



Stafford Family Services

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Judy Gardner
Executive Director

Judy K. Gardner, LMFT Executive Director

MINUTES – STAFFORD FAMILY SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MARCH 2, 2023 – 5:00 P.M.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jen Halstrom, Jen Ohlendorf, Brian Bradway, Ella Ohlendorf (student representative)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Andrew “Osmar” Starkey, Rachel Ayn Konick, Steven Moccio, Police representative, Sal Titus (ex-officio)

STAFF: Judy Gardner, Brenda Henderson

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m.
- II. The Minutes from the September 1, 2022 meeting were approved (Bradway motion, Ohlendorf second)
- III. Ms. Henderson presented the third quarter report for clients being served and budget expenditures. 226 new cases have been opened since July, 2022. Some of these cases are former clients but they count as a new case if they come back into care. Ms. Halstrom asked what the current number of open cases is and Ms. Gardner responded that approximately 300 cases are currently being seen. A new LCSW per diem clinician will start on Monday and we are at capacity in terms of available office space for clinicians. Ms. Henderson noted that the agency received an additional \$4,000 from DMHAS and \$14,000 from DCF this year. The DMHAS money should be spent without issue but Ms. Gardner noted that it may be an issue to spend all the DCF money. Some is being allocated to pay a portion of the case manager for the three-town JRB and funds were given so the Future Business Leaders of America could attend a statewide conference. Ella Ohlendorf discussed that students might respond to financial incentives for school attendance and Ms. Henderson suggested programs to expand career options for students at the high school. Ms. Halstrom suggested bringing the Herron project which provides toolkits to help students address mental health and substance abuse issues with establishing more community connections. Ms. Gardner noted that Mr. Herron made a presentation to Stafford High in 2016 and that his message of asking “what makes you so unhappy that you need to use substances” was very powerful. Ella Ohlendorf noted that “no one seems to care” that students are using drugs or trying to buy or sell drugs as there does not seem to be consequences. Mr. Bradway stated that in his experience not having consequences and no recourse or deterrence

has people cycling in and out of prison. Ms. Halstrom responded that there are many studies that show that punitive measures do not reduce negative behaviors and that a balance between therapy and consequences is more effective. Mr. Bradway requested a copy of those studies so he could see what was being evaluated.

- IV. The First Selectman was not in attendance so there was no report.
- V. There were no critical incidents or client grievances to report.
- VI. Ms. Gardner distributed the second quarter report from DMHAS of statistics and program services for the clients at SFS that have both a mental health and substance abuse diagnosis. The agency serves a higher percentage of women and Caucasian people than statewide and continues to struggle with positive outcomes aside from fewer arrests. She also handed out a report showing 6 years of client characteristics from DMHAS (again also only clients with a substance abuse diagnosis). Ms. Halstrom noted that there has been a measurable increase in the number of clients under the age of 20 over the years as well as an increase in the number of clients self-identifying as having mental health issues. Handouts from Troop C statistics for assault, DUI and narcotic for towns served by Troop C were handed out. Mr. Bradway explained that aggravated assault and sexual assault can be charged separately for the same incident. Ms. Halstrom requested information on domestic violence statistics and Ms. Gardner reported that a representative from The Network will be presenting to the staff on March 15th and data will be requested from them for the next Advisory Board meeting. Mr. Bradway requested that comparison data from 2019 – 2022 be provided so trends regarding the different charges can be tracked.
- VII. Ms. Gardner reported that the Town will be receiving Opioid Settlement funds for the next few years and noted that the First Selectman was looking at different ways to use the funds. Ms. Halstrom reported that Massachusetts will be using some of the funds to provide transportation to treatment and case management and housing services as stable housing is necessary for recovery. Ms. Henderson noted that a client at the agency is being evicted and wasn't eligible for a new apartment because she couldn't provide a credit report as the client does not have a credit card.
- VIII. There was no other business. The next meeting is Thursday, June 1, 2023. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m. (Bradway motion, Halstrom second).

These Minutes Respectfully Submitted,


Judy Gardner