

Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council  
Friday, July 25, 2014  
BMCW 635 N. 26 St.  
Minutes

**Partnership Council Members Present:** Linda Davis, County Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Dr. Earnestine Willis, Kim Kampschroer, Tom Wanta, Kent Lovern for DA John Chisholm, Mallory O'Brien, Representative LaTonya Johnson, Sara Scullen, County Supervisor Deanna Alexander, Senator Alberta Darling, Christine Holmes, Judge DiMotto and Judge Joe Donald for Judge Triggiano

Eric Thompson of Children's Rights attended the meeting. Linda Davis opened the meeting with greetings and introductions.

### **Public Notice**

Notice of the meeting was published in the Monday, July 21, 2014 edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Second, the notice was faxed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on Monday, July 21, 2014. Finally, the notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Monday, July 14, 2014. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

### **Minutes from May 30, 2014 meeting:**

Minutes from the May 30, 2014 meeting approved as read.

### **Budget Information**

The Budget will be discussed at the next Partnership Council meeting, and an Ad Hoc Budget Committee will be established.

### **Milwaukee County Mental Health/AODA System, Susan Gadacz**

Susan Gadacz presented an update on mental health and substance abuse services in Milwaukee County. Ms. Gadacz reported that the loss of anticipated Access to Recovery grant money will have an impact on services and how they are delivered. The amount of funding lost was \$3.5 million which represents a 30% loss of funding for the overall Wiser Choice network that will take effect in January 2015.

- Looking at working with Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.
- People at or above 200% of the poverty level will be asked for insurance
- Number of people being served will most likely decrease
- May need to reduce the number of providers.

A related discussion referenced in Susan's presentation and discussed by the Council was the growing concern with heroin use on the rise as well as the use of prescription drugs as evidenced by a 30-40% increase in these kinds of referrals to the DA's Office. It will be important to consider what efforts BMCW should be taking to support the children affected by these trends.

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### **Short and Long-term Plans for BMCW Leadership**

Division Administrator Fredi Bove reported that a short term transition plan has been developed with the departure of Arlene Happach. The management teams of the Department of Children and Families and the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare will ensure that services continue to be provided with no erosion of quality.

- Mary Pat Bohn will be the Acting Director.
- Attorney Sarah Henery will be assisting Mary Pat
- Jane Penner-Hoppe will be the lead support person for the Partnership Council.
- Arlene's duties have been assigned to Mary Pat and Sarah and other people in the Department.

DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson briefed the Committee on the longer-term plans. As part of this transition the Department is looking at the organizational needs of the Bureau. Discussion is being had regarding whether the time has come for the Bureau to become a Division of the Department of Children and Families or maintain its role as a Bureau. The group discussed issues that might be taken into consideration during the decision making process:

- What are the needs of the Community?
- How do we maintain a relationship with the community?
- What resources do we need to keep children from being abused?
- How do we **prevent** children from being abused?

Secretary Anderson would like feedback from the Partnership Council and the Community regarding the Bureau/Division issue, and suggested that community forums be held in order to get input from the community. Linda Davis summarized the discussion about this possibility when the new department was formed in 2008. There was a concern that turning the bureau into a division would signal that Milwaukee was being treated differently than the rest of the state (higher profile and more attention) and that the Division Leadership is a political appointment and that there was need for continuity in leadership across gubernatorial changes. It was also pointed out that changing the status of BMCW to a division would not affect the current challenges BMCW is facing.

The Secretary noted that the Partnership Council would take the lead in holding the community feedback sessions.

A related discussion focused on strengthening prevention programs for Milwaukee families and exploring connections with the Children's Trust Fund in that regard as they are the state's official Child Abuse Prevention arm.

The Department will be doing a national search for the Director position. It is hoped that a new director can be in place by the beginning of the new year.

### **Initial Assessment Caseloads**

As of June 2014, there are approximately 2900 cases in backlog.

- Any cases not closed by day 60 is considered backlog.
- Average number of incoming cases has been steadily increasing.
  - o Increase in incoming cases started in the spring of 2013.
  - o Monthly average number of incoming cases in 2012 was 600; in 2014 so far the monthly average number of incoming cases has been 750.
- Bureau had been averaging 80 children removed a month; the current average is 105.
- Emergency cases are increasing.
- Contacts have been made in the majority of the cases in the backlog but the paperwork has not been completed.
- The Bureau is currently using a team process to close backlogged cases.
  - o Working in teams of four with a consultant from Action, and Bureau and other DCF staff.
  - o 200-300 cases have been closed by teams in the last two weeks.
  - o The cost for the outside consultant did not involve requesting additional funding.
  - o So far, the backlog teams are committed for July and August.

How do we prevent backlog from happening again?

- An internal team is re-evaluating access and initial assessment functions.
  - o Do we have enough staff; are they in the right spots?
  - o Are we screening in the right referrals?
  - o We will be working on screening in the right families – i.e. some families are not abusive/neglectful, they just need help.
  - o We are working on providing access supervisors with more help.
- The Bureau is looking at retention issues. The Department is working on establishing the proposed Initial Assessment Specialist-Advanced position.
- Fill vacancies quickly and establish a more frequent recruiting process. The department is working on improving the frequency of recruitments for BMCW staff.

Due to the length of this meeting and time constraints, it was agreed that further questions/issues/concerns be addressed and/or answered at the September Partnership Council meeting:

- What can the community/Partnership Council do to help with the backlog?
- What is the average case size for a Bureau Initial Assessment Specialist?
- What is the average years of seniority for Initial Assessment Specialists?
- Request was made that data be provided comparing current referral sources and nature of calls received at access to calls received a year ago.

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- Request for data on cases for which a new report of potential abuse or neglect was made while the case was open from a previous report and in backlog status (i.e., more than 60 days in Initial Assessment).
- What kind of additional resource does the Bureau need to prevent a backlog from happening again?

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Zellner