

PRESS RELEASE
December 27, 2006

The Logan County Children's Services Board held its twelfth meeting for 2006 on Tuesday, December 19th. The meeting was originally scheduled for December 14th, but due to personal illness of several Board members (the flu), it was necessary to postpone the meeting.

There were five members of the public and three Agency staff in attendance.

The guests all noted they had come together and were members of a single extended family. Some indicated they wished only to observe the meeting, others indicated they wished to address the Board in regard to a specific child abuse case. The Board went into Executive Session to hear their concerns about a specific case. The guests were thanked for their input and encouraged to attend the entire meeting, which they did.

Ms. Pat Bonar was re-appointed to the Board of Directors. Her new term will run through 12/31/2010. Ms. Bonar was congratulated upon her re-appointment.

Director Holtkamp noted that in November, Investigations and Assessments were conducted involving 76 children. This number is down from October which was a record setting month. In-Home services were provided to 73 children, again a decline from the prior month. Out-of-Home services (Foster/Adoption) were provided to 11 children. The Agency continues to have no children waiting for adoption who are legally ready for adoption. Adoption Assistance is being provided to 51 children.

The Neighborhood Outreach Centers saw an unduplicated count of 170 children in November, 76 at the Chippewa Center and 94 at the Western Center in Bellefontaine. The Western Center has started a Neighborhood Watch program at the West end of Bellefontaine and is hosting monthly meetings. They are working with the United Methodist Church on an "Angel Tree" for gifts for needy children. Children from the Center also helped decorate a tree at the Orr Mansion. The Chippewa Center held a Talent Show for local children at the Moose Lodge in November. Rite-Aid in Russells Point has put up an "Angel Tree" with the Chippewa Center for gifts for needy children. Chippewa children also volunteered to help serve meals at the Moose Lodge Family Center for the Moose's anniversary dinner. Both Center's plan Christmas Parties with lots of gifts and activities for Neighborhood kids and their families.

The Board reviewed finances for the Agency. Revenues continue 10% higher than in prior years due to TANF, extensive use of shared funding agreements and IV-E efforts. Expenses (except TANF reimbursement) remain lower than in prior years, due to expansion of In-Home services and development of local resources (rather than expensive services far from home).

The Board reviewed and approved a new 'Client Rights Handbook' "*Because We All Have Rights*", and the accompanying Policies to implement the handbook. Every client of the Agency will receive a copy of the Handbook which sets out the rights and responsibilities of anyone who receives services from the Agency. These are, essentially

- The right to understand the services plan for their family
- The right to participate in developing or modifying the service plan
- The right to complain and to be heard

The Handbook and policies set forth procedures to handle Complaints, Grievances and Appeals. It had been reviewed and approved by the Prosecutor's Office. In response to questions, Director Holtkamp responded that the Handbook is not required by the State, but is recommended as a part of Accreditation. It is simply "a better way to do business".

Director Holtkamp reported upon:

- Christmas giving: A variety of local businesses, Church's, Sheriff's Office, Commissioner's Office and others (29 volunteers) have gathered gifts for 52 families with 129 children.
- Permanency Initiative: That every child have a home for today, for tomorrow, forever. Discussions with the Court over ORC 2151.353 versus ORC 2151.42 are ongoing. The latter legal section provides greater legal protections to ensure permanency. Emily Pool and Jen Meyer spearheaded this effort.
- The Agency Christmas Party in December had the largest turnout (180 children and adults) and was very successful. Many thanks to Amanda Willis.
- The Agency's Strategic Plan, built from the Mission Statement, is providing a focus upon Safety and upon Permanency.
- Renovations ranging from the Reception area, to the Services area, to the Board room, File Room, Interview Room and Supervisory rooms are ongoing.
- Monthly meetings continue with Judges. Issues of CASA roll-out are present.
- Issues of Child Abuse reporting by Mary Rutan Hospital are being addressed with Mary Rutan.
- Foster Parent medication lists will be requested annually. Additionally a list of all licensed Foster Parents in the county will be provided to the Prosecutor's office.
- Latest statewide research indicates Kinship Care placements are as safe as Foster Care placements in regard to Child Abuse (less than 1/2 of 1% of children suffer abuse annually in Kinship or Foster Placements. This compares with 1% to 3% of children in parental homes).
- Emergency Services funds used in 3 recent cases to pay legal fees for families to stabilize children's placements. Trying very hard not to open this gate any wider.
- *Help Me Grow Program* (\$330,000, 7 staff) looking for a new home. FCFC wants to spin-off. CSB, Health District or MR/DD are potential matches. We are also looking at it.
- *Happy Bear* was presented to 17 classrooms with 794 children receiving safety training through this effort. Shoan Nease deserves credit for organizing this effort.

The next regular meeting of the Board will be at 5:00 pm Thursday, January 11th, 2007, at the Agency's offices. Accreditation processes and Power Point presentation of Fiscal and Services information will be provided.

Questions may be directed to John Holtkamp, Agency Director at 599-7290.

John Holtkamp
LISW, ACSW
Executive Director
Holtkj@odjfs.state.oh.us