

**Board Retreat**  
**Capital One West Creek Town Center**

**September 29-30, 2005**

Attendees:

Julie Christopher  
Nettie Simon-Owens  
Peppy Linden  
Trudy Brisendine  
Maggi Luca  
Bela Sood  
Mark Johnson  
Ben Owen

DSS Staff

Richard Martin  
Pat Rengnerth  
Commissioner Conyers  
Bo Harris

Absent

Marilyn Rigby  
William Mitchell  
Danny Brown

Chairman Christopher welcomed members, staff, presenters and the facilitator to the Board's first Retreat. A brief bio and presentation follows:

**Facilitator**

***Marge Connelly***, Executive Vice President  
Corporate Reputation and Governance  
Capital One

**Presentations**

***Mark Johnson***, Director of Lynchburg Social Services provided an overview of the Strategic Plan goals.

***Wallace Bo Harris***, Chief Operations Office for VDSS spoke on the System. Topics included the National and State context; state structure; and primary programs and performance.

## **Board Work**

Below is a list of actions that will require some direct action on the part of the Board (either specific members, or the Board as a whole):

### **1. Create a list of priority issues and map it to Board meetings**

What? We decided that we wanted to be more proactive and purposeful about identifying priorities and focusing more of our meeting agendas on these specific issues. They would be determined by considering issues that are high on the public agenda, high on the legislative agenda, areas where specific gaps or concerns have been noted and / or issues for which regulations will have to be reviewed or developed.

Who? Julie will work with Richard to develop a draft. She will then present this draft to the full Board and solicit their input.

When? We hope to have the draft ready for review by the next Board meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **2. Ensure that the State is taking a holistic and comprehensive view regarding poverty and is taking appropriate actions**

What? The news reports from Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina have raised awareness of the impact and implications of poverty throughout the country. We want to ensure that, here in Virginia, we have a clear understanding of this for our state, that our policies and investments are appropriately addressing it and that we have the right metrics and review process in place. We also want to ensure that we learn all we can from the Katrina experience and create capabilities that lessen the impact of poverty during emergency situations.

Who? Trudy will put together a subcommittee to discuss this topic further and make recommendations. Peppy will be on this subcommittee as well as two other Board members (TBD). The recommendations that come out of this group could include a request to create and publish an annual report, to hold an annual summit or to perform a specific stuffy, to name a few.

When? TBD

### **3. Assign Social Services Board members to other committees as required**

What? There are a few other committees (e.g., The Child Day-Care Council, Child Protective Services Out-of-Family Investigations Advisory Committee, Strategic Planning, Child & Family Welfare Review, and Child Welfare Advisory Group) that are suppose to have members of the Social Services Board on them but currently do not.

Who? Julie will work with Pat to put together a list of committee needs and will circulate that to the Board and request volunteers.

When? By the next Board meeting

#### **4. Increase knowledge of other departments, organizations, and agencies that play a role in social services**

What? Because Social Services is really about a broad and complex “system” that involves different organizations, it is important that the Board have a reasonable understanding not just of the Department of Social Services, but of other major contributors and the system as a whole. To accomplish this, other departments and organizations will be invited to present at Board meetings, as appropriate, based on the priority issues list. They will be asked to include in their presentations some information about training, about their customer (if appropriate, to bring a customer to the meeting to share their experiences first hand) and particular programs which could act as a role-model for success.

Who? Once the priority list has been established, Julie will work with staff to identify pertinent groups and include them on the schedule.

When? On-going, with new approach in place by beginning of '06.

#### **5. Encourage all Board members to increase their knowledge of the local environment and our clients' experiences**

What? Even though we are focused on state-wide policy, we all recognize that the actual services are delivered locally. Therefore, knowing what really happens when the “rubber hits the road” and understanding the opportunities and challenges of the local departments is extremely important to us. Rather than creating a one-size fits all program for all Board members, we are asking that each of us take steps to build up knowledge and awareness ourselves. This can be done in a number of difference ways, including:

- Attending local training programs
- Attending the Fall and Spring League Conferences
- Meeting individually with local directors, visiting offices, etc.
- Reading books (*Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich ) and articles

Who? Everyone, individual choices. We will also provide some time at Board meetings to share some of your observations.

When? Ongoing

#### **6. Ensure that training and change management are appropriately addressed**

What? Changes to regulations and the implementation of new programs can only be effective if staff and the public are appropriately trained. Ensuring that staff develop essential competencies is also important. In some instances, the regulations reviewed by the Board include the establishment of specific credentialing and training requirements. To ensure that the appropriate actions and investments are occurring in this arena, the Board will review the training and change management activities associated with all regulations and programs that are discussed at our meetings.

Who? All Board members

When? On-going

## **7. Ensure a smooth succession of the chair role**

What? There will be a learning curve for any new chair, but this can be shortened and continuity better ensured by planning for a succession. This will be done by having the current chair make a list of her activities as well as a list of key relationships.

Who? Julie

When? By the end of her term

We also developed a number of requests for the Department of Social Services staff, namely:

- To put together and present a review of “case-load” metrics at an upcoming meeting – current measures, comparisons to other states, differences between areas, etc.
- To look at the implications of a major emergency event on social services and extract learnings from Katrina
- To graphically depict what the broader social services system looks like, identify potential redundancies, dependencies and synergies
- To create PSA’s and other promotional materials to support priority programs as specifically requested by the Board
- To enhance the web-site and create tools to further support public comments
- To explore the possibilities of using State Colleges and Universities (in particular, any policy institutes) to perform studies to support Board work around priority issues
- To provide a presentation on current training and change management activities within the department
- To ensure that training is one of the items addressed in Board documents regarding regulations

The Commissioner and staff will review these requests and will get back to the Board with specific commitments or alternative suggestions.

Finally, one recommendation, namely, that all programs include some measure of client satisfaction in their performance metrics.