

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
March 17, 2022

Present: Lisa Virkler, Chair; Andrea Moroughan, Vice-Chair; Richard Chartrand, Ron Burns, and Jeffrey Nellenback.

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Tom Osborne, Josh Leviker, Phil Hathway, and Ian Gilbert; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Atty. Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chair Legislator Virkler called the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Legislator Chartrand made a motion to accept the minutes from February 15, 2022 as recorded, seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

Lewis County Child Care Services Expansion Program – Brittany Davis, IDA; Casandra Buell, Planning; and Jenny Jones, Social Services Commissioner

Casandra Buell reminded the Committee that the childcare initiative was presented last year showing the use of ARPA funds, since then the program has been defined further and parts of it implemented. The current problem in Lewis County is that it is a childcare desert with 7.8 children for each regulated childcare slot available. The solution is to invest in a comprehensive, hybrid approach to mitigate current childcare challenges by leveraging partnership and using ARPA funds. The estimated budget is to use \$35,000 for Training Bootcamp; \$9,000 for Materials & Equipment; \$120,000 for Staffing Program; and \$36,000 for Retention Program, total investment being \$200,000.

The Home-Based Day Care Training Bootcamp is to develop an accelerated program to empower, educate, and launch new regulated in-home day care facilities in Lewis County. The Home-Based Day Care Materials & Equipment Grant Program would provide up to \$1,500 per new provider for items such as carbon monoxide detectors, play equipment, and various materials. Center-Based Child Care Staffing Program was created in hopes of adding more available childcare slots, this program supports up to four (4) new staff positions with funding available for up to \$30,000 per new position for one year. Center-Based Child Care Staff Retention Program is to help retain staff, this program provides Lewis County's one center-based childcare center with the funding to give their employees a retention bonus of up to \$1,500 per year.

In 2021, the first cohort of Home-Based Day Care Bootcamp was completed with funding provided through Jefferson County IDA and Lewis County IDA. This created two additional home-based day cares and approximately 10 childcare slots. In 2022, there is work being done with Community Action Planning Council to administrate three of four county-funded programs. A second cohort of Home-Based Day Care Bootcamp is set to begin in the Spring. In 2023 the hope is to explore expansion of Center-Based Childcare options in Lewis County and sustainable subsidy employment programs.

Some of the current stumbling blocks are: a lack of day cares accepting DSS subsidies; state regulations; limitations for Center-based Expansion; and lack of employment dependent care subsidy programs. Childcare subsidy programs provide financial assistance to families that meet low-income guidelines that need childcare to work, look for work, or attend employment training. Eligibility is based on income, reasons for needing childcare, child/children's ages, and individual needs. Lewis County Social Services Department submits a childcare plan as part of the annual Child and Family Services Plan to CFS. A household would apply directly through Social Services and payments are made by Social Services to the childcare provider.

The parent share of the subsidy program is currently 10% of household income that is above 100%???. Parents are able to choose their registered or licensed provider. Program covers 24 absences per child. Eligibility is determined on an annual basis. There is no local share required for this block grant which totals \$242,886.00. Jenny Jones, Social Services Commissioner shared the current Subsidy Program eligibility guidelines. The proposed changes in the NYS budget this year would raise the annual income guidelines from 200% above poverty to 300% and reduce the parent share from 10% to 1%.

Brittany Davis from the IDA explained that the Employer Subsidy Program as a way to educate and promote childcare as a benefit. This would allow employees to have partial subsidy with registered daycare providers. Childcare is workforce development in many ways. There was further discussion about other large business's using this as an employee benefit.

Employee Assistance Program update – Caitlyn Smith, Human Resources Director

Caitlyn reported that our EAP provider is Mountain View Prevention Services. IN 2021, MVPS met with employees twelve times, through either in person meetings or phone contacts. Last year, they lost their prevention counselor and, as with any hiring scenario now, took some time to find and train a new prevention counselor. Since bringing the new counselor on, we have received updated signage, pamphlets, and contact cards to distribute hoping to see more employees take advantage of the services in the future.

In 2022, we are putting a concentrated effort toward the mental health and wellness of our employees. In addition to our EAP we have also contracted with Lee Vance, a Transformation Coach and Mindfulness trainer. He has met with a group of our Health and Human Services Department Heads and a small group of volunteer employees to speak about overall wellness coming out of the pandemic and managing expectations as we learn and grow as an organization. Upcoming we have 3 sessions scheduled for the end of March and gaining of April to introduce Lee to more of our employees so that he can continue to build a program surrounding work life, stress reduction, and growth.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Authorizing Agreements between Department of Social Services and New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and with Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. to serve as Administrator of the Rental Supplement Program Allocation.

AYE 5

NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Chartrand made a motion to adjourn at 2:43 p.m., seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board