supervisor Kari Vebe stad received the Ohio START Supervisor of the Year award at the OhioSTART Summit held in Columbus last week. Kari Vebe stad holds natural leadership skills and has always been passionate about serving families affected by substance use. She has been a frontline worker at Lucas County Children Services for 20 years, most of those years spent as a caseworker. Kari was frequently encouraged to step into supervision but continually decided to remain a caseworker because she enjoyed the direct connection, engagement, and proximity to the families and children she served. One year ago, she made the decision to move into a supervisory position. After only a few short months of moving into this role, she was asked to take on the supervision and further development of the Ohio START Program.

Kari and her team exhaust every possible support to maintain families together while they work towards recovery. She advocates as fiercely for the families she serves as she does her staff, dedicating herself during and after business hours to helping her team. She works tirelessly to ensure her dyads are cohesive and that all voices are heard.

Building strong community relationships is important to Kari, and she often travels to educate about Ohio START and learn about other entities serving the community. Because of these relationships, her agency has been able to secure two Memorandum of Understandings and collaborate to ensure that families are receiving the intensity of treatment they need at the front door.

Kari continues to move the START program forward at the county level and has tackled some difficult community challenges with ease. Her talents and skills are not only evident to her county agency, but also to her state partners. She was nominated to, and now serves on, the leadership council.

### **Diversity Committee**

The DEIS team is starting a Diversity Committee. Within this committee, we will have Employee Resource Groups/Teams that will create safe and brave spaces to discuss topics which are of importance to the Committee and to generate, process and implement ideas on how to enhance our practices. Individual members will select the team they most relate to and will be free to join that team if they choose. The Resource Groups will discuss a variety of topics, produce strategic initiatives within their teams, and share them with the committee, creating a culture where everyone's voice is amplified in the workplace. Understanding that people feel free to be their authentic selves when they are in safe spaces.

Administration, in partnership with the DEIS department is committed to making the agency a safe space in which our employees can be their whole selves. Part of the mission of this committee will be to amplify the voices of those unseen, unheard, and underrepresented. The Committee will also strive is to bring us all together under a collective voice.

## OneOhio Grants

LCCS submitted four grant proposals before the deadline to Region 4 of OhioOne. I would like to recognize the expertise, insight, input, creativity, and cooperation of the staff during this most challenging process. I would like especially to recognize and thank Kevin Milliken for all his hard work in preparing the grants and his invaluable grant writing experience and technical expertise. We literally couldn't have done it without him. Based on informal discussions I've had with my peers and PCSAO, most county pcsas didn't submit any proposals and those that did, only submitted one.

The total funding available in Region 4 this cycle is \$2,407,572.32. We submitted four proposals totaling nearly \$2.1 million. Which means that if all our proposals were funded, there would only be approximately \$300,000 for everyone else. Here's a breakdown of our proposals:

|               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Prevention    | \$390,795.62          |
| FSE           | \$695,704.15          |
| KSI           | \$804,838.06          |
| DEIS          | \$200,000.00          |
| <b>TOTAL:</b> | <b>\$2,091,337.83</b> |

There's a four-step review process ahead, however, no timeline has been provided as of yet:

1. Regional grant review committee
2. Expert panel review
3. Grant oversight committee review
4. OneOhio Board of Directors approval

What we do know so far is:

- \$51 million available in 2024 (\$2.4 M in Lucas County)
- 19 regions
- 1,530 grant applications statewide by 797 organizations
- 48% of proposals seek to serve multiple regions
- 415 (25+%) of the proposals requested \$100,000 or less

It sounds like this is going to be pretty competitive. Nevertheless, below is a brief summary of the four proposals:

### Prevention – Three Years, \$390,795.62

Hiring a second prevention caseworker whose caseload would consist of opiate-involved mothers and their babies using. This case worker would employ similar interventions and strategies that exist for Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) referrals in marijuana-related cases. The new caseworker will be involved in implementation and service delivery of preventative, supportive and interactive interventions and establishing a Plan of Safe Care for each opiate-involved family. She would also employ a collaborative approach to prevention services planning among the family, Lucas County early childhood providers including Help Me Grow, other child and family serving organizations, Lucas County Family Council and LCCS. This partnership will advance an approach to utilize the family's

protective factors to address needed services and supports with the goal of reducing risk and maintaining safety while allowing the family to remain intact

### **Kinship Supports Intervention – Three Years, \$804,838.06**

Hiring two kinship specialists to administer a new Kinship Supports Intervention (KSI) program to manage more kinship caregiver families within the agency. The kinship specialists will have an ongoing case management relationship with kinship care families to ensure children of opiate-involved families have a stable and supported placement. These Kinship Supports Intervention specialists would ensure that kinship caregivers have the support they need to meet the child's physical, emotional, financial, and basic needs. It is essential that kinship caregivers are supported in order to connect with appropriate community resources (including financial resources) for the sake of maintaining placement stability. They would complete individualized plans for kinship caregivers which focuses on case management activities, addresses topics such as financial assistance, referral services, and training for kinship caregivers. The plans would also incorporate information from tools such as the home assessment and needs assessment and be reviewed and updated regularly. Face-to-face, monthly home visits with a kinship specialist would serve as an opportunity to establish trust between the kinship caregiver and specialist in order to promote more effective communication, education, assessment, planning, and support for the family.

### **Family Search and Engagement – Three Years, \$695,704.15**

Hiring a dedicated Family Search and Engagement (FSE) Specialist and entering into a contract with Kinnect to Family Coach to provide Kinnect to Family Coach. The FSE specialist would lead intensive efforts to locate and engage a child's relatives and the contracted Family Coach would provide crucial guidance and support to caseworkers navigating the family finding process. This partnership would collaborate with Ohio START and Ohio Youth-Centered Permanency Roundtables (YCPRT), facilitated through Kinnect to Family. This two-prong approach would involve a youth directly in placement decisions, while widening the search for relatives who can handle or support such a kinship placement. In sum, a youth would remain with family, while a relative support network is arranged to strengthen the extended family dynamic. Integrating Kinnect to Family and Ohio START presents an unprecedented opportunity to develop a more impactful approach to supporting affected families, leveraging resources and expertise to address their diverse needs.

### **DEIS – Three Years, \$200,000**

If funded, LCCS would contract with the Haywood Burns Institute (BI) to conduct an 18-month Structural Well-Being Framework process in Lucas County to support the county's proposed transformation. The process will include a multimodal history of child and human service systems as well as a focused examination of the opioid epidemic and its outside influence and pressure on the county's child welfare system. Racial bias combined with personal and public attitudes toward substance abuse provide a challenging path to success for many families and especially children who, through no fault of their own, are displaced from the family setting. Therefore, transforming any child welfare system requires leaders and advocates who possess an informed understanding of the long history and complex contexts of child-serving systems is essential to mitigate the devastating effect the opioid crisis has had on families of color in Ohio. Through these lenses, community partners and stakeholders can examine what exists to develop guides on how to disrupt policies and patterns that harm individuals and families. The intended

beneficiaries of this program would be opioid-involved families with a concentration to eliminate disparities that negatively impact families of color.

### **Open House Event for the New Building**

We will be having an Open House at the new building for the staff, their immediate family and Board members on Monday, June 10, probably from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Since we won't be actually located in the building because it's after hours and because it is not owned by the Commissioners, we can also engage in levy fundraising activities. We will have a sign-up sheet for employees to agree to do committee activities, provide their private email address so that we can stay in contact, and we'll even have donated gift baskets for a silent auction that day.

### **No June Meeting**

Due to the fact that the next meeting falls on Juneteenth and is a holiday for us, and in light of the move, the Board agreed to consolidate the June and July meeting to the July meeting. Therefore, the Board will not meet in June.

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### **DONATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS**

Unity Church held two Sunday collections for infant items to be donated to LCCS—diapers, wipes, Pull-ups, teething rings, pacifiers, baby wash, and clothing. Two carloads of donations resulted. This is an annual April project for the congregation.

Focaccia's sold blue cookies on Wear Blue Day as a fundraiser for Friends of LCCS and donated part of the proceeds: \$100. Glass City Federal Credit Union collected donations totaling \$125 for Friends of LCCS on Wear Blue Day. The Buckeye Broadband employee committee donated \$6,000 to Friends of LCCS, an annual contribution. All funds will be used for the upcoming backpack/school supply drive.

Rollad Allys employees in Temperance made and donated 25 hand-tie blankets for children LCCS serves. Those come from kits ordered from Columbus nonprofit My Favorite Blanket.

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### **IN THE MEDIA**

|                                 |                                             |           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------|
| WTOL, wtol.com                  | Child Memorial                              | 4-18-2024 |
| WTVG, 13abc.com                 | (Randy Muth interviews)                     |           |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com |                                             |           |
| <i>Toledo Blade</i> , blade.com | Isaiah House Kickoff Preview                | 4-21-2024 |
|                                 | (Donna Seed, Jennifer Bohnsack)             |           |
| YES-FM                          | Isaiah House Kickoff Preview                | 4-23-2024 |
|                                 | (Jennifer Bohnsack Interview)               |           |
| WTVG, 13abc.com                 | Isaiah House Kickoff Preview                | 4-23-2024 |
|                                 | (Jennifer Bohnsack & Donna Seed interviews) |           |
| WTOL, wtol.com                  | Isaiah House Kickoff Preview                | 4-24-2024 |
|                                 | (Jennifer Bohnsack &                        |           |

|                                   |                                                                                                      |           |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
|                                   | Rebecca Theis interviews)                                                                            |           |
| WTOL, wtol.com<br>WTVG, 13abc.com | Isaiah House Kickoff Event<br>(foster parent, Jennifer Bohnsack,<br>Ohio CYS Kara Wendte interviews) | 4-28-2024 |
| WTVG, 13abc.com                   | LMHA Housing for Emancipated<br>Youth (Dayna Riley interview)                                        | 5-2-2024  |
| Proclaim-FM                       | Community Action Day<br>(Shelby Cully, Rachel Gagnon,<br>Jennifer Bohnsack interviews)               | 5-3-2024  |

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A motion was made by Ms. McCollough to go into Executive Session to discuss a confidential case. Ms. Gagnon seconded the motion.

A roll Call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Easterly, Mr. Schinharl, and Mr. Walrod. The motion carried upon roll call vote.

### **OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION/OPEN SESSION**

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

A roll Call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Easterly, Mr. Schinharl, and Mr. Walrod. The motion was carried upon a roll call vote.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Ridi.  
Seconded by Ms. McCollough.  
The meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Cowell  
Board Chair