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

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SSAB Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2011

Members Present
Bob Brandenburg
Philip Thalheimer
Donald Stump
John Hughes
Linda Blair Forth
Sandy Pugliese

Members Absent
none

Staff Present
Kim Forrester, SPOSD, HHSA
Irene Chin, SPOSD, HHSA
Ruth Supronovich, HHSA
Maria Sanders, HHSA
Angelina Young, HHSA
Camile Chenoweth, DA

Guests

1. Chair Phil Thalheimer called the meeting to order at 9:43 a.m.
2. Rev. John Hughes made a motion to approve the December 9, 2010 minutes. Ms. Linda Blair-Forth seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.
3. Public Comments on Items on the Agenda:
   1. Bill Oswald provided the SSAB members with two handouts and wanted to emphasize four points: 1.) The need for greater clarity on the definition of pending cases 2.) The criticality of the voice of the client as decisions are made to change processes 3.) Careful scrutiny of the early steps in the application process as there are problems with verbal denials, application of regulations, etc. 4.) Insist on good data as we move forward. Additionally, Mr. Oswald commented on the compliance numbers and how SPIN/Caring Council estimates of 34% differ from the County's calculated compliance rate of 78%. He indicated that we need to look at counting pending cases in the compliance number. There is a strong correlation in the number of cases in pending status and those that are in compliance. Mr. Oswald indicated that the County is unlikely to get new resources so improving efficiency is important. He indicated that there is an inherent problem with a system that is rewarded by keeping people out. He reiterated two recommendations: change the formula of how compliance is calculated and have a better breakdown of who is in pending status, why the case is pending, and how many cases are pending over 30 days.
   2. Aida Reyes provided two case examples from parents: One where a parent had received three Notices of Action (NOA) indicating that her aid was going to be reduced. This was a VAWA case and she applied for a hearing, but in January had not received her assistance. SPIN was able to assist her in restoring her aid paid pending within one day. The concern is that the aid paid pending a hearing is not issued timely. Second case example: A client received a call indicating that she was not a qualified alien and was not eligible to receive any of the benefits she had previously received and would have to repay them. SPIN advised her to go to the office to obtain a written NOA which she did so that they can now file an appeal.
   3. Client 1: Provided her personal story on the difficulty she had with her CalWORKs case and the many confusing NOAs she received. She commented that even the Appeals worker had indicated the case was confusing. She stated that even though she is financially eligible for Food Stamps, she is not able to receive them because her mother who must be included in the Food Stamp case does not want to apply. Her mother had a bad experience with Food Stamps, has an overpayment that she is still re-paying back, and wants nothing to do with it. She also related a pleasant experience that when she turned in her report this month she only spent 10 minutes in the office because of a worker that was stationed in the lobby to assist.

4. Joni Halpern stated that there were 3 case examples brought forward last month involving VAWA, an overpayment and 13 Notices of Action (NOA) that were sent. These are meant as examples for the County to find the cases, research them, and then report back to the SSAB in some fashion. They are not meant to have case specifics reported back to SSAB or SPIN, but to report back on the processes – insight into the processes that may be running in parallel and causing some of the inefficiencies/problems for clients.
5. Client 2: Shared her experience regarding her request for a hearing for a re-calculation of the Time on Aid due to her and her children's disability. She agreed to an out of hearing resolution which is supposed to be completed within 30 days and it has been two months. She stated she tried to call ACCESS 15 times and either got a busy signal or a recording to try again later. Once she waited an hour only to receive a recording to call back. She is still trying to find out why aid was reduced by $67 and she explained the impacts to her family.
6. Client 3: If welfare is to help people, why do they make it so hard? Since the Eligibility BPR implemented it has been a roller coaster for all families; closing cases, receiving many NOAs. She did not receive her mileage reimbursement and this caused problems for her and her family. She stated that she wondered if this is retaliation because she speaks and helps her community. She does not believe that the classes that she is receiving through Welfare to Work are valuable or will move her to self-sufficiency.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- **Information Item:** Dragon Organics: Ruth Supranovich, Assistant Deputy Director, North Regions, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA). Ms. Supranovich provided an overview of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that is being done at San Pasqual Academy (SPA) in conjunction with Dragon Organics. The CSA program is a way for the community to support the school/local farm and supports the students in their learning and preparation for independence.
- Supports learning and business skills of the students at SPA as they perform all activities from working in the fields, planning, marketing, budget, etc.
- Supports the Nutrition Security Plan for both County employees and students
    - Promotes healthy eating and physical activity at SPA
    - Reinforces healthy eating with County employees who serve as role models for clients and can share information on healthy eating

5. **Discussion Item:** CalFresh (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -SNAP) Work Group Update: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): Ms. Forrester reported that in response to the Board receipt of the SSAB SNAP Work Group recommendations on December 7, 2010, a group was formed to complete the analysis. She introduced Maria Sanders who is the Project Manager. As requested by the Board, the Agency will return on March 15 with an analysis of the feasibility, timeline for implementation and associated resources/costs. As part of the analysis the community partners were asked for any additional or clarifying information. The draft response to the Board will be brought to SSAB for review at the February meeting.
   Ms. Forrester reported that in analyzing the feasibility of the recommendations there are several actions that have been taken to improve effectiveness and efficiency along the way, as part of the normal continuous improvement efforts. Ms Forrester reported that as of 12-31-10 the timely processing for CalFresh (Food Stamps) had increased to 92% following the State's methodology for timely processing. This is a significant improvement since the SNAP Work Group. The number of pending cases has also decreased.
   - The Chair inquired about an article in the paper regarding Restaurant Meal Program: This is an option that is available through the CalFresh Program and is in place in a few other counties and States. It allows disabled, homeless, or aged individuals who may not have the capacity to prepare a hot, nutritious meal to use their CalFresh EBT card at State-approved restaurants. Restaurants wishing to participate must have lower cost options available.
   - Bob Brandenburg inquired about where we are in improving ACCESS: Ms Forrester reported that

beginning approximately one week ago some of the General Information calls are being answered by San Diego 2-1-1. The remainder of the General Information calls will be sent to 2-1-1 today. With this change, there has been a modest decrease in the call wait time and an increase in the total number of calls that are able to be taken. There was also a discussion of what would be the plan if the desired reduction in wait time was not achieved. This is part of the analysis of the SNAP recommendations. Mr. Brandenburg indicated that there are analytical programs to assist in determining the number of staff required at ACCESS to achieve the desired outcomes. There is a single pool of eligibility workers to staff both ACCESS and the FRCs so it is a question of priorities as to where the staff goes to best support the clients that are coming into the FRCs and calling ACCESS.

6. **Information Item:** Agency Updates: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA): Ms. Forrester provided updates on the following:
   - Implemented Benefits CalWIN on 11-22-10 - very popular received approximately 1700 FS and 1100 Medi-Cal with 50% new to our system. Appears this has tapped a new population. Applications are centralized with an electronic referral application unit
   - Staffing updates
     - Staffing updates:
     - Donna Hand, Regional General Manager in North Regions, announced her retirement in May 2011
     - Dann Crawford, Assistant Deputy Director in North Regions, will retire in February 2011
     - Irene Chin who has provided staff support to SSAB is promoting to Human Services Specialist and will begin training on 1-14-11

SSAB inquired about the Governor's budget: The County has begun to analyze impacts of the proposed budget to the County and clients. Example loss of child care may cause some families to lose employment and reapply for CalWORKs.

7. **Information Item:** Fraud and Integrity Update: Kim Forrester, Assistant Deputy Director, Strategic Planning & Operational Support, Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA):
   - Received approval for funding for the IHSS Program Integrity unit and need to provide additional clarification to the State as requested
   - Camille Chenoweth, Supervising Public Assistance Investigator provided an update on early fraud activities in 2010
     - Completed 26,453 referrals with cost avoidance of $5,557,846
     - Criminal investigations for long-term fraud including In-Home Supportive Services and Child Care resulted in $1.3 million in repayments
     - Worked to train staff to be aware and sensitive of economic time. Only conduct walk-through to resolve an outstanding issue or discrepancy and ask client to help in the resolution which may result in walk-through. This has increased efficiency and enhanced public image. Hired 3 trainees and anticipate hiring 4 more later this month.

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

ADJOURNMENT/SET NEXT MEETING:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

The next regular meeting will be held on **February 10, 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 Angelina Young.