

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Department of Community and Human Services
Social Service Advisory Board Meeting Notes
October 21, 2024

Present: Nathan Barnathan, Alison Greenleaf, Abby Horrell, Shawna Gary, Michael De La Guardia, Ann O’Hanlon, Karen Carter, Ashley Caison (virtually), Lesa Gilbert (DCHS Staff), Angela Almonte (DCHS Staff), Sean Curry (Alexandria Health Department)

Absent: Samantha Pedrosa (Vice Chair), Jordan Nally

Call to Order/Welcome:

The meeting was called to order by Abby Horrell (Chair) at 7:00 p.m. and SSAB members were welcomed to the October meeting.

Guest Speaker: Sean Curry (Alexandria Health Department):

Community Health Assessment:

- The community health assessment (CHA) is a comprehensive review of the state of health in Alexandria, identifying community strengths, issues, and opportunities for growth.
 - Focused on qualitative data coupled with quantitative data, centered on community input and lived experience. This includes review of the social determinants of health. Communities’ health conditions are made up of 40% socioeconomic factors, 10% on physical environment, 30% health behaviors and 20% health care.
 - Qualitative data collected in Spring 2018 through summer 2019 quantitative data collected through methods such as photovoice, story collection, survey meeting, and data analysis alignment regionally.
 - After completion of CHA: The health department will analyze, review findings, and generate a report. The goal is to create an actionable plan to improve community-selected health factors such as poverty, mental health and housing.
 - Next steps include a talk and walk through census tracks that have social vulnerabilities identified by the CDC to focus on more community engagement in December and milestone meetings in January.
 - SSAB members can support the community health assessment by signing up for the mailing list, sharing information on the talk and walk with respective networks.

Approval of minutes: The minutes of the September meeting were approved by SSAB members.

Updated SSAB Bylaws Review:

- SSAB members reviewed section five regarding quorums in the SSAB Bylaws.
 - Language was updated to reflect if a meeting is a hybrid meeting, then the quorum must be in person. If the meeting is fully virtual, then the quorum can be virtual. Voting: Votes may take place virtually, if there is a quorum in attendance.
 - SSAB member Alison Greenleaf motioned to approve updates, and SSAB member Nathan Barnathan seconded the motion. Abby Horrell (Chair) signed the updated Bylaws.

Medicaid Unwinding and Medicaid Expansion Update:

- Medicaid unwinding refers to Medicaid renewal, redetermining eligibility for continuous coverage and is usually done annually. The process was suspended during the pandemic for about three years.
- In 2019, Medicaid expansion became available to VA residents who are 65 years old and those who earn up to 138 of the federal poverty level which is about \$20,120 for one person. When it expanded, the program served 5989 October 2019 even though it was estimated to serve 5,941. Current enrollment in Medicaid Expansion is 11,387. About 35% of people receive Medicaid in the City because of Medicaid Expansion.
- With Medicaid Unwinding, the Department of Medicaid and Services conducted training to prepare staff for the process. The staff had two months of training to prepare for March 20, 2023, batch renewal packets.
- There were Alexandrians 33,941 (9,139 households) who received renewal packets. Medicaid unwinding officially ended in April 2024 and 31,841 redeterminations were completed. 22,000 applications were approved and about 8,000 had to close due to income eligibility requirements.
- DCHS led a strong outreach effort with partners to contact about three hundred people who were non-responsive or had not received packets.
- SSAB member Michael De La Guardia asked about the impact on staff's workload. Staff worked longer hours doing overtime. It was challenging doing unwinding and keeping up with the current workload. The impacts are still being felt the agency receives approximately 25 applications a day for SNAP and Medicaid. In a week there are one hundred twenty-five applications, and with only seasoned twenty-five staff members who have the processing speed and accuracy.
- SSAB members discussed ways the board can address staff needs such as flexibility in teleworking, higher salary, leave enhancement or matching competitive pay.

State legislative package submission Review:

- The Delegate Bennett-Parker free school meals legislation was submitted to this year's SSAB legislative package.

- For further legislative packages, SSAB members would like to partner with other boards to submit similar legislative package suggestions.

The City's annual legislative package Discussion (November 1st):

- SSAB members would like to focus on employee retention in the budget letter to the City Manager's per his request; it aligns with City Council's priorities.
- Submission will focus on teleworking flexibility and following up by requesting information from funding allocated for staff during the last budget cycle.
- There was money set aside to focus on retention bonuses, a reclassification process, and ask for DCHS classifications with high turnover to be considered as priority.
- SSAB member Ann O'Hanlon will draft a submission for the City Council and share it with the board members.

Holiday Sharing program discussion:

- SSAB members discussed this year's holiday sharing program and past efforts that included SSAB members volunteering their time and or providing gift cards.
- SSAB member Ann O'Hanlon will collect money and buy gift cards. The gift cards will be given to Lesa Gilbert to distribute to the program.

Upcoming meeting dates:

- November 18th (virtual)
- December 16th
- January 20th

Meeting adjourned: 8:31 pm