

**COUNTY OF OSWEGO
CHILD PROTECTION ADVISORY COUNCIL (CPAC)**

September 7, 2023 – 9:00 AM
CiTi, Stern Building, Board Room
Mexico, NY

PRESENT:

Tanya VanOrnum, Chair
Eric Bresee
James Brooker
Tory DeCaire
Heather DelConte
Patrick Dewine
Dr. Dennis Mullaney
Melissa Parkhurst
Mary Margaret Pekow
Karla Barnes

EX-OFFICIO/GUESTS:

Stacy Alvord, DSS
Marti Babcock, DSS
Brian Chetney, Youth Bureau
Sara Finley, DSS
Diane Godfrey, DSS
Rachael Pelow, DSS
Tiffany Bivens, DSS
Vera Dunsmoor, Health Department
Emily Watson, Liberty Resources

EXCUSED:

Elizabeth McLean, Vice Chair
Roseann Bayne
Lori Burger
Mary Chirello
Brian Coleman
Diane Cooper-Currier
Geri Geitner
Amy Leotta
Annmarie Muller
Nicole Nicholson
Maggie Olon
Christy Parker

MEDIA:

None present

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Chair of the Council, Tanya VanOrnum, called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from 6/14/23 CPAC meeting

- Motion to approve minutes: no discussion or corrections to the minutes, approved unanimously

2. Community Subcommittee Updates—Tanya VanOrnum, Chair

- First subcommittee meeting was held on 7/20/23 with members Tanya VanOrnum, Liz McLean, Amy Leotta, Christy Parker, Karla Barnes, Sara Finley, Marti Babcock and Vera Dunsmoor
- Focus was placed on community messaging and video development for the Community Child Safety and Protection video

- Community messaging suggestions: TikTok videos, outreach at fall festivals and events, partnering with the county's Youth Bureau and local YMCAs, provide youth-friendly activities and incentives to participate in discussions and surveys
- Video messaging suggestions: encouragement to look out for one another and all youth in our community, identifying trusted adults for youth, fostering organic and healthy relationships between adults and youth, strengthening our community through moments of kindness and support when noticing struggling and anxious parents

3. School Subcommittee Updates—Tanya VanOrnum, Chair

- First subcommittee meeting was held on 7/11/23 with members Tanya VanOrnum, Diane Godfrey, Kayla Barnes, Heather DelConte, Marti Babcock and James Brooker
- Focus was placed on developing strategies to strengthen the partnership between DSS and the Oswego County Education System and disseminating information on mandated reporting and trauma informed practices
 - Superintendents Meeting will reconvene 9/21/23
 - An informational table will be set up for the upcoming CCC Career Fair where Junior and Senior students will be present from all districts
 - Tanya VanOrnum provided a presentation to the Sandy Creek Board of Education
 - Diane Godfrey provided Phoenix CSD staff a DSS and School Collaboration presentation where the new mandated reporter training is also promoted
 - Subcommittee and DSS Staff have been working diligently to share the most recently updated Child Protective/Preventive Services and School Districts Collaboration Guide

4. Update on Social Services Staffing and Initiatives—Marti Babcock, Deputy Commissioner

- Caseworker vacancy rates have decreased from 29 vacancies in March 2023 to 15 vacancies in August 2023, leaving a 16% vacancy rate
 - Each team is comprised of 5 caseworkers on average, leaving 3 teams vacant
 - Caseworkers require extensive mandated training which means they cannot assume a caseload upon acceptance of a position therefore, still yielding high caseloads for the seasoned Caseworkers
- DSS hired 1 new attorney and has 1 attorney vacancy
 - County Finance and Planning is preparing to vote on updates to attorney paygrades to assist with competitive recruitment
- DSS continues to move forward with the Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team (START)
 - Drug use continues to be a growing issue within Oswego County, START is an initiative that will utilize a family centered approach when decisions and planning are made
 - START Training Conference was held 8/8/23-8/9/23
 - Hired 3 family mentors from Farnham, 1 vacancy for a mentor still exists
 - Referrals are tentatively slated to start in October 2023
 - Farnham continues to partner with other Human Services Agencies to offer public discussions about substance use disorder and creating enriching dialogue that best supports individuals in their recovery efforts

5. Update on Bonadio Recommendations & FC Placements—Sara Finley, Director of Services

- DSS has not yet been able to actualize a new grade restructure for the Services Management Team, but will continue to explore options for 2024

- There was a massive shortfall with the mandated Foster Care and Adoption Subsidy payments for 2023 due to the increase in the mandated Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) over the last two years, leaving a gap of over 4.2 million when combined
- DSS recently began mailing flyers to over 55,000 households in Oswego County in a continuous effort to recruit new Foster Parents
- DSS's Services Management Team has sought volunteers to focus on written data collection policies to proactively prepare for trends and implementation of the ever changing federal and state mandated regulations and policies

6. DSS Transportation Transition—Sara Finley, Director of Services

- DSS has contracted with Catholic Charities to expand transportation services for Services families given the ending of the Volunteer Transportation Contract
- Court ordered visitation has increased from 1 hour, 1 time per week to 2 hours, 2 times per week which has also impacted the need for transport
- DSS will hire 5 more Caseworker Aides, 1 Senior Caseworker Aide and 1 Principal Caseworker Aide to effectively staff this team
- All associated duties such as dispatch and scheduling will be handled in-house
- DSS will add 5 more vehicles to their fleet to accommodate the increased transportation

7. CPAC and DSS Video Production Updates—Tiffany Bivens, DSS

- DSS worked with Tyler Kellogg and Jordan Mancuso in August 2023 to film three videos
 - Video 1: Caseworker Recruitment video
 - Video consisted of 2 interviews (1 seasoned Caseworker and 1 newer Caseworker)
 - Both interviewees provided insight on what the job currently entails and highlights the noble mission that a Caseworker becomes a part of
 - Video 2: Foster Care Parent Recruitment video
 - Video consisted of 3 interviews (1 set of Foster Parents, 1 seasoned Foster Care and Adoption Caseworker and 1 individual that was raised through the Foster Care System)
 - Interviewees highlighted the increased need for these parents in our community as well as shared some of the positive moments each of their experiences brought forth
 - Video 3: Community Child Safety and Protection video
 - Video consisted of 2 interviews (1 from School Counselor, Tanya VanOrnum and 1 from DSS Deputy Commissioner, Marti Babcock)
 - Both interviewees emphasized the need to have and identify trusted adults for children while also providing help to struggling parents through acts of kindness, support and education
- As videos are edited, finalized and approved for release, they will be posted on all social media websites and the county website to be viewed and shared
 - The Community Child Protection and Safety video will be aired for 30 days via Spectrum

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 10:32 A.M.

Next meeting: December 7, 2023 at 9:00AM

Location: This meeting will be offered in a hybrid format with a physical location being the BOARD Room in the STERN building at CiTi BOCES