

**Kent County**  
**Family & Children's**  
**Coordinating Council**



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**KCFCCC Meeting Minutes**

April 16, 2002, 12:00p.m. – 1:30p.m.

Kent County Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

Kent County Administration Bldg., 300 Monroe, NW

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**Members/alternates present:** Susan Broman (and Christine Nelson), John Cole (for Andrew Zylstra), Sandra Davis (for Tom Czerwinski), Beverly Drake, Lynne Ferrell (for Milton Rohwer), Karl Hascall, Debra Holmes Garrison, Bonnie Huntley, Linda McDonald, Patti Nussbaum, Cathy Raevsky, Jack Roedema, Diana Sieger (and Wendy Jackson), Mike Weiler, Mary Alice Williams

**Members absent (with no alternate present):** Ruth Buntin, Candace Cowling, William Forsyth, Marvin McKenzie, Miles Murphy

**Others present:** Bethanie Archbold, Mary Swanson (staff); Board Chair Steven Heacock, Sharon Parks (guest speakers); Brittany Barber (student representative); Lou Barnes, Lynn Heemstra, Kathy Humphrey-Vaughn, Sharon Loughridge, Mark Olthoff, Kate Scheid

**I. Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of Agenda**

Diane Sieger opened the meeting at 12:10pm and welcomed the participants. She issued a special welcome to the two guest presenters: Board of Commissioners Chair Steven Heacock and Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services. There were no changes to the agenda.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Debra Holmes Garrison moved to approve the minutes of the previous Council meeting. Mary Alice Williams supported. Motion carried.

**III. Special Presentation: Task Force on Health Care for People of Color**

Ms. Sieger introduced Board Chair Heacock, who thanked the Council members for their work on behalf of families and children in Kent County. He stated that he had established the Task Force on Health Care for People of Color to examine the reasons for the shocking disparities in health outcomes between minority populations and the majority, and to develop recommendations for what the County can do to impact these outcomes. He stated that the members of the Task Force had produced great work in a short time, and gave special thanks to Beverly Drake for her leadership of the Task Force.

Mary Swanson reviewed some of the statistics that show the disparities in health outcomes for people of color. She stated that the group spent some time brainstorming possible ways to impact the statistics, then met again to group and prioritize them.

Ms. Drake presented the findings and seven recommendations of the Task Force. She stated that the goal of the Task Force was to create doable recommendations that could be implemented in a three-year pilot project. She stated that the Task Force emphasized the need for a specific

person or persons within the County structure to be accountable for ensuring that the recommendations are implemented.

Cathy Raevsky presented the resources required to implement the recommendations. She stated that the Task Force was insistent that the County recognize and support existing efforts in the community, rather than create duplicative systems. For this reason, many of the projects will be initiated using an RFP process and using County funds to leverage private dollars.

Ms. Raevsky stated that the Board of Commissioners accepted the recommendations on March 28, and has already designated \$500,000 for a three-year pilot project. She stated that the Health Department is in the process of hiring a coordinator who would place his or her full focus on the project.

Lynn Heemstra asked what the role of the coordinator would be in regard to the clinics. Ms. Drake replied that the coordinator would work to identify and implement strategies for better communication and coordination of services between clinics, both to improve access for those who don't currently access the system, and to improve case management for those who may be served by two or more different sites.

Ms. Sieger stated that Delta's involvement would help ensure good measurement of the Task Force's progress. Ms. Drake added that the purpose of doing the project as a three-year pilot was to be able to evaluate its effectiveness.

Susan Broman asked whether the Task Force would remain in place to oversee the implementation. Ms. Swanson replied that several members of the Task Force were assisting in the implementation, and that the whole group would be reconvened periodically.

Ms. Williams stated that she would be interested in periodic updates about the progress of 211. She expressed concern that the community may be relying on 211 too much, and that the community should also consider barriers to people accessing and using information and referral services. She stated that while 211 is important, the community must be careful not to see it as a panacea, but instead consider multiple methods for getting information out to citizens.

Ms. Drake stated that the Task Force expressed the need to use non-traditional methods, such as churches, laundromats, beauty shops, and barbers, for spreading the word about services.

#### **IV. Special Presentation: TANF Reauthorization**

Ms. Sieger next introduced Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services. Ms. Parks stated that the League is a statewide nonprofit organization with approximately 1800 members which focuses on research and analysis of human services issues, particularly those that relate to low income people. She stated that she had been asked to speak to the group about the Temporary Assistance to Need Families (TANF) funding.

##### **A. Current State of TANF Funding**

Ms. Parks stated that TANF was established as part of the 1996 Welfare Reform package, which moved from an entitlement program to a state block grant (TANF). TANF funding was fixed for five years, based on the 1994 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) caseload, and required a state match. The four purposes of TANF are to:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that the children may be cared for in their homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Ms. Parks noted that that cash assistance caseloads have declined dramatically since even before welfare reform. As TANF funds are fixed, this originally meant that the State was in the position of deciding how to spend large TANF surpluses, and was in fact warned by the federal government to spend the money or lose it. Rather than increase the base assistance, the State used the surpluses for one-time expenditures, including summer programs, IDA's, prevention programs, and before- and after-school programs.

Ms. Parks noted that since 1999, there have been a series of enacted tax cuts, and as State money for programs was phased out, it was in many cases replaced by TANF money. Ms. Parks directed the Council's attention to the March 2002 MLHS briefing, *TANF Supplantation of State General Fund Dollars*, which outlined the history of TANF replacement of State general fund/general purpose spending. She stated that by 2002, 20% of the TANF block grant had been used to supplant State spending in existing programs. She questioned whether the federal government would allow this to continue.

#### B. Future of TANF

Ms. Parks stated that with the carry forward funds now expended toward one-time programs and a large portion of TANF funds used to supplant State funding in other areas, TANF is now facing the pressure of increasing caseloads due to the mild recession. Congress will have the opportunity to address these issues with the reauthorization legislation. Ms. Parks stated that Congress must reauthorize TANF funds by September 30 for the block grant to continue, and that debate is currently in progress. She stated that key issues include the level of funding (the presidential proposal calls for the funding to be frozen at the current level, i.e., no inflationary increase) and work requirements (Michigan currently requires up to 40 hours; the president's proposal calls for a required 40 hours, not including education or training).

#### C. Opportunities for Action

Ms. Parks suggested the following ways to get involved:

- 1) Talk to legislators – Ms. Parks distributed a list of legislators, and suggested that anyone who has concerns to contact their legislators. She stated that the reauthorization process is expected to move quickly through the House, but slower through the Senate.
- 2) Stay informed – Ms. Parks stated that anyone who is interested can get on the MLHS TANF email list by contacting [pruark@mianet.net](mailto:pruark@mianet.net). Updates are also posted on the MLHS website, [www.milhs.org](http://www.milhs.org).

Karl Hascall asked why the proposal disallows education from being counted toward work requirements. Ms. Parks stated that there has been a growing mindset to “get tough on work,” to ensure that everyone who can work does. She stated that as long as we have had a good

economy in Michigan, this has worked, but only by increasing the number of individual who work in the low wage (average \$7/hour) market. She stated that as a result, we have had a lower caseload, but families are still poor. However, now that the economy is in a mild recession, the caseload has begun to rise again. Ms. Parks suggested that the way to draw families out of poverty long term is to assist parents in increasing their skill level and their employability. She stated that the State legislators are beginning to understand this relationship, but the federal legislators still have an unrealistic expectation that they can reduce the caseload to zero.

Ms. Sieger asked whether there was research linking training and education to long term self-sufficiency. Ms. Parks replied that there was evidence that training results in greater job retention as well as a higher income, and that there was even greater evidence that a combination of employment and training leads to increased income and job stability. She stated that the main concern is that many of the families lack the social support network necessary to balance long hours of work, plus education and family requirements. She stated that the drop out rate is higher among individuals who must also balance work and family.

Lynn Heemstra asked what programs may be cut. Ms. Parks stated the FY 2002-2003 Executive Budget recommendation calls for a reduction in the yearly Children's Clothing Allowance, elimination of the Before and After School programs, and cuts to the fatherhood initiative and Community Services block grant funding. She stated that the recommendation is based on the assumption that State funding will remain constant, and that the State will be refunded 90% of the money that was withheld in penalties for its failure to implement a centralized child support system. Ms. Parks stated that there are no guarantees that the child support system will be certified, or that the State will receive a refund. She stated that relying on the refund does not address long-term funding concerns.

Ms. Sieger thanked Ms. Parks for her excellent presentation.

#### **V. Covenant on Racial Justice**

Mr. Hascall presented the Covenant on Racial Justice for the Council's action. He stated that the Covenant was created by the government task force of the Racial Justice Summit, and has been adopted by several governmental units. He moved that the Council adopt the Covenant for Racial Justice. Ms. Williams supported. Motion carried.

#### **VI. Executive Committee Vacancy**

Ms. Williams moved that Candace Cowling be appointed to the Executive Committee to fill the vacant consumer/advocate position. Ms. Drake supported. Motion carried.

#### **VII. Committee Updates**

Ms. Sieger thanked the committees for their hard work, and directed the Council's attention to the enclosed written updates. She stated that we would have verbal updates from the committee at the June meeting.

#### **VIII. Updates & Administrative Items**

##### **A. Revised FY2001 SF/SC Annual Report**

Ms. Archbold directed the Council's attention to the revised report, which replaces the older version in Council binders. Ms. Sieger stated that anyone who did not have a binder could pick one up in the back of the room.

**B. SF/SC Multi-Year Planning**

Ms. Sieger reported that committee had almost finished its work. Final recommendations will be brought before the Council for its action June 4.

**C. Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms**

Ms. Sieger directed Council attention to the Conflict of Interest disclosure forms, and asked Council members and alternates to fill them out and return them to Ms. Archbold prior to the June 4 Council meeting.

**IX. Other Community Information & Updates**

Ms. Heemstra reported that the Expanded Learning Opportunities initiative has created a survey tool to gather information for mapping enrichment opportunities for youth. She asked that anyone who receives the tool to please fill it out and return it. She stated that the goal of the mapping was to create an up-to-date, regularly maintained central database for analysis, planning, and outreach. She stated that the City of Grand Rapids would be passing a resolution of support for the project on April 30.

Ms. Sieger asked whether appropriations would be attached to the resolution. Ms. Heemstra replied no.

Mr. Hascall reported that the Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth was accepting applications for Executive Director. Anyone interested should contact him at 531-8600.

**X. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:30pm. **The next Kent County Family and Children's Coordinating Council meeting will be June 4, 2002, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm at the Kent County Health Department, 700 Fuller, N.E.**