



**ROCK COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday, August 25, 2021 – 4:30 P.M.**

**Call to Order:** Chair Knudson called the virtual meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 11, 2021.

**Committee Members Present:** Brian Knudson, Supervisor; Sally Jean Weaver-Landers, Citizen Representative; Shirley Williams, Supervisor; J. Russell Podzilni, Supervisor; Kathy Schulz, Supervisor; Pam Bostwick, Supervisor; Ashley Hoffman, Citizen Representative; Angelina Reyes, Citizen Representative; and Stephanie Aegerter, Supervisor.

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Katherine Luster, Director; Tera O'Connor, Deputy Director; Greg Winkler, Deputy Director; Sara Mooren, Administrative Services Manager; Tasha Bell, Equity Manager; Brad Demrow, Economic Support Services (ESS); Tracy Mayer, Behavioral Health (BH) Clinician; Amy Evans, Jail Re-Entry; Shelbey Puppe, Subcare Supervisor; Madeline Prange, Child Protective Services (CPS) Supervisor; Kayce Wilson, CPS Supervisor; Kami Williams, Lead CPS Supervisor; John Weber, Analyst; Katarina Ploch, CPS Analyst; Ben Dobson, CLTS Supervisor; Julie Butz, CLTS Program Manager; Bette Trimble, Crisis Program Manager; Kendra Schiffman, Analyst; and Danielle Milligan, Crisis Supervisor.

**Others Present:** Josh Smith, County Administrator. Patrick Singer, Data Services Manager, Rock I.T. Jamie Kersten, UCP. Neil Johnson, Janesville Gazette. Nicole Zorn, SFFC Wisconsin. Becky Drager. Dan Schuhmacher. Peg Cadd. Alyssa Whitney. Pamela Belanger. Theresa Wixom. Cheri Diehls. Yvonne Sanchez. Shiann Oldenburg. Dean Johnson. Kelly Berg. Eugene. Sandy H. Katie Shebesta. Joyce Wilson. Sue Rusch. Ashley Zummo & Jojo Zummo, Foster Parents. Joan Vetter. Matt Diehls. David. Laurie Z. Cindy's phone. David's phone. Micaela Broetzmann. Amanda Hookham. Rev. Courtney Curran. Debbie Albright. Kathy Monson Lutes. Jennifer Short.

**Approval of Agenda:** Supervisor Podzilni moved the agenda to the floor, seconded by Citizen Representative Hoffman. The agenda was unanimously approved. APPROVED.

**Approval of Minutes of Human Services Board Meeting on July 28, 2021:** Citizen Representative Weaver-Landers moved the minutes to the floor, seconded by Supervisor Bostwick. The minutes were unanimously approved. APPROVED.

**Public Comment:** Nicole Zorn, Safe Families For Children (SFFC) addressed the Board in response to the August 12, 2021 County Board meeting and subsequent Janesville Gazette article regarding the change in the CW system. She advised whenever there is change there is a degree of frustration. Rock County is not alone with the shift to the Family First initiative there is a culture shift throughout the country to rethink foster care. She stated she has worked with Rock County

administration, leadership and staff for three plus years and it has been positive. She has observed strong leadership for the well-being of children. There has been a culture shift which keeps kids with families and data shows this is better for outcomes for children. With Family First there is a rethinking of Foster Care. There is a common concern to not leave children in a home at risk but we know that the foster care system is overwhelmed and something else needs to be done. We know and understand that families with alcoholism, domestic violence, substance abuse and homelessness puts children at risk and about 70% of cases are neglect cases not abuse cases. The solution is to not cling to the status quo and responsibility should not be placed solely on the child welfare system. The community and neighbors need to engage and shift to prevention and support families to build a new system. She applauds Rock County HSD and is proud to walk along with HSD to help families that are struggling.

**Communications and Announcements from Staff and Board Members:** None.

**Approval of Contracts and Transfers:** Citizen Representative Weaver-Landers moved the two contracts to the floor, seconded by Citizen Representative Hoffman. Ms. Mooren provided details regarding the contracts. The contracts were unanimously approved. APPROVED.

**Rock County HSD August Employee Impact Recognition Award:** Ms. Luster introduced Brad Demrow, the August Employee Impact Recognition award recipient. She read the nomination as follows: Mr. Demrow is an Economic Support Specialist and was nominated by his supervisor. Mr. Demrow is a dedicated ES specialist who specializes in Elderly, Blind, and Disabled Medicaid and Long Term Care programs. Brad is patient and kind with his clients and co-workers. He is detailed and thorough with his casework in a very complex program area. There is a process for certain EBD individuals who can be eligible for FoodShare under Federal Program Rules. The process for looking at these cases is all manual, time consuming, and very complex. Brad has become an expert at these cases and is often sought out to assist other coworkers. Recently, Brad worked through and explained in detail with a consortium partner how to address these cases. She wrote, "Round of Applause - Nominee for Brad DEMROW for helping me process an EBD case that needed manual review for FoodShare under the Federal SNAP rules for EBD. Brad took the time to review the case and the FoodShare worksheet with me to ensure we correctly opened the case. Truly a Life saver!" Excellent job Brad in demonstrating commitment to all our co-workers and always being willing to assist with difficult cases. Mr. Demrow conveyed thanks to his supervisor and coworkers.

**Reports and Updates:**

- a. **Birth to Three Update** – Ms. Kersten, UCP, provided statistical information regarding ongoing open individual service plans, intake evaluations, and referrals. UCP has been serving families in their homes throughout the last year and continuing to do so. The percentage of races other than white children being served has increased. She provided details about their outreach activities and events including a resource fair coming up on September 27, 2021. She provided information about staff trainings as well. Ms. Kersten, Ms. Butz, and Mr. Weber responded to questions.
- b. **Foster Care Advisory Committee Update** – Ms. Mayer introduced Ms. Berg a FCAC member. Ms. Berg stated the last FCAC had low attendance but discussed inviting an HSD Board member to the meetings. They voted to allow an HSD Board member to attend. At the next meeting they will be discussing the survey results. Ms. Sanchez asked about a case that was not referred to the B-3 program and Mr. Knudson asked for her to send the case to him.

- c. **CORE Committee Report: Professional Development Committee** – Ms. Luster advised she will be cycling through CORE committee workgroups to present to the Board. Supervisor Schulz requested an agenda item regarding staff trainings and starting with Professional Development workgroup will respond to her request as well. Mr. Weber presented a power point explaining all about the Professional Development Committee including the following; members, approach/training plan, training topics; platforms and resources; communication; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; focus for the remainder of 2021; and future committee goals.
- d. **Report on CPS Systems Change and Recent Public Commentary** – Ms. Luster advised there is a lot of information that can be shared about the CPS System change to address concerns regarding the recent public commentary. She has invited CPS leadership to share information regarding historical context, safety concerns and shift of practice. She stated information would be provided about how safety is assessed and the big picture elements of safety assessments. She advised that Ms. Ploch would be sharing data regarding concerns raised and CPS leadership would be providing narrative and examples of working with families.

Ms. Luster asked the Board members to think about questions they have and contact her to ask for information they need that would help them to be informed and to have what they need to answer questions.

Ms. Luster informed the Board that many workers felt misrepresented. Ms. Luster conveyed that Rock County HSD CPS workers are legitimate and effective, and deserve respect. She stated they cannot respond to specific cases but can respond to the fact there are hundreds of families being served and the quality of what CPS does, is meeting measures of compliance and standards, and CPS holds themselves accountable.

Ms. Williams touched on key topics regarding CPS. CPS is very complex. She has worked in Rock County CPS for twenty years and has seen that the practice, safety standards and protocols have changed over the years. She has seen shifts in practice throughout the years as when she started there were no standards to follow, then it shifted to standards of practice to remove the children then looking at the family. Now, the shift is to look at the family first and to not take the children out of the home whenever possible. She explained how cases are assessed and that there are standards followed for the safety of the children and she provided more details of what is done to make decisions regarding present and impending danger.

Ms. Prange provided a step by step detail of an example of a case and how it is screened in or out. She emphasized there is always discussion between a worker and supervisor to make decisions, and some cases are discussed by a group of all supervisors. Once a case is screened in there is an immediate response to have a worker go out and immediately assess the situation in person. She described in detail that the worker talks to law enforcement, children, parents and others to assess the situation. Ms. Wilson provided a detailed example of a case, step by step and what happens during the reunification of a family.

Ms. Luster advised HSD effectively uses data to improve outcomes. She introduced the new CPS Analyst, Katarina Ploch, who is tracking benchmark data. Ms. Ploch

presented a power point which began with the overdue paperwork of initial assessment cases which have dropped from 55 cases in January to 23 currently. Ms. Ploch advised that the information she was sharing is posted on the DCF website as well. She shared information regarding Access Report Screening rates, Cases screened in and out, Substantiation rates of 2017-2021, and Recurrence of Maltreatment. Ms. Luster advised this is global benchmark data on HSD CPS performance overall, but we have key areas for the Quality Improvement (QI) team to look at and want to use data to be more informed. Ms. Luster shared a short video portraying key perspectives of families and workers involved in the child welfare system.

Chair Knudson advised he would allow for questions in the chat to be answered. Ms. Williams answered the questions. Questions that could not be answered were noted and some questions could not be answered due to being specific to a case. Others will be answered in the future with data that will be presented. Ms. Luster explained more regarding how child welfare turnover is calculated and the increased percentages. She agreed that HSD is concerned and wants to improve retaining workers. Supervisor Aegerter shared thoughts of how hard it is to calculate turnover. Supervisor Williams requested data regarding Covid and the past year and half, and how that has impacted services, specifically workers meeting with families and the percentage of families not receiving the normal amount of contacts.

- e. **Update Regarding 2022 HSD Budget Request** – Ms. Luster advised she previously shared the 2022 Budget Request memo with the Board members by email. The memo is a fiscal overview and she highlighted the reclassifications as well. She advised this will be put on another agenda. HSD leadership budget meetings will be taking place in September with County Administrator Smith. Ms. Luster advised the Board members to contact her if they are interested in going through the entire budget or answer any questions they may have. The total county share is approximately \$24 million and total expenditure are approximately \$74 million HSD is moving forward through the budget and Ms. Luster advised that at the second meeting in October the HSD Board will be voting on the County Administrator’s budget.
- f. **Update: COVID Related Departmental and Community Needs** – Ms. Luster advised that the HSD Open House at the DWRC was modified due to the Covid protocols. Originally the Open House was going to be mandatory but was changed to optional, and a virtual version will be sent out. No food or swag bags were given out but will be given to employees as a welcome bag once in their office. We have seen more Covid cases coming through with staff.
- g. **Update: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams Rock County Resource Center** – Ms. Luster advised the Open House welcomed staff to the DWRC. At the Open House Ms. Luster spoke about the big picture, Mr. Stevens spoke about safety and parking, and Ms. Thompson spoke about the Morale Committee and Move Committee’s passport and scavenger hunt activities. A few HSD employees also provided live music during the activities. The ribbon cutting ceremony is at 1:00 p.m. tomorrow, August 26, 2021. The move starts Friday with Administrative Services.

**Committee Requests:**

- a. **Review of Committee Requests to Date:** None.

**b. Requests for Future Agenda Items or Information:** Supervisor Schulz requested a report from Corporation Counsel to provide some sort of answer of things that have been asked and how to respond better.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, **September 8, 2021** at 4:30 p.m. – via Zoom

**Adjournment:** Supervisor Williams motioned to adjourn, seconded by Supervisor Bostwick with unanimous approval at 6:38 p.m.

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Jodi Parson, Secretary

**NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE BOARD**