

Harney County Commission on Children and Families
Regular Meeting Minutes
4/14/05

Attending: Chair: Dan Nichols; Lou Davies; Ramona Hofman; Michelle Bradach; Ann Vloedman; Patty Dorroh, Director
Absent: Debbie Ausmus; Joyce Moser; Sonni Svejcar
Guests: Donna Schnitker; Kathy Rementeria; Chris Phillips; Chris Siegner; Terri Williams; Thad Labhart

Dan called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm. No public comments were offered.

Call to order

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda and minutes as written. Motion carried.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Terri Williams, Director for the Harney County Senior and Community Center, was introduced and spoke to the Commission about the formation of a Community Action Agency for Harney and Malheur Counties. This new agency will be funded by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and focus on anti-poverty programs. Harney and Malheur Counties will each fill six positions on the Board of Directors, which will be responsible for determining how the \$150, 000 in grant money is to be spent for the two counties. All funds are federal dollars and many counties use this money to leverage additional funds. Terri provided handouts entitled "Community Action Agencies and Their Role," which listed typical programs and services offered by community action agencies. Commission members thanked Terri for providing this information.

Community Action Agency Information

Chris Siegner, Director of Harney Behavioral Health (HBH), was introduced and further introduced Thad Labhart, HBH Alcohol and Drug Clinical Supervisor. Chris described HBH services in our community, which include outpatient mental health services, foster care, and a residential program. Outpatient programs serve the entire county and all age groups. Clients range from those with milder, emotional problems to chronic and severe situations. There is a house in Hines which provides foster care for people with severe mental health issues. The residential program covers mental health and substance abuse cases and includes up to ten beds, with eight bed spaces contracted with the State at any given time. Psychiatric services have changed: Dr. Martin joined the staff and is qualified to provide child psychiatric services.

Harney County Mental Health Plan

Alcohol and drug services include referral, assessment, outpatient treatment and intensive contact services. Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) is now doing group counseling. HBH and Dept of Human Services (DHS) are working together to combine related alcohol and drug contracts from both agencies in order to provide better overall services for children while avoiding duplication.

Thad mentioned that gambling is becoming a major problem, even here in Harney County. He was referring to online gambling as well as casino and lottery activities.

Dr. Johnston is working with HBH to develop ways to provide appropriate services at the medical clinic, with all due care to confidentiality concerns.

HBH has also hired another Masters level clinician who does child and family counseling/therapy. Patty asked how Chris Siegner felt about our Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families Priority #7: Develop a plan to hire a full time child/family clinician. Chris said that he felt HBH presently has that strategy accomplished.

These programs and initiatives, as well as prevention activities such as Red Ribbon Week, the 40 Assets Campaign, and the Spring Conference sponsored by Harney Partners for Kids and Families, the Commission and other partners, present a strong community effort to address our mental health and substance abuse issues.

Donna Schnitker reminded the Commission that during the week beginning April 25th, there will be 11 monitors at the Early Childhood Center to evaluate Head Start compliance with official performance standards. On April 27th, community partners are asked to come by for lunch and to answer questions by the monitoring team. Donna provided the Commissioners with survey question handouts for their reference.

Early Childhood Programs – Upcoming Evaluation

Chris Phillips of DHS provided an overview of services and general update. In November 2003, a Child Welfare Audit was conducted which indicated changes were needed in the Harney County office. Since then, with major management and staff turnover, we've gone from 150 open cases with a spike of 35 children in foster care, to 40 open cases and 18 children in foster care. Flexible funds accounts may be used to hire mentors for one-on-one modeling for good parenting. The Family Support and Connections Program, formerly named Community Safety Net, which provides family intervention before official entrance into the child welfare system, will remain in the DHS budget. Michelle mentioned that the Burns Paiute tribe has an outstanding and cooperative relationship with DHS.

DHS Overview and Update

Dan opened up the topic of the Summer Food Program in Harney County. Lola Benton, program director, had spoken with Patty about getting input to better provide this service. Patty summarized the program. There was no public input offered, and commission members had no recommendations for change.

Summer Food Program

Patty provided the Director's Report. Community partners worked together well to raise awareness of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, using banners, blue ribbons, radio and newspaper coverage, and government proclamations. The Community Action Team continues

Director's Report
April as Child Abuse Prevention Month

to reward Burns High School students who are on track academically and behaviorally with fun events. Planning is well underway for the third trimester event and the final “capstone” event that the commission is helping to sponsor. Harney Partners for Kids and Families will be sponsoring Keith Nord for motivational and anti-drug/alcohol messages and the Spring Awards Banquet.

Community
Partners Sponsor
Events

Patty reported that she continues to collaborate and meet regularly with community partners and that our providers are on track with their programs and reporting.

Providers On Track

The Oregon CCF staff completed a review of all 36 counties and their outcome reporting. The only substantive comment for Harney County is that our some of our Positive Youth Development programs, provided by School District 3, may not be an appropriate use of the Children, Youth and Families (CYF) funding stream. Patty will ensure this becomes an agenda topic for our next meeting.

State Outcomes
Review

Patty updated the commission on the legislative activities in Salem regarding the CCF budget, provided the commissioners with background material, a list of legislators’ addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses, and some talking points to use if the commissioners care to advocate to the Oregon legislature during the budget process. The Oregon Senate is proposing even more drastic cuts to CCF funding than the Governor’s recommended budget. Patty plans to write several letters and emails over the next month or so and encouraged commissioners to do the same.

CCF Biennium
Budget Advocacy

No letters of interest have been received to fill the one Commission vacancy. Commissioners are asked to continue to look for good candidates.

Commissioner
Vacancy Remains

In miscellaneous matters, Patty informed the commission that she had appeared before the Harney County Budget Board to present our recommended budget for consideration, that Art Tassie had donated his time to draft a grant proposal for the Boys and Girls Club, and that we purchased two Child Abuse Prevention Month banners.

Miscellaneous
Matters

Dan asked the commission to review the draft meeting schedule and upcoming topics for the next few months. Commissioners were in agreement that the draft schedule looked good and offered no changes.

Suggestions for
Future Schedule
and Topics

Meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm. The next HCCCF meeting is scheduled for June 9th, 2005 at 1:30 pm at the State Office Building conference room.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Dorroh - Director