

**MCSSA District V Meeting Minutes**  
**April 24, 2008**  
**Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn**

Attending:

Mark Stevens, Director, Isabella/Midland  
Dale MacDonald, Board Member, Isabella  
Monica Siegfried, MCSSW, Huron  
Linda Schaefer, Isabella  
Eileen Rau, Isabella  
Stephanie Rockwell, MCSSW, Tuscola  
Jack Campbell, Saginaw  
Terri O'Neil, Bay  
Kathy Kierzkowski, St Clair  
Cathy Churchill, St Clair  
Dave Robinson, Sanilac  
William O'Connor, Sanilac  
Jane Smith, Board Member, Bay

Irene Bazan Waller, Director, Lapeer/Sanilac  
Bernell Wiggins, Director, Bay  
Ardith Fales, Board Chair, Arenac  
Christine Hoffman, Isabella  
Lisa Davis, MCSSW, Tuscola  
Kitty Packard, Saginaw  
Richard Fairley, Midland  
Terri Norton, Bay  
Jennifer Hutkowski, St Clair  
Lacey Whitford, Clinton  
Michele Hosterman, Sanilac  
Donald David, Board Member, Bay  
Len Richards, Director, Huron/Tuscola

Guests:

Nancy Dean, Executive Director of Sanilac Kids' Connection, speaker  
Ashley Hutkowski, daughter (Daughter to Work Day)  
Karen Foster, Sanilac, administrative support

10:00 AM Meeting called to order by Irene Waller, chairperson.

Introductions

Moved by Jane Smith, supported by Kitty Packard to accept minutes of January 24, 2008 meeting as mailed. Passed unanimously.

10:15 AM Presentation by Nancy Dean, Executive Director of the Kids Connection, Sandusky.

- The Kids' Connection is a countywide collaborative focused on community changes of youth service programs and support
- It's a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization
- One stop shopping family friendly center
- Focus on prevention programs to apply a band-aid before severe problems surface
- In Home Team Initiative
  - Community response to intervention in high risk child abuse and neglect cases
  - True collaborative model
  - Parenting skills is the concentration
  - Focus on prevention of out of home placement of child abuse and neglect
- Mission Statement
  - To reunify at risk families and given them the tools to stay together
- Tools of the trade: Intensive, home based service teaching basic social skills

## Reports

### Report on Legislative Conference held March 4-6, 2008: Irene Waller.

- DHS staff cannot lobby but can educate legislators. Discussion of importance of board members in informing legislature of DHS issues.
- Review of MCSSA Advocate, highlighting important issues covered in it. Very good article by Mark Stevens on page 14.
- Poverty Summit coming on November 13 at Cobo Hall in Detroit. DHS hopes to obtain funds to send some staff and customers. Everyone is invited.
- Although FIP is down statewide, as recent publicity has indicated, some counties have record high caseloads. Also, Food Assistance Program is at record high statewide.
- Some are predicting that the lawsuit on children's care will cost \$400 million.
- Discussion of chart showing the amount of revenue DHS programs bring to each county
- Question about how the new Medicaid recoupment will work. No rules have been sent out yet, but will be shared with board members when directors receive information.
- Question about SSI/Food Benefit project starting soon. SSI clients who are coded in independent living by SSA, and who do not show up on SSA/DHS tape matches will be sent a Bridge card. By using it the first time, it will be considered an application by the client. In other words, independent living SSI clients will automatically get Food Assistance Program benefits.
- Comment. There has been an increase in clients calling solely to complain they are not getting enough on the Food Assistance Program. They are getting the appropriate benefits per the current program rules, but the rising food costs are making it harder to purchase enough food.

### Advisory Board report by Mark Stevens.

- State DHS director Ismael Ahmed met with them and talked about the children's lawsuit in general terms. They are close to a settlement. If it is not reached, the trial will start June 3 and is expected to last about 3 weeks. Then they will need to wait for the judge's ruling. Either way (settlement or lawsuit) it is expected to cause "big changes." It is certain there will be increased child services staff. No one knows where the funds will come from. The projected FY09 budget does not allow for any of this increased cost. Mr. Ahmed did give a hint that they should look to what is happening in large counties for the future configuration of DHS. Mr. Stevens said that in Wayne, only the eligibility program is under the supervision of the Wayne County director, Child Services are supervised directly by Lansing. There was some indication these changes may affect large counties more than smaller ones. Mr. Stevens recommended board members pay close attention to this issue as it develops. If responsibility for children's services is centralized, there will be uniformity that will reduce the local choice of response to local needs. Current policies vary from county to county (as far as issues like county child care funds, etc.) They requested that local directors be given advance notice of any settlement of the lawsuit, and were told that it was likely that they may get only 24 to 48 hours notice in advance of when it hits the media.
- Concern expressed: Will they reduce payments staff to increase children's staff. Concern was expressed by many attending that the Bridges program will not free up enough staff time to warrant a reduction in eligibility workers.
- The Poverty Summit is planned as a general session in the morning and regional meetings in the afternoon to discuss local issues of poverty. They are seeking donations and corporate sponsors to provide funds so low income persons can attend.

- In the week before the summit, the governor and her cabinet will take the Food Stamp Challenge. (Live on what the average Food Assistance Program recipients receive.) They are trying to get corporate leaders and CEOs to also participate in this.

Comment: DHS staff should be praised for their focus on service to clients. Never has it been as difficult as it is now. (Applause from directors and board members.)

#### MCSSW report by Monica Siegfried

Monica referred everyone to the minutes which were mailed with the meeting packet. They are currently working on a resolution regarding the notice sent to clients when their Medicaid case is closed. It is sent from Lansing, so workers often do not have contact with the client at that time. Many clients think that if they get this letter, there is no chance to get further help. They do not know there are various Medicaid programs with differing requirements. The closure letter does not mention that clients could reapply and may be eligible for Medicaid under another program.

#### MCMCFC report.

Louis Wentzlaff, Sanilac MCF was not able to attend but sent information via Irene Waller that Sanilac MCF had hosted the most recent meeting on 4-11-08.

#### Legislative Committee.

Page 9 of the MCSSA Advocate covers this. Of special interest are pending bills reviewed and rated by MCSSA. Board members were encouraged to pay close attention to pending legislation that may affect DHS.

#### Other Topics.

Bernell Wiggins mentioned that May 5-9 is Employee Appreciation Week. There are events planned in all counties. This would be an ideal time for boards to express their appreciation to DHS staff.

Next Meeting: July 24, 2008. Clinton-Gratiot hosting.

/ksf