

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



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KCFCCC Meeting Minutes

September 3, 2002, 12:00p.m. – 1:30p.m.
Kent County Health Department
700 Fuller Avenue, NE

Members/alternates present: Nanaruth Carpenter, Sandra Davis (for Tom Czerwinski), Lynne Ferrell (for Milton Rohwer), Debra Holmes Garrison (and Barbara Terry), Paul Ippel, Marvin McKenzie, Christine Nelson (for Susan Broman), Patti Nussbaum, Cathy Raevsky, Diana Sieger, Mike Weiler, Mary Alice Williams, and Andrew Zylstra.

Members absent (with no alternate present): Ruth Buntin, Candace Cowling, Beverly Drake, William Forsyth, Karl Hascall, Linda McDonald, and Miles Murphy

Others present: Bethanie Archbold, Mary Swanson (staff); Joyce Bos, Kathy Humphrey Vaughn, Nick Koster, Richard Ney, David Schroeder, and Kristine VanVonderen

I. Welcome and Approval of Agenda

Diana Sieger opened the meeting and asked the members to introduce themselves. She welcomed Paul Ippel, the new Director of Kent Community Mental Health and a new member of the Coordinating Council, and stated the Council's appreciation for the many years of service of Bonnie Huntley, who was enjoying her well-deserved retirement. There were no changes to the agenda.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mike Weiler moved to approve the minutes of the previous Council meeting. Sandra Davis supported. Motion carried.

III. Emergent Issue: Recent State Actions Impacting Perspective 21! Early Impact

Ms. Sieger stated that the primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss recent State actions that would negatively impact the Perspective 21! Early Impact program. She invited Andrew Zylstra to provide an overview of the threat.

Mr. Zylstra stated that Perspective 21! Early Impact was a community collaborative created by the community after a child died five years ago. As a result, several community partners formed a partnership with FIA to develop a program to ensure that every call to child protective services would receive an investigation, and those with unsubstantiated claims but at high risk for future maltreatment would be offered treatment services. He stated that at the time, a study conducted by the American Human Society had estimated that at least 50% of clients whose referrals had traditionally been screened out needed and would accept services. He stated that the actual number of families requesting services exceeds that estimate.

Kent FIA has been notified that as part of the State's personnel plan in the wake of retirements, Kent FIA will lose all five of its Prevention positions. These are the positions that provide the in-home investigations, risk assessment, and intake functions of the program, before families are referred to the provider agencies for services. He stated that if these positions are eliminated the program will be negatively impacted, not only due to the loss of the experienced FIA staff who serve that role, but also as the service would have to be purchased from existing program funds. As a result, if the positions are not reinstated, the community will have to decide whether to reduce the level of service to families or to deny some families service.

Mr. Zylstra stated that he has appealed the decision to Jim Nye at the State FIA, requesting that the Prevention workers be reinstated. He stated that he was bringing this information before the existing funders (Grand Rapids Community Foundation, United Way, Community Mental Health, and the KCFCCC) and provider agencies so that they can begin the discussion about what to do if the appeal is denied.

Ms. Sieger stated that the State's decision could have a serious negative impact on this unique public-private partnership. She stated that in the past, the State FIA had showcased the program as a shining example throughout the State, yet was now pulling away from its commitment to the partnership.

Mary Alice Williams added that in addition to the immediate crisis, an issue has persisted for several years that the agencies' costs are fast outdistancing their reimbursement rate for the service. She stated that the agencies have a strong commitment to providing this necessary service, but that they are facing increasing difficulties making up the shortfall, and may have to back away if nothing is done to resolve the issue. She stated that if current funds are redirected to cover the investigation/assessment/intake function, the result will be a serious cut in services to families.

Ms. Sieger also noted that the community has a prevention plan that outlines the importance of prevention as an investment in reducing future costly problems. She stated that in addition to the over \$400,000 in community funds provided by organizations which are members of the Council, the Council itself allocates approximately \$360,000 in CP/CP and SF/SC funds to the program. She asked whether, considering the considerable commitment and funds provided to the program by the Council and its members, the Council was interested in playing some role in advocating for a resolution to the problem.

Mary Alice Williams stated that based on the KCFCCC's Family and Children's Services Plan, which emphasizes the cost-savings and social benefits of prevention and calls for consistent, long-term funding for prevention services, she moved that the Council authorize the Chair to speak on behalf of the Council regarding the negative impact that eliminating the Prevention workers will have on families, and to urge FIA to resolve the issue. Sandra Davis supported.

Ms. Nelson asked what the advantages and disadvantages were for Ms. Sieger to serve as spokesperson for the Council, considering that she was both Chair of the Council and President of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Ms. Sieger replied that she was unsure; the dual role could strengthen the Council's position.

Ms. Archbold suggested that multiple voices from Council members would be more effective than relying on the Chair alone. She stated that Kent FIA has offered to share information about the issue with Council members for their use when discussing the issue.

Motion carried.

Ms. Sieger stated that this action does not negate the long-standing issue of the unit rate provided for services. She stated that this issue must still be addressed.

Mr. Zylstra stated that the trend has been to expect more and more from private agencies. He stated that the State sets the unit rate, and the non-profit agencies have had to raise the extra funds. He stated that Kent County should look on the success of private agencies in filling this need as an asset to the community.

Ms. Williams noted that as the difference between the cost of service and reimbursement rates has continued to increase while the economy has worsened, private agencies have faced a more difficult task in raising the funds.

IV. Community Indicators

Ms. Sieger invited Barbara Terry to provide an overview of the Community Indicators initiative. Ms. Terry introduced David Shroeder of FIA to speak on the topic.

Mr. Shroeder reported that a group of representatives from several agencies and collaborative groups had been meeting for several months to create a process for identifying shared community indicators. The purpose of the project was to build on existing efforts to develop shared indicators of the well being of the community.

Ms. Terry invited the Council members to attend any of three upcoming community sessions to provide input on the indicators. She stated that the group was interested in learning what indicators the community considered useful and relevant. She stated that the five topic areas were:

- Health & Well-Being
- Safe Homes & Neighborhoods
- Education & Development
- Economic Well-Being
- Social Capital/Cultural

Ms. Terry stated that defining community indicators would be the first step. She stated that the next step would be to look at existing program and community data to see how they fit with the shared indicators. She stated that the purpose was not to create any new structures or change program performance indicators, but instead to see how they fit together.

Mr. Shroeder stated that the initiative was more focused on the process than the product. He stated that the goal was to provide opportunities for community members to provide input and help create shared indicators that could serve as the barometer of well-being for the community, building off of current structures such as the Delta Strategy report card. He stated that Grand

Valley State University's Center for Philanthropy will play a primary role in data collection and analysis.

Ms. Sieger stated that the GVSU Center for Philanthropy Community Research Institute fills a vital role in the community by serving as a central facility for community data and research, and that she was pleased that the center was playing a significant role in the initiative. She asked whether the group had considered the media's role in the project. She stated that historically, the media has been more interested in human-interest stories than reporting data community well-being.

Ms. Terry stated that a member of the group was a retired businessman with media contacts, and the group hoped to build upon his contacts.

V. Committee Updates

A. Early Childhood Committee

Ms. Nelson reported on behalf of the committee. She stated that the committee took the opportunity to apply for a Federal grant over the summer. She stated that if the grant is awarded, it will provide the resources necessary to serve as a catalyst for the committee's work. She stated the committee is cautiously optimistic about the grant. Notification of awards will be given at the end of the September.

B. Elementary School Years Committee

Mr. Schroeder reported on behalf of the committee. He stated that with Phase I of the summer food initiative (LunchBLAST!) completed, the committee has begun an initial review of some of the results. The committee leveraged in massive community support for the project, including coverage by several television and radio stations and newspapers, as well as help in conducting neighborhood outreach from a large number of churches and community organizations. In addition, Spartan Stores has pledged to provide additional support next year. He stated that the committee was especially grateful to Mary Greene of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, who donated her personal time to coordinate the media campaign.

Mr. Schroeder stated that the committee has heard a lot of anecdotal evidence from parents and community partners indicating that they learned about the program this year. However, the final numbers were disappointing - overall, the average daily attendance for lunch dropped 23% (323 fewer kids on average) from last year.

Mr. Schroeder stated that the committee was still analyzing the results, and Wendy would have a final report for the Council before the end of the year. However, the committee did discover that one of the most significant reasons for the drop was that seven of last year's largest sites were closed, due to summer school closings and other issues. He stated that in part due to the committee's efforts, ten new sites were opened, which helped to mitigate the effects felt by the closing of seven of last year's largest sites. He stated that the committee could be fairly certain that the decrease in performance would have been greater if they hadn't acted. The ten new sites brought in a daily average of 312 children.

A key finding was that for those sites where there was an active community partner willing to champion the program, attendance jumped dramatically. Bright spots include Stocking Elementary, which showed an increase of 86 percent in average daily attendance over last year, Palmer, with an increase of 175 percent, and Campau Commons with an increase of 89 percent.

Ms. Nelson suggested the committee contact representatives from Campfire Boys and Girls and Recreation Reaps Rewards for their input when analyzing the data. She stated that these programs had also experienced a decrease in participation, and might be able to provide insight into why fewer children were participating in programs this year.

C. Middle and High School Years Committee

Ms. Archbold reported that the committee had no report, due to scheduling difficulties. The committee is making plans to kick off its Youth Voice project, and hoped to have a report soon. Ms. Nussbaum added that the committee has faced difficulty in coordinating several individuals with different responsibilities.

D. Ongoing Family Support Committee

Ms. Davis reported on behalf of the committee. She stated that as substance abuse has been identified locally as one of the primary factors in child abuse/neglect, the committee was focusing its efforts on enhancing current efforts to identify and treat substance abuse early for families at risk of abuse/neglect. As its first strategy to this end, the committee worked closely with Perspective 21! Early Impact provider agencies to develop a two part training for Perspective 21! Early Impact and CPS Early Impact caseworkers to help them identify substance abuse issues and engage the family in seeking treatment. Approximately 50 caseworkers attended Part I of the training, which focused on identification of drug use, confidentiality, and access to MINK substance abuse services. CMH provided the trainers free of charge, and CMH and Arbor Circle coordinated the training.

Ms. Davis reported that preliminary subjective evaluation data was available based on participant surveys from the first session of the Part I training. She stated that the committee would share the final numbers once surveys were calculated from all of the participants. She stated that some of the themes from the surveys included:

- The participants felt that the training enhanced their skills as therapists and increased their awareness of substance abuse issues.
- The participants identified the need for regular updates on substance abuse trends, as well as the need for strategies and interventions to share with their clients.
- The participants identified the need to more clearly and specifically define confidentiality/recipient rights as they relate to P21!/CPS clients.

Ms. Davis stated that next steps for the committee include coordinating Part II of the training, which will focus on intervention strategies and providing substance abuse resource materials to caseworkers. The committee is also engaging in planning to build upon its initial success and identify additional strategies to identify and treat substance abuse issues early for children at risk of abuse/neglect.

Ms. Sieger thanked the committees and staff for their hard work. She stated that the committees were taking the Council in a new and exciting direction, which was significantly different from the original intention when the MPCBs were created. She stated that a mechanism would be developed for Council members to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the new structure and format.

VI. Updates & Administrative Items

A. 2003 Council Appointments

Ms. Archbold reported that six Council positions were open for appointments in January. She stated that the Board of Commissioners encouraged the existing members to reapply, as well as anyone else who may be interested in serving on the Council.

B. Strong Family Safe Children Multi-Year (FY2003-2005) Plan

Ms. Sieger reported that the Council's SF/SC Multi-Year Plan has been approved by the State Program Office. She noted that the Program Office complemented the Council on its well-done, measurable, and meaningful local service outcomes.

C. Emergency Needs Task Force Report

Ms. Sieger noted that copies of the ENTF 2001-02 Update Report were available on the table next to the door, and invited Council members to pick up a copy.

VII. Other Community Information & Updates

A. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grants

Ms. Archbold reported that a group of community organizations were working collaboratively to develop a proposal for 2002-2003 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants. The funds are directed toward middle school students, and can be used to expand existing programs or fund new ones. While endorsement of the MPCB is not required for the grant, applications which include a letter of support from the MPCB are awarded a higher point value. She stated that due to a tight timeline (the grant was due September 24), the proposal would be presented to the Executive Committee for their action. Present to speak about the group's plans was Kristine VanVonderen, Associate Executive Director of the YMCA.

Ms. VanVonderen reported that the group was still in preliminary discussions, and would have a more solid plan to present to the Executive Committee. She stated the group was looking at applying for funds for five sites. Grand Rapids Public School would likely be the applicant for the grant, and other agencies would be invited to apply to provide services. She stated that services would be centered around those that improve MEAP scores and offer enrichment opportunities to the students. She invited anyone who would like more information to contact her. Ms. Sieger noted that the Executive Committee would meet September 19, 2002.

Mr. Zylstra stated that the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant was an excellent opportunity. However, he stated that the Council was still in the responding mode in regards to grant funding. He stated that the Council should explore ways to be in the position to know what opportunities are coming, and proactively seek funding.

B. Community Mental Health (CMH) Authority Status

Mary Swanson provided the update on the status of CMH's request for authority status. She stated that CMH had originally brought the request before the Board of Commissioners in 1997, but questions concerning the legislation postponed the process. Now that those questions are resolved, the CMH Board has once again requested authority status. She stated that the Board of Commissioners has been in the process of researching and providing opportunities for public comment on the issue for several months. The Board of Commissioners will vote on the issue on September 26, 2002. If the vote is to establish CMH as an authority, the target date for that status to go into effect is April 1, 2003, to allow CMH time to transfer their retirement benefits, etc.

C. Other

Richard Ney of Life Guidance Services announced that the availability of information at www.lifeguidanceservices.org about the re-traumatization effects on children due to the anniversary of September 11.

VIII. 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 October 1, 2002, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm at the Kent County Health Department, 700 Fuller, N.E.**