

**CIRCUIT 7
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF VOLUSIA, FLAGLER, PUTNAM & ST. JOHNS COUNTIES

Calvin Martin, Chair

**Government Services Building
1769 East Moody Boulevard
Building 2
Bunnell, Florida**

November 9, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Lynette Shott
Robert Snyder
Lois Berardi (Alternate for David Kerr)
Arnold Anderson
Patricia Boswell
Calvin Martin
Carl Coalson
Linda Merrell
Claudia Roth
Shirley Olson
Ben Coney
LT. James Day
Christine Sikora (Alternate for Robin King)**

GUESTS AND STAFF PRESENT:

**Linda Mandizha - DCF
James Lynam - DCF
Felicia Benzo – Public Participant
Sandra Felecia – ALM - HHJ
Mark Jones – CPC
Clay LaRoche – DCF
Steve Rankin - LSF
Michael Forster - FIP
Julie Shaw – Disability Solutions
Dusty Pye – LSF
Linda Mandizha - DCF
Evelyn Lynam - DCF
Dawn Green - DCF**

The mission of the department is to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency

in conjunction with

The mission of the Community Alliance is to support a comprehensive continuum of services to strengthen children and families through advocacy, education assessment and forging community collaboration with organizations and individuals that share the vision and mission of the Community Alliance.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. Roll call did establish a quorum.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Martin asked if there were any corrections needed to the June minutes. Member Coalson noted that the June minutes needed to be corrected on page 3, paragraph 5. He stated that the sentence should read “7 schools **will be** connected...” and not “**are now** connected”. The correction was noted and the approval of the June 2016 minutes was motioned and approved.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

IV. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Arnold Anderson reported:

- Mr. Anderson discussed that as a community, we are addressing the increase in out-of-home care children in Circuit 7. Examples he gave were creative prevention measures in the community, recognizing that families with abuse have experienced severe trauma and ensuring that families with this trauma experience do not experience more trauma by penetrating the DCF or DJJ systems.
- Mr. Anderson introduced two community members, Ms. Lynette Shott and Ms. Sandra Felicia, who worked on a summer project called the A Game camp. Ms. Felicia and Ms. Shott addressed what the A Game camp was and the objectives of the project. They discussed the many partners that participated and presented to the youth in this camp. They presented a Power Point presentation which reflected the work and participants in the camp. They went on to discuss how the program has been extended into the school year in several high schools and how well the youth are doing. They also discussed plans to replicate the program in other schools and other counties in Circuit 7.
- Member Roth asked if there is any data that supports the success of this program. Ms. Shott responded that they have pulled attendance records and grades for the participants of the camps. All of the students are passing their classes and there are no negative issues with this group of youth.
- Member Roth asked Ms. Shott to define the term "at risk". Ms. Shott responded that what they looked at was attendance and disciplinary issues of the students. Also, the referrals may have come from the parents who had concerns about their children's motivation in school. Ms. Felicia also responded that they targeted students that were disengaged from the education process and whose grades were failing. She stated that making these students feel like a part of something and that somebody cared was very powerful.
- Member Merrell congratulated the presenters on an excellent program.
- Chair Martin stated that he felt there may very well be a grant opportunity for this project. He stated that with the Alliance's support he would like to place this as an item for Community Alliance Executive Committee to discuss how the Alliance might be able to assist.

V. NEW MEMBER COMMITTEE REPORT:

Calvin Martin reported:

- Chair Martin discussed the new officer for the balance of the fiscal year. He requested the Alliance consider maintaining the current set of officers for that period. There was a motion supporting this and it was seconded. The vote was unanimous in support of the motion.
- Chair Martin discussed the three at-large vacancies on the Alliance; one each for Volusia, Putnam and Flagler counties. He presented the three members recommended for membership; Julie Shaw, Emanuel

Roberts and Sandra Felecia. A motion to accept these candidates as members was made and seconded. The vote was unanimous in support of the motion.

VI. COMMUNITY ALLIANCE TOURS

Calvin Martin reported:

➤ Chair Martin discussed the Alliance addressing the local county commissioner boards for each county in Circuit 7. He proposed a tentative schedule and discussed the purpose and probable content of the presentations. He intends to begin the presentations in January and he invited Alliance members to attend with him if possible.

VII. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

➤ Chair Martin stated that this item will be moved to the January agenda.

VIII. COMMUNITY BASED CARE

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN (CPC) – Mark Jones reported:

➤ Mr. Jones discussed National Adoption Day and CPC's event at the Plaza Resort and Spa. He urged Alliance members to attend.

➤ Mr. Jones talked about the CPC Christmas Toy Drive. This year they have more than 100 additional children to provide with gifts. He asked the Alliance if they know of any organizations or individuals willing to donate toys or sponsor a family to please get in touch with him.

➤ Mr. Jones spoke to a meeting that occurred on October 27, 2016 with a State Supreme Court justice and a team of child welfare officials from West Palm Beach. There was extensive discussion regarding CPC's child welfare achievements and low case manager turnover. The meeting was very productive and hopefully it will help them out.

➤ Mr. Jones corrected the number of children in out-of-home care in the written report to 1189. He went on to say that as of today it is 1202 children. Everybody is looking at ways to mitigate that number. The number of children being sheltered has stabilized. However, CPC is struggling somewhat with getting children home due to the new Safety Decision Methodology. We are trying to reconcile these changes with the judicial system so that everybody is on the same page. Hopefully this will improve in the next few months. He stated that often the cases they are receiving are egregious and the judge will ask "If I order these children home can you assure me they will be safe?" We cannot really assure safety. We can put services in place in the home and reduce dramatically the likelihood of something happening to those children but there are no guarantees. We are working to resolve this.

➤ Chair Martin spoke to the meeting with the Supreme Court justice and felt it was an excellent meeting and stated it was real testament to how well CPC runs its child welfare system. Member Merrell thanked Mr. Jones and CPC for the great work that they do. She asked if some of the editorials that Mr. Jones has done could be shared with the Alliance membership. Chair Martin stated that he would get it out to everyone.

➤ Chair Martin noted that the Family Builders service was now activated for CPC. This is an excellent service and it is good to see it come back. Mr. Jones agreed that this should be of great benefit.

FAMILY INTEGRITY PROGRAM – Michael Forster reported:

- Mr. Forster stated that he has been with FIP for 5 months and discussed some of his background. Chair Martin responded that he had talked with Mr. Forster and Ms. Novak and that someone with his background should be a great asset to the St. Johns community.
- Chair Martin noted that the report reflects a caseload ratio goal of 16 to one. He asked what the current ratio is. Mr. Forster replied the current is 22 to one. He went on to state that the case managers can do their best work with a ratio of 16 to one.
- Chair Martin noted that FIP also has significant financial challenges as do other lead agencies. Mr. Forster reported that they are monitoring the fiscal situation quarterly, reporting to the department and are focused on staying on budget.
- Chair Martin noted that FIP has a very high percentage of sibling groups staying together and congratulated FIP on this effort. He asked if there was any comparison data with other CBCs on this metric. Mr. Forster stated that he would attempt to gather this data for the next meeting. He went on to state that FIP holds monthly staffings on any sibling group that is separated to determine if there is a possibility of placing them together.

IX. PROGRAM UPDATES

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY – Dawn Green reported:

- Chair Martin noted in the report the “Stay Interview” process and he felt this was a very proactive effort in stemming turnover. He asked if this has been effective. Ms. Green responded that the data is not tabulated yet however the interviews themselves have been very informative. She went on to state that ESS hires a lot of people and a lot of people leave ESS. It seems like ESS is the starting point for many employee’s career with the Department. The pattern seems to be either the employee leaves within 6 months or stays for many years.
- Chair Martin asked about the new culturally relevant training for front line staff and if there were incidents that prompted this training. Ms. Green responded that it was ESS trying to be proactive rather than incident driven. She went on to state that the workload has been very stressful for the employees and this training is coupled with other training such as Customer Service to provide the staff with the tools needed to cope with this type of environment.
- Member Merrell congratulated the ESS staff on doing a great job in a difficult environment. She stated that it made her think about the pay scale for these staff and feels that these employees should be rewarded for good performance. She stated that perhaps we should look at how we can help improve the pay.

ADULT SERVICES – Representatives had notified Alliance that they could not attend today – no report:

FAMILY SAFETY – Linda Mandizha reported:

- Ms. Mandizha announced that in addition to Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties, she is now also responsible for St. Johns and Clay counties.
- Chair Martin noted that the report reflects a decrease in shelters apparently from April 2016 to current. Ms. Mandizha responded that is correct. There was a time period with extremely high shelter rate but that is not the norm. We are working to develop a culture where foster care is recognized as not the optimum option for

families. It is too long, not family centered and further traumatizes the children. Many of the issues can be treated in the home but the services are often difficult for our clients to reach. So we are trying to work with the community to provide better services, faster and in their homes to prevent shelter. Many of our CPIs are struggling with the new Safety Decision Methodology. Cases are not black and white and we are trying to train them and provide them the time to do a good analysis for the proper actions to take.

➤ Chair Martin asked about the proficiency training and testing and noted that this appears to have to be passed for a supervisor to keep a job. He also asked if this is statewide. Ms. Mandizha responded that this is one of the Secretary's Priority of Efforts for the upcoming year and is statewide. Each quarter we recommend supervisors that should be ready for this process. There are two tests. The first is a consultation with your CPI which is graded and, if you pass, the second is a full case review based on the new methodology. You are allowed two attempts and must pass both to remain a supervisor. The Northeast Region is the best performing region in the state but the passing rate is only 66%. I believe the major issue is that CPIs work under a lot of strict procedures and we have lessened their ability to use good common sense and analytics when deciding the best actions for a family.

➤ Chair Martin stated that the Alliance should stay mindful of this testing. It is an added layer of stress upon an already very stressful job. Ms. Mandizha stated that a bright spot in all this is that the Secretary recognizes the heavy workload and is going around the state and having focus groups addressing the methodology issues. They are looking to streamline some of the processes.

➤ Member Coalson congratulated Ms. Mandizha on the work she does. He noted that the report reflects that ½ of the CPI staff have less than one year's experience. He offered to provide the Compassion Fatigue training to the CPIs to assist with the stress. Ms. Mandizha responded that she plans to contact Member Coalson for this training.

➤ Member Roth asked if there was a model out there that reflects the community assisting with providing services more directly to the client's. Ms. Mandizha stated that at one time we had a Community Partnership Program, the Family Builders program and the Intensive Crisis Counseling program all of which helped deliver these types of services. The combination of these programs reduced the number of children that had to come into care. Member Coalson stated that is an excellent effort in order to bring the service to the client instead of having the client have to seek it out. We have experienced the same thing in our schools. That is where the students are for 6 or 7 hours a day so that is where we need to bring the services.

X. COMMUNITY ALLIANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

Chair Martin reported:

➤ Chair Martin reported on the Legislative Subcommittee stating that its focus is on the upcoming legislative session and anything that would impact the lead agencies or other services in our communities. It will then determine what position that the Alliance as a body can take to influence or educate the legislators. This committee will continue from now through the legislative session. Calvin Martin will chair this committee.

➤ Chair Martin stated that this will be his last year as the Chair Person for the Alliance. He intends to have an Ad Hoc Committee to search for a person to become the new Chair. He invited Alliance members who may have an interest to contact him. Deb Reith will chair this committee.

➤ Chair Martin discussed the Managing Entity Subcommittee. The purpose of this committee will be to engage and communicate with our ME and speak to any kind of challenge the ME has and that we can assist

them with. The committee will also identify any concerns that Alliance has and would like the ME to look into. The committee will also act in concert with any other community mental health activist group such as the Behavioral Health Consortium. Shirley Holland will chair this committee.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Evelyn Lynam addressed the Alliance on the status of the Circuit 7 System of Care. She stated that they have received a new grant to cover the next four years. The grant will total \$425,000 per year. We anticipate dividing the Circuit into a North and South area to make the work more manageable. The full amount of the grant will be used for services. 2 full time positions and one part time position will be funded by the DCF SAMH Department. She provided additional updates on this program.
- Members Merrell and Coalson congratulated Ms. Lynam and Troy Weingarten for their work in the community. Member Coalson added that the Putnam Police Athletic League was mentioned and went on to discuss how much good they do in Putnam County and how much support they need.
- Ms. Lynam requested that she become a routine reporter to the Alliance and join the Program Updates group.
- Ms. Julie Shaw presented for Disability Solutions. She discussed a special program that they ran this past summer. The project brought youth to the agency and focused on “soft pre-employment skills”. This program served youth from ages 14 to 24, 6 hours a day, two days a week for six weeks. Most of the youth were youths with disabilities with very little chance to become employed due to having “special” diplomas. We were able to get several of these youth back in school working towards a regular diploma. This is just one of several very positive outcomes we had with this group. By their request, we are offering these youth an afternoon class once a week now that school has started.
- Member Merrell recognized the many years of service that Ms. Shaw has provided the community.

XII. MEMBER COMMENTS:

- Member Ben Coney noted that this was his first meeting and that the mission statement of Alliance says a lot about this group. He got a chance to read the reports everybody turned in and then witnessed the representatives come forward to discuss their reports and it was very powerful. He looks forward to participating in the future.
- Member Merrell thanked everybody that participated in the Alliance. She announced that she was now a resident of Flagler County.
- Member Coalson brought up the PAL program in Putnam and the after school program they run. They have 10 computers that need hard drives and he asked if anybody could help get hard drives for these computers to please contact him.
- Chair Martin extended a warm welcome to the new members that will be joining the Alliance in January. He also appreciated all the members that did show up today even though you are still dealing with hurricane damage.

XIII. ADJOURN

With nothing further to come before the Alliance, Chair Martin adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.