

## **Baltimore County Department of Social Services Board Minutes**

The meeting of the Advisory Board of the Baltimore County Department of Social Services was held March 20, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of the Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lisa Simon Jablon, Sheri Jackson; Vice Chair, Gregg Powell; Chair, Orrester Shaw and Rosalyn Wiley. Karen Bethea, Stefanie Bronson and Donald Gabriel attended via conference phone.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Gregory Wm. Branch; Director, Marsha Parham; Executive Director; Office of Housing, Mark Millspaugh; Deputy Director, and Kathy Wynn, Executive Secretary to the Director.

### **I. Reading and Approval of the Minutes**

**Motion: To approve the minutes of February 13, 2017 as presented.**

**Motion by:** Orrester Shaw  
**Second by:** Lisa Simon Jablon  
**Decision:** Unanimous Approval

### **II. Director's Report**

#### Benefit Programs

Food stamp caseloads are declining. Recipient count peaked at 115,000. As of February, we are at 94,000. This decline is a national trend, when the economy begins to improve caseloads go down. Another factor is the Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) work policy, the requirement to find work was waived for many years. The federal government required Maryland to reinstate in eight jurisdictions of which Baltimore County was a part of. Once reinstated, some ABAWD recipients did not participate and were no longer eligible.

#### Benefit Applications

The number of applicants coming in to apply for benefits has remained steady. Expedited food stamps remains the same at 1,550. Tdap went from 586 to 528. TCA is up from 1,009 to 1,076. The same number of individuals are seeking assistance, some are being denied or using benefits for a shorter term. Mr. Millspaugh is monitoring the data as it impacts how the department uses its resources.

We received notification last week that Maryland was recognized among a small number of states who has increased their participation rate in the food stamp program, now at 97%. This is attributed to changes in policy. The online application was created for individuals to have easier access to their benefits. At home telephone interviews have been allowed, as opposed to individuals having to travel to our offices.

Baltimore County is almost at 100% compliance in terms of processing benefits, 99.7% for expedited food stamps and 99.6% for TCA. Last year at this time we were at 96% TCA, 97.4% for food stamps and 98.9% for expedited food stamps. The department is servicing a large number of people and doing it well.

Communication to FIA staff during the height of the recession was that benefits should be processed accurately and on time. Now that caseloads are declining, we are broadening our customer service focus. By the end of June, all DSS staff will be trained in G.O.L.D. Standard Training.

### Child Protective Services (CPS)

The total number of CPS cases has remained relatively steady. In February 2016 there were 410 cases and as of January of this year the number of cases remains at 410. CPS tends to run in cycles. The high season is March, April and May, before school recesses for the summer, teachers reporting on the well-being of children. Another rush occurs when school begins in September. Cases are to be closed within 60 days once a child is seen. The department is challenged with closing cases, especially when the court is involved which prevents us from closing cases.

Baltimore County has the second highest caseload in the State for children that receive in-home services. A number of these cases are for substance exposed newborns. We try to keep the case number to 300. Cases are kept open for families who need continuing services. These children receive monthly visits from a social worker and also involve a family support worker who manages household needs, monitors safety and service plans put in place by the social worker. 40% of cases are alternative response, 60% are investigative response. There are also families that ask for assistance; these families receive assistance and their cases are opened as voluntary.

### Foster Care

As of this January, Baltimore County has 569 foster care placements. We are seeing an increase in challenging cases. Younger children are entering due to substance abuse, older children due to home behavioral issues which the caregiver has found impossible to manage.

It is the department's preference to keep youth with challenging behaviors (e.g. violent, fire starters) within Maryland but there are not enough facilities in the State that handle these behaviors; facilities that can provide one on one or two on one support 24 hours a day.

Dr. Branch and Ms. Schagrin will be travelling to Boston at the end of the month to visit a facility where one of our foster youth is located. Mr. Millspaugh provided an overview of this case with board members.

Mr. Millspaugh will ask program directors to attend this meeting periodically to speak in-depth about their programs.

### **Office of Housing**

The Office of Housing is operating under a Continuing Resolution. Anticipated budget approval in late April 2017. During this period, we are operating at 94% of 2016 HAP expense. Significant cuts to the HUD budget are anticipated with the new administration; predicting it will equate to an estimated 200,000 vouchers across the country. The Office of Housing is working as forecasted prior to the election.

#### Waiting List Purge

The waiting list purge process was changed following feedback from the last board meeting. Anticipating the process to be complete by the end of the month. Ms. Parham will report to the Board in April as to the number removed.

#### Administrative Plan

The proposed 2017 Administrative Plan will be presented to HHS Executive Management for review and comment no later than April 10. The finalized document will then be presented to the Board for review and approval. The public hearing will be held in conjunction with the Office of Planning the first week in May.

#### Upgrade Software System

There have been prior discussion about implementing portals for landlords to receive their remittances via direct deposit. A first run check for this will be done in May. The Office of Housing sends out over 2,000 checks a month. Direct deposit will be a requirement for landlords.

#### Legislative Session Update

Mr. Millspaugh thanked the Board for their support regarding HB697 – Child Abuse and Neglect Statewide Reporting 2-1-1 Maryland. All 24 jurisdictions opposed and the bill was pulled.

Additional information has not been received regarding HB 1147 – Youth Services Bureau budget appropriation.

### III. New Business

A resume for board candidate was reviewed by the Board. Does this individual bring a skillset the Board needs? Individual to be vetted by this office and brought back to the April meeting for further discussion/determination.

Dr. Branch wants to get the word out to faith-based institutions regarding the Department of Health's spay/neuter program and for a cost of only \$20.00. Included in this cost is a Rabies vaccine, other vaccines, deworming, a microchip and a County license. For constituents living in specific zip codes, it is free. The Board discussed the possibility of producing a three to five minute video for Animal Services.

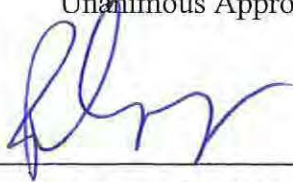
### IV. Remarks of the Chairperson

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The next meeting of the Board will be held on April 17.

### V. Adjournment

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

**Motion by:** Lisa Jablon  
**Second by:** Orrester Shaw  
**Decision:** Unanimous Approval



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Gregory Wm. Branch, M.D., MBA, CPE, FACP