

**SERVICE AREA 15
MENTAL HEALTH
FLORIDA LOCAL ADVOCACY COUNCIL**

*Serving the residents of Charlotte, Collier,
Glades, Hendry and Lee County*

**Fort Myers Regional Service Center
2295 Victoria Avenue
Fort Myers, Florida
May 1, 2006
Minutes**

Members Present:

Stan Appelbaum , Chair
Carol Hayes, Second Vice-Chair
Jane Bevan
Lyn Carlson
Toni DeFinis
Jim Hogue
Kathy Stick
Shara Weaver
Kellie Elders
Betty Busbee, SAC

Members Absent:

Leslie Swanson, Vice-Chair

Staff Present:

Elizabeth Drake, SAMH

Guests:

Karla Morgan, Ruth Cooper Center
Michael McNally, Ruth Cooper Center
Julie Boudreaux, Ruth Cooper Center
James Bratt, FACT Ft Myers
Betty Phillips, Coastal Behavioral FACT
Nancy Kelly, Ruth Cooper Center
Melba Arthur, David Lawrence Center

Call To Order & Introductions: Mr. Appelbaum called the May 1, 2006 meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.. Introductions were made and a quorum was established.

Agenda : Council members approved the agenda.

Minutes: Due to the fact that there was no staff available at the April meeting, no minutes were available to approve. Ms. Busbee, SAC member agreed to write the minutes for the portion of today's meeting during which she was present. Due to another commitment, she was not present at the beginning of the meeting; therefore, all of the information concerning Receiving Center Reports will not be included in the minutes this time..

Receiving Center Reports

Ruth Cooper Center:

- Council members were advised that a National search has been conducted for a new CEO for Ruth Cooper Center. The two finalists are scheduled to be interviewed on May 15. Mr. Appelbaum has been invited to participate in the interviews.
- Other update reports were provided by Ruth Cooper Center staff..

Riverside Behavioral Center:

- While Ms. Busbee was present, there was no report from this facility and the attendance sign-in sheet did not include a representative from the facility.

FACT Team Update

Mr. Bratt (Ft. Myers PSI FACT) informed the members:

- They are using the SHARE program as a meaningful activity for clients to work for food items. He reported that 27 people participated in the SHARE program. They signed up for the Adopt a Park program and a Habitat program. This is part of the effort to get clients
- involved in community services.

Other Reports

Members were informed about the CAT program for children who have mental health issues who are at risk to placement in a more restrictive environment. This is similar to a program in Manatee County and provides services to children living at home. The program consists of the provision of a variety of services for the child and family in order for the child to remain in the home.

District Program Office Mental Health Update

There was no report at this time.

Forensics : There was no report.

Baker Act Reviews: There was no report.

Chair's Report:

- Mr. Appelbaum shared with members an article about the LACs entitled "Records battles, lack of personnel spell troubled times for advocacy councils" that appeared recently in the Bonita News. The article described the problems being encountered by the LACs due to denial of access and the staffing problems in this area. .

Community Based Care:

Council members were advised by Ruth Cooper Center representatives that the following problems presently exist in the Community Based Care:

- Insufficient number of foster homes
- Lack of availability of appropriate facilities or funding for children who need to be moved to more specialized facilities.
- High level of staff turnover
- Staff in training
- High case loads...which are now in the 40's in Lee County and about 20 in Collier County.

In an effort to resolve these problems, the agency is doing extensive recruitment for foster homes and looking at specialization for staff to either recruit or train.

Statewide Advocacy Council Report:

Ms Busbee informed the council of the following:

- Penny Vallario has been hired as the new staff person and will begin on May 5th. She provided the Council with information about Ms. Vallario's education and experience.
- Full SAC meeting is planned for July 19-21 in Tampa with training for trainers scheduled for July 18th. Dr. Edward Ferguson, member of the MP LAC, who is a statewide trainer for SAC, and has been doing most of the new member training in this area, will be ending his second term in August and does not plan to apply to another LAC. The other two LACs in this area do have members who are trainers, but the MH LAC has no trainers. Members of this council are encouraged to attend the training in July and become trainers, but only if they will then agree to train. In the past there have been LAC members throughout the state who have attended training and become certified but have never intended to train.

- There is pending legislation, that if passed and signed by the Governor, will make some changes in the SAC?LAC legislation.
- Reportedly, additional funding for SAC has been included in the Governor's proposed budget for next year; however, it does not appear to provide increased funds for expenses. Increased funding for staff may not necessarily provide additional positions as new FTEs are not being included for state positions. Therefore, except for a small percentage which can be transferred to the Expense category, the increase may only provide upgrading current positions..
- Updated information on pending litigation.

Monitoring

There was no monitoring completed this month.

Old Business: There was no old business discussed.

New Business: There was no new business.

Staff Support Report:

- ◆ Since there is currently no staff support in the Fort Myers Hub office, no report was given.

CLOSED SESSION

Due to the lack of staff support, this council has opted to not hold closed session until staff is on board.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. The next meeting will be held at 2295 Victoria Avenue at the Fort Myers Regional Service Center at 10:00 a.m. on June 5, 2006 in room #110.

Submitted by

Betty Busbee
SAC Member, SA 15

Stan Appelbaum
Chairperson

In order to ensure a quorum, members should contact Stan Appelbaum if they will be unable to attend the next meeting.