

**BAYFIELD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
FAMILY SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Minutes are subject to change before approval at next FSAC meeting

Courthouse Conference Room B  
Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 4:30 pm

**Committee Members Present via telephone:** Wayne Crozier, Lona Schmidt, Bev Patterson, Nancy and Dale Johnson, Bev Lindell, Mary Dougherty, and Kylie Vadnais.

**Others Present:** Melissa Huempfner (Child Protective Services Social Worker), Cheryl Hanson (Family Services Section Manager, and Nina Bucher (Support Staff).

**Introductions and Call to order:** Lona called the meeting to order at 4:31.

**Minute Approval:** Bev L made a motion to approve the July 2020 FSAC meeting minutes as written. Dale seconded the motion and the motion passed.

**Public Comment Opportunity:** No public comment.

**Child Protection During the Pandemic:** After introduction/background from Cheryl, social worker Melissa Huempfner explained that the state mandates regarding child abuse reporting response time and manner have not changed during the pandemic. Workers are still required to physically go into the homes, see children in the home, conduct extensive interviews within timelines based on severity of allegation. While Family Services staff are wearing masks and trying to meet outside, the weather adds complication and the home walk-through requirement make distancing/safety protocols difficult. Melissa relayed that although the number of abuse reports were lower than normal when school was out, those reported were more serious in nature (drugs and physical abuse) and mainly came from law enforcement. Since school has reconvened and children are being seen physically and virtually by educators, the number of child abuse reports has increased.

Child Protective Workers are mandated to see children placed out of their homes monthly and tour their living situation to ensure safety. This is still taking place physically within the county, but Bayfield County has issued a travel ban for employees which limits completing the out of area visits physically. Video calls and virtual home tours have become the norm for the five children currently placed out of home outside of Bayfield County. Melissa and Cheryl stated they are doing the best they can in these circumstances. Discussion followed.

**Staffing Update:** New Committee member, Kylie Vadnais, joined the meeting and all introduced themselves. Cheryl reported that one social worker was on extended medical leave and one was going on maternity leave shortly. There is a tentative hire for the AOCA Coordinator position waiting to see if the State approves their undergraduate degree qualifying them to obtain Social Worker certification.

**Program reports:** Year to date there have been 31 emergency detentions, 31 youth justice referrals from law enforcement (down from 2019), and 50 children in out of home care.

**Other Informational Items:** Upgrades for the forensic interview room located in the annex are necessary to create high quality video/voice recordings of abuse victim interviews to use in court. A grant award of \$14,534 from the Department of Justice is tentative.

For mental health holds, juveniles may only be held securely at facilities separate from adults that meet the requirements to do so. These are currently located in Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Oshkosh at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute, which include a 3 hour plus ride in a squad car and placement far from family. The Northland Counseling youth crisis bed in Ashland plans to reopen under new licensure with certified 24/7 staffing in 2021 and will hopefully be able to address these kid's needs.

**Future Meetings:** 2021 meetings will continue quarterly on the second Wednesday of the month on January 13<sup>th</sup>, April 14<sup>th</sup>, July 14<sup>th</sup>, and October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,

*Nina Bucher*

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