



Georgia Department of Human Services
Aging Services | Child Support Services | Family & Children Services

Muscogee County Division of Family and Children Services Board Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2024 - 1:00 p.m.

Location: 2100 Comer Avenue, Columbus GA 31904

Call to Order

The Muscogee County Georgia Division of Family and Children Services Board's January 2024 meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees/Participants

Board Members in attendance: Dr. Chandler Padgett, Dr. Darlene Small, and Pastor Johnny Flakes

Board Members not in attendance: Mrs. Gwendolyn McIntosh, and Mrs. Jennifer Melvin.

Guest: Onteria Foster with One Main Focus Organization

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services staff in attendance – were Muscogee County Director - Tonika Wadley and the Administrative Assistant - Chris Nunn.

Review/Approval of minutes from last meeting(s) All details of the November 2023 Board meeting were provided to each Board member via email.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

Mrs. Wadley greeted the Board Members and thanked them for their attendance. She began the meeting welcoming Ms. Onteria Foster with One Main Focus program and allowed her to share information regarding the organization. Ms. Foster shared that the program's primary focus is to foster youth transition in and out of the system. They offer anger management classes, character building classes, completing a self-healing journal, and assist Group Homes with their ILP programs, and assist clients in completing their community service requirements. Ms. Foster reported two Group Home's residents served Brookdale Retirement Home for an hour of engagement on MLK, Jr. Day. She reported the kids were exceptional on this outing. Ms. Foster added that the organization assist children coming out of the system with assistance in locating jobs, producing a resume, completing college applications, and locating housing. Currently, this organization only serve Muscogee County's children. Mrs. Wadley will have the Foster Care leadership team to contact Ms. Foster regarding the services they offer. Ms. Foster thanked us for the opportunity to share the details of her program and was excused from the meeting.

Mrs. Wadley again greeted the Board and wished them a Happy New Year, then asked if they had received the Board Report emailed last month. There were no questions regarding the report. The report is one that is done annually, although some of the information may change from year to year. Some changes relates to services and concerns around services. One of the main concerns for our agency is the access to appropriate mental health and substance abuse treatment programs for our youth. While there are programs for adults, there are limited services for youth who are challenged with substance abuse matters. This is a challenge for children in and out of care, Mrs. Wadley shared. She asked the Board to review the report and send an email or call her with any questions or concerns.

Mrs. Wadley reported to the Board of the challenges the Office of Family Independence experienced for several months this past year with the backlog of Food Stamp Renewal applications. This issue was a statewide issue and they're working to resolve the matter as much as possible. The challenge experienced was due to the enormous number of renewal applications versus the limited staff tasked to get them processed, Mrs. Wadley conveyed. There were no questions asked by the Board on the matter.

The next item discussed pertained to Christmas and the Secret Santa Campaign through the state office. We were able to partner with Walmart again this year to provide gifts to our children in care for Christmas. Additionally, we received an abundant amount of donations from various organizations in our community this year. More donations were received this year versus last year by far. We will use the extra gifts for birthday gifts, other special occasions, and for Christmas gifts at the end of this year. The staff is to be commended for ensuring over 400 children in Foster Care were provided gifts this year without any issues or problems.

Mrs. Wadley informed the Board of our plans to share our appreciations again to our staff during the month of April – Staff Appreciation Month. She asked that the Board be on the lookout for details we'll send them, as we will need to request permission to use county funds to carry out our staff appreciation event. She invited the Board to participate in the event of celebrating our hard-working staff, if they were able.

The last item shared by Mrs. Wadley was her being out of the office on FMLA to care for her husband. The Board was very supportive of Mrs. Wadley and even made themselves available to be of help where needed. She asked that during the time of her absence if they needed anything to reach out to Chris Nunn. With no other business to discuss, the meeting concluded at 1:25 p.m.

Next Board meeting will be determined by Mrs. Wadley.

Tonika Wadley

Board County Secretary

Tonika Wadley Director

Muscogee County DFCS

Board Chairperson

Jennifer Melvin

Muscogee County DFCS

