

**JFS Planning Committee
February 27, 2024 @ 9 am
CCDJFS Community Room**

Members Present: Mary Ann Kochalko, Kim Steele, Tom Andrews, Steve Ullom, Marcy Patton, Rodger Sikorszky, Pastor Brian Brown, Chaney Nezbeth, Marie Williams, Jim Stitt

Guest: Courtney Amendola, Cindy Martin

Meeting Called to Order/ Quorum Established

Tom called the meeting to order 9:02am after quorum was established and welcomed members.

Approval of Minutes

Mary Ann motioned to approve September minutes; Chaney seconded. Motion carries.

Adoption of Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda. Agenda adopted.

Introduction of Guests

Cindy Martin was present at the meeting in place of Tracy Smith to represent AFSCME union. Members welcomed her.

Reports

a. Ohio Means Jobs –Mary Ann.

Mary Ann stated that Jack reported that there were 4,362 visits, and they saw 2,886 clients. They are currently dealing with dislocated workers, and there were no layoffs for a while, but they're starting to see that now. People are having problems filing for their unemployment. Mary Ann stated that unemployment is a nightmare. There is a limited compacity dealing with people's issues at the state. We are tasked with providing meaningful assistance, but it is difficult to get access to their problems when we do not have access to system itself. One day a week someone is providing more assistance than we can provide. This is the pilot program, and its mission is to offer a variety of supports and incentives to participants. It is hopeful, they are being more responsive than in the past. A lot is falling on the OMJ center. Funds continuing and there are resolutions once again. Been working on it but a lot more things are being added. Mary Ann stated that they are hoping to get some resolution. If there isn't a resolution by April, many programs will take a hit. However, it has always been resolved in the past. Mary Ann added that we will see what happens. Courtney asked if they are still getting fraud? She said her department gets calls left and right for unemployment fraud. Mary Ann said yes, there is still fraud, but not like it was before. The influx in fraud cases stemmed from the extra allotment of funds for unemployment during the pandemic, and now that there are no extra funds it hasn't been as much as a problem. However, it does still happen. Tom commented that it was interesting; he got several unemployment claims from his staff members who were still employed that were not seeking unemployment. Mary Ann stated that now there is a lot more verification that unemployment requires with many more safeguards. Courtney commented that she has had 158 calls in Public Assistance all in one day pertaining to unemployment fraud. She had to provide a script for her customer service workers.

b. CCDJFS TANF Program Reports –Courtney

Courtney presented a PowerPoint presentation of the TANF report. She stated that for SNAP and OWF there was a slight increase in October and then it went back down in November and December. Match change took effect in October – to reevaluate the cost of living and things like that. This sometimes affects the food assistance that people receive. Around Christmas time it usually increases, however, this year it decreased. For county population enrolled in Medicaid – there was some decrease. Unwinding – more and more decreasing. We are coming up to the end of unwinding process. For Medicaid payment there are 2 months for delinquent renew. Reached out to state to see when these numbers will be available, and we won't have them until March. Courtney reported that the applications and timeliness have been good. Snap 95-96%, and TANF 100%, and Medicaid 97-99%. The PCSA case management expenditures have been pretty much the same across the board. It is dependent on what type of services are being used to help, and that determines if those increase or decrease. For Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) there was a decrease in the last quarter. Unduplicated consumers, one-way trips, miles, and expenditures all decreased. NET depends on what type of medical appointments are needed. For PRC, Shoe voucher program was still the biggest area here, there is an extended period to get invoices in. Courtney reported that they didn't approve any of the applications in October – but they did receive invoices. It expired in August and then was extended. Again, the Shoe Program has the most expenditures, and then diversion cash and gas vouchers are larger expenditures too for PRC. For Adult Protective Services, there was a higher number of referrals in October. There were 6 investigations in October, 8 in November, and 8 in December. Pastor Brown asked why October is such a business month? Courtney answered that typically people are preparing for the Holidays and are thinking ahead. Steve asked if you had an actual number of referrals and investigations. APS workers must act upon every report. They look into every referral and then based on the information provided, and a number of other factors, they investigate. October there was a lot of referrals and not a lot of investigations.

Old Business

None.

New Business

- a. Add new seat Marie Williams, replacing Anna Marie Vaughn for Columbiana County ESC.
- b. Add new seat Jim Stitt, replacing Eloise Traina for Family Recovery Center

Both new members are present. Courtney reported that the commissioners approved them both for 3-year term. Tom officially welcomed members and is thankful to have them serve on the JFS Planning Committee.

Marcy asked about possibly getting progress reports for the different contracts we have. Does Susan still do that? Yes, she does. It would be nice to see what each month looks like, what projects are going on and what is happening. For us as the Planning Committee, to have more knowledge. Marcy added that we don't know a whole lot of what is happening, but it would be nice to get a little presentation about statuses. Tom commented that we have talked about services and funding

– usually when we are revamping, but it would be nice to hear on a quarterly basis. It's always nice to have a good understanding of what programs and services we offer. It would also be interesting to see how many contracts and providers we have. Courtney will talk to Rachel.

Members' Comments

Chaney stated that The Way Station has been open since January 8th, 2024, and the floors have been remodeled. We are having a fundraising campaign to pay ourselves back for that. We came out under budget, 215-220 - wanted to stay under 300. Chaney stated that they are celebrating their 35th anniversary this year – and are honoring Jim Couchenour. Tom asked if they will be sending something out. Chaney stated that the invites will go out to donors first before we put it out to the public. That is in April. Additionally, we are looking to hire someone in our East Palestine location, for our boy's program centering around teen pregnancy. We need to present all options for pregnancy and help make teens aware of the resources that are available to them. We are trying to maintain an all-male staff on that to the best of our abilities. We are hoping to get interviews in the next couple of weeks for that position.

Steve stated that he has 2 things to share. The first being that the next Bridges out of Poverty training is in the community room here at Job and Family Services this coming Friday, March 1st, 2024. It filled up fast. There must be a lot of new staff members that have never done it. The next thing is the county is going to be receiving \$10,000 for children's trust fund. They want us to conduct a family fun day. The idea is to do large event with music and free food. Through this we can promote services in the county through the children's trust fund. Resource fair / carnival. Don't be surprised if you get something from us asking you to bring a resource table. We have a location in mind but haven't gotten official permission. End of school year – hoping schools will promote it. More details to come.

Kim commented that the social work program continues to grow. The regional campus system has made major changes. They have been sharing an interim dean between campus, but now there are two separate deans. However, they are still sharing one assistant dean. No one is happy on campus about this. Brad has been great. Stark campus dean used to be at Salem and has a lot of knowledge of the county. People are losing their jobs; it is a somber place to be right now. Chaney asked if they will be picking up any students from Eastern Gateway? Kim answered that they are working on that right now. They have been scrambling to help the students that are losing their school.

Chaney added that her goal is to get community health workers. There are 4 staff members who are interested in becoming certified. Tom stated that he would like to connect when they get certified. He added that they work with fragile individuals, and he has many clients who have chronic illness. This certified person could come in and teach these people how to live. For example, someone with diabetes could benefit from having a certified health worker come in and show them how to cook meals that will not elevate their sugar, and that will benefit their diet, and improve their quality of life.

Marcy commented that her and her team are very involved in the appellation grant. It could be helpful. It is a lot of work though.

Marie stated that Columbiana County ESC is looking toward next year. They are putting out their preschool packets and are looking for staff and programming for next year. They are always looking for staff.

Pastor Brian stated that they have upcoming Good Friday services for the community. This is the first time since COVID-19 that it's back in town. The Nazarenes are also participating in 50,000 people going out into the communities to spread awareness that faith-based communities are still here after the COVID-19 epidemic. This will include passing out food to people. We will be at Save-a-lot if the town allows is. Pastor Brown added that they are also having a fair at RSVP down at the center on March 15th, 2024. They will be offering individuals to get their blood pressure taken and things like that. This is pending the mayor. Tom commented that he's sure the mayor will be happy to support it. Tom asked if there will be a flyer? Yes, we will send one.

Marcy stated that she has a quick update on East Palestine. There are components in place, and they are working. There is a substance abuse counselor needed, as the counseling services are growing. They are getting more and more people every week. Marcy stated that they are doing things every week and are regularly at the Christian House and Threshold Residential. She further stated that they had an anniversary event at The Way Station. Overall, the program is going well. There is a lot of interest. Marcy commented that they are hoping to have some space at the health clinic down there. The legal folks cannot seem to get wording right to utilize the space. Really pleased. Don't have any specific primary care in there yet. If someone wanted to come in and do a clinic, it will be a space to do many things, yoga, small groups, meetings, meditation, etc. Everything is coming along well. Marcy stated that they are getting a no cost extension because they didn't use all the funds in 12 months. They are going to request a 12-month extension, but she doesn't think the money will last that long. There is a resiliency training and other trainings to be scheduled. Dealing with the government is interesting, dotting l's and crossing t's.

Rodger commented that he is in the process of renovating a duplex; it takes a lot of effort and time to get these off the ground. Rodger stated that they now own and manage 58 properties. Tom asked if all those units are for people with special needs? Rodger answered yes, they are all for people who have severe mental disorders.

Jim stated that they are looking to hire at Family Recovery, just as everyone else is. He further stated that counselors are hard to find right now. Students for Columbiana County are going down to Columbus. Offering support for families centered with substance abuse issues, and families that have been affected by it. Additionally, they are trying to stop the sale of flavored vapes and things like that. That's where it starts. He added that there are great things going on with the youth.

Tom commented that the additional money to help with rental funding will be finished in February. Families and individuals are going to come back to the well for more money but there will not be funds available for this anymore. We can still help people, but we will not be able to help like we were. Shortly after the pandemic we got these funds. There were customers come back to us after they were already 3-4 months behind in rent. Marcy asked if those are ending this month? Yes. Tom went on to talk about Micro Transit, which is their version of Uber. In Salem and going to Washingtonville and then to Columbiana. It can only go to the northern area, it is restricted. Tom mentioned NEORide which is another transportation service, and how they have partnerships with

other similar services. They got 4 additional Micro Transits and are going to put them around the county. Tom stated that he just found out that the grant is only for 4 years. We are hoping to have it up and running in the spring. We want it to be easy for people -you call, and we come get you. It used to be that people had to schedule, and more people would use it if they could just call for a ride. They are hoping to improve services. Tom commented that he ran into someone who had negative comments about transit, but people don't understand how challenging it is. The funding sources mainly consist of two pots of money, operating and repairs and mechanics. Whatever money we bring it, gets sent to state, and then matched. It's not a great program to run, but it continues to run.

Pastor Brian commented that Marty Leake is who you can contact for the info fair. Her number is (330) 424-7877, option 1.

With no further comments the meeting adjourned.

The next JFS Planning Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28th, 2024, at 9 am @ JFS