

January 17, 2024

The regular meeting of the Camden County Board of Social Services was held on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. in the office of the Board at 101 Woodcrest Road, Suite 161, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, 08003 with James H. Rhodes, Chair, presiding (via WebEx). The following members were present:

Vice Chair, Andres Camacho, John Kendall, Gwen DeVera

Public Attendance: Jennifer Lucas

Also present were: Christine Hentisz, Director; Edward Hill, Esquire; Rich Behm, IT Director; Fred Anderson, IT Supervisor, Christine Colbert, Personnel Officer, Nicole Jefferson, Administrative Clerk; Paulette Konopka, Fiscal Officer; Susan Purvin, Esquire

At 12:00 p.m., a quorum being present, Chairman Rhodes called the meeting to order, and announced that in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the Courier Post Newspaper was notified of the Board Meeting; notice of the agenda was posted in a prominent location at 101 Woodcrest Road, Suite 161, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003, and the County Clerk was notified.

Chairman Rhodes requested approval of the following items:

- Minutes of the December Board Meeting
- The listed expenditures from both Clearing and Administration Accounts
- The payment of salaries and traveling expenses for January.
- Requisition from the County Treasurer for administration expenses for February.
- Movement of funds to be requisitioned from the State and County Treasurers less monies on hand for assistance payments for the month of February.

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to approve.

Mr. Kendall moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion, and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously adopted.

**OPEN SESSION  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to open the meeting for public participation. Mr. Kendall moved to open the Public Participation portion of the Open Session, seconded by Ms. DeVera and the motion was unanimously adopted.

Chairman Rhodes asked if there were any members of the public wishing to address the Board.

Jennifer Lucas inquired what is the Agency's plan to replace the administrator of the Child Support Department since the previous administrator has retired.

Ms. Hentisz stated that there will be a posting to fill that vacancy in the next couple of weeks.

Jennifer Lucas also inquired if there were any updates to the previous dental coverage inquiry from December's Board meeting.

Mrs. Hentisz replied that yes the management team is currently reviewing and discussing some components and will try to get back with an answer as soon as possible.

Chairman Rhodes thanked those for their comments and asked if there were any other members that wished to address the Board.

Hearing and seeing that there was no one, Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to close the Public Participation portion of the Open Session. Vice Chair Camacho moved to close the Public Portion of the Open Session. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously adopted.

The Open Session of the meeting continued.

**UPDATE STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES ..... Christine Hentisz, Director**

Ms. Hentisz stated that all Board members would find a synopsis of informational transmittals, procedural bulletins, general assistance procedural bulletins and Division of Family Development instructions in their packet. If there were any questions on any of the material, Ms. Hentisz stated that she or her staff would be happy to answer.

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to approve the Director's Update on the State and Federal Policies.

Vice Chair Camacho moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion to approve the Update was unanimously adopted.

**OPEN SESSION****DIRECTOR'S REPORT..... Christine Hentisz, Director**

Ms. Hentisz provided information and updates to the Board from DFD (Division of Family Development) and DMAHS (Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services).

The ABAWD (Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents) provision is resuming on February 1<sup>st</sup> for the State of New Jersey. The ABAWD provision mandates a minimum 20-hour work requirement or job search for SNAP recipients. The resumption of the ABAWD program is due to recent federal law changes. Ms. Hentisz reported that Camden County is exempt from having to implement the ABAWD provisions for SNAP. However, Ms. Hentisz still encourages staff to attend the DFD issued trainings on the ABAWD provision when it becomes available.

Next, Ms. Hentisz stated that due to legislation that was passed last year, DFD is required to create a public dashboard that include county specific data such as: processing timeliness and closure data. DFD has begun sharing with the county directors on how this information will look on the State's website. Ms. Hentisz stated that our Agency's data is looking good, and she will be sure to share the dashboards with the Board once it becomes available. The dashboards are set to be available on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Hentisz stated the Food and Nutritional Services (FNS) provided clarification regarding how welfare agencies should notate clients race and ethnicity in the state systems. There have been a few discrepancies between state regulations and state systems. Welfare agencies are required to report the race and ethnicity of each client; however, the client is not required to answer what their race and ethnicity is. In the past, employees would use their best visual judgement to input the client's race or ethnicity; FNS informed that welfare agencies should no longer visually determine the client's race/ethnicity.

DFD has provided some guidance on a recent request for staff to ensure better privacy with client-to-worker communication. DFD has stated that is not a requirement for a case worker's name to be on an agency document. The Agency will still need to be able to identify who processes the case however, other identity options may be used, such as: an employee ID number or first initial and last name. Ms. Hentisz stated this is great news and the Agency will be looking to implement a new process sometime soon.

Lastly, Ms. Hentisz informed that she and Deputy Director Marrero will be attending the upcoming Child Support conference on March 27-29<sup>th</sup>. This conference will be attended by various welfare agencies, judicial/probational agencies, and State and partner agencies.

Next, Ms. Hentisz provided updates from DMAHS.

The Agency's Medicaid Department is still focusing on the Medicaid 'unwinding', which is the continuous review of Medicaid redeterminations that were open during the pandemic. The unwinding is set continue through April 2024. The Medicaid staff are vigorously working through the heavy and increased volume of case work. DMAHS has reported there is about a 50% no response rate state-wide. Ms. Hentisz stated there are challenges each month, however our numbers remain to be on average with the rest of the State thanks to the hard work of our Medicaid staff. Additionally, there is some concern on the accuracy of the data being displayed on the dashboards. DMAHS has agreed to review the dashboards to ensure the data is breaking down the reasonings behind case closures. Currently, the dashboards at times are misleading on the reasoning of terminated case. Some cases are being closed due to the client not submitting the renewal application.

Next, Ms. Hentisz provided Agency updates and projects to the Board. The Agency is working to staff the Camden County's Restorative and Transformative Justice HUB located in Camden, NJ. Although there isn't an opening date just yet, the Agency will be providing two eligibility caseworkers to be stationed at the Justice Hub two full days a week. Ms. Hentisz will continue to update the Board as more information comes along.

**OPEN SESSION**

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT (cont.).....Christine Hentisz, Director**

Also, Ms. Hentisz was pleased to inform that a few of the Agency's current clerical and receptionist staff are being promoted into the Human Service Specialist training class.

Lastly, Ms. Hentisz provided updates from the County Welfare Association (CWDA). CWDA continues their discussion with DFD to review the current motel rates for homeless placements. The statewide rate is \$50.00 a night, and a lot of counties are struggling to keep motel vendors with that current rate. This creates a challenge for motel placements when homeless shelters are full. Ms. Hentisz will continue to provide updates to the Board as they come.

Also, the Homeless Point in Time count will occur on January 25<sup>th</sup>. This count is conducted on the night of January 24<sup>th</sup> which keeps a total count of homeless individuals within the county. There are collaborative efforts between the Agency, local agencies, and the VOA shelters.

Mr. Rhodes thanked Ms. Hentisz for her Director's Report and asked if there were any other questions or comments for the Director.

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to accept the Director's Report.

Mr. Kendall moved to approve. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken and the motion approving the Report was unanimously accepted.

**FISCAL REPORT.....Paulette Konopka, Fiscal Officer**

Ms. Konopka stated that each Board member had received copies of the Fiscal Report in their packet for the month December 2023.

Ms. Konopka stated that if anyone had any questions, she would be happy to address them.

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to accept the Fiscal Report for December 2023 as presented in the packet.

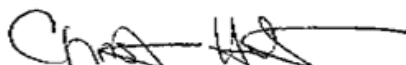
Mr. Kendall moved to accept. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken, and the Report was unanimously accepted.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Rhodes requested a motion to grant the discretionary leave requests as were presented in Closed Session. Mr. Kendall moved to approve the request. Ms. DeVera seconded the motion and there being no discussion on the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously adopted.



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Clerk