

**King and Queen Department of Social Services
King and Queen CH, VA 23085
Advisory Board Minutes
May 24, 2022**

Present

Angie Alley, Vice Chair
Bette Albert, Member
Betty Dougherty, Director
Maddie Kieffer, Administrative Programs Assistant II
Brittany Lawson, Program Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Angie Alley.

Public Comment Period

There was no one present for public comment.

Consent Agenda

The January 25, 2022 and March 22, 2022 meeting minutes, statistical reports, and the Directors report were included in the consent agenda. There were not enough Board members to approve the Minutes; Agenda was tabled for the July meeting.

Director's Report

Child Abuse Prevention Awareness

April was Child Abuse Prevention Awareness month. On April 1, we dressed in blue across the nation. We displayed blue pinwheels at all 3 schools and here at the courthouse. Each pinwheel at the courthouse represented a referral that we received regarding the abuse and/or neglect of a child in our County. In FY 21, we received 106 referrals. We held a training event planned here at the Courthouse on Tuesday April 26. The training was on Collaborative Problem Solving and our goal was to help provide professionals with tools to share with parents that may need help in understanding and managing their child's challenging behaviors. We had a good turnout for the event and the consensus was that the training was very helpful in their work with children and families. Some of the organizations that participated plan to coordinate with the trainers from United Methodist Family Services to bring the more extensive training to their location for their staff.

Child Placement Crisis in Virginia

Over the past 2-3 years a placement crisis has slowly developed and is now growing across Virginia. Social Service agencies are creatively housing foster children that no foster family, group home, residential facility will accept. These children are living inside of local departments, in motels, and in rental homes with 24 hour supervision being provided by a minimum of 2 local department personnel at all times. In some cities and counties children live inside of a local department or at a motel for several months despite the agencies' diligent efforts to find a place that would accept them and be able to meet their needs. This search for a placement also extends to other states.

This past year, over 150 children ages 7-17 in foster care in Virginia were caught up in this type of situation. We have not yet experienced this in our County but it could happen at any point in time. Across the state, we are seeing a growing trend of children being placed in foster care due to their parents being unable to manage them rather than allegations of the parent abusing or neglecting them. This is especially true of adolescents.

The Virginia Department of Social Services is making efforts to assist local agencies in identifying and developing resources but, ultimately the legal responsibility for foster children lies with the locality. The Governor announced on April 1 that he is putting together a task force called the "Safe and Sound Task Force" to find solutions to this issue. I would love to report that I have a brilliant plan for us if this were to happen in King and Queen but unfortunately I do not have one at this point in time but we are exploring our limited options.

Benefit Programs Unwinding

Throughout the pandemic several of our benefit programs were changed to meet the needs of citizens during that difficult time. SNAP benefits were maximized through emergency supplemental allotments. VIEW and TANF recipients (Employment Services) continued to receive benefits regardless of whether they were participating in employment activities to become gainfully employed. There is a mandate that Medicaid benefit cases could not be closed for any reason other than at the clients request, client leaves the state, or the death of the client. The Virginia Department of Social Services and the Department of Medical Assistance Services is preparing to launch what they are referring to as an unwinding of all of the emergency protocols put in place during the pandemic. We will begin planning meetings in May. In King and Queen, our agency will do all that is possible to minimize the negative impact on our citizens. We predict that the greatest impact will be experienced in losing the additional SNAP that citizens have grown to rely on over the past two years. We are gearing up to help them with this transition back to a new normal in benefit programs.

Foster Care and Adult Abuse Prevention Awareness Month

May is Foster Care and Adult Abuse Prevention Awareness month. We have a table in the courthouse hallway with educational materials on adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We need everyone's help in identifying, preventing, and stopping the abuse of our older adults. We

currently have 5 children in foster care and one young adult in the fostering futures program. While we strive to maintain children safely with their families, there are situations where foster care is the only option. During the month of April, one two month old infant came into foster care and was placed in a King and Queen County foster home licensed by our agency.

EnergyShare Program Update

Brittany Lawson briefly discussed the EnergyShare program which helps eligible clients pay their electric bill. This is a crisis based program which helps pay for wood, oil, natural gas, propane, kerosene, or electric; anyway a client heats or cools their home. The maximum allotment during the heating season is \$600 and the cooling season's maximum is \$300. Anyone under the age of 60 can be helped once a season, while those over the age of 60 can be helped twice a season. Applicants are interviewed, screened, and tracked to ensure timely pledges are made.

Yoots and Coots Update

Brittany Lawson was excited to talk about the Yoots and Coots event which will be help on Saturday August 6, 2022. This is a fun fishing event which targets children of a variety of special needs. Lanyards and shirts have been purchased for volunteers and donations for school supplies are being requested.

FY 23 Budget Presentation Follow-up

Since the last meeting, the Assistant Director position was approved for recruitment. Potential applicants are trained to do the duties of the Director.

Preparation for Social Services Board Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chairs from the Stevensville and Newtown districts are open and will be elected at the July 26, 2022 meeting.

Planning Future Meetings

In July, the Supervisors will present Team Reports, followed by a Safe and Stable Families "PSSF" presentation in September. November topics remain undecided. In July, Chair and Vice Chair will also be nominated.

Social Services Board Service Appreciation Celebration for Doris Morris

The Appreciation Celebration for Doris Morris was postponed until the July 26, 2022 meeting.

Adjournment

Angie Alley adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.