

Oconee County Department of Family and Children Services

Board Meeting

January 12, 2017

Board Members Present: Beverly Griffin, Chair; Mary Jo Gerlach, Rosemarie Newman and David Jackson

Staff Present: Dawn M. Criss, Director; Rhonda M. Floyd, Operations Coordinator; Debra L. Maxey-Hunter, OFI Administrator

Guest: Kelsey Caulder with The Oconee Enterprise Newspaper

The January board meeting was called to order by Ms. Beverly Griffin.

**Minutes Review:**

The November 17, 2016 called meeting minutes were reviewed. Ms. Gerlach motioned to approve and Ms. Newman seconded. The Board approved the minutes with no corrections.

The November 8, 2016 regular meeting minutes were reviewed. Mr. Jackson motioned to approve and Ms. Gerlach seconded. The Board approved the minutes with no corrections.

**Financial:**

The December County Revenue and Expenditure report was reviewed noting the expenditure goal is 50% and we are spending at 47.8% which is under budget. Ms. Criss explained the lapse process to the board as well as the amount of supplements for December. Mr. Jackson suggested that we ensure that each category has the appropriate amount of budget to reflect current spending needs.

**Office of Family Independence:**

Ms. Maxey-Hunter provided the board with an up to date report on the current OFI staffing in Oconee County. Ms. Alicia Dailey is now on a full time state funded position and is covering the front desk for the Oconee County DFCS office. There is one full time OFI case manager in Oconee but there needs to be two and hopefully another one can be hired soon. Oconee dropped below 96% SOP (Standard of Promptness) goal at 93.3%; however, Ms. Maxey-Hunter reported that could be because we do not have the staff here or the customer could have delayed the process by not returning items timely, etc. We are already on the way to bringing up the SOP in Oconee County. The Total Active Caseloads for this office is 1,551 and 617 of those are for food Stamps. Mr. Jackson asked if these numbers increase during the holidays and Ms. Maxey-Hunter doesn't think so but she said the reports after January would have that data to reflect that time period. All of the DFCS offices are going back to a local person answering the main telephone line in each office. The DHS Commissioner and the Governor want the phone answered in the local offices. The number for Oconee County will be (706) 310-2260. Hopefully this will be effective the next couple of weeks and Ms. Dailey will be answering the phone for Oconee County. This will be great change for the customers.

Ms. Gerlach shared her recent experience with a customer whose food stamps were about to expire and they were not able to access their account on COMPASS because their password had expired. They

contacted Ms. Gerlach trying to find out how to resolve the issue and of course the customer was in a panic. Ms. Gerlach contacted Ms. Criss who in turn had Ms. Maxey-Hunter call her and explain that if a customer does not log into their account periodically over the course of a year, their password will expire. She said that this is an example of a situation that would be better handled by having a case manager housed in the local office so they could have been assisted with these issues personally during their first attempt. The customer was told to go back to the office which they did and completed the paperwork but when they went in for the appointment, they had to go through it all again because they were told no one kept the paper copy. Ms. Maxey-Hunter said she tries to educate staff to talk with their customers and educate them on how to eliminate these issues by staying current with their password in their account. Each customer is sent a courtesy letter the month before their review month to let them know their annual review date is coming up but if they have not logged into their account recently then they have to re-set their password which can cause fear for customers.

### **Social Services**

The board reviewed current staffing conditions and Ms. Criss reported that with the positions that we are allocated, if everyone were trained and had full caseloads assigned, we would be at 14 cases per caseworker. She is hoping the proposed increase that the Governor announced for Child Welfare Staff will slow turnover. We had a 3% performance based cost of living raise for FY16 and it looks promising for the future. Ms. Griffin said one of the responsibilities of the board is to help staff and the turnover rate.

The Social Services Reports were reviewed and the trends from July – December were looked at noting the trend looks like there was a 50% increase in reports from last year. In looking at the number of cases assigned to the Family Support and Investigations tracks, there does not appear to be much of an increase. Statewide we generally have an increase in children that come into care in January. The Family Preservation caseloads is trending downward. Ms. Criss thinks one thing driving that is cases are being looked at more closely for their appropriateness in remaining open and open cases are being closed if there is no clear safety issue to warrant the Departments involvement. We have fewer kids in Foster Care than last year. Oconee County currently has 10 kids in Foster Care (not all are placed in Oconee County).

### **Other Business**

Oconee County has a new Board of Commissioners Chairman, Mr. John Daniell. Ms. Griffin would like for her and Ms. Criss to personally meet him and thank him for the support the Commissioners have given DFCS over the years.

The Supplemental Budget Request has not been received yet. Ms. Criss asked if the board wanted to work on this once she receives it.

Ms. Griffin read from a list of items that are appropriate to use county funds for to include foster care expenses, trainings, staff appreciation, holiday luncheons, travel and regular operating costs. She wants to make sure that we are supporting our foster families as much as we can and that they are not being conservative in providing for a child in fear that the funds are not in the budget to support the need. Ms. Criss assured the board that she cannot think of a time when a foster parent has made a request on

behalf of a child in care that the request was not granted. Ms. Newman said she is especially interested if there are scholarships available with the local Recreation Departments to ensure children have activities available to them during the summer and afterschool so they are not alone or on the streets. The more kids are involved in team sports, the better they function the rest of their life.

The board agreed that all categories need to be looked at to make sure we have enough funds in them to accomplish the county's goals. The Oconee County Commissioners granted a 3% increase last year and the board agreed it may be time to ask for more of an increase in the budget.

The Organizational Chart was reviewed and the board asked Ms. Criss to BOLD the staff who were actually sitting in the Oconee Office to make it clearer for them to recognize.

Updates on Board Members supporting Staff:

Eddie Bennett is available for staff to do ride-along on Fridays and asked that they call him any Friday they would like to go. Training for how to assist with covering the front desk will be available on either February 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>. Confirm with Ms. Floyd and she will coordinate.

Mr. Jackson asked about the Workplace Safety Training provided by the Oconee County Sheriff's Office that he arranged for the staff which was held this week at the Clarke County DFCS Office. He said the next step would be getting all of the law enforcement personnel to the agency and suggested maybe a day they could all stop by and have coffee. He also said he would like to see us have more positive exposure in the newspaper.

**Next Meeting – Thursday, March 9, 2017 @ 3:00 pm.**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:



Dawn M Criss, Secretary



Beverly Griffin, Board Chair