

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



KCFCCC Meeting Minutes
June 2, 2009, 12:00pm – 1:30pm
MSU Extension Offices – **Room B**
775 Ball Avenue, NE

Members/Alternates Present: Susan Broman, Candace Cowling, Bev Drake, Kristen Gietzen, Jack Greenfield, Lynne Ferrell, Paul Ippel, Ron Jimmerson, Jackie Klinestecker, Rich Liberatore, Carol Paine-McGovern, Cathy Raevsky, Diana Sieger, Dr. Bernard Taylor, Matthew VanZetten, Patti Warmington, Andy Zylstra

Members Absent: Tom Czerwinski, William Forsyth, Bob Haight, Lynn Heemstra, Judge Patrick Hillary, Kevin Konarska, Sharon Loughridge,

Guests: Betsy Boggs, Wayman Britt, Diane Gibbs, Gayle Orange, Larry Rosen, Scott Shaw, Brooke Van Prooyen, Jon Wilmot

1. Welcome & Call to Order

Jack Greenfield opened the meeting with a welcome and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

A motion was made by Diana Sieger to approve the April minutes, supported by Lynne Ferrell,
UNANIMOUS.

2. Kent School Services Presentation/Discussion

Jack Greenfield welcomed Larry Rosen from Public Policy Associates to talk about the Kent School Services Network Evaluation. Mr. Rosen, the evaluator for the Kent School Services Program Initiative, has been working on this for the last two and a half years. The first year or two is developmental phase, establishing the program. Towards the end is where we begin to compile the outcomes data.

Larry mentioned the 8 schools participating in the program:

Grand Rapids Public Schools:

- Alger Middle School
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Academy
- Burton Elementary
- Coit Creative Arts Academy
- Harrison Park Elementary
- Sibley Elementary

Godfrey Lee Public Schools:

- Early Childhood Center

Comstock Park Public Schools:

- Pine Island Elementary

The most important question being asked is if this program is an effective way of creating the conditions for learning.

The program is designed to provide services in the schools including health, behavioral, mental health, social services. Services are intended to provide ways of getting over some of the barriers children face in getting an education, including food, clothing and adequate housing. The anticipated outcomes are improved academic achievement, student behavior and attendance.

During the first year they looked at the process, how well it is developing, if it is being adopted enthusiastically and if the teachers and administrators are happy with the program. He said they found the program was being adopted very well in the 8 schools. The staff and faculty have become considerably more knowledgeable and supportive of the program. The key element has been the employment of a Community School Coordinator in each of these schools.

There is a growing awareness, need and demand for these services. The thing they have found lacking is parental involvement. There also does not appear to be a coordinated effort between the after school program and the Community Schools Program.

Larry continued that they also looked at best practices around the country. He said overall, the report card is good.

The outcome areas explored include: Teacher Perceptions, Absenteeism, Student suspensions and Academic Achievement.

Larry noted an important finding is that the survey response rate among the teachers has consistently grown over the past three years, from one-third to three-fourths. He says the teacher's perceptions are that their peers and principals are familiar and supportive of this program. He says they believe this program has had a positive impact on students' learning and the learning environment. When asked about improvement in students' behavior changes, the opinions were mixed. Some had a wait-and-see attitude, some had no opinion. But, Larry pointed out, those who did have an opinion one way or the other felt positive about the behavior changes as well.

Absenteeism outcomes show a mixed result. Some cases show percents of absenteeism declining, some have not. In Godfrey Lee, chronic absenteeism has declined considerably. He said they cannot say with absolute certainty that KSSN is having a dramatic effect on absenteeism. He reminded the group there is still one more year of data to collect before making a real determination.

Another area looked at was suspensions. Larry said there isn't a whole lot of data. The number of suspensions has gone up for the first years, but the percentages went down a little bit. The data for this year is not in yet.

Achievement data (MEAP scores) for this year is in the process of being compiled. The data they have for the last two years shows a dramatic improvement in every school.

In summary, teachers appear to be very positive, knowledgeable and supportive, believe KSSN to be improving the school environment, and that it is helping children become better able to learn. They perceive improvements in absenteeism and behavior. Community involvement activities and student participation is low and needs to be pumped up a little. There have been some reductions in both chronic and excessive chronic absenteeism, but no across the board improvements have been determined. Student suspension percentages are slightly down, but still need to look at second half of this school year. Academic Achievement seems to be in a positive direction, showing a lot of improvement. The best improvement is in math, reading and ELA. Writing is a problem, but may be outside of the scope of teachers and educators. Finally, every school in this program has something they can point to that says KSSN has made some real changes and improvements in the last few years.

Larry said they will try to tie what they find to KSSN as they can and will report back on that in the fall.

Dr. Taylor asked if this program was helping the teachers and administrators do their jobs better by giving them more time to do instruction. Larry said that was originally not part of the intent of this evaluation, but agreed they could address that in the upcoming principal focus group discussions.

Larry mentioned he is sitting on an affluent advisory committee regarding Community School programs across the nation. He was invited because they thought it was a sterling program and wanted someone who was researching it to participate on the advisory panel.

He said the program is really good, but it's going to take some time to develop and to see the results.

3. **Strong Family Safe Children Funding**

Matthew VanZetten provided an update on Strong Family Safe Children funding. He said there has been a 20 percent across the board cut in the funding. There have also been some severe changes in the policy on how the dollars can be spent. He said they took the \$229,000 allocation and determined the best way to get it through the DHS contracting process and still meet our local priorities. He met with the DHS program staff and together they determined the best allocation.

An important note was that initially the Health Department Healthy Start assessment was to be bid out this year for services starting 10/1/09. After reviewing the program standards they determined they could not get through the contracting process in Lansing because the service was too open ended. At the same time, the Healthy Start Program is delivered through Catholic Charities right now. They agreed there is language in the program standards addressing that and we could do that for local DHS clients as a referral coming from their office.

The second change is that the Adoptive Family Support Network contract was significantly reduced as a result of program standards from the settlement that was given out and what the contract stated and the services that were being provided in the contract. There was a 50% cut there. Matthew said they all agree the services are needed, but this is a result of the tightening of restrictions on the dollars coming from Lansing of centralized planning to meet the requirements of the settlement. They were trying to do the best they could to keep the services available. He said it's unfortunate, but the program standards have changed so significantly, they did what they had to.

Betsy Boggs added that she had originally understood there would be more funding coming from Lansing for this program, but that is not the case. There is not going to be any contract for Post-adoptive Services, even though it is required by the Children's Rights Settlement. Even though they have tightened the standards, there is no money. Now the money has been cut from both ends. Not only is there no potential of money coming from the state, and the Strong Family Safe Children money was cut because it doesn't meet the standards of the contract that isn't going to be issued by the state. That leaves us with half of the money we were getting, that wasn't enough to begin with. Betsy said they are getting more and more calls every day and they are getting more desperate because of the economy. More of the callers are looking for emergency food.

Betsy said although she understands there are other needs, there are 5,000 children available for adoption in the state of Michigan. She said it's very depressing that there is no money for post-adoptive services and it's not a very healthy environment for Kent County. They are looking for ideas for additional funding. There are a lot of families out there who have adopted children thinking there was post-adopt services. She said if this gets cut, they may be able to maintain services one more month and then that's going to be it.

Matthew said the most recent directive from DHS says the KCFCCC can advise DHS on the funding plan, but the DHS director has the authority to sign off. In working with DHS, Matthew said they are comfortable in this plan and working with DHS in a collaborative relationship. He said the chart he

provided in the handout is what was submitted to the DHS and if it changes, DHS will have to sign-off again.

Jack Greenfield requested a motion to support the 2009/2010 Funding Plan for Strong Family Safe Children to include the concern of the needs not being met and not having local influence and the process. Patti Warmington moved, supported by Paul Ippel. The vote passed with one opposed. (Lynne Ferrell)

4. State Funding Cut Impact

Matthew began by saying it is important to note that the public agencies have been working extra hard to try and figure out how to keep services available now. Specifically, the DHS took a large chunk of services out. Families First was cut \$350,000. Shelly Wood commented that originally the cut was \$700,000, but there was an error and through uncommitted funds and such they got it down to \$200,000. It will impact a certain number of contracts, but not statewide. It will be targeted for contracts that would be underspent by the end of the year for 2009. Shelly said Family Group statewide was cut about \$800,000. Family Group decision-making contracts were given notice to end. The posting that was up for bid was pulled.

Jackie Kleinstecker added that Children's Services was cut \$280,000 for all the services for the last quarter.

Cathy Raevsky said they were cut about \$181,000 for the last quarter, which translates into about \$250,000 for next year.

Matthew said the Executive Committee talked about this issue last meeting and they are going to organize a meeting to determine what the key priorities are and to be sure they are investing fully in.

Bev Drake said the JET Plus program was cut by about \$1 Million. She said it terminated as of May 6, when they got a stop order. She said they were shorted in the full program of welfare participation of about \$500,000. They were going to make the money up, but are not going to now. She said it is extensive.

Candace Cowling mentioned that increasing CPS workers, while cutting services, they might be more likely to do a removal. Basically we will be pushing them to have the opposite effect on every front than what we want.

Jack Greenfield said the Executive Committee is looking at how to organize ourselves in such a way to not only prioritize the services, but also to keep each other informed and try to understand the impact instead of having our families learning on their own services are no longer available. He said there will be further discussions.

Candace expressed the concern that direct service workers need to get the information at their level as well. We have to be sure they don't send families to programs that don't exist or have different eligibility.

Bev Drake suggested using 211 to advise individuals calling in on what services are available. Bev said when they have programs that are out of money or haven't started, they advise 211 of it and they make note so they don't make referrals when there isn't anything there. She said at the community level it works and a lot of people do use 211.

Wayman wanted to know if they had the ability through their website or emails to convey messages to distribution lists and continue to build on that through partners.

Jack said there are a number of things that can be done and take back to the executive committee and continue to brainstorm. It would be interesting to know if this is something worth continuing to

pursue or should we just let it happen, or should people do their own negotiations.

Bev said she thought it important to work on a mode of communication. She doesn't think it will get better. We don't want to frustrate the people we serve.

Wayman asked who would take responsibility. Bev answered it would go back to the Executive Committee. Jack agreed, if that's how the group wants to handle it.

Bev offered the suggestion that a communication be sent to the members of the KCFCCC to utilize 211 of any changes in programming.

Jack said they had a discussion at the System of Care leadership team meeting recently. They decided to work toward better communication across the organizations. This group agreed to the idea.

5. Board of Commissioners Priority Setting

Matthew VanZetten mentioned the Board of Commissioners' first round of priority setting ended May 28, 2009. The meeting packet included a copy of the initial results. He said there will be a series of questions where they will drill down further on June 11. Once that information is complete, they will begin constructing the budget. This is just FYI. It's not the end of the process.

Candace Cowling wanted to know what the status of advocacy with the Executive Committee's doing with County Commissioners.

Jack said they were given individual responsibilities to talk with the County Commissioners. Many have met with the commissioners and they felt there was a positive response with the committee's agenda and interests. He said generally there was a positive response. There is no further step planned at this time.

Andy asked for clarification of the charts created from the Priority Setting meeting last time. Matthew said there were 18 commissioners and they had touchpads where they voted anonymously on each question. Andy said he was glad to see that participation in community-based social welfare and children's initiatives, including KSSN was rated high by the commissioners. But, he's concerned about discretionary funds are given to DHS. He thinks it's a concern that funds are given to the Animal Shelter.

Wayman said the discussion was about the fact that the Animal Shelter was just built. This whole process is not done yet. These are the initial reactions. He said as we drill down, it doesn't mean the Animal Shelter is going to be top on the list. The commissioners obviously want to maintain a program they just approved \$4.7 Million to build. As a result of this first step, there are more questions to be asked. They do have sensitivity to Human Services programs to the degree they can hold those programs harmless. He said it's important to continue to communicate with individual commissioners over the next few weeks and months and talk about how important these programs are.

6. Public Comment

There was none.

7. **Miscellaneous**

There was none.

8. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

Next Council meeting: Tuesday, September 1, 2009, 12:00pm – 1:30pm
MSU Extension Room B