

# Lorain County Children Services

## Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 20, 2024 @ 5:00 p.m.

### I. Call to Order

Board Chair Jim Miller called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

#### A. Roll Call

**Present:** Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick

**Excused:** Lee Armbruster, Rania Assily, Kenneth Glynn, Andrew Lipian, Mallory Santiago, Kim Withrow

**Also Present:** Kristen Fox-Berki, Executive Director

#### B. Review Agenda

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Agenda submitted for the November 20, 2024, Board meeting. No additions or changes made.

#### C. Review and Approve Minutes

Board Chair Jim Miller asked if there were any additions or changes to the Board Meeting Minutes submitted for the October 16, 2024, Board meeting. Hearing none, the minutes are approved as distributed.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Dan Gross to approve the October 16, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

#### Roll Call Vote

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

### II. Public Comment

Board Chair Jim Miller confirmed that there were no requests from the public to address the Board.

### III. Old Business

#### A. Tabled Items

##### 1. Policy 3.4 Public Comment

Kristen Fox-Berki and Board Chair Jim Miller drafted a proposed addition to Policy 3.4 Public Comment and reviewed the changes with the Board. The new Board Policy 3.4 Public Comment will read: "All LCCS Board meetings are open to the public. Each meeting agenda will have a public comment agenda item to ensure public has the opportunity to comment. All public comments

will be granted by the Board when the request is formalized through the completion of the LCCS Board Public Comment Request Form found on [www.childrenservices.org](http://www.childrenservices.org). Public comment periods will not exceed three minutes per person and will be conducted in a professional manner per the LCCS Board Attendance Decorum Policy as found on [www.childrenservices.org](http://www.childrenservices.org). If a current LCCS Board member is contacted personally by someone who wishes to comment on the operations, policies, personnel, or interactions with agency staff, the Board member should avoid engaging in a discussion with members of the public about children services issues and should direct the individual to the LCCS Board Chair or the Executive Director. The Board member may also inform the individual about their option to make a public comment during a meeting.”

**MOTION:** It was moved by Christina Doran, seconded by Tamara Newton to approve Revised Policy 3.4 Public Comment. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0
Abstentions:	None- 0

**2. Policy 7.14 Client Grievance**

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with the Ombudsman Quarterly Report from July 1, 2024, through September 30, 2024, including the number of Grievances Filed, Public Complaints, Telephone Calls, Emails, Walk-ins, New Requests for Ombudsman Services, Pending Requests Resolved from Last Quarter, and New Requests Resolved within this Quarter.

The Grievance that was filed has not been resolved; there is more work to be done. Kristen Fox-Berki will provide an update on the next quarterly report.

**B. Unresolved Action Items**

**1. Levy Discussion**

Board Chair Jim Miller congratulated the LCCS staff on a successful levy campaign, with 68% of the Lorain County voters voting in favor of the LCCS levy. Kristen Fox-Berki thanked the Board members for making vital connections within the community, as well as the LCCS staff and union representation for their contribution to the levy’s success.

**IV. Executive Director’s Report**

**A. Staff Presentation- Referral/Intake Process**

Staff members were present to provide the Board with a presentation on the referral/intake process:

1. Dena Jones-Bulgin, Referral Specialist
2. Mary Knoblock, DS Assessment/Intake Caseworker
3. Anna Tyson, DS Supervisor

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month. For the Board members that have not already done so, they are encouraged to shadow the screeners/referral specialists as well as a caseworker in the field.

Summary of the presentation:

- Partnership Between Reporters and Lorain County Children Services
    - Child protection is something that involves the entire community.
  - Defining Abuse and Neglect
    - Abuse- represents an action against a child. It is an act of commission.
    - Neglect- failure to act on behalf of a child through the fault of the caregiver. It is an act of omission.
  - Types of Abuse
    - Physical Abuse
    - Emotional Abuse
    - Sexual Abuse
  - Reporting Concerns to Children Services
    - There is a lot of information gathered during the initial phone call, including the address of the child/family. Photos and other information is also important, when applicable.
    - No one else can call for you, on your behalf.
    - Callers can remain anonymous. State law prohibits the agency/caseworker from revealing the reporter/source of the information.
    - Caseworkers are investigating reports of child abuse, domestic violence, and other safety threats.
  - Referral Process- a copy of a mock referral worksheet/intake report was provided to the Board as an example:
    - Intake Narrative- caseworkers use this to gather information for their investigation.
    - History with the family and details about the parents.
    - The caseworker is the only person that is informed about the reporter.
- The screening guidelines were provided to the Board to review.

Assessment/Intake Caseworker's role:

- Investigate the report.
- Case initiation- initial contact should typically be made within 24 hours. Alternative response reports can be initiated by phone.
- During the initial home visit, present the pamphlet and explain the reason the caseworker is there.
- Gather information and meet with each child individually in their home. Gather signed release of information and link the family to resources.
- Gather information about relatives, should there be a need to place a child. A child cannot be removed from their home without the Court's authority.
- Talk with collateral to help guide the decision to close or transfer for ongoing services.

Supervisor's role:

- There is constant conversation among staff regarding the screening decision; information is not taken lightly. If there is an impasse on whether to screen a referral in or out, the supervisor is responsible to make the final decision based on further review of the historical, patterns, collaboration, etc.
- The agency does hold some liability, but there is also a lot of protection. Caseworkers have the authority to see children in the school, take photos when there is an allegation. The prosecutor's office is available for guidance when there is uncertainty on how to proceed.

**B. Policy 4.6 New Hires/Leaves**

New Hires for the month of October:

1. Kaitlynn Horsley, DS Caseworker 10/7/24
2. Jaycea Foust, DS Caseworker 10/21/24
3. Paige Penny, DS Caseworker 10/21/24
4. Chloe Rivera Torres, DS Administrative Assistant 10/21/24
5. Adriana Davila, DS Caseworker 10/21/24

Leaves for the month of October:

1. Erik Gebhardt, DS Caseworker 10/4/24
2. Hillary Budd, DS Caseworker 10/4/24
3. Paige Penny, DS Caseworker 10/28/24

**C. Policy 6.6 Adoption, Foster & Kinship Rates**

Kristen Fox-Berki provided the Board with a handout listing the previous foster care rates, from 2000 to present. The per diem for foster homes, licensed by LCCS, has not increased since 2022. Kristen Fox-Berki is proposing the following, beginning January 1, 2025:

1. The per diem for infants 0-2 years old remain the same, \$37 per day.
2. Increase the per diem for children ages 3-13 from \$40 per day to \$41 per day.
3. Increase the per diem for children ages 14 and older from \$47 per day to \$52 per day. An analysis was completed to project the impact financially over the course of one year (2025), with an increase ranging between \$80,000 to \$100,000 per year. This could potentially lower the number placements for children ages 14 and older in residential centers and group homes, and have a greater number of children placed in foster homes. Some are currently in higher cost placements. On average, private foster agencies range in cost from \$88 - \$300 per day, and residential centers and group homes range from \$350 - \$800 per day.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Thomas Patrick to approve Policy 6.6 Adoption, Foster, and Kinship Rates, as presented. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0

Abstentions:	None- 0
--------------	---------

**D. Visitation Center**

The Notice to Bidders was published in the Chronicle Telegram on October 29, 2024, and November 5, 2024. A mandatory walk through was completed on November 12, 2024, and several vendors attended. Following the walk through, the vendor’s questions were submitted, and responses were provided by the architect. All bids must be submitted before Friday, November 22, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. The bid opening is public, and anyone can attend. The vendor that is awarded the project (lowest and best) will be chosen by Kristen Fox-Berki, Board Chair Jim Miller, and Board member Dan Gross. Following their decision, the Commissioners will need to approve a Resolution awarding the contract.

**E. LCCS Board Subcommittee Re: Foster Care Recruitment**

The Veterans Recruitment event, co-sponsored by the Lorain County Veterans Services Commission (LCVSC) will be held tomorrow, November 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Lorain County Community College.

Another connection was made with the Westshore campus at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C). Several LCCS staff met with Board member Rania Assily, the Tri-C President, a community relations staff member, and the Dean of Students to talk about how to support each other. This connection would be a tremendous resource for Independent Living youth to gather more information on higher education and tutoring. We will also consider holding an event like the recruitment event at Lorain County Community College to present on foster care. Another meeting will be scheduled after the first of the year.

**V. Fiscal Reports**

None.

**VI. New Business**

**A. New Items for Discussion and Approval**

None.

**VII. Executive Session (to discuss litigation, personnel matters and other matters required to be kept confidential by law)**

None.

**VIII. Announcements**

None.

**IX. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Martin Heberling, seconded by Roberto Davila to adjourn the Board meeting at 6:14 p.m. Motion carried.

**Roll Call Vote**

Ayes:	Roberto Davila, Christina Doran, Dan Gross, Martin Heberling, Jim Miller, Tamara Newton, Thomas Patrick
Nays:	None- 0

Abstentions:	None- 0
--------------	---------

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Administration Building, 226 Middle Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room A, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

Minutes Prepared by:  
Kimberly Kassam, Administrative Supervisor

Approved by:  
Christina Doran, Board Secretary