



COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

OFFICE OF OPERATIONS & PLANNING

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MICHAEL FROST
Planning Administrator
ZACHARY BERLINER
Mental Health Administrator
AFN Coordinator
MEG ISBITSKI
Addictions Services Director
LISA FEDERICO

Aging & Disability Services
JOANNE FETZKO
Community Development
KIMBERLY COWART
One Stop Career Center
Juvenile Institutional Services
MONICA MULLIGAN
Richard Hall Community HWC
NICCI SPINAZZOLA
Rutgers Cooperative Extension
LISA ROTHENBURGER
Veterans Services
PETER NIEMIEC
Volunteer Services
LAURIE ROOME
Youth Services
LINDA M. PORCARO

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes
Meeting via Zoom

Council Members Present:

Chair Mary Jane DiPaolo, Community Child Care Solutions
Vice-Chair Pastor Tim Wolf, Pioneer Family Success Center
Secretary Diann Robinson, Adult Day Center
David Walker, Visions and Pathways
Herardine Lacrete, Board of Social Services
LuAnn Dias, Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen (CCDOM)
Lucy Forgione, Bernards Township Health Department
Mallory Dubuisson, Atlantic Adult Day Center
Michele Boronkas, Safe + Sound Somerset
Dr. Mark Avery, Zarephath Christian Church
Mike Frost, Director of the Department of Human Services
Nancy Good, Alternatives, Inc
Nicci Spinazzola, Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center
Paul Grzella, The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB)
Rajni Chopra, Martin Luther King Youth Center (MLKYC)
Richard Schumann, Family and Community Services (FCS)
Steven Nagel, HomeSharing

Council Members Excused:

Michelle DuFour, Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)

Council Members Absent:

Council Officials and Liaisons:

Somerset County Department of Human Services (SCDHS) Staff:

Coordinator Rheanah Johnson, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Angelica Sandi, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Dameon Stackhouse, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Ellen Russo, Office on Aging and Disability Services (OoADS)

Ihinosen Akhagbar, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Jan Goodman, Greater Raritan One Stop
Jen Guyette, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Kim Cowart, Community Development
Kristy Soriano, Office of Youth Services
Monica Mulligan, Juvenile Institution Services & Greater Raritan One Stop

Guests:

Allison Reinking, Central Jersey Family Health Consortium
Allizae Lyons, NJ Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S)
Andrea Strack, Legal Services of Northwest NJ
Andrea Rodriguez, Zufall Health Center
Arnette Hannah, Community Child Care Solutions
Beth Kross, Community Child Care Solutions
Bernadette Knoll, McKinney-Vento Region I
Brendan Ward, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern New Jersey
Briana Belcher, Princeton Justice Initiative
Cecilia Genao, Norwescap
Christina Martinkovic, The Learning Gate
Debra Crossman, Community Hope
James Parauda, Tri County Care Management Organization (CMO)
Lashonda Dumas, Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P)
Leslie Towns, United Way of Northern New Jersey
Maria Marnell, Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission
Maria Strada, Middle Earth
Saul Petersen, Princeton Justice Initiative
Shaina Sherman, Jewish Family Services

I. Call Meeting to Order & Introductions

Mary Jane DiPaolo called the meeting to order at 1:32 PM. A quorum was established.

II. Approval of the November 15, 2023, Minutes

Motion to approve the November 15, 2023 meeting minutes was made by Tim Wolf and seconded by Steve Nagel. One abstention was made by Paul Grzella.

III. Presentation from Princeton Justice Initiative- Saul Petersen, CEO

- Princeton Justice Initiative is a social impact, legal aid, and public interest 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to alleviate, reduce and eliminate poverty in Central Western New Jersey.
- Princeton Justice's evidence-based, holistic approach includes mobilizing local volunteers, forging partnerships with aligned organizations, and providing responsive, flexible hand-in-glove solutions to people and communities in need.
- With partners, Princeton Justice Initiative provides a menu of no-cost services aimed at helping individuals and families resist the pull of poverty and intervene on their behalf when necessary.
- Princeton Justice volunteers offer:
 - Vaccines and mental-health advocacy
 - Information on community resources, including help filling out forms
 - On-the-spot food assistance
 - Free civil legal aid /public health/counseling services and advocacy

- Address and Phone Number
 - 1000 Herrontown Road, The Clock Building Second Floor, Princeton, NJ 08540
 - Phone 609 366 6238

IV. State and County Agency Reports

Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) – Michelle DuFour

2023	November	December
Families	325 (69% intake cases)	321 (68% intake cases)
Children	653	635
Children in Placement	28	30
Referral Type		
Child Protective Service Referrals	111	120
Child Welfare Referrals	14	20
Allegation Type		
Neglect	151	190
Physical Abuse	59	47
Sexual Abuse	4	9
Emotional Abuse	1	0

Department of Children and Families (DCF) – Provided by Rick Hager

- NJDCF has launched a new webpage for our “Family Connects NJ” (home visiting program for parents of newborns). The website is here: [Family Connects NJ](#) Note that this is initially starting in five counties: Essex, Middlesex, Mercer, Gloucester and Cumberland. (For the counties that are not yet active, there is still a link that will get the parent to the “Connecting NJ Hub”, which does provide resources for all counties.) On the Family Connects NJ webpage, in addition to the links at the top of the page, there are five informational topics in the *scrolling banner*. These are: “Birth Families” (the benefits of participating in the program, including a Q&A and Fact Sheet), “Adoptive Parents and Resource Families” (the programmatic benefits for these parents, including a Q&A), “Bereaved Families” (Stillborn or recent death of newborn I including a Q&A), “Doctors/Clinicians” (includes a fact sheet for medical practitioners and a Q&A), “Registered Nurses” (includes a fact sheet and a Q&A). NOTE: Somerset County will be eligible in January 2025.
- NJDCF will be exhibiting at the “NJ Recreation and Parks Association Conference” at Harrah’s Waterfront Conference Center, Atlantic City from February 25th to 28th, 2024. There are many worthwhile training sessions for recreation and park staff and a great exhibit floor. Information is at this link: <https://link.edgepilot.com/s/3c9f5fdf/pGLqhhFOR0ejPhsnA8aXYg?u=https://www.njrpa.org/Home>

V. Human Services Director’s Report – Mike Frost

- Budget submission was finalized including recommendations for Non-Profit Purchase of Service (NPPOS). A recommendation was made to the commissioners for a hefty increase. The typical increase is 2%. Expecting the budget to come in earlier this year hopefully around April.

- Expanded Community Police Alliance program. Victor Flores-Lopez is the coordinator in Bound Brook. Hoping to expand into two more municipalities within this budget cycle.
- Under Lisa Federico’s direction the county has been providing staff Narcan training. A policy has passed so Naloxone will be available in AED boxes.
- Meg Isbitski has continued to work on a clinical resource directory and CIT training.
- Zachary Berliner has been on family leave since December 2023. Is expected to return February 5, 2024.
- Meg Isbitski, Mental Health Administrator will be resigning February 20, 2024, and will become a clinician in the cares program at Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center.
- Mike Frost shared he is retiring July 1, 2024. The Director of Human Services position has been posted.

VI. Committee Reports

Executive Committee– Rheanah Johnson

- The committee met on January 8, 2024. The committee will focus on youth and mental health services, particularly with a focus on immigrant families. The initial steps will be to connect with local partner agencies that work with these populations to gain insight into barriers and trends. Rheanah met with Melinda McCabe of the Child Advocacy Center. The committee will be meeting with an organization known as Church World Service about their organization and about their work with unaccompanied minors across the state of New Jersey. The program manager for Refugee Health Promotion leading their mental health initiatives will be on the call as well. The meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2024. The committee is also working to meet with the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children & Youth Program.

VII. New Business – None

VIII. Agency Highlights/Announcements

- Rheanah Johnson - The Somerset County Department of Human Services and Tri County CMO is hosting a workshop called Angst-Anxiety and our Youth on Thursday, February 22, 2024, from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm at the Human Services Building Conference Room 1, 27 Warren Street, Somerville, NJ 08876. Angst is a film-based program designed to raise awareness around anxiety. Angst aims to remove the stigma and open the conversation about mental health, helping our youth and their families understand that a certain amount of anxiety is healthy and to recognize when it's too much. Deadline to register is Thursday, February 15, 2024. For questions, please call 908-704-6300.
- Mary Jane DiPaolo- Community Child Care Solutions has an Early Childhood Education Shared Services Advisory Council. Ideally, the Advisory Committee will be diverse and may include solutions from the areas of advocacy, finance, business, academia, philanthropy, public service, social media, marketing, HR, the arts, etc. We will collaborate to explore new and creative ideas for the Early Care and Education Sector. If you are interested in being part of the Advisory Committee, please contact Liz Bilder – Shared Services Specialist for Somerset County, lbilder@cccschildcare.org or 908-927-0869, ext.2466.
- Mallory Dubuisson- The Adult Day Center located in Basking Ridge has been approved for the 2023-2024 Alzheimer’s Adult Day Service program which is a grant program that helps subsidize and fund the services provided. The agency has also launched a scholarship program to serve seniors in the community with financial hardship covering up to \$5,000 for adult day services. For more information, please contact mallory.dubuisson@atlanticealth.org.
- Steve Katz- Tentatively the Food Bank Network of Somerset County in collaboration with the Somerset County Department of Human Services will be expanding the mobile food distribution to Woods at Warren an 85-unit section 8, low-income housing development. The distributions will take place on the

second Tuesday of the month from 4 pm – 7 pm. All agencies are welcome to table and provide resources for the residents.

- IX.** The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Tim Wolf and seconded by Luann Dias. The meeting was adjourned at 2:09 PM.

The next meeting will be held on February 28, 2024, at 1:30 PM via Zoom. The link will be sent out a week prior via email.