

The Accomack County Department of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, at 9:30 A.M. Present were Mr. R. Dodd Obenshain, Chairman; Ms. Kay W. Lewis, Vice-Chairman; Ms. Nicolette A. Hickman; Ms. Reneta Major; Ms. Laura Belle Gordy; Mr. John Sparkman; Mrs. Mary E. Parker, Secretary, and a special attendance by Eastern Region Director Steve Blythe.

Mr. Obenshain called the meeting to order. Ms. Major gave the Invocation.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of October 20, 2015.** On motion by Ms. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Major, the Minutes of October 20, 2015 were approved as written.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 4 – Fraud Update.** Mrs. Parker stated there was a good story in the local newspaper relative to a woman who was reprimanded to jail for 12 days for energy assistance fraud. Mr. Obenshain stated Fraud Investigator Jack Thomas was continuing to do a good job and requested Mrs. Parker to relay the message.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 5 – Director’s Update.** Mrs. Parker stated she and Information Systems Support Specialist II listened to the Information Systems conference call. The conference call is held monthly.

On November 5, 2015 Mrs. Parker attended a truancy meeting for several Northampton County children and later attended the regular CPMT meeting. Mrs. Parker chaired the meeting as Northampton County DSS Director Richard Sterrett was out of town. She further stated she would probably be assuming the role of Chairman January 1, 2016 as Mr. Sterrett was retiring.

Mr. Obenshain continued to **Item 6 – Medicaid Renewals.** Mrs. Parker thanked Mr. Blythe for allowing Benefit Program consultant Amy Phillips to take the lead in creating a plan to complete the Medicaid renewals.

Mr. Blythe stated Mrs. Phillips is quite versed in VaCMS which is very helpful. Mrs. Parker had asked Mrs. Phillips to prepare a written report to present to the Board as she was in Lynchburg and could not attend the meeting; however, she would be returning to our agency later in the week.

Mrs. Parker stated the staff was part of an overdue plan that went from 1199 renewals, which included November renewals. The Medicaid cutoff date of the 16th of each month is set by DMAS. Any renewal processed after the 16th is considered “overdue” in the system even though only half of the month has elapsed. The plan requires each staff member to process 5 cases per day to meet the goal. Some of the cases were “bridging issues” which means the review was completed and updated in VaCMS but the update of the review date did not “bridge over” to the MMIS system which is run by DMAS. She encouraged staff to do telephone instead of face-to-face interviews. It is hard for some clients to get to the agency. If someone wants to come, we will definitely see them. All workers in the Families and Children Unit were under 100% monitoring, which was removed. The monitoring of every VaCMS case in the Adult Unit was also eliminated. This enabled a reduction in paperwork and things being done unnecessarily. It also eliminated the use of unnecessary forms and workers writing on forms and then entering the same information into the system. It also required all workers to go to VaCMS to process cases and also work their pending reports from VaCMS.

As of November 16, 2015, each worker had worked their pending report and Mrs. Phillips assisted when they had questions or issues. This was an issue with Adult Benefit Program staff only. Mrs. Phillips will be training VaCMS Basics in

December 2015 and any worker that is having issues will be attending, Benefit Program Supervisor Linda Spence has requested to go to VaCMS Basics (3 day course) trained by Mrs. Phillips at the Eastern Region Office in December.

Mrs. Parker stated Mrs. Phillips had organized and gotten rid of large bins that had cases, applications and old paperwork and determined which needed to be saved, shredded and scanned. We recently had an employee who had retired and Mrs. Phillips cleaned out the numerous amount of paperwork from that office.

Mrs. Parker stated all vacant caseloads still carrying the worker number of someone no longer employed by our agency; i.e., retired or quit, were reassigned to current staff. Mr. Niblett has been unable to get three of them out of our system so he put in tickets. One of them is working in Fairfax County and that should not have anything to do with him being able to take her out of our system. We also have two others who had previously retired.

Mrs. Phillips also recommended that adult workers no longer use their G numbers and begin using their normal caseload numbers. Workers moved cases that were due to the current number and plan to make the necessary changes whenever they access an open case.

A recommendation was made to use a duty person each day to handle phone calls and issues from customers so front desk staff does not have to reach out to multiple workers. This was tried by the adult unit; however, the previous day Office Supervisor Linda Rew was approached and informed the adult workers did not want to do this anymore.

A requirement that front desk staff call workers for his/her appointments and if the worker is not available, the front desk will leave a voicemail and then send an email that copies the worker's supervisor and the Office Supervisor. This prevents customers from waiting too long in the lobby and also makes the supervisors aware.

Front Desk staff was instructed to stay in their section unless on a break or lunch and that Benefit Program staff would do the same. There were unnecessary personal conversations being held throughout the work day.

Workload responsibilities for one of our Benefit Program Specialist III positions has been revised to include ongoing caseload responsibilities in excess of the number carried by Benefit Program Specialist II staff plus other responsibilities assisting, coaching, and mentoring ongoing staff. She was promoted from the Families and Children Ongoing Unit to the Intake Unit; however, commencing December 1, 2015 she will be finishing up the intake applications she currently has and will be moved back to Families and Children Ongoing. This was her expertise and since she is a Benefit Program Specialist III, she will have a larger caseload and more responsibilities with her position.

Front Desk staff will no longer open the mail, which was a time consuming process. All staff will now receive their mail unopened and in their mailboxes and they are responsible for scanning and processing their own verifications and/or mail. If there is any mail without a worker's name, it is given to Mrs. Rew or Mrs. Parker. Mrs. Rew normally opens same and sees it is given to the proper person.

Front Desk staff will be trained to pend applications so that all applications are pended immediately. The Front Desk staff is now scanning verifications into the DMIS system, which is a paperless system the State has.

Mrs. Phillips will be training employees to use the DMIS system on 11/18/15 so they are all familiar and able to scan into DMIS.

Mrs. Phillips worked with Ms. Spence to eliminate documents that had not been scanned and assisted in the reorganization of her office. A drawer was created for foster care cases and another drawer was created for cases of employees' relatives. Scanning is currently being done by the new benefit worker so we can be sure it is in the proper place in Laserfiche.

Mrs. Phillips suggested at least one worker attend the VaCMS User group meeting. This allows for new information regarding VaCMS and also Phase 1 & II to be communicated to agency staff. There will be two employees attending from our agency – Adult Benefit Program Specialist Loretta Rhodes and Families and Children Benefit Program Specialist April Major from the Families and Children Unit. They had previously attended the October User group meeting and will be attending the November 17, 2015 meeting. They are required to return to the Agency and give a presentation to the remaining staff.

Mrs. Parker stated the State has set up a webinar for December 17, 2015. We normally hold our webinars in the training room; however, our Toy Closet will be held that day so Mrs. Parker has reserved a room at the ESCC. Information Systems Support Specialist II Steve Niblett will be going down to ESCC and set everything up for staff.

Mrs. Parker stated the above presentation leads into the survey that was taken by the Regional Consultants from ACDSS benefit workers. Therefore, she suggested **Item 7 – Financial Statement** – be skipped and they proceed to **Item 8 – Report on Benefit Program Staff Interviews Conducted by ERO Staff – Eastern Regional Director Steve Blythe**. Mr. Obenshain stated they could skip **Item 7** and go back to it after Mr. Blythe's presentation.

Mr. Blythe stated it was a pleasure to be present at our Board meeting. He further stated several of his staff came to our agency in September, sat with our Benefit Program staff for several days, reviewed records, observed processes and learned a lot. They had 14 findings and recommendations that resulted from those experiences and reviewing reports over a period of months prior to coming to our agency in September. Everything on the summary sheet, which was prepared by Mrs. Phillips and just presented by Mrs. Parker, was a result of some of the findings from their site visit in September. They had prepared a report for him to present to our Board in October; however, he had another commitment on that date. Mr. Blythe stated it was probably a blessing in disguise because with Mrs. Parker's guidance and Mrs. Phillips having been here a couple of days per week for the previous six weeks or so, this Benefit Unit is not the same as it was when observations were done in September.

Mr. Blythe stated he brought the official report for the Board, but he was glad to say it was significantly diluted because of the work done by staff, Mrs. Parker, Ms. Spence and Mrs. Phillips. He further stated one of the hardest things is letting go; i.e., old habits and old processes. Staff has worked so hard over the past 5 or 6 weeks but going forward their job will be so much easier as it has been streamlined and various items eliminated. They will be able to keep up as they had 1200 overdue Medicaid renewals and we are now less than 200, including the ones due in November. This was probably the biggest percentage drop of any locality in the State. Everyone should be commended for putting their noses to the grindstone and getting it done.

He stated there was a one-on-one confidential interview with each Benefit Program Specialist and Supervisor, the results of which are presented in a summary fashion in the report. The majority of the staff had a desire to do things differently; however, they did not know how to go about it. This was probably due to seeing things in broadcasts and by attending meetings with workers from different localities and hearing their procedures. There was a yearning for staff to do something differently. Of course, you had seasoned supervisors with over 40 years at the agency and now one has retired. That will present another positive solution by getting a replacement supervisor that will inherit a unit more efficient and by doing things in the manner that needs to be done. There were 1100 cases that were still in previous worker numbers and when mail came in, it was given to a worker; however, the case was not assigned to that worker which was confusing. Now, that has been changed. He felt by January 1, 2016 there should be a better work environment than before.

Mr. Blythe reviewed the entire report with the Board Members. In summary he stated that even though there were some things in the report which were less positive, the good news was most all of the issues have been addressed and corrections made, and according to Mrs. Parker, staff feels more comfortable in doing their daily work. They see the light at the end of the tunnel from the overdue Medicaid reviews and going from 1200 to less than 200 is an accomplishment. In a short period of time staff will be caught up and they will not have that burden. It will then be work on a daily basis as long as they do 3 or 4 daily reviews to avoid this occurring in the future.

Mr. Blythe asked if there were any questions about his report. Mrs. Parker stated we will continue to address issues as they occur. She will do her level best to see that Agency Supervisors and staff understand processes and the goals that must be achieved each month.

Mrs. Parker stated the Board had requested her to advertise the Assistant Director's position. As of that morning seven applications had been received. Mr. Blythe stated he was on the panel for the Director position being vacated by Northampton County Director Richard Sterrett.

Mr. Blythe thanked Mrs. Parker for her leadership. Mr. Obenshain thanked Mr. Blythe for coming and sharing the good news. Mrs. Parker stated Mr. Blythe would be retiring the end of the year and everyone wished him well.

Ms. Major stated in a positive light for Accomack County DSS she wanted to report ACDSS was one of the agencies with the Payment Accuracy for Childcare that had no errors. Family Services Specialist II Selina Coulbourne should be commended for her accomplishment.

Mr. Obenshain proceeded to **Item 7 – Financial Statement – Administrative Office Manager Shirley Harmon**. Mrs. Harmon stated for the month of October our Total Expenditures were \$302,334.17. Our year to date Total Local Adjustment is \$226,840.87 and our Total Local Balance to Date is \$529,006.13. We also have a mid-year review of our budget and that is due by December 9, 2015. She and Mrs. Parker will be looking over the budget line to see if any line needs to be refunded or any line that needs additional funds.

Mrs. Harmon stated last month the Board had asked the amount we had returned to Accomack County. The amount was \$66,634.00. Mrs. Parker stated part of it was Cost Allocation funds and we have to return it.

Mr. Obenshain stated the next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, December 15, 2015.

On motion by Ms. Major, seconded by Mrs. Hickman, the meeting adjourned at 11 A.M.

APPROVED: **R. Dodd Obenshain**

ATTEST: **Mary E. Parker**