

**Kent County**  
**Family & Children's**  
**Coordinating Council**

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**KCFCCC Meeting Minutes**  
**February 5, 2019** 12:00pm – 1:00pm  
Kent County Administration Building  
Room 311

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**Members/Alternates**

**Present:** Melanie Beelen, Candace Cowling, Tracey Fountain, Judge Patti Gardner, Sandra Ghoston-Jones, Cynthia Gladyness, Jack Greenfield, Lynn Heemstra, Maureen Kirkwood, Ron Koehler, Jacob Maas, George Meek, Jackie O'Connor, Jim Paparella, Kasie Pickart, Julie Ridenour, Diana Sieger, Scott Smith, Michelle VanDyke,

**Members Absent:** Chris Becker, Lynne Ferrell, Adam London, Teresa Neal, Savator Selden-Johnson.

**Guests:** Heather Boswell, Tawana Brown, Ross Buitendorp, Veneese Chandler, Anissa Eddie, Carol Paine-McGovern, Kristyn Peck, Wende Randall, Jim Talen, Annemarie Valdez.

**1. Welcome & Call to Order**

Cynthia Gladyness, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

**2. Public Comment**

None.

**3. Crisis Center Update** – Ross Buitendorp began the update, saying that our community has been facing an issue regarding individuals going to the emergency department when they really need mental health assistance. There are also individuals that go to the emergency department and end up in psychiatric in-patient, but don't belong there. There are between 700 and 1000 going to the Kent County Jail, but have a serious mental illness, when the charges are "petty" crimes.

Network180 received a grant about 2 years ago and has since used some of the funds to hire a consultant, Dr. Randy Hillard, a nationally-known expert in crisis psychiatry who has set up a number of crisis centers throughout the country. Network180 has also contracted with Common Ground, out of Oakland County, the only crisis center in the state right now. They operate under the mental health code, Community Mental Health, as the pre-screening unit. It allows them to determine an individual's eligibility for inpatient

admission. They can hold the individual.

The next step was the formation of the Kent County Crisis Center Task Force. Representation in the group includes the hospitals, law enforcement, providers and insurers. The Crisis Center will provide needed services such as detox, therapy, psychiatric, outpatient services, housing and coordination of benefits.

The Crisis Center may be located downtown. The Network180 site is near the jail, but most of the arrests are coming from the downtown area.

The Kent County Health Consortium has agreed to take on the Crisis Center, who is currently working on figuring out how to launch it.

Maureen Kirkwood added her comments, saying in order for it to move forward to the next phase of planning, there needs to be a Project Manager hired for the Crisis Center. The Crisis Center Task Force came to the Kent County Health Consortium to see if it would fit there. They are interested in championing this but are in a holding pattern while it is determined who is going to fund the Crisis Center Project Manager position.

The discussion continued with questions about how the Center is expected to work. Ross said there are a lot of unknowns at this time, but it will take the support of many community partners to make it all work.

When the discussion turned to concerns with businesses experiencing situations with patrons with mental health issues, Ross said with these situations the police will be able to bring people with mental health issues to the Crisis Center. Sandra Ghoston-Jones asked if there was any type of training offered for people faced with dealing with situations involving people experiencing mental health issues.

Ross said Network180's Mental Health First Aid class would be a good fit for that. It helps to identify some of the traits or behaviors, but also assists in identifying people who may or may not be in a mental health crisis and how to figure it out. He said he will get back to Sandra on whether or not that is currently being offered, who in turn offered to send it out to the Council.

4. **Early Childhood Millage Update** – Sandra Ghoston-Jones said First Steps Kent was the only responder to the rfp for the Early Childhood Millage administration. Matthew VanZetten and Sandra met with AnneMarie Valdez and members of her team to get started on moving forward with this. The goal is to have a contract ready for signature by the end of March. A lot of things will need to happen prior to that. This is a start-up for First Steps, so financial assistance will be needed for setup costs and staffing. It will be important not to do too much too fast and that everything done going forward is very thoughtful. There are lots of eyes on this Millage because it is a one-of-a-kind millage. It needs to be done right.

One note that Sandra made was that the existing dollars for Early Childhood that are allocated from the Prevention program will continue and will be supplemented by the Early Childhood Millage. It will be important to make sure these dollars are blended and

are supportive, but also not duplicative.

## 5. Miscellaneous

Sandra Ghoston-Jones asked the group to provide information on how they handled the Polar Vortex crisis within their agency/business and for their clients. They responded as follows:

- Maureen Kirkwood – First Steps closed Monday, Tuesday afternoon and all day on Wednesday. She said they already had processes in place. She said they paid everyone. Those who had the ability to work from home and had deadlines were encouraged to work from home...but it was not mandated.
- Jack Greenfield – Felt this was a great opportunity to reflect on how this was handled. It required a lot of coordination and communication. He said they closed early Monday and Tuesday and closed all day Wednesday and Thursday.
- Michelle VanDyke – United Way was closed Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. 211 stayed open the entire week in the office. She said the facilities person worked to keep the parking lots plowed for employees. 211 worked to get people off the streets and into shelters. She said it was difficult because many agencies were closed. She added they were provided great assistance from DHHS and others throughout the week, making sure utilities were turned back on. Many families had no heat but was turned back on as soon as 211 called.

The rest of the office was closed during those days. Communication was done via text and phone calls.

- Ross Buitendorp – Network180 was closed Tuesday through Friday. The Access center was open with a skeleton crew. Protocol was changed. Instead of transporting to the emergency department, they called instead. Therapy services closed. Therapy clients who really needed to be seen were scheduled in, otherwise they were postponed. Staff were either asked to work from home or take PTO.
- Melanie Beelen – Baxter Community Center was closed Monday through Thursday. Even though the roads were still bad, they opened on Friday because many people would have spent out their dollars for January and were in need of food. Friday was February 1. They weren't super busy. Everyone was paid.
- Judge Gardner – The courthouse closed early Monday and Tuesday and closed all day Wednesday and Thursday. Judges are typically reluctant to adjourn hearings, but that week every hearing that was requested adjourned was granted. Hearings are in the process of being rescheduled. Staff notified people in advance of hearing adjournments.
- Candace Cowling – Family Futures has an inclement weather policy which states they are closed until 10:00 AM if Grand Rapids Public Schools is closed due to bad weather. The parent coaching is done remotely, so it continued. Tuesday Family Futures tried to open, but it got worse. The rest of the week they were not actively open. Employees were not required to report.

Candace also shared that AnneMarie Valdez received a Newsmaker of the Year Award for non-profits.

- Lynn Heemstra – The City closed Wednesday and Thursday, but essential staff had to report...public works, police and fire. They were very busy. The city paid full time permanent staff, but temporary were not paid.

Sandra Ghoston-Jones mentioned that the City of Grand Rapids was a great partner in coordinating the message and the closings.

- Ron Koehler – Nineteen of their school districts were closed all 5 days. One was opened one day. Schools in KentlSD close or stay open by region. Superintendents decide together whether or not to close.
- George Meek – He is responsible for 4 private sector companies and they all stayed open. He got a lot of work done.
- Kacie Pickert – She is on the communications team at Cherry Health. It was a very busy week. They didn't close. There was a 2-hour delay on Monday, which affected their methadone-assisted patients, so they stayed open two hours later. The Methadone clinic hours stayed the same as normal the remainder of the week to assist clients in getting their dosing.

She said they closed early a couple of days. Texting, email and social media communication was used. Staff who were able to work from home were given that option. Hourly staff who did not report and did not work from home were asked to take PTO. The leadership team is looking at this to look at protocols.

- Julie Ridenour – Steelcase used it's all-employee texting system, which seemed to have worked. One shift was closed down, on Monday evening. Employees who were able to work from home were able to do so.
- Jacob Maas – All ten of their service centers were shut down in the seven-county region for all five days. The biggest fear was for job seekers to take the bus into services centers with the negative windchills. They take a look at what GRPS does in heading out on the roads early in the morning to determine the need to close. Hours were extended on Feb 5 until 7:00 PM for job seekers. A weatherline is set up for staff to call in to learn of closings. The line is recorded by 6:30 AM. TV-8 is also utilized, as well as social media. Inclement weather policy states employees have to take paid time off if they have it to use, but Jacob states he feels that's unfair as everyone gets paid.
- Jackie O'Connor – She reported they were closed three days. Staff was encouraged to take work home. All staff was paid and were asked to monitor email and phones. Everyone was closed within their 9-County region, so clients were unable to get ahold of anyone. Jackie thanked 211 for picking up the messages.

- Scott Smith – Cedar Springs Public Schools were closed for six days in a row. The challenge it presented for the students that receive food through Hand to Hand Ministries is that food is distributed to them on Fridays. They missed the weekend of Friday, January 25. Thankfully, Hand-to-Hand partners put together a process to distribute food on February 1<sup>st</sup> so students would not have to go two weekends in a row without food. They set up shop in district for families who could come in, but also had a delivery team that took food out to families. Although the safety of students is the utmost priority, often the warm classroom is the warmest place they have and the food served for breakfast and lunch is the only food they get for the day. It makes it a tough call to make.
- Diana Sieger – Grand Rapids Community Foundation informs their staff through a text alert. She said they used to follow the GRPS closings, but now confer with their own management team. They were open Tuesday morning and Friday. Everyone gets paid.
- Jim Paparella – He said as late as Tuesday staff were told that DaB/St John’s Home only closed when the government closed. They closed Wednesday and Thursday. He said they paid all of the staff double time who had to come in on those days to staff the children’s residential campus.
- Tracie Fountain – DHHS is in the front line of emergency response, so their partnership with 211 was invaluable. She said about six referrals came through where families were without propane. Savator Selden-Johnson’s team went out and did safety checks. Those who could not have services restored within 24 hours were provided with hotels. DHHS was closed all day Wednesday and Thursday, closed early on Monday by the State and on Tuesday by the County. She said they had a call-for-emergency response plan about seven or eight months ago so they could still provide services for food and utilities during the storm. She said a core team on the assistance payment side that could do processing and get in touch with providers to be sure propane and energy services were restored. Consumers Energy and DTE Energy promised not to shut off any utilities for that week either.

Tracie stated that she was very impressed with the way Kent County came together to serve the community.

- Cynthia Gladyness – She mentioned that she provides the EAP for the Postal Employees and family members in greater Michigan. Since the Post Office was closed Wednesday and Thursday, the clients she had scheduled were handled by conference call.
- Veneese Chandler – The Family Outreach Center was closed Monday through Thursday. Although they used to close in tandem with GRPS, the executive leadership now makes the decision. She added that about 85% of those they serve are low income and they have to walk, ride the bus, bike and drive to the facility. They provide a lot of agency-based, home-based and school-based services. The concern was to keep the staff and consumers safe. The policy states clinical staff works from home when the agency is closed. Full and part-time are all paid, except for their

psychiatrists because it is stated in their contract that they do not.

- Kryistyn Peck – WMPC closed on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. All staff were paid. Staff were encouraged to work from home. Child Placement line and emergency line remained open. On Tuesday and Friday staff were allowed to take unscheduled PTO or unscheduled telework if preferred. The leadership team was very productive in working from home.
- Anissa Eddy – KConnect gave the option of working from home. Employees were encouraged to take PTO if not working from home.
- Carol Paine-McGovern – Community Schools don't close down, but staff were encouraged to either work from home or take PTO. She said she went to the office to field a lot of the calls. She added that her staff were out delivering food. She said she was very warmed by those in the community who came together to help out families.
- Wende Randall – The Coalition to End Homelessness was working very closely with the Salvation Army, Family Promise and Mel Trotter to try to ensure people were in shelter. The 211 team did a phenomenal job. Her team was busy throughout the week. One of the biggest things that had to be considered was whether or not the Point In Time count needed to be rescheduled. HUD requires it to take place within a specific timeframe and cannot be rescheduled without HUD's approval. A waiver was applied to HUD and it was approved. It is now scheduled for February 6. Shelters were above capacity but brought in extra homeless.
- AnneMarie Valdez – First Steps were closed Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and closed early Tuesday.
- Sandra Ghoston-Jones suggested a meeting among the agencies and the County to discuss what processes were, so we can come up with a plan as well. She is planning to draft a memo to our County Administrator, Wayman Britt and our Communications Director, Lori Latham. She anticipates our Emergency Manager will receive this information so we can pull together some people to plan going forward.

One additional comment from Jim Paparella was that the available services were concentrated in the downtown area and the rural needs were not included.

7. **Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 1:15 PM. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9, 2019.