

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

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**KCFCCC Meeting Minutes**  
**April 13, 2021 12:00pm – 1:00pm**  
Kent County Administration Building  
Via ZOOM

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**Members/Alternates**

**Present:** Candace Cowling, Misti DeVries, Lynne Ferrell, Tracey Fountain, Judge Gardner, Kristen Gietzen, Jenny James, Ron Koehler, Eileen McNeil, Mary Mulliet, Paul Petr, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Savator Selden-Johnson, Diana Sieger, Scott Smith, Michelle VanDyke, Bill Ward.

**Members Absent:** Chris Becker, Cynthia Gladyness, Maureen Kirkwood, Adam London, Jacob Maas, George Meek, Jackie O'Connor, Jim Paparella.

**Guests:** Travis Atkinson, Doug Booth, Tawana Brown, Veneese Chandler, Karen Lezan, Salvator Lopez, Sonia Noorman, Carol Paine-McGovern, Wende Randall, Juan Rosario, Jim Talen, Annemarie Valdez, Mark Woltman.

**1 Welcome & Call to Order**

Candace Cowling called the meeting to order.

Scott Smith made a motion to accept the minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> provided by Diana Sieger – Vote was unanimous.

Michelle VanDyke made a motion to accept the agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> provided by Judge Gardner – vote was unanimous.

**2. Public Comment**

There was none.

**3. Behavioral Health Crisis System** – Travis Atkinson from TBD Solutions began his update, explaining why he got into this work. He talked about the Kent County Advisory Group, previously known as the Consensus Workgroup, stating the group's purpose. He went on to share what the system used to look like, what it looks like now and what the plan is for the Behavioral Health Crisis System into the future.

Currently a person in crisis is instructed to call 911 if they are having a medical emergency. Mental health emergencies are treated in the same system. Patients are often sent to the emergency room and then receive a referral to a psychiatric hospital as an inpatient or for outpatient services. There are currently no in-between services.

If a person who has committed a crime is having a mental health crisis, they typically end up in jail.

Another potential scenario is a person walking into the Community Mental Health Access Center. A wider variety of services are available through this option, including an evaluation, referral to the proper level of services, or dispatch of a Mobile Crisis unit.

The new model will seek to address the proper level of care, avoiding the more expensive, unnecessary levels of care.

Another option in the new model is the Crisis Residential Unit. For youth, these will be operated by Hope Network. There are very few youth crisis residential programs in Michigan, much less than there are for adults.

Travis went on to describe what options are currently available, one of which is an emergency unit at Pine Rest, designed to keep people out of the emergency room at the local hospitals. Another recent development is an Empath unit at the emergency department at Spectrum Health. It is designed to be a specialized emergency department just for people with psychiatric emergencies, hopefully keeping people out of psychiatric hospitals and emergency rooms when appropriate.

The Crisis Administrator project will now focus on the priority recommendations that came out of the work with Tri-West:

- Develop a secure crisis center plus enhanced urgent care
- Develop an effective adult mobile crisis capacity & enhance current children's mobile crisis capacity
- Transition to a central behavioral health call center
- Ensure no one is turned away from psychiatric services

The timeline of the deliverables was shared. A significant focus will be on the development of metrics to measure the success of this new system.

- 4. Update on the Lakeshore Regional Entity** – Bill began this update, saying he has all good news. He gave a brief historical overview of the funding issues the LRE has experienced. The last two years have been spent demonstrating to the state that this region has been underfunded for the last several years. Network180 achieved a positive fund balance in September of 2020 for the first time in five years. Some providers were given rate increases for the first time in years.

Bill expects to see a fund balance again this year. This will allow the LRE to have a Risk Reserve available in case of underfunding or unexpected costs.

The LRE CEO retired in February. A new CEO, Mary Dumas, has been hired. She has

been onboard for about two months. Bill Riley is assisting in transitioning Mary into her new role.

The LRE has moved into an annual contract with the State, instead of the month-to-month contract they have been operating under. A draft contract has been finalized and includes a quality improvement plan. It is currently with the state for their approval.

A contract with Beacon Health has been finalized and they will become an administrative service organization instead of a risk-sharing partner.

Bill summarized that the LRE has come a long way in the last few years.

5. **Housing Stability Alliance (HSA) Update** – Salvador Lopez, president of KConnect and the interim lead for the Housing Stability work, gave the update. Mark Woltman joined in the update, providing the data. Salvador stated that Housing Stability is key to the stability of home and family, which aligns with the work of KConnect. The Vision of the Housing Stability Alliance is to ensure safe and stable housing for all residents in Kent County. Its purpose is to:

- Increase Access to quality affordable housing
- Dissolve homelessness in Kent County
- Focus on eliminating racial disparities among families, children and youth
- Address data-driven priorities

A slide was shown giving a visual of the spectrum of homeless to stably housed. Mark Woltman shared that of the 70,000 families living in Kent County, 22,000 are less than stably housed. The goal of the HSA is to ensure all families in Kent County are stably housed. One point he shared is that there are disparities in the community when it comes to race within homelessness. He said 1 in 6 Black/African American children experienced homelessness, while only about 1 in 130 white children experience homelessness in Kent County. Kent County is the 4<sup>th</sup> worst county in the Nation when it comes to the black-white homeownership gap. Mark added that over 70% of our white families own their homes while only about 30% of African American families own their homes.

A Community Plan has been developed for Housing Stability and can be found on their website at:

<https://k-connect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/KCON-BOOK-0920-Common-Agenda-and-Roadmap-FINAL-01-12-21.pdf>

The Housing Stability Alliance now has a public, private and philanthropic leadership team that consists of Mayor Rosalyn Bliss, Lynne Ferrell, Christina Keller and Kent County Board Chair Mandy Bolter. This group is leading the formation of the new backbone entity in partnership with KConnect, whose work will be to continue the work of the HSA, operationalize the community plan and to address the emergent needs of the community as it relates to housing.

Salvator stated that the HSA has obtained 501(c)3 status, is currently developing a board of trustees, are working on branding and marketing and that KConnect continues to uplift the organization and support the work.

6. **COVID Vaccine Update** Candace asked Jenny James if she had an update to provide in Adam's absence. Jenny said she would provide an email update to the group.
7. **Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)** This item is being tabled to the next meeting agenda.
8. **Agency Updates:**
  - **Savator Selden-Johnson** – Savator said that referrals are beginning to increase, which is what was expected. Work continues on a CPS redesign, focusing on prevention, providing services to families as opposed to an investigation. Work continues on Race Equity.
  - **Kristen Gietzen** – Gearing up for what recovery looks like. Hoping that the Spring and Summer brings good things. They are bracing for the onslaught of mental health needs that will likely arise post-pandemic. Arbor Circle's Spring event is coming up. It will feature a free, 30-minute virtual event by Chris Mathis and Cole Williams. Information on the event can be found at: <https://arborcircle.org/event/spring-forward/>
  - **Paul Petr** – Paul introduced himself as the new Assistant to the County Administrator. He gave an overview of his background. He also gave an update on the upcoming Community Event, a virtual event taking place on June 23 at 8:30 or 9:00 AM. A subcommittee is working on the agenda. More details to come.
  - **Juan Rosario** – Juan is the Talent Solutions manager for West Michigan Works. He shared they have recently partnered with Calvin Social Research Team to do a survey in regards to why individuals are not engaging in the workforce. Hoping to disperse the information and statistics to the community.
  - **Mary Mulliet** – DA Blodgett/St. John's has begun a deep dive into equity, diversity and inclusion work with the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities. An assessment was just completed. DA Blodgett/St. John's is in their first year of the HRC and All Children All Families work. She said they are in their second year of Sanctuary. She added they are focused on growth and family preservation and clinical and behavioral health spaces. She said they are re-envisioning their residential programming. Mary also reported that they are in search of a new CAO, with interviews to happen swiftly.
  - **AnneMarie Valdez** – AnneMarie announced that this week is Week of the Young Child. First Steps Kent received a proclamation from the governor, proclaiming the week, so a host of activities are taking place.
  - **Venece Chandler** – Things are continuing to work well at the agency, with work being done face-to-face as well as virtual with clientele. Slowly reintegrating work with some of the partners and community around outreach or co-located services. A community event is coming up May 22<sup>nd</sup> at Garfield Park. A number of community partners will be invited to participate. The event is designed to bring people together, socially-distanced, mindful of COVID-19 protocols. Feel free to drop by and enjoy some food.
  - **Tracey Fountain** – Tracey shared business has been steady serving the community. Staff have been primarily working from home. They are working on a Return-to-work plan with ESA leadership. Many staff have been vaccinated, so they are feeling comfortable about being placed out in the community.

- **Eileen McNeil** – Eileen reported that she is working on getting her arms around what everyone is talking about. She said being in the private sector, she is learning from this group.
- **Wende Randall** – She reported the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program is up and running. [www.endhomelessnesskent.org/cera](http://www.endhomelessnesskent.org/cera) applications available online (for download) or at The Salvation Army, Kent County Community Action, and Hispanic Center of West Michigan or call 616-454-5840. An online portal will be available for submitting documentation online soon. Outreach efforts will be seen throughout the community beginning at the end of this week. and moving forward. Documents can be submitted to [kent.rent@usc.salvationarmy.org](mailto:kent.rent@usc.salvationarmy.org).

ENTF has been working with the Kent County Health Department in putting together transportation options for people to get to vaccination clinics free of charge. More information coming soon.

Wende also shared that ENTf recently issued a digital inclusion statement, which provides community-wide strategies for digital inclusion.

- **Doug Booth** – Health Net of West Michigan has opened their services to anyone in Kent County by calling our number: 616-726-8204. Normally there are eligibility requirements, but due to COVID, those requirements are currently being waived through the end of MAY. Some transportation is being provided as well.
- **Jenny James** – The Board of Commissioners approved the creation of a Chief Inclusion Officer in the County Administrator’s Office. We will use the opportunity to bring together the various equity and inclusion efforts going on around the County into one seat here in Wayman’s office.
- **Misti DeVries** - Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County is staying busy with interviews, seeing numbers going up as children are back in school. We have a new healing garden that will now be able to be utilized so our clients can connect with nature. It is Child Abuse Prevention Month, so local businesses and organizations are encouraged to participate on their social media and tag the CAC and other organizations that work with children.
- **Karen Lezan** - Bright Beginnings home visiting is still going strong with parents wanting outdoor visits with the weather improving to take a break from virtual visits. Our increase in preschoolers and kindergarteners has given us opportunities for a lot school readiness work, primarily with social-emotional needs.

**10. Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 1:29 PM. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 1, 2021.