

**Tioga County Department of Human Services
Advisory Board
August 9, 2023
12:00 noon**

Board Attendance: Isobel Anderegg, Commissioner Bunn, John Eckman, Kristin Hamilton, Timothy McBride, Saira Olson, Sara Rice, Sue Sticklin, Seth Watkins

Guest Attendance: Jenny Bowen, SueAnne Carson, Lindsey Chambers, Jenny Farrer, Jenny Harmon, Mellissa Parsons, Trisha Tanner, Jim Schu, Diane Weed, Brett Weiskopff, Mary Wilson

Remote Attendance:

Call to Order: Saira called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence.

Sara began the meeting informing the board that Jim Bodine, John Eckman, Tim McBride, and Seth Watkins terms are expiring at the end of this year. We appreciate the wisdom and value the feedback that we have received over the last several years.

Secretary's Report: Kristin asked the Advisory Board to review the minutes from the June 2023 meeting. Any questions, concerns, discrepancies? No voiced concerns. John made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Saira seconded. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Sara states that at the end of July 2023, the balance is \$1,743.85. Kristen made a motion to approve the treasury report as presented, Sue seconded. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays. Motion Carried.

Agenda Items:

Jenny Harmon began informing the Advisory Board that there are copies of the draft Children and Youth Needs-Base Plan and Implementation Plan available for review. Again, this is just the draft, so please do not take the copies with you today. Tioga county continues to be confronted with issues regarding truancy, staff shortages, and complex case needs. Due to the size and rural nature of Tioga County, there are several areas within the county where cell service is limited, and we are requesting funding to install On-Star in the County lease vehicles to prioritize staff safety.

Brett discusses intake trends for Tioga County. We have had 200 CPS reports, 28 which have been indicated and 1 founded. Tioga County has had 800+ GPS reports that include domestic violence, mental health, drug use by the parents and children, and behavioral issues. A lot of these reports are of generational repeat families.

Trisha states that we have served a total of 365 children, 175 families, and have 119 placements in the northern unit. There has been an increase in poor home conditions. We have had to purchase/utilize a lot of dumpsters. The state gives us \$20,000 housing funds to utilize to prevent removal of homes, however we ran out of those funds prior to the end of the fiscal year. Other uses of the housing funds included bed bug treatments, housing repairs, heat, and fencing for an autistic child to prevent them from running in the road. Our total number of case loads are lower however more severe.

Jenny Farrer states that in the southern unit we have been dealing with overcrowded housing, drug use in parents, and a lot more cases with severe domestic violence. Our cases tend to be more complex than they have in the past.

SueAnne states that we currently have 57 children in care. 24 of them are in foster care homes, 21 are with kinship providers, 9 are in legal custody, and 3 are in a community-based facility. 35 children were exited from foster care last year. We are struggling with recruiting foster care families. A few families have left due to the demands and other families have left to go to other agencies because of the rates. Our rates have not been raised in 10 years and that is something we need to address. Some of our families that were fostering children have adopted those children and then ended their fostering journey.

The foster care department has been attending fairs and events throughout the county for recruitment efforts. Trisha states that the behaviors of the children are more severe and daunting at a younger age which has been a turn-off to the foster families. Respite care has been more difficult to find to give our foster families a break.

We have had a decrease in kinship care homes in the past year. Kinship homes are not always appropriate care for the children, so we end up going through the traditional foster care homes. When we do find appropriate kinship homes, these families have tended to begin the process, then realize what it entails and decide not to do it anymore.

We have had 19 children adopted last year which has been the highest number in five years.

Adoptive parents can receive financial assistance with a subsidy agreement if they would like and 95% of our parents receive it.

Question—How big is the truancy problem in our county and what are we doing? Truancy is a rippling affect from the COVID pandemic. The kids just do not want to go to school. The school districts have the responsibility prior to referring them to the agency. Our vision is to have 1 truancy worker per school district that will work with the families to prevent truancy. This is not just a Tioga County problem, this is a problem across the state.

Question- Has there been any CASA contributions to children in the county? We do not have a lot of CASA cases. The cases that we do have, CASA provides an additional support but does not decrease timeframes. The older youth do not tend to like it—they see it as one more thing they must do. However, the younger children are more favorable of the program.

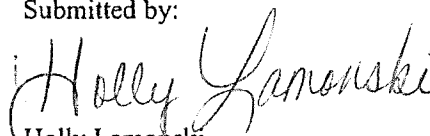
The Juvenile Probation Department's referrals have slightly decreased over the past year. There was a total of 55 referrals, with 3 community-based probation cases and 3 probation placements. The majority of those referrals were granted Consent Decrees and they have been a positive outcome for the youth over the years.

We have had an increase from 0 to 5 kids in Dependent Residential Care, but not for extended period of times. The children that are in this level of care all have complex needs, such as severe drug use with overdoses, multiple suicide attempts, sex trafficking, and aggressive behaviors. It has been difficult finding care at this level due to programs having to shut down. We have two contracted providers however we get denied due to shortage of staff. We have had to house 1 individual in our Bridge Housing program and two individuals in our office where staff have had to supervise 24 hours a day.

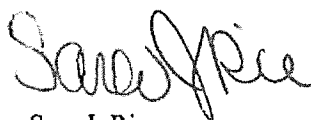
Question—Could we reestablish an RTF program back up in Tioga County? We would love to but the problem we are having is finding qualified staffing and a provider to run it.

Jack motioned to close the TCDHS Advisory Board Meeting, Tim seconded. Meeting Adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Submitted by:



Holly Lamonowski
Secretary



Sara J. Rice
Administrator of TCDHS