



Families First Community Advisory Board Meeting

August 16th, 2021

Board Members Present:

- Commissioner Clarence Carter (DHS)
- Grant Minchew: Designee for Commissioner Bob Rolfe (ECD)
- Commissioner Jeff McCord (LWFD)
- Ashleigh McFadden: Designee for Commissioner Penny Schwinn (Education)
- Commissioner Lisa Piercey (TDH)
- Senator Bo Watson
- Senator Raumesh Akbari
- Representative David Hawk
- Dr. Jerry Askew
- Brittany Cleveland
- Rachael Corry
- Dr. Emily House
- Executive Jim Mangubat

Staff Present:

- Trevor Lauri
- Anne Havard
- Dakota Simpson
- Keisha Thaxton
- Lakecia Peterson
- Gary Wilson
- Whitney Page
- Charles Bryson
- Suzanne Carr
- Marcia McShane
- Krisann Hodges
- Clyde Stith

Board Members

Absent:

- Representative Bryan Terry
- Jack Bailey
- LaTerre Pleasant
- Bishop Edward Stephens

***Board Members Not**

Appointed:

- Business representative
- Business representative
- Non-profit representative
- Non-profit representative

**Appointing authority: Speaker of the House of Representatives and Speaker of the Senate*

9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Carter called the meeting to order once it was ascertained that a quorum was present. Commissioner Carter initiated introductions from each member of the group.

9:12 a.m. Presentation (Vision: Growing Capacity to Reduce Dependency)

Commissioner Carter presented information about the current state of the social safety net and outlined his vision for growing capacity to reduce dependency. He noted inefficiencies in the current state and his vision for improving the public safety net so that customers can move out of poverty. He stated that different sectors in Tennessee would be utilized (the "Whole Tennessee Approach") to bring non-traditional entities to the table.

9:33 a.m. TN General Assembly TANF Working Group

Commissioner Carter introduced the legislative members.

Representative Hawk discussed the legislative perspective on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Working Group. He outlined a personal goal/charge for the legislation: every family in Tennessee having two healthy working parents whose children can read by 3rd grade. He expressed that a full inventory of who is doing what, rather than a siloed approach, will assist the group in reaching their goals.

Senator Watson discussed the history of their General Assembly TANF Work Group assembled in 2019, and the work that they have done since during the COVID-19 pandemic. He discussed legislation made by Rep. Hawk and himself to tackle this issue, and how they partnered with non-profits, the Governor's office, and DHS to further investigate the topic and how to reach a resolution. He discussed his work to get a randomized control trial for TANF. He emphasized a goal to have the rest of the country look at our system and desire to replicate it.

Commissioner Carter thanked the legislative group for helping the TANF Opportunity Act to pass the legislative session without opposition.

9:52 a.m. Election of Vice-Chair

Commissioner Carter explained the role of vice-chair. **Commissioner Carter made a motion to elect Dr. Askew as the vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Executive Mangubat and approved through acclamation.**

9:57 a.m. Morning Break

The Board adjourned for a 15-minute break.

10:23 a.m. Presentation (TANF - Overview)

Lakecia Peterson and Keisha Thaxton presented an overview of the TANF program and its four goals. Programs funded by the TANF Block Grant include Families First, Workforce Innovative & Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Work Incentive Payment, 2Gen Programs, and Community Grants. The presentation included a video on the TANF Program titled "Program in Action."

Following the presentation, the Board discussed the work participation rate and Tennessee's status concerning declining caseloads and the resulting impact. The Board continued more discussion on the purposes of TANF, particularly as it relates to those purposes as a foundation of outcome evaluation rather than output evaluation. Social Sciences randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are very different from medical ones, and partners will be very excited to participate in something of this nature.

The Board commended member Rachel Corry for her insightful comment that the current TANF program is

focused on how to keep customers from drowning, but it does not teach customers how to swim. She noted that people need to be taught more than just how to stay afloat.

10:57 a.m. Presentation (TANF Opportunity Act Overview and Roadmap)

Commissioner Carter and Whitney Page, DHS Chief of Staff, presented the TANF Opportunity Act Overview and Roadmap. The presentation included an overview of the TANF annual award and annual reserve obligations.

The Board discussed various items involving the TANF reserve. It was noted that the annual reserve is equal to the amount of one year's worth of the TANF grant. The TANF Opportunity Act has a purpose to set forth a rational spending mechanism so large balances do not accrue.

The average payment for a family of three is \$387. The Board discussed how other supports, such as childcare assistance, depend on having accessible resources. The goal is to keep people in the workforce.

Following the Overview, Ms. Page discussed the Act's new provisions regarding civil penalties and she reviewed the grants specified in the Act, specifically the community grants, the planning grants, and the pilot grants.

Anne Havard gave an overview of the role of the Advisory Board. It will meet monthly until pilots are awarded. Ms. Havard discussed details of the planning grants and pilot program. The Board discussed how the process will reveal where more help might be needed. Communication and outreach will be key. The Board would like the process to reach beyond the usual players to let the public know about these opportunities. The Board discussed possible outreach to religious organizations, civic organizations, and local Health Departments.

Anne Havard explained the 7 pilot programs in the TN Opportunity Pilots program. The DHS Pilot will focus on mitigating the benefits cliff (reducing benefits because they're earning more). These pilots are to be selected by May 1, 2022. Senator Watson discussed an almost Shark Tank-like model for the seven pilots, and that it will be hyper-competitive. He noted that there may be opportunities for even those planning pitches that don't get selected from private funding or other avenues.

Anne Havard explained the Training and TA Partner process. She noted that a hub of shared services will help reduce redundancy. The RFP will be issued in Fall/Winter 2021 with a contract expected to begin Summer 2022. The shared services hub will be the central hub for the randomized controlled trials.

Anne Havard explained the Program Evaluation Partner. After October 1, 2021, the Board must select a research and program evaluation partner. The RFP will be issued in Fall/Winter 2021. Commissioner Carter noted that this will be an academic partner and that the Quality Improvement division of DHS has been working on a statement of work for this partner.

12:00 p.m. Lunch

The Board adjourned for lunch.

1:00 p.m. Research Partner Discussion

Commissioner Carter and Gary Wilson discussed the Research Partner. Commissioner Carter noted that we will have to be much more intentional with our communication to avoid the same old results.

The goal of this process is to deliver a qualified contractor who can measure impact and success. This will be a 3-year contract with the RFP issued in Winter 2021 and the selection in Spring 2022. The start date will be May/June 2022 with a final report by December 31, 2025. The Board discussed preliminary plans for the

evaluation of the research partner and expectations. Reports, dashboards, presentations, and the final report will be brought to the Board as well.

The Board discussed input in the evaluation process. Several questions were posed about how members could serve as part of the evaluation team and how the Board's approval of candidates will work. These items will be addressed at the next meeting.

Commissioner Carter outlined the expected schedule beginning in September for submission of abstracts, award of planning grants, and pilot review and selection process.

1:27 p.m. Planning Grant Discussion

Commissioner Carter and Keisha Thaxton discussed the Planning Grant process.

The legislation provides for up to 50 planning grants. Each of those entities can receive up to \$500,000. These grants can provide services such as technical assistance, visioning, and bring together key stakeholders in communities to grow capacity to reduce dependency. This is in preparation for the TN Opportunity Pilot Program application period. Grantees will have 90 days to provide their proposals. Grantees will be selected from each Grand Division and represent a mix of urban, rural, and suburban populations. These can be a political subdivision of the state, non-profits, development districts, and human resources agencies.

1:35 p.m. Concluding Remarks & Next Steps

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board continued discussion of items related to the procurement process, the grant selections, the research partner, randomized control trials, and other related questions.

Commissioner Carter noted that any grantees not selected can be considered for the community grants.

Commissioner Carter thanked the Board for their time and involvement. He reemphasized that this was an opportunity to be a model to the nation.

1:58 p.m. Adjournment

A motion for adjournment was made by Senator Watson and seconded by Commissioner Piercey.

The motion carried and the Council meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m. The next Advisory Board meeting will take place on September 21st, 2021 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. in Nashville at the Tennessee Tower.