

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



KCFCCC Meeting Minutes
September 7th, 2021 12:00pm – 1:30pm
Kent County Administration Building
Room 311

Members/Alternates

Present:

Candace Cowling, Tracey Fountain, Judge Gardner, Kristin Gietzen, Jennifer James, Maureen Kirkwood, Jacob Maas, George Meek, Mary Muliett, Jackie O'Connor, Paul Petr, Scott Orr, Diana Sieger, Scott Smith, Michelle VanDyke.

Members Absent:

Chris Becker, Misti DeVries, Lynne Ferrell, Cynthia Gladyness, Ron Koehler, Adam London, Eileen McNeil, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Savator Selden-Johnson, Bill Ward.

Guests:

Teresa Branson, Joanne Lambert, Karen Lezan, Carol Paine-McGovern, Wende Randall, Brianne Robach.

1 Welcome & Call to Order

Judge Gardner called the meeting to order.

George Meek made a motion to accept the minutes, 2nd provided by Jackie O'Connor – Vote was unanimous.

2. Public Comment

There was none.

3. Welcome Katie VanHevel, New Senior Administrative Specialist- Introduction by Judge Gardner. Katie comes to us from Alternative Directions and has a Bachelor of Science degree from Grand Valley State University.

4. Diversity Equity and Inclusion Partnership Opportunities- Teresa Branson introduced herself as the new Chief Inclusion Officer now embedded in the Administrator's Office.

Teresa stated Kent County is coming to the end of a five-year DEI Strategic plan and will now develop a new DEI plan specific to the Office of Inclusion.

Teresa previously was the Deputy Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. During the COVID pandemic, she focused on community outreach and engagement by creating a race equity and inclusion team to address disparities.

The county currently offers a two-day health equity social dialogue workshop as well as two half day workshops on equity and social justice. Teresa is currently working on a Building Belonging with Words workshop to address mindfulness of communication with diverse populations. Teresa discussed the role of cultural intelligence, employee engagement with diverse populations, and assessments. The county is currently piloting an equity organizational assessment and will be looking at racial equity assessment tools.

Teresa stated the county has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Pulse Newsletter and would like to create a DEI dashboard to report the diversity of the workforce to the community.

- 5. Strong Beginnings Program-** Teresa Branson filed in for this presentation due to her experience within the Health Department.

Strong Beginnings is a community-wide effort to improve maternal, paternal and child health among African Americans and Latinxs, promote father engagement, and eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes. The program targets Medicaid/MIHP eligible women in Kent County who are pregnant and have a child under four months.

A slideshow was provided to explain goals, objections, program interventions, the involvement of community health workers and partners, as well as improved outcomes. Teresa stated she would follow up on evaluation and program reports that include outcomes for Strong Beginnings to share with the group.

The council discussed the decline of African American infant mortality rates from 4-5x to 2.5-3x compared to Caucasian infants. Kristin Gietzen attributed this decline to improved mental health services while Candace Cowling noted a community effort with an environment supportive of all. Teresa stated when IMRs for 11 counties were studied, key findings included racism and stress, specifically with bias by providers.

- 6. Kent County COVID School Dashboard-** Mike Fortman, Kent County Data Scientist, began his update by stating the county is seeing 176 cases per day on average over the past seven days. Cases are currently going up at a slower rate compared to previous surges. There is an average of one death every two days, possibly attributed to vaccinations, with the death toll staying lower compared to the case count.

Kent County currently has 63.9% of individuals over 16 vaccinated. More individuals are coming in for first vaccinations now compared to the beginning of summer possibly due to vaccine mandates, fear, and/or education around COVID. Last month 14 million people were vaccinated compared to 10 million in the prior month.

In the past week, 10% of COVID cases were between ages 5-11 which is a 50% increase from the average when schools opened in January (6.7%). It is a 25% increase for ages 0-4 as well. There is no case count for kids with symptoms who are not being tested.

Maureen Kirkwood raised the question of vaccine mandates within other council member's organizations. Kristin Gietzen stated labor shortages and tracking positive rates to determine capacity limits in the office. Mary Mulliet shared a similar process of vaccines not being mandated but reviewing data and CDC guidelines. Maureen noted due to working with individuals within the hospital, Health Net mandated the vaccine.

Diana Sieger started a discussion around the Board of Commissions mask mandate meeting and the Council's support of Adam London. Kristin Gietzen stated, "I think that is a message we should be delivering as a community body. We are an advisory body of the county commission and we need to be communicating to that group it's unacceptable our county health officer is not supported and that this body supports the work of the health department unequivocally."

Kristin made a motion which passed unanimously. Judge Gardner reaffirmed the Council is here to support children's safety and promote health in the community.

After further discussion with Adam London about the recommendation to send a letter addressed from the KCFCCC to the Board of Commissioners, it was decided due to Adam's role as Chair to the KCFCCC, this may not be appropriate. Instead, individuals can send a letter to Kalie Gascho at kalie.gascho@kentcountymi.gov from themselves or on behalf of their organization in support of the Health Department to be shared with the Board of Commissioners.

7. **Virtual Community Conversation Thursday October 7th 9:00 to 10:00am-** Paul Petr advised the council the goal is to engage with groups from the community not normally involved or heard. The event will share what the KCFCCC does, what it works on and what has come out of it with time for breakout sessions to get additional information and feedback. Electronic posters will be available.

8. Agency Updates

- **Jackie O'Connor** – The Area Agency of Aging was contacted by the Health Department for involvement getting the booster shot to specific elders by providing transportation.
- **Candace Cowling** – Family Futures has been working with community partners regarding trauma. Looking for input from the community regarding adverse childhood experiences, trauma and resiliency as well as the needs that exist.
- **Mary Mullett** – D.A. Blodgett St. John's is occupying their new building by the end of 2022. Seeing growth in their programs and receiving requests from the state to serve youth in new programs on campus in a residential setting.
- **Dianna Sieger** – Stated the funders have come together in a positive way. Acknowledged Michelle VanDyke and the distribution of CERA funds through the county.
- **Scott Orr** – Children Welfare District manager for DHHS present on behalf of Savator Selden-Johnson. States they are experiencing staff shortages. DHHS is offering support and assistance via warm outreach on the prevention side and continuing antiracism work. Hoping to bring an antiracism transformation team to Kent to parallel the state's efforts.
- **Michelle VanDyke** – CERA emergency rental and utility assistance still available. The Salvation Army, Kent County Community Action, The Source, The Hispanic Center, and West Michigan Asian American Agency are taking applications and doing outreach. kentrenthelp.org or call 2-1-1. There is a 42-day average turnaround for applications.

- **Jacob Maas** – Michigan Works can assist those looking for work understand scholarships eligibility as well as how to apply their skills to different positions.
- **Paul Petr** – New to Assistant to County Administrator role and looking to connect, to learn more about each organization and how the County can partner and learn how to further the work.
- **Teresa Branson** – During COVID, the Health Department hired 8-10 community connectors representing different racial and inclusion groups working to help distribute information. They work part-time, 20 hours a week.
- **Karen Lezan** – Kent ISD Bright Beginnings serves those in Kent with kids prenatal to age 5. Home visits and play groups are growing, as parents missed the social interactions for their children during COVID.
- **Wende Randall** – Kent County Essential Needs Task Force. Kent County, Ottawa County and the City of Grand Rapids are working on their disaster preparedness plan. ENTF looking for input/reflection on how the basic needs areas went and can put those considerations into the disaster preparedness plan.
- **Carol Paine-McGovern** – Kent School Services Network. As a community school initiative, we are the bridge between communities and schools. Carol asked the group to look at root causes of issues related to food, housing, etc. and how to move forward with strong partnerships to support each citizen in the community.

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 1:16 PM. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 2nd, 2021 at 12pm.