

**FLORIDA LOCAL ADVOCACY COUNCIL  
Bartow Multi-Program  
Service Area 8**

**September 28, 2006**

**Members Present**

Amanda Boudreau  
Karl Thiele  
Pat Babcock  
Bobby Boedicker  
Keith Finlayson  
Gonzalo Jose Lezama  
Kim Nesbit  
J.J. MacHill  
Catherine Uria  
Andy Phillips (SAC)

**Members Absent**

Lois Matthews-Smith

**Staff/Guests**

Sheila Watkins - DCF  
Vanessa McCottry  
Eric Olsen – APD  
David John-Coral  
Liesta Sykes – Access  
James George – Access  
Bill Bucher – DCF Admin

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**OPEN SESSION:**

Open session was called to order by Karl Thiele at 9:08 a.m. There was quorum.

**Guests:**

**Liesta Sykes: DCF, Access**

Liesta Sykes discussed with the council the history of the DCF ACCESS (Automated Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency) program and the corrective measures they have taken to improve the system. ACCESS is the statewide program that serves the population applying for and relying on food stamps, Medicaid and cash assistance. The online application originated when the program was cut staff and required to consolidate offices. Online application was the most logical solution, have clients apply via the internet. There were situations that led to delays and errors in claim processing. Liesta reported that steps had been taken to reduce the cases lost in gaps of the system. Special teams were created, additional fax lines were implemented and assistance from “Goal Partners” in the community are part of the solution. Currently 81% of the applications for assistance come from the online ACCESS program. With the improvements the department hopes to maintain a speedy verification time and process the needed benefits in a faster time. If there are issues with claims by clients for food stamps, Medicaid application and verification, or cash assistance the LAC Hub office will route callers to the ACCESS line, 866-762-2237 as first option of solution. At that number, by listening to the entire option menu, the client can receive the assistance they need. If more assistance is needed the client can contact the Client Relations Coordinator, 863-619-4100, the Hub office gives that number to callers if they have not received appropriate assistance from the ACCESS

line. If the client does not receive assistance from the CRC, the Hub office will open an LAC case and forward it to a council member to investigate with the CRC for that area. Being there is no time that can be guaranteed for service approval, the average length of wait before Medicaid or food stamps begins is 21 days, in emergency cases meeting appropriate criteria, 7 days. In the time before services begin, the client can obtain food pantry and other means of temporary assistance by calling the ACCESS line, 866-762-2237. Liesta and James George handed out lists of locations other than DCF where clients can apply online for assistance. These Goal Partners are located throughout SA8 area counties. Liesta and James handed out pamphlets and contact cards to the council. DCF, Aging services and APD services confirmed the assistance given to their clients by ACCESS and verbalized their appreciation.

### **Sheila Watkins: DCF Aging Services**

Sheila Watkins represented Aging Services for Julia Hermelbracht. Sheila extended her assistance to the council if there was a need to confirm a client's case status. She also provided the council with a full list of ALFs and Skilled Nursing Facilities in Polk, Highlands and Hardee counties.

### **Eric Olsen: DCF APD**

Eric Olsen from APD announced that aspect of DCF will be moving to a new location. The anticipated location is 200 N. Kentucky in Lakeland. The topic of abuse notifications not reaching the Hub Office was brought up by Karl Thiele. Eric explained that the APD cases could fall in the realm of adult or children as persons with disabilities are either adults or children. It was suggested that the notifications are not facilitated to the LAC from the CRC office. It was requested of Bryan Morgan and Andy Phillips to make an inquiry and determine where the child and APD notifications are. LAC is receiving notifications from the adult services via Sheila Watkins' office. Eric did offer the intake phone line for situations such as Medicaid Waiver questions and even possible continuing education funds for persons with disabilities. That number is 863-619-4236.

### **Vanessa McCottry – Heartland for Children**

Vanessa updated the council on events. October 21 there will be a children's concert at the Bartow Civic Center. October 27<sup>th</sup> begins the Rudolph Round-Up Holiday benefit collection. Currently HFC out of home care numbers are high and they are working toward reaching the numbers suggested by the State. The statutory number of months for finding homes for children in services is twelve. It was suggested prior hurricane activity did slow down the process due to storm effect and recovery.

### **MINUTES:**

The minutes from August 24, 2006's meeting were reviewed.  
*Minutes unanimously adopted.*

### **Old Business**

**Budget/Staff Announcements** – Bryan Morgan reported that the budget had a balance of 1,350.45. He also handed out business cards for council members created by Maribel Rodriguez at the Orlando office. Bryan also reported the reimbursement sheets will now be every other month in an effort to maximize the AHCA personnel's processing times.

**Recruitment/Membership** – It was requested that the council be made aware of what seats are available for recruitment. The council has a ratio of professionals, providers and consumers it must abide by. Bryan will inform the council where it stands in its current membership. J.J. MacHill informed the council of an upcoming volunteer event and Bryan requests the entire council to inform him of such events in enough time to plan a booth and staffing.

**Election of Chair and Vice-Chair** - Voting took place by ballot and under advisement of the nominating committee. By unanimous ballot vote the Chair shall be Keith Finlayson and Vice-Chair shall be Gonzalo Jose Lezama. October 26<sup>th</sup> will be the next meeting and where the new Chair and Vice-Chair begin their terms.

**SAC Report** – Andy Phillips distributed an approved SAC budget listing of funds allocated to the purpose of bettering the LACs. This included staff, office space and communication upgrades. Andy also made the council aware of the next full SAC meeting, November 13, 14 and 15<sup>th</sup> at Singer Island in West Palm Beach. Andy will contact the council with meeting information as it comes. Bryan is also available to the council for any meeting questions.

**Monitoring Reports** – None at this time, however Gonzalo turned in paperwork from last months monitoring forms mentioned in the August minutes.

### **New Business**

Keith Finlayson distributed LAC flyers and brochures as discussing plans for required monitoring of facilities in SA8. Keith also announced Lois Matthews-Smith on the council had been appointed to sit on the local child fatality council to represent the LAC.

Meeting dates for the holiday season have been changed to:  
November 30  
December (No meeting)

The next meeting will be at the DCF office in Lakeland, room D, Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.

### **CLOSED SESSION:**

The Council had no further business and adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Signature on File  
Bryan Morgan  
LAC Staff

Signature on File  
Keith Finlayson  
LAC /MP Chairperson

- cc:
- Florida Local Advocacy Council, SA8
  - Penina Popper, Local Advocacy Statewide Regional Manager
  - Sherri McVay, Executive Director, Statewide Advocacy Council
  - Betty Busbee, Vice-Chair, Statewide Advocacy Council
  - Meeting guests
  - File