



COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

OFFICE OF OPERATIONS & PLANNING

27 Warren Street • P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, New Jersey 08876-1262
(908) 704-6300 • Fax (908) 704-1629
HumanServices@co.somerset.nj.us
www.co.somerset.nj.us

Human Services, Director
ZACHARY BERLINER

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, June 26, 2024, Meeting Minutes
Meeting via Zoom

Council Members Present:

Chair Pastor Tim Wolf, Pioneer Family Success Center
Vice-Chair Diann Robinson, Adult Day Center
David Walker, Visions and Pathways
LuAnn Dias, Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen (CCDOM)
Mallory Dubuisson, Atlantic Adult Day Center
Dr. Mark Avery, Zarephath Christian Church
Nicci Spinazzola, Richard Hall Community Health and Wellness Center
Paul Grzella, The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB)
Richard Schumann, Family and Community Services (FCS)
Steven Nagel, HomeSharing

Council Members Excused:

Secretary Michele Boronkas, Safe + Sound Somerset
Herardine Lacrete, Board of Social Services
Michelle DuFour, Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)
Nancy Good, Alternatives, Inc
Rajni Chopra, Martin Luther King Youth Center (MLKYC)

Council Members Absent:

Council Officials and Liaisons:

Nelson Troche, New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS)

Somerset County Department of Human Services (SCDHS) Staff:

Coordinator Rheanah Johnson, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Antonietta Phelan, Office of Youth Services
Dameon Stackhouse, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Ellen Russo, Office on Aging and Disability Services
Gerry Montague, Office of Youth Services
Jan Goodman, Greater Raritan One Stop
Jen Guyette, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Kristy Soriano, Office of Youth Services

Lisa Federico, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Monica Mulligan, Juvenile Institution Services & Greater Raritan One Stop
Sandra Avellan, Office on Aging and Disability Services
Stephanie Billitz, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)
Zachary Berliner, Office of Operations and Planning (OAP)

Guests:

Andrea Rodriguez, Zufall Health Center
Andrea Strack, Legal Services of Northwest NJ
Ashley Merino, RWJBH
Brendan Ward, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern New Jersey
Cecilia Genao, Norwescap
Christina Martinkovic, The Learning Gate
Cynthia Walker, RWJBH
Denise White, Board of Social Services
James Parauda, Tri County CMO
Josh Gargano, Somerset County Advisory Council on Disability Issues
Lashonda Dumas, Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P)
Maria Marnell, Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission
Maria Strada, Middle Earth
Marlin Hernandez, Tri County CMO
Skylar Randazzo, Family Success Center
Tania Asmal, Zufall Health Center

I. Call Meeting to Order & Introductions

Tim Wolf called the meeting to order at 1:33 PM. A quorum was established.

II. Approval of the May 22, 2024, Minutes

Motion to approve the May 2024 meeting minutes was made by Steve Nagel and seconded by Diann Robinson. Motion carried.

III. State and County Agency Reports

Department of Human Services (DHS) - Nelson Troche

- As part of a continued effort to improve and expand the home and community-based services workforce, the Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Families, and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority announced a new student loan redemption program to benefit health care, behavioral health, and social services professionals serving those with medical needs, behavioral and/or mental health conditions, and disabilities. Under the new Home and Community-Based Services Provider Loan Redemption Program, eligible workers can receive up to \$50,000 in loan relief in exchange for one year of service at an approved home- and community-based services provider agency or as a self-directed employee. Provider agencies are encouraged to share information about this program with all eligible employees prior to July 1, when applications will open for a 30-day period. Eligible program participants who submit a complete and accurate application will be selected by October 1 on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information on the program and to apply once the application opens, visit <https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/HCBSPLRP.aspx>.

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

- The Summer EBT is a new federal program that will provide \$40/month to all children that qualify for free/reduced-price meals every summer month that schools are closed (\$120 for the summer). In NJ, we will be using data captured on school meal applications (or household surveys for CEP districts) to directly certify as many children as possible and cards will be sent out starting in June with all \$120 loaded onto the card. Hunger Free New Jersey, has the Summer EBT Toolkit at this link: [Summer EBT 2024 - Hunger Free NJ](#)
- 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 that Somerset County will be active in January 2025.
- The Department of Children and Families’ “Join Our Village” campaign is at this link: <https://link.edgepilot.com/s/6c408428/pRQUzkZtLUyUxlQYw2jeHA?u=https://www.nj.gov/njfoosteradopt/> Our resource family (foster care) efforts are now focused on prospective resource families who are willing and able to provide a loving home to the following:
 - Children and youth with complex behavioral health, developmental and medical needs
 - Adolescent youth ages 13-17
 - Sibling Groups of 4 or more
 - [NJ children and youth cleared for adoption](#)
*NJ children and youth who are currently cleared for adoption have unique needs and include characteristics of the other 3 specialized populations described above
- On our NJDCF webpage, there is a report, *Equity for Women in New Jersey: Identifying Needs and Priorities* https://link.edgepilot.com/s/a8106dc8/PWXki3VnJ0yS3BY76xmuUQ?u=https://www.nj.gov/dcf/women/equity4women_report.html This report details the top concerns for many women across the state of New Jersey, including access to affordable child care and high-quality health care, equal pay, career development and advancement opportunities, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

IV. Human Services Director’s Report – Zachary Berliner

- The Mental Health Administrator position is still vacant as well as the position of Planning Administrator.
- The Non-Profit Purchase of Service contracts have been sent out and agencies can bill the 1st and 2nd quarter starting July 1, 2024.

V. New Business

- Joint Council meeting ideas
 - Luann Dias shared her agency is getting a lot of calls about different types of grief not just attributed to loss of life.
 - Stephanie Billitz recommended contacting Imagine NJ or Good Grief for a presentation.

VI. Agency Highlights/Announcements

- LuAnn Dias- Catholic Charities was awarded a DCF grant for their new program called Exchange Parent Aid Services. Will be using an evidenced based model for strength-based parenting and support services.
- Jen Guyette- the new allocation for HSAC for July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025. The contract has stayed the same. The amount is \$69,949 which goes to salary and fringe.
- James Parauda- Tri County CMO is having their annual picnic this Friday, June 29th at Forest Lodge. 600+ families have registered.
- Brenda Ward- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern New Jersey recently wrapped up their school-based programs serving 71 elementary and middle school students with 56 high schoolers serving as mentors. The focus will be on the community-based program serving 21 students in Somerset County. There are adult mentors ready and available for any youth in need of a mentor.
- Camp Dragonfly is a week-long camp hosted at Somerset Hills YMCA Day Camp and is provided complimentary to children who have experienced trauma, grief, or loss in the past 14 months. For enrollment or for more information contact Eddie Norgard at enorgard@gscymca.org.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Zachary Berliner and seconded by James Parauda. The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 PM.

The next meeting will be held on July 24, 2024, at 1:30 PM via Zoom and in-person. The link will be sent out a week prior via email.