

Baltimore County Department of Social Services Board Minutes

The meeting of the Advisory Board of the Baltimore County Department of Social Services (DSS) was held February 11, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of the Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Gregg Powell, Chair; and Lisa Simon Jablon. Members attending via phone were Dr. Bronson, Don Gabriel, Sheri Lumsden and Dr. Wiley.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Karen Bethea and Justin Jackson.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mark Millspaugh, Deputy Director and Kathy Wynn, Executive Secretary to the Director.

I. Reading and Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of January 14 will be approved at the March meeting.

II. Director's Report

Employee of the Year

The DSS employee selected for Employee of the Year for 2018 is a social worker in Children's Services, Brittany Call. Ms. Call carries a full case load, participates on a number of committees, including the Labor Management Committee which represents employees with the union. She will be recognized at the All Staff Meeting on February 27. Board members are welcome to join us. There will be three different sessions, early, mid-morning and afternoon. Exact times will be forwarded to board members.

Leadership Development Initiative (LDI)

Maryland Department of Human Services requested applications for its fifth LDI. The LDI program identifies and develops future leaders. DHS receive over 100 applications each year, only 30 individuals are selected. We have been fortunate to have a number of employees attend in the past few years. This year's selection process is different in that applications went directly to DHS and we were only notified of finalist candidates. We have two employees that are finalists for this year's program, Erika Lee who is a supervisor in the Independent Living Program and Tracey Bosik who is a supervisor in Child Protective Services.

Having staff selected for this program is important for accreditation as leadership development is a standard requirement. Ms. Jablon suggested sending a letter to the editor to the local media regarding this accomplishment. Mr. Millspaugh will ask the communications team to follow up with the County Executive's office. Employees are recognized internally via HHS News.

Budget

The Governor's budget has been submitted. It includes a 3% COLA for state employees. It does not include employee step increments. All programs appear to be funded. We are moving ahead with maintaining current programs.

County Budget

We met the mark for the County budget and then were asked to submit hypothetical budgets that would include reductions. This has been submitted; we met targets without negatively impacting our operations. Mr. Gabriel asked about immigration in the County, has the student population grown and if DSS services have been impacted.

Mr. Millspaugh stated that a number of public assistance benefits have requirements that the recipient has to be a citizen or legal resident alien. Illegal immigrant children are eligible to attend school. DSS does not see the same burden as the public schools as illegal immigrants are not eligible for most DSS benefits. We have served that community in our Child Protective Services and foster care programs. We have not seen much in adult services. This population does not drive any significant volume of workload for DSS.

Mr. Gabriel asked if the new County Executive has made any decisions that would impact DSS. The County Executive's transition team has been meeting for a few months, the final report is due the end of the month. Recommendations from this report will be a future topic for this board.

Potential Government Shutdown

The last shutdown did impact us significantly in terms of workload. This time federal agencies that suffered from the last one have put in place what their plans will be if the government shuts down next week and how we would continue to offer benefits for March. Dr. Wiley asked if DSS has received feedback regarding families running out of food. DSS is currently not receiving a large number of phone calls. It's anticipated we may start to receive next week as benefits were issued January 17.

The State is coming up with a plan to issue March benefits in a way that does not cause a long wait. They may issue March benefits all at once as opposed to issuing by last name. There are emergency food funds that flow through grants to States and DHS is moving those out to the Maryland Food Bank and other large non-profits that run food pantries. We also included a request to the general public to make donations to their local food pantries.

The housing voucher program was also affected by the government shutdown. The Office of Housing received the full February allotment. The office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has put processes in place to make certain March and April funds are received.

MD Think

The State is moving at a faster pace with more intensive requirements for employees to participate. We have about nine employees who are involved either one or two days a week. One employee participates three days a week and the contractor is asking them to commit additional time. Participants state CJAMS is a major improvement over systems we have in place now.

Legislation

A bill that DHS is focused on that impacts the department has to do with safe haven babies. There was a law that went into effect many years ago that allows parents to voluntarily give up custody of a child within a certain time frame with no questions asked. There are advocates that have raised issues of father's rights regarding this law. The current law is silent regarding this. If this happens at a hospital, we have information regarding the father/family resources. If a child is dropped off by the mother, it is difficult to identify other family resources. This bill would make us pursue the father and provide a certain amount of time to claim his rights as a parent. This bill was drafted by DHS attorneys. We are supportive of this bill.

Another bill not sponsored by DHS but will impact us is when a substance exposed newborn case gets reported. If the mother or caregiver is addicted to opioids, it would require them to download an application on their phone that would be used to check in with DSS on a periodic basis. If they do not check in when that periodic check is to occur, we would be required to rush out and check on them. We are not supportive of this bill.

III. Old Business

Board Membership

The Board is short two members which include Mr. Jackson's appointment. Mr. Millspaugh met with his leadership team on Friday and informed them we are looking for additional board members; he is also talking to other individuals who have antennas out in the community. He does not anticipate immediate feedback from this process.

Regarding current members whose terms are due to expire this year, Mr. Millspaugh would prefer to stagger this process. Per Maryland code, Human Services 3-501 "*At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is appointed*". Input from the Board is welcome. If members know of anyone who would be interested in serving on this Board, living or working in the County please let us know. If they work in and are committed to the County, they would be considered for an appointment.

For members whose term is ending and who are interested in staying involved with this department, there is a Board of Health. Dr. Branch and Mr. Millspaugh to speak with members individually regarding their terms and potential interest in other boards. Ms. Jablon and Dr. Wiley expressed interest regarding other boards.

IV. New Business

None

V. Remarks of the Co-Chairperson

The next meeting of the Board is March 18, 2019.

VI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:49 p.m.

Motion by: Ms. Simon Jablon
Second by: Dr. Wiley
Decision: Unanimous Approval



Mark Millspaugh
Deputy Director