

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



KCFCCC Meeting Minutes
November 2nd, 2021 12:00pm – 1:30pm
Kent County Administration Building
Room 311

Members/Alternates

Present:

Michelle VanDyke, Ron Koehler, Diana Sieger, Tracey Fountain, Maureen Kirkwood, Candace Cowling, Judge Gardner, Kristin Gietzen, Jennifer James, Paul Petr, Eileen McNeil

Members Absent:

Jacob Maas, George Meek, Mary Muliatt, Jackie O'Connor, Scott Orr, Scott Smith, Chris Becker, Misti DeVries, Lynne Ferrell, Adam London, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Savator Selden-Johnson, Bill Ward

Guests:

Heather Boswell, Karen Lezan, Carol Paine-McGovern, Doug Booth, Keenan King, Nakia Kyler, Jim Talen, Peggy Vander Meulen

1. Welcome & Call to Order

Judge Gardner called the meeting to order.

Diana Sieger made a motion to accept the minutes, 2nd provided by Kristin Gietzen – Vote was unanimous.

2. Public Comment

There was none.

3. Strong Beginnings Program

See PowerPoint presentation given by Peggy Vander Meulen.

Follow up questions and discussions centered around infant mortality rates as a multi-level problem with the underlying issue of systemic and structural racism. It was suggested laws and systems in place are looked at to create change. Another discussion was to expand the program to a larger eligibility group while using warm hand-offs or peer mentors to increase enrollment by building trust.

During COVID, it was found enrollments increased due to a greater need for support, but visits were shorter with COVID fears. There is now a hybrid model with a mix of in-person and virtual meetings for clients, depending on comfort levels.

4. **Community Conversation Discussion & Review**

The Council agreed more time within the breakout groups was needed in future conversations. Prevailing themes included access to affordable, flexible childcare as well as workforce staffing issues, especially related to nonprofits.

Making sure service providers are aware of the defined role of the Council was highlighted as a need to be impactful within future work in addition to encouraging access to resources in a holistic approach rather than separate, isolated entities. Most organizations are aware how to use 2-1-1 but again, collaborative work was stressed to overcome the barriers that arise while navigating eligibility and accessibility to resources.

The Council discussed moving intentionally with reinventing the purpose and focus of their work. There is a need to examine the impact of systemic racism on community disparities to then be able to operationalize anti-racism organizations. Organizations also need to be educated and trained in working with LGBTQ+ youth. Additionally, the Council should plan to present its success and recommendations for next steps to the Board of Commissioners.

5. **Expectations and Self-Assessment of the Council**

- **What can you bring to this collaborative?**

Many Council members expressed being a voice for those not around the table who they serve in the community. In addition, everyone touched on their different lens perspectives based on individual experience whether in healthcare, for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, school systems, Family Division of the Circuit Court, etc. Reoccurring themes included partnering to fill gaps in services as well as utilizing data to bring action and operationalize work.

- **What is your expectation as your member of the Council?**

The relationship with the County/Board of Commissioners in terms of a direct reporting line and sharing information was brought up by several members as an expectation of the Council. Furthermore, revisiting the by-laws and diversifying membership to include youth was introduced as well as an action through identifying gaps, influencing policy and increasing funding. It was noted common data to the Council is not common to the larger community so collaborative work and communication is expected. Several members also emphasized continuously increasing the likelihood of children being successful and raising the bar for children's quality of life. Finally, Tracey noted each member should never get too comfortable to ask questions within the Council or the community.

6. **Agency Updates**

The K-Connect accountability partners meeting is November 12th. Also, the tentative 2022 Council and Executive Committee schedule was distributed.

7. **Miscellaneous- none.**

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 1:32 PM. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 11th, 2022 at 12pm.