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## Minutes

Tuesday, September 5, 2023 1:00pm – 2:30pm  
Lakes Rooms, Kent County Health Department  
700 Fuller Ave NE – Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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<b>Council Members/ Alternates Present:</b>	Chris Becker, Tiffany Clarke, Tracie Coffman, Candace Cowling, Tracey Fountain, Bryana Hopkins, Kristin Gietzen, Maureen Kirkwood, Jason Loepp, Jacob Maas, Mary Mullett, Madelyn Olson, Tracey Silas, Michelle Van Dyke
<b>Council Members Absent:</b>	Misti DeVries, Lynne Ferrell, Kendrick Heinlein, Ron Koehler, Adam London, Judge Deborah McNabb, Eileen McNeil, Joas Occes, Shaunte Paul-Oliver, Leadriane Roby, Scott Smith, Bill Ward
<b>Council Partners/Guests:</b>	Justin Brownlee, Jennifer Headley-Norman, Ashley Karsten, Keenan King, Karen Lezan, Courtney Myers-Keaton, Leah Ortiz, Gustavo Perez, Wende Randall, Jacque White
<b>Kent County Staff:</b>	Christopher Eakin, Brian Hartl

### 1. Welcome & Call to Order

Candace Cowling called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

### 2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes of June 6, 2023

A motion was made by Maureen Kirkwood and seconded by Mary Mullett to approve today's agenda and the meeting minutes from June 6, 2023. Prior to voting, Tracey Fountain asked that the proposed minutes be amended to reflect that she is not nearing retirement. The agenda and minutes were subsequently approved unanimously by voice vote.

### 3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

### 4. Kent County Community Needs Assessment

Gustavo Perez, director of Kent County Community Action (KCCA), presented on his department's findings from the 2023 Community Needs Assessment (CNA). The CNA's purpose is to identify service gaps, propose solutions, and adjust programming to meet residents' needs. KCCA has four main program areas: community development, emergency services, housing services, and senior services. Mr. Perez provided a brief overview of the services offered by KCCA, including their food and utility assistance, home weatherization and rehabilitation, housing vouchers, and transportation services.

The CNA is done every three years and requires community input. This year, 1,034 community surveys were received, and 62 service providers completed surveys. The CNA also relies on secondary data. After describing the survey process, Mr. Perez presented key

findings. It was found that the median household income in Kent County is not enough to support a family of four. The survival budget for a family of four is \$72,782, but the median income in Kent County and Grand Rapids, respectively, is \$67,789 and \$55,385. Additionally, about one-quarter of County households (61,801) are housing-cost burdened, where they are spending more than 30% of their annual income on housing. Related to employment, there are still significant racial disparities; Kent County has an unemployment rate of 6% but for people who are Black or African American that rate in Kent County is 10% and 14% in the city of Grand Rapids. Other findings included that one-third of respondents identified transportation as a top need; one-third live within the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) or poverty thresholds; 85% of residents do not have adequate broadband access at home; and racial disparities still exist in the uninsured rate, with residents who are Hispanic or Latino more likely to be uninsured than White or Black/African American residents.

Strategic recommendations identified included: reducing inequity; serving more people; bringing partners together; and ensuring all client needs are met. Mr. Perez also covered service-based recommendations that covered housing, income and finances, education and employment, food and nutrition, transportation, safety, and health and healthcare domains.

Mr. Perez said the slide deck and executive summary were shared with Chris Eakin, who can share with council members and partners.

At the end of the presentation, Mr. Perez took questions from council members. Questions asked included:

- *Will the CNA and Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) be combined in the future?*  
It is hoped that the CNA and CHNA can be more coordinated in the future.
- *Where can this report be found?*  
The report can be found on the County's website. Today's presentation and executive summary will be sent out to council members and partners by Chris Eakin.
- *How long was the survey open for responses?*  
Survey responses were collected for two months.
- *The presentation stated that 85% of Kent County residents do not have adequate broadband access. Where did that number come from?*  
That figure was provided by the Johnson Center. This number does not mean that residents do not have internet access; it means that they do not have fast enough internet.

## 5. Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project

Courtney Myers-Keaton, Continuum of Care (CoC) Director for the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness, presented on the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. She began the presentation by providing an overview of the Coalition, including its purpose, structure, funding, and projects.

She then presented on the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, for which the Coalition received \$2.47 million. The two-year federal grant allows for homeless service providers to develop a community plan and pilot innovative approaches to end homelessness for adults 18 to 24 years old. The plan was developed from December 2022 to May 2023 and leaned heavily on input from youth with lived experience. It was approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in June 2023, and projects are slated to begin in Fall

2023. Ms. Myers-Keaton summarized the plan's goals and highlighted the approved projects. The implementation kick-off will be on October 5.

Ms. Myers-Keaton shared the slide deck and community plan with Chris Eakin, who will forward them to council members and partners.

At the end of the presentation, Ms. Myers-Keaton took questions from council members. Questions asked included:

- *These projects have justice-involved youth involved. Is there a liaison between law enforcement/the legal system and these projects?*

Ms. Myers-Keaton invited anyone from law enforcement and/or the legal system to come to a stakeholder engagement session.

- *In what ways has this progressed protected against exploitation and commodification of youth experiences?*

Ms. Myers-Keaton said that members of the Youth Advisory Board are paid \$35 per hour in gift cards. When contacted by the media, the Coalition has a policy of not sharing stories of youth who have experienced homelessness, and when in public they are not identified as being youth who have experienced homelessness unless they self-identify that way.

- *How are we in making progress with the precariously housed?*

Ms. Myers-Keaton said that assisting the precariously housed has been more challenging with the end of pandemic assistance. The Coalition is working closely with Housing Kent and is working on a more coordinated prevention system. Additionally, though United Way has case management funding, there is a need for more financial assistance funding.

## 6. Agency Updates

- Kristin Gietzen: Arbor Circle is looking at doing some cool things, including with the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. She is excited to see what the year ahead holds.
- Mary Mulliet: D.A. Blodgett-St. John's had a successful ribbon cutting in August. There will be a golf outing coming up on September 25.
- Jason Loepp: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan will be offering an Advancing Maternal Health Equity grant opportunity in September. Kent County will be added as an eligible county this year. He will share information about this grant with Chris Eakin, who can then forward this onto council members and partners.
- Bryana Hopkins: Bryana introduced herself as the alternate member for Lynne Ferrell.
- Tracey Fountain: The universal caseload model that was rolled out in February continues. Medicaid redeterminations continue at a rate of about 10,000 per month.
- Maureen Kirkwood: Piggybacking off Tracey's comments, Maureen stated that Health Net of West Michigan has walk-in hours available to help with Medicaid redeterminations.
- Brian Hartl: The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process continues. The community survey goes live next week. He asked that everyone share this within their networks.
- Candace Cowling: Family Futures is partnering with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to provide outreach and navigation services to families who are at-risk of repeated involvement with the Children Protective Services system. This will be starting in the next two weeks.

## 7. **Miscellaneous**

- Jennifer Headley-Norman (First Steps Kent): The Early Childhood Millage Subcommittee of the Board of Commissioners met this morning.
- Karen Lezan (Kent ISD Bright Beginnings): The Empowering Parents conference will be happening on Saturday, September 9. It will consist of an opening session and breakout sessions. There are still seats available, and registration will stay open until Friday. She has flyers available for pick up after this meeting.
- Leah Ortiz (Children's Advocacy Center): Ms. Ortiz introduced herself as the new president and CEO of the Children's Advocacy Center.

## 8. **Adjournment**

Candace Cowling adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m. Next meeting is November 7, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the Kent County Health Department (700 Fuller Ave NE, Grand Rapids).