

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**

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SSAB Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2011

Members Present

Bob Brandenburg
Philip Thalheimer
Linda Blair Forth
Sandy Pugliese

Staff Present

Kim Forrester, SPOSD, HHSA
Patricia Lopez, HHSA
Maria Sanders, HHSA
Elizabeth Locano

Members Absent

Donald Stump
John Hughes

Guests

Derek Staats, Bill Oswald,
Ofelia Olguin, Marjone Larson,
Joni Halpern

1. Chairman Phil Thalheimer called the meeting to order at 9:35a.m.
2. Mr. Bob Brandenburg made a motion to approve the February 10, 2011 minutes. Ms. Sandy Pugliese seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.
3. **Public Comments on Items on the Agenda:**
 - i. Derek Staats of the Caring Council and the Supportive Parents Information Network (SPIN) began by expressing appreciation for the time and effort that was put into the analysis of the SSAB and SNAP Recommendations by the staff of the Health and Human Services Agency. After reviewing the draft analysis, the Caring Council and SPIN agree that although the county has significantly increased in the number of recipients, they believe San Diego County still has the lowest participation and hundreds of children go to bed hungry. They recommend more specific measures to to increase transparency and accountability that allows the Social Services Advisory Board (SSAB) to monitor progress and that Recommendation 21, referring to the inaccessibility of information to county workers on how to properly administer the Food Stamp program would be given greater emphasis.
 - ii. Bill Oswald referred to a handout he provided to the Board entitled "Supportive Parents Information Network (SPIN) & Caring Council Response to the Chief Administrative Officer's Plan to Address Social Service Advisory Board Work Group Recommendations" and also thanked the staff for the 90 day turn around in developing an action plan for the 69 recommendations. Mr. Oswald asked that the SSAB continue to monitor the process and recommendations in a transparent manner and continue to consider the voice of organizations. In looking at the plan, it is a good start. It provides a framework for future actions such as directing resources and assessing progress. On the recommendations "in place" and "in progress", Mr. Oswald called for more methods of evaluation. Although it is acceptable that the County use the State's measures of compliance, data specific to San Diego County such as the number of cases in pending over 30 days is still being requested. For the recommendations under the "further study" sections, Mr. Oswald indicated they still support those recommendations and inquires how the County will follow through on them. The only item that Mr. Oswald strongly disagrees with is the plan to use "*Bridges Out of Poverty*", authored by Ruby Payne. According to Mr. Oswald, this program is the derogative opinion of a self-proclaimed expert and will negatively influence public policy. In closing, Mr. Oswald asked the County to reconsider using "*Bridges Out of Poverty*" and offered his services as well as the expertise of others in his network to find an alternative.
 - iii. Ofelia Olguin of SPIN also expressed concern regarding the use of Ruby Payne's workshop to train staff on the perception of poverty. Ms. Olguin said the theories are wrong and have

been severely criticized by reputable researchers in this field. Ms. Olguin described her personal experience with poverty and states that Ruby Payne's portrayal contradicts the real life experiences of people who have actually lived in poverty. According to Ms. Olguin, Ruby Payne's research is biased and based solely on the one sided story of her husband and taboo cultural beliefs, not on reliable first-hand accounts.

- iv. Marjorie Larson, of the Social Policy Board of San Diego County League of Women Voters and SPIN/ Caring Council indicated that their review found some of the recommendations wanting, most notably recommendation 54, regarding Ruby Payne's "*Bridges Out of Poverty*". One of the major objectives is for staff to change their perception of poverty. This idea of cultural poverty is ingrained in many of the Board of Supervisors and the typecasting found in Ruby Payne's work impedes the momentum for change in this area. Ms. Larson would like to see policy making guided by more rational explanations for poverty and increased transparency and accountability and hopes that the rest of the recommendations will soon be implemented.
- v. Joni Halpern expressed SPIN's gratitude toward the SSAB saying that they understand the challenges HHSA face in providing informed and well-reasoned public policy; however, SPIN will strongly oppose the Ruby Payne training due to its harmful nature. In SPIN's 13 year existence they have helped approximately 5000 people living in poverty, and in that time they have never treated a single person as *other* but treated everyone with the same kindness as their own friends and family. Ms. Halpern understands that when applying these values to a large organization such as HHSA it may change a little, but states that Ruby Payne's training is designed in such a way that it concludes that poor people are *other*. With this mindset, the desired changes will not occur in the HHSA.

Chairman Bob Brandenburg addressed the Board with two observations: First there is no explanation for why any one particular poverty training program was chosen and second, with poverty being one of the largest social problems with extensive research, why was a program that is so heavily criticized chosen?

- a. Kim Forrester will provide additional information at next meeting regarding *Bridges Out of Poverty* including the selection process which occurred prior to formation of the SSAB SNAP Work Group.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- 4. **Discussion Item:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Work Group Update: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): The response to the recommendations is a high level priority for HHSA. More detail will be put forth as actions are expanded upon and the county moves forward with implementing the recommendations. A revised copy of the Board Letter containing updated formatting based on worker recommendations was sent out. The revised letter contained no material changes and served only to resolve issues relating to its readability. Chairman Bob Brandenburg commented that every step taken should be rigorously monitored to ensure maximum efficiency. Following up on an issue that was brought before the Board in the previous meeting, Kim Forrester stated that as of March 9, 2011 there are a total of 265 cases in pending over 30 days; which, when compared to the average number of applications received each month (approximately 9300-12000) is about 2.6%. Responding to the 5 cases situations presented in previous meeting: Research found that on 2 cases workers misapplied regulations. This prompted the new training measures that will be going out to all staff. On the remaining 3 cases, the exact circumstances that were portrayed were not substantiated in the case files. It was found on one case that the appropriate Notices of Actions (NOA) were sent to indicate a case closing, but the case did not close. The case was reactivated once the appropriate information was obtained and a new notice sent. Chairman Phil Thalheimer asked if it was reasonable that the applicant could have been confused and thought the case was closed due having received a NOA. Ms. Forrester indicated that was reasonable and the actions

taken were according to regulations.

5. **Discussion Item:** County of San Diego CalWORKs Plan Addendum: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): As a result of combining the CalWORKs Welfare to Work, Refugee Employment Services and Child Care services under one set of sub-contractors and addition of the *Ready Set Work!* program, the County is submitting a change to the County of San Diego CalWORKs Plan. Changes also include the County adopting the IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate which is the same as used for County employees. In respects to *Ready Set Work!*, Chairman Bob Brandenburg commented that he would like to see some insight provided on how this program will accomplish its goals given the current state of the economy. Specifically, Mr. Brandenburg asked about the availability of jobs vs. the number of eligible applicants. Ms. Forrester replied that this program will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Elizabeth Locano, CalWORKs Program Manager, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, HHSA, followed by saying that the contractor who is providing this program, Arbor E&T, is working very closely with local employment and One Stop Career Centers and has been very successful. *Ready Set Work!* is designed to help a specific, job ready, target group with more intensive employment services. So far 41 people, roughly 30% of the target group, have obtained employment through Ready Set Work.
6. **Information Item:** Agency Updates: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): CalFresh Update: Participation numbers have risen to 218,229 recipients. There are 85,000 individuals are now receiving CalWorks, however the number of applications is lowering and HHSA is monitoring this decline. There are 350,000 recipients in Medi-Cal. The number of monthly Food Stamp applications now outweighs the number Medi-Cal applications.
7. **Information Item:** Fraud and Integrity Update: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): Recently a match was completed to cross check a list of individuals who have passed away with those receiving In-Home Supportive Services. Program Integrity staff found a number of cases where the report of death had not yet been made. This has helped to reduce the number of overpayments.

Derek Staats requested permission to address the Board and asked how is the County preparing for Governor Jerry Brown's plan to cut the length of time on CalWORKs from 60 to 48 months. At direction of the Chair, Kim Forrester replied that the County is looks at potential impacts of legislative or budget changes on our operations and the clients we serve.

8. **Information Item:** Post CalWORKs Services Discussion: None

ADJOURNMENT/SET NEXT MEETING:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

The next regular meeting will be held on **April 14, 2011, Tower 7, CAC Building, 7th Floor 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

The SSAB Minutes were written and submitted by David Brown.