

CHFS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION TF

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2022 Interim

August 17, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 3rd meeting of the CHFS Organizational Structure, Operations & Administration TF was held on Wednesday, August 17, 2022, at 3:00 PM, in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Stephen Meredith, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Stephen Meredith, Co-Chair; Senators Julie Raque Adams and Ralph Alvarado; Representatives Danny Bentley, Keturah Herron, and Kimberly Poore Moser.

Guests: Eric Friedlander, Secretary, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Marta Miranda-Straub, Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Lesa Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS).

LRC Staff: Samir Nasir and Mariah Derringer-Lackey.

Approval of the July 19, 2022, meeting minutes

With a motion from Representative Moser and a second from Representative Bentley, the minutes from the July 19, 2022, meeting were approved.

Overview of the budget, staffing, functions, and programs of the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services

Eric Friedlander, Secretary, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Marta Miranda-Straub, Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; and Lesa Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), provided testimony and a presentation regarding the organizational structure, budget, division overviews, data, uses of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, personnel, and challenges for the department.

A general overview of DCBS was given by Commissioner Miranda-Straub. While DCBS is currently comprised of 4,000 employees across the state, DCBS has the capacity

for 4,500 employees. A map was provided to show the nine DCBS service regions. The commissioner presented the organizational structure noting the addition of the Division of Prevention.

Secretary Friedlander provided a breakdown of the funding and expenditures of DCBS. A majority of the funding is federal grants which are usually specific to the program, such as a child care grants. Personnel is a large expenditure for the department.

Deputy Commissioner Dennis gave a snapshot of some programs and services administered by DCBS. Not yet listed was the employee child care assistance partnership program (2022 RS HB 499) as the department is still working on its implementation.

The Division of Protection and Permanency focuses on child and adult protection, and foster and adoptive services. The department has focused on incorporating the voice of those with lived experience within the foster and adoptive system. To do so, DCBS has created a trusted advisory council, birth parent advisory council, and the voice of fathers, and is continuing to work with the Voices of the Commonwealth Council.

Deputy Commissioner Dennis provided statistics, graphs, and testimony about the number of children in the custody of or committed to the cabinet, reports that met acceptance or criteria for child abuse/neglect assessment, and child protective services (CPS) intakes. Deputy Commissioner Dennis discussed a change that occurred in 2019 with how the department counted children who were with relatives or fictive kin caregivers. The intensity or severity of child abuse or neglect has increased. The majority of referrals to the cabinet do not meet the statutory requirement for intervention, which the department believes to be missed opportunities to provide prevention services.

The Division of Prevention Services contains three branches: primary prevention, prevention evidence based practices, and community response and well-being. Secretary Friedlander discussed the prevention funding provided in the budget. A large portion of the funding used was to increase rates for child caring facilities.

An overview of the Division of Family Support was given. The division administers programs to support families and individuals in need. Statistics regarding the following programs within the division were supplied: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (TANF), and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). An update was given on the implementation of HB 7 (2022 Regular Session).

Information was presented regarding the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Funds flow to the community action agency, and it is decided locally on how the funding is spent.

A summary of the Division of Child Care was provided. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) was discussed including the two recent reimbursement rate increases. Highlighted was the use of ARPA funds. The department has concerns when ARPA funds are eliminated and how it will sustain the programs created or grown with the funds. ARPA funds were also used to address the benefits cliff by creating a transitional period for households exiting CCAP; and provided an increase in CCAP eligibility thresholds.

An update was given regarding the implementation of the Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership (ECCAP) established in HB 499 (2022 Regular Session).

Commissioner Miranda-Straub discussed the vision, goals, and challenges of DCBS. The plan to build a 21st century DCBS contains three phases: stabilization, innovation, and thriving. Testimony was given about the challenges of DCBS, including staff turnover and high acuity youth.

Senator Meredith made several comments regarding the goal of the task force and how this knowledge can aid the General Assembly with their legislative work.

In response to questions from Senator Meredith, Secretary Friedlander believed the nine DCBS service regions were created when the cabinet was split. During that time, the secretary attempted to balance the workload relative to the number of people being served within DCBS. Deputy Commissioner Dennis referenced a reorganization that occurred in 2006 which reduced the service regions from 16 to 9.

In response to questions from Senator Meredith, Deputy Commissioner Dennis explained an interim employee and the interim hiring process. The interim hiring process allows DCBS to hire employees quickly and then begin the process of making that employee permanent. Commissioner Miranda-Straub testified about the challenges with the hiring process and needing to hire staff quickly.

In response to comments from Senator Meredith, Secretary Friedlander discussed the state wide telecommute policy and the need to be consistent across cabinets. With the state wide telework policy, employees will be in the office three days a week.

In response to questions from Representative Moser, Commissioner Miranda-Straub thought it was vital to review the exit reasons given by employees, the two most common being trauma and caseloads. To manage the caseloads, DCBS needs more employees. Commissioner Miranda Straub believed Kentucky to be comparable to other states in terms of requirements needed to be a social worker. Deputy Commissioner Dennis also thought it was a good idea to look at the credentials of social workers and interstate compacts; however to implement something similar to that would limit the already limited hiring pool.

In response to questions from Representative Moser, Secretary Friedlander spoke on the benefits cliff tool being developed in the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. He believed it to be a nice and comprehensive tool but it may need to be simplified. Secretary Friedlander also hoped at one point the tool would be able to be used within the CHFS' integrated benefits programs.

In response to comments from Senator Alvarado, Secretary Friedlander gave his opinion on merit and non-merit employees and believes there are challenges to any system. Secretary Friedlander also referenced his time when the cabinet split and spoke about the challenges. He believes it costs more to split because of the cost allocation system and that splitting the cabinet would not more effective, due to staff not wanting to work across the system with one another.

Senator Meredith announced the next meeting on September 21, 2022, at 3 p.m.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.