

Minutes
Commonwealth of Virginia
State Board of Social Services

Workforce Development Center
Norfolk Department of Human Services
201 East Little Creek Road
Norfolk, Virginia

October 15-16, 2008

Members Present

Trudy Brisendine, Shirley Culpepper, Brenda Hornsby, Michelle Larkin, Peppy Linden, Maggi Luca, Barbara Manuel, and Bela Sood

Members Absent

Danny Brown

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chairperson Trudy Brisendine.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair recognized Board members Shirley Culpepper, Brenda Hornsby, Peppy Linden, Maggi Luca, and Bela Sood and two new members Michelle Larkin from the Eastern Region and Barbara Manuel from the Piedmont Region. DSS staff introduced included Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Margaret Schultz, and Richard Martin. Al Wilson, Special Assistant Attorney General was also introduced.

Sharon Laisure, Interim Director of the Norfolk Department of Human Services, gave an overview of the City of Norfolk and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Management staff from the Norfolk DHS was introduced. Ms. Laisure stated the Norfolk DHS is very proud of its focus on community partnering for all services.

REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

Richard Martin, Manager of the Office of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs reviewed the meeting agenda. At the December 10-11, 2008 meeting the Board of Nursing staff will make a presentation on medication aides.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Status Of Regulations

Mr. Martin reported on the status of regulations as of October 15, 2008 and provided a copy of this report that indicated the unit of responsibility; periodic review schedule; current location and status. Sixty-six regulations are in place; 34 are currently active. Over the past several years DSS has streamlined the number of regulations

to 49. A copy of the report on regulations is attached to the official minutes housed in home office.

Hornby Zeller Workload Measures Study

A draft report was published in August of 2008 and presented by Erik Beecroft, Office of Research. The report updates a 2000 study conducted by Hornby-Zeller. This report not only contains data that will enable local agencies to count cases and staff but will provide the capacity to measure workload needs on an ongoing basis. Since caseloads and staffing resources change over time the most important information to be drawn from this study is the amount of time required to handle cases appropriately and the amount of time workers have to spend on cases. Non-English speaking cases were not included in the standard case calculation because they take three times as long to process.

Commissioner Conyers told the Board that in the short term, given the budget issues in Virginia, it would be difficult to address some of the staffing issues in our local agencies.

VIRGINIA SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLANNING

Dottie Wells, Director of the Division of Strategy Management and Research, is responsible for the development of a strategic plan for DSS. Ms. Wells updated board members on the status of the plan for fiscal years 2008-2013. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee oversees six goal-driven subcommittees. It is comprised of local agency directors, representatives from the Virginia Community Action Partnership and DSS staff. The Steering Committee and its subcommittees create the Virginia Social Services System Strategic Plan and monitor the social services system's performance. Details of these ongoing efforts at both the state and local levels can be found at <http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/smr/sp/index.html>.

Energy Assistance Program Update

Tom Steinhauser, Director of the Division of Benefit Programs, reported on the Energy Assistance Program. Mr. Steinhauser stated that between June and September of 2008 there have been 7,600 additional food stamp cases. Although there has been some streamlining with cases, additional federal requirements have been instituted.

There are four components to this program consisting of fuel assistance; crisis assistance; cooling assistance (mandated); and weatherization. Fifteen percent of the funding goes toward weatherization. There is no waiting list and all customers are being served.

COMMENT PERIOD

Public Comment

-Betty Wade Coyle commented on the Child Protective Services (CPS) regulation (22VAC40-705) which implements Abraham's Law. It is her belief and that of the

medical community, that this regulation will be difficult to implement. Many of the criteria contained in this regulation are objective and require substantial expertise. Ms. Coyle believes decisions concerning medical conditions should be made by a judge with a guardian ad litem.

Another gap in the CPS regulation concerns alternative treatments and Ms. Coyle suggests that there be a requirement that the child have follow-up treatment.

Ms. Coyle would like to know if Safe Haven is working since she has not seen any feedback.

Ms. Coyle also would like to know if the Putative Father Registry is working and whether it has made it easier to get children into the social services system.

Ms. Coyle is in favor of training and believes it is a huge factor in curtailing staff turnover. She stressed that it is very important that new workers get core training as soon as possible. She questioned whether it would be possible for the department to work with colleges/universities to prepare workers to be able to "hit the ground running".

She would also like to see more monitoring in the form of a publicized complaint process; more preventive measures to save money up-front; and asked Board members to please be aware of what local workers experience when dealing with the human element in their jobs.

-Edith Jones, Community Action Agency serving the Hampton Roads area, asked the Board not forget their existence and work in this area.

Local Boards and Directors of Social Services

Steven Blythe, Director of the Eastern Region, introduced the following directors of local agencies: Glenn Butler, Newport News Division of Social Services; Wanda Rogers, Hampton Department of Social Services; Doris Roberts, Chesapeake Bureau of Social Services; Steve Hawks, Deputy Director of Newport News Division of Social Services; Lawrence Owes, Franklin City Department of Social Services; Cathy Pemberton, Essex Department of Social Services; Pamela Barton, Isle of Wight Department of Social Services; Rusty Jordan, Portsmouth Department of Social Services; Mary Parker, Accomack Department of Social Services; and Richard Sterrett, Northampton Department of Social Services.

Mary Parker, Accomack, spoke about the social worker licensure. Her concern is the amount of education required to become licensed. This is an issue with Accomack because of its geographical location being separated from mainland Virginia by the Chesapeake Bay. She also has concerns about unregulated vendors charging energy assistance customers a higher amount than their regular pay customers.

Pam Barton, Isle of Wight, talked about customers affiliated with the different branches of the military and how it complicates the delivery of services.

Wanda Rogers, Hampton, made complimentary comments on training, particularly the DSS Leadership Academy. She also stated that the Council on Reform has renewed our energy by focusing on how local agencies can use data. It has helped us keep our minds on the fact that Virginia is a leader in getting better outcomes in foster care.

Doris Roberts, Chesapeake, reported that on October 14, 2008 the first comprehensive plan for children was adopted by the Chesapeake City Council. This plan will be made available if anyone would like to see it. The Tidewater area has been working closely with the military which has been extremely innovative in prevention efforts in the Tidewater area.

Richard Sterrett, Northampton, talked about budget shortfalls and stated that he has two positions in jeopardy because of federal funding issues.

Local Boards and Directors of Community Action Agencies

Comments provided during public forum.

Virginia League of Social Services Executives' (VLSSE)

Sarah Snead, President, reported on leadership changes made in July within the League. Ms. Snead talked about the pressing need for all levels of government to work together in these times of financial reductions.

Ms. Snead expressed the League's appreciation to the Commissioner, J. R. Simpson, and other state staff who worked on the financial situation. Commissioner Conyers assured her that state staff would continue to be at the table working on financial issues during these turbulent times. The Fall VLSSE Conference will be held at the Holiday Inn-Roanoke Valley View on November 12-14, 2008.

Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP)

Jim Schuyler, Director of VACAP, introduced members of the community action agencies who were in attendance.

The "Earned Income Tax Credit Grant" was a topic Mr. Schuyler spoke about. He stated that most applications include participation with other agencies, including local departments of social services. VACAP's goal this year is to educate the public about who might be eligible. Some Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) coalitions are providing financial counseling. The demand for services exceeds their ability to provide all that is needed. Goals are being set and in the process working with other civic, education and government agencies.

Mr. Schuyler reported that Kenneth Ackerman, Project manager for Virtual CAP, has received a grant to work on strengthening the community action agencies. For more detailed information on Virtual CAP and its history go to www.Virtualcap.org.

Commissioner's Report

Consolidation Study: Commissioner Conyers reported that this study was mandated by the General Assembly during its last session. Local social service agencies that serve a population of 20,000 or less are the focus of this study. Nineteen local agencies are currently consolidated in Virginia. Even in localities that are not consolidated there is a lot of interaction occurring. The Commissioner does not believe there is a huge financial incentive with consolidation but more on the plus side of integrated services. Much more interaction can occur with combined staffs.

Local Board Training: The *Code of Virginia* provides for the local administration of public assistance and service programs under state supervision, creating the common phrase, "state supervised, locally administered." Commissioner Conyers stated that some local boards of social services and their members do not understand whether they operate as an administrative or as an advisory board and have not been apprised of their legal responsibilities. A detailed training outline was distributed.

Financial Report: Budget letters have been distributed to local agencies for the next state fiscal year (SFY10). A projected two percent cost-of-living raise will be withheld.

The page showing the details of the Governor's FY 2009 Budget Reduction Plan was distributed. This plan reflects a ten percent reduction and details where funds will be taken to cover the DSS shortfall. Commissioner Conyers wants everyone to know that FY 2010 will be tougher financially than FY 2009. The Governor's FY 2010 budget will be released in December. This reduction plan will most likely see state agencies sharing administrative functions in such areas of human resources, a leaner leadership team that can be more efficient in decision-making situations, and possibly a grants unit.

Committee Reports

Committee on Adult Issues: There was no report due to the absence of Danny Brown.

Committee on Children's Issues: Ms. Hornsby, Chair reported that this was the first meeting of this committee. Paul McWhinney reported that there were no specific recommendations for assistance from the Board in kicking off the child & Family Services Review (CFSR). Mr. McWhinney shared goals of transforming the child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) into a stakeholder group responsible for addressing a broader range of issues related to transformation of the child welfare system. Discussed the Structured decision Making model (SDM) and some of the

challenges in adopting the model throughout the state. Ms. Hornsby shared that hopefully the Board can be more involved in discussions of future consideration of this model. Discussed the federal mandate for monthly visits for children in foster care and current challenges of budget constraints and caseloads. Ms. Hornsby shared an interest in the Board receiving reports on success of local departments who have creatively used "authorized visitors" for completing home visits that may not currently be used by other departments. Questions were raised about completion of the permanency regulation. The Board will be updated during the meeting tomorrow.

Committee on Poverty Awareness: Ms. Luca, Chair reported that the National Governors' Association awarded Virginia with a grant to fund a 2009 Summit On Poverty. The summit will be held in the spring.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Mr. Culpepper) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to approve the Minutes from the August 20-21, 2008 meeting. Motion carried with all in favor with one abstaining (Ms. Linden).

Discussion: none

2009 Meeting Schedule

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Linden) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to adopt a schedule to meet in Richmond for the February 18-19; April 15-16; and June 17-18, 2009 meetings, and at the April meeting make a decision where the remaining 2009 meetings will be held on August 19-20; October 14-15; and December 16-17, 2009. Motion carried with all in favor.

Discussion: In lieu of holding all 2009 meetings in Richmond, the Board reached a compromise to hold the first three meetings of the year in Richmond and at the April meeting reflect on the financial situation to see if it would be advisable to hold two of the remaining three meetings in regions.

Ms. Brisendine raised the question of whether Board members should be traveling to attend other meetings across the state. Mr. Culpepper feels it would be inappropriate to travel and that materials and minutes from meetings should suffice. Mr. Martin suggested that board members could take advantage of events and meetings in their area and share information with other members. Consensus was that this would be a good idea.

Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month Resolution

Ms. Linden, Board Secretary, read a resolution to designate February as Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month in Virginia.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Luca) and seconded (Mr. Culpepper) moved to adopt a Resolution that the State Board of Social Services does hereby commend all eligibility workers across the Commonwealth of Virginia for a job well done and recognizes the month of February, 2009 as Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month, calling upon Virginians to join in acknowledging their public service and contributions. Motion carried with all in favor.

Ms. Brisendine presented the resolution on behalf of the Board to Arlene Hamilton of the Benefit Programs Organization (BPRO). Copy of the resolution attached to the official minutes housed in the home office.

Discussion: None

22 VAC 40-630-10 et seq. General Relief program Disability Advocacy Project. ON MOTION DULY MADE (Mr. Culpepper) and seconded (Ms. Sood) moved to approve the proposed regulatory package to repeal 22 VAC40-630, General Relief Disability Advocacy Project for publication in The Virginia Register subject to approval under the provisions of Executive Order Number 36 (2006) and to approve the fiscal impact analysis of this action for distribution to local boards of social services pursuant to § 63.2-217 of the Code of Virginia. Motion carried with all in favor.

Discussion: Ms. Brisendine asked Mr. Wilson if this regulation changes anything. Mr. Wilson responded that this repeal would not change the substance of the regulation, but would move the regulation to a different section of the Code of Virginia.

Auxiliary Grant Portability Study.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Sood) and seconded (Mr. Culpepper) moved to Approve the submittal of the Auxiliary Grant Portability Study Report to the General Assembly and Governor. Motion carried with one dissenting vote (Ms. Linden).

Discussion: Margaret Schultz presented this study along with Karin Clark (DSS) and Michael Shank (Mental Health, Retardation and Substance Abuse) via a teleconference. Ms. Luca asked about the benefit of doing this successfully. Mr. Shank answered with his knowledge of the Wisconsin project. Many additional details need to be worked out. It is noted that this document does not include all the implementation factors – it is a feasibility study and a plan. The department was directed to do this study in January by the 2008 General Assembly, prior to the current budget crisis. When and if this study will be implemented is still in question. A copy of this report is attached to the official minutes housed in the home office.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Overview of the Division of Benefit Programs

Tom Steinhauser reported that the Virginia Initiative Not Welfare Program (VIEW) ranks first in the nation in its placement program and second in job retention. He also reported that the Food Stamp Program has been reauthorized. Mr. Steinhauser reported that Benefit Programs staff supports the VLSSE financial Services Subcommittee on an as-needed basis. The Benefits Program Steering Committee could be reactivated, depending on the financial situation and if the Board so wishes.

September saw the full use of the debit card for TANF. Ms. Linden asked how this was working. Mr. Steinhauser responded there are some administrative issues but overall it seems to be going very well.

RECESS AT 4:25 P.M.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2008

Board Member Comments

-Ms. Brisendine recently appeared on Channel 10 (public broadcasting station) where she talked about social services in Virginia. She feels this exposes our programs to a great number of citizens. Ms. Brisendine highlighted preventive measures and reflected on the funds that were available in the 1960's and how that bubble has now burst. She commented on the financial "bail out" and how many times priorities are swayed from the more important issues of food and hunger in America.

-Ms. Sood shared her positive impressions of the Norfolk Agency and its successful Work Force Development Center. She questioned how we (Virginians) could create a good work force despite the financial cuts. She believes a good work force is very important and offered her assistance in this area.

-Ms. Linden gave positive comments on the number of local directors in the Eastern Region who attended.

-Ms. Manuel shared statistical information on the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) collections. She recently attended a meeting at the Bedford County Sheriff's Department relating to this program. Since she is a new member this served as an excellent opportunity of orientation to the DCSE program.

-Mr. Culpepper thanked the Commissioner and all staff for their hard work.

-Ms. Luca was impressed with the one-stop shopping feature of this building housing the Work Force December Center and the Department of Health.

-Ms. Larkin shared her passion for youth mentorship and will be glad to assist in this capacity.

Norfolk's Prisoner Re-entry Program

Jill Baker, Programs Manager for Special Projects, gave a presentation on this program. In July 2003 the National Governors Association announced Virginia as one of the seven states to participate in Prisoner Re-entry Pilot Program. Since that time, the goal has been to develop effective prisoner re-entry strategies to reduce costly recidivism rates by improving pre- and post-release services. In 2006 Governor Kaine signed Executive Order 22 establishing pilot programs within Virginia.

The Commissioner shared his perspective on the prison population in the United States. Seventy percent of prisoners have children for which they are responsible for child support while incarcerated. Twelve thousand are coming out of Virginia's jails and prisons each year.

Status Report on the Establishment of a Regulation for Permanency Services

Paul McWhinney, Director of the Division of Service Programs, reported that he plans to have the permanency regulation ready for the Board's action at its February 18-19, 2009 meeting. Ms. Sood and Ms. Hornsby volunteered their assistance to get this regulation moving. Virginia ranks as one of the worst in the nation in permanency services and Ms. Brisendine is very focused on getting this regulation established. She asked Mr. McWhinney why this regulation has been before the Board three times and has not advanced. Mr. Wilson answered this with (1) first the Governor had cost issues; (2) General Assembly stated we could make no changes to the Adoption Program; and (3) the biggest problem has been the costs associated with the regulation, such as once a month visits.

Report on Prevention Services

Mr. McWhinney reported that the purpose of Virginia's prevention programs is to intervene early in the lives of children and youth enhancing protective factors and improving childhood outcomes. Some of these programs are Healthy Families; Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF); and projects funded through the Office of Family Violence. Virginia has 38 local programs serving 87 cities and counties in Virginia and one state level contract with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia.

Report on Child and Family Services Review

Mr. McWhinney reported that the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) has two parts: a statewide self-assessment and the on-site review. The on-site review will take place the week of July 13, 2009 in three localities across the state. Fairfax is the largest metropolitan area so it is automatically selected. The remaining localities will represent an urban locality and a rural locality from across the state. The monitoring unit is currently evaluating eight departments as potential sites.

2009 Legislative Proposal Update

Mr. Martin shared a detailed update on DSS's initial 15 legislative proposals. This update is effective as of October 14, 2008. A copy of this document is attached to the official minutes housed the home office.

Legislative Studies Update

Mr. Martin reviewed two study reports that have been submitted to the General Assembly and the Governor: *Annual Report on Human Research State Fiscal Year 2008*; and *Implementation of a Screened Family Day Home Provider Registry*.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

NONE

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

December 10-11, 2008 Prince Edward LDSS
February 18-19, 2009 Richmond Home Office

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Ms. Brisendine thanked the Norfolk Department of Social Services for hosting this meeting and in particular Ms. Jan Callaghan, Programs Manager, for her special assistance; Jill Baker for her special presentation; Steven Blythe for his efforts in having the Eastern Region so well represented; Commissioner Conyers for his support; and all state staff who attended and presented.

Adjournment

11:25 a.m.

Submitted by:
Phyllis Dalton
October 21, 2008