

Advisory Committee for Children's Voluntary Services

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, February 8, 2022

TIME: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: VIRTUAL - Zoom meeting

PRESENT: Angela Wade, Sharon Oberkrieser, Kelly Skifstad, Tracy Gehrke, Staci Thorkildsen, Emily Paschen, Kathy Schumacher, Marci Thiry, Lynn Brittnacher, Wendy Hein

STAFF PRESENT: Mitch Cornils, Elizabeth Wagner, Ciarra Zemke, Liz Riley

Sharon Oberkrieser called the meeting to order at approximately 12:32 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes from December 14, 2021 Meeting:

Sharon Oberkrieser moved for approval of the minutes of the last meeting, seconded by Tracy Gehrke and carried.

2. Presentation – Brain Balance Achievement Center – Lynn Brittnacher:

- "Brain Balance for children is a brain and body wellness program. The program is designed to help your child strengthen and improve his/her brain's functioning -- positively impacting many areas of their life." [Brain Balance Fox Valley, WI | Programs for Struggling Kids \(brainbalancecenters.com\)](https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/)
- Lynn shared "The Developmental Pyramid" with committee members. A child grows in succession developmentally through the pyramid and improvements are seen academically, socially, and behaviorally. The pyramid starting from top to the bottom level is as follows:
 - Synchronization: Behavior, academics, social skills, focus & attention
 - Processing: Reading, following directions, ability to learn
 - Body awareness: Balance, pain tolerance, empathy
 - Sensory motor: Movement, endurance, muscle tone
 - Primitive reflexes: Foundation of movement
- Youth come to Brain Balance with a variety of diagnoses including ADHD, anxiety, and Autism and what is found is there may be processing delays, such as auditory or visual, that impede the brain from functioning at greater capacity. Brain Balance works to help the youth become more aligned with brain and body connection to increase skills in areas that may be under developed. Brain Balance recreates development starting at primitive reflexes, which is the foundation of movement, and continues to support that youth through developmental stages by stimulating the brain in various ways to recreate the neuropathways that should have developed from birth on. When the brain is functioning typically, then behaviors, academics, social skills, and focus/attention become typical.
- Brain Balance can support youth who are non-verbal, those struggling with aspects of cognition, focus/attention, behavior/self-regulation, social skills, physical/motor coordination, obsessive and repetitive thoughts and actions (anxiety, OCD, tics, etc.). Services may not be a fit for those with genetic conditions.

- A diagnosis is not required to receive services as Brain Balance is non-medical and does not accept insurance. A diagnosis may be necessary for certain programs that can fund Brain Balance.
- At the first session, an assessment is completed to gather functional levels/processing speeds and ensure the child is fit for the program. Typically, individuals come to the center three times per week for an hour at a time. The average program length for a child is 12 months of in-center programming. All receive a year of follow up appointments / post assessment.
- Caregivers are asked to attend the center, at times, to review functional changes and also have the opportunity to connect with other caregivers as an informal support option.
- Brain Balance can also support adults with developmental delays or memory and executive functioning changes. Brain Balance has worked with IRIS programs that provide funding for long term care services.
- Brain Balance can be used in conjunction with other therapies or services a youth may be accessing. Families may find that a youth may be better capable of learning skills in therapies as they go through the Brain Balance program. Brain Balance may help reduce the need for medications.
- The program is an interactive, drug-free developmental program in operation for over a decade, over 50,000 families helped, and 85 centers across the country.
- The "Brain Balance Program" involves:
 - Whole-Brain Approach: Activate many regions of the brain through sensory engagement, physical development, and cognitive exercises.
 - Tailored for You: The program is personalized to your needs and development level, building progressively as you advance.
 - 1:1 Performance Coach: Your coach will guide you through your program while teaching you about the brain-body connection.
 - Support: Monthly parent support meetings and progress meetings.
 - Neurotech: Engage in proprietary cognitive training designed to challenge the brain through vision, auditory, and timing activities.
 - For Adults and Kids: The brain can change at any time! Adults and kids alike benefit from the program protocols in this cognitive training program.
- The Brain Balance website offers information on the research behind this program. Harvard Medical School found Brain Balance was found to be as effective as stimulant medication in alleviating ADHD in kids and Journal of Mental Health and Clinical Psychology – Nearly all the children who participated in the program showed up to 50% improvement in mental well-being. Lynn stated that the Brain Balance Program was created based on more than 60 different research studies when building the program about 20 years ago. The approach combines several evidence-based protocols into one integrative, multi-modal program.
- Lynn shared results of the program often lead to:
 - Enhanced cognitive abilities – Attention & focus, memory, comprehension & reasoning
 - Heightened social awareness – Ability to engage with peers
 - Improved executive function – Self-regulation, motivation, organization, decision-making
 - Success in mainstream environments
 - Greater independence, happiness, well-being

3. **Member Sharing – Updates or news to share about your agency or child:**

- **Angela Wade** of TRIO shared she is hiring. A number of children have graduated in the last few months and is interested to see what other options are available for them for support. She is hopeful the committee will continue to talk about new services that become available. Trio is working with the

Oshkosh Area School District to support youth transitioning from ABA services to school. Availability for services will likely increase in summer.

- **Kelly Skifstad** of the Oshkosh Area School District shared some after school programs are in operation and this is dependent on staff availability but the hope is to resume services as more staff are available.
- **Tracy Gehrke** of Public Health stated she is the chair for the back-to-school fair for OASD. The committee for the fair meets at the end of the month to discuss what the upcoming fair will entail. Last year, the fair was held over three days and served 850 children. This year, Winneconne School has decided to do their own program and Neenah and Menasha have their event. Tracy also reported there will be a vaccine coming soon for ages six months through four years, likely in the form of a three-dose series.
- **Mitch Cornils**, Child Welfare Supervisor, stated they continue to look for staff.
- **Staci Thorkildsen** of UW-Oshkosh Headstart reported they will soon ready to accept applications for next school year.
- **Emily Paschen** of NOVA also reported hiring new employees, including a BCBA. Services are primarily center-based.
- **Marci Thiry** of Menasha Joint School District stated that 4K and 5K registration opened February 1st. The virtual school option for kindergarten through 7th grade will continue for families not ready to come back to in-school classes.
- **Kathy Schumacher** from Music Therapy services had no updates to report, however, she enjoyed the Brain Balance presentation. She reported to have done some trainings on primitive reflexes which she has been successfully utilizing over the last year.
- **Ciarra Zemke** of Lutheran Social Services introduced herself. She graduated from UW-Oshkosh in December with a degree in Human Services leadership. She is excited to get started as a service coordinator for the Winnebago County area.
- **Elizabeth Wagner** shared the following handouts:
 - Leaven – "Your Future Awaits" – For those struggling financially, Leaven is able to help with rent, utilities, transportation, childcare, or other expenses. For more information, contact Cheryl at Leaven (920) 738-9635, Option 3 or casework@leavenfoxcities.org.
 - Love the Mess – Love the Mess Support Group is hosting a fun-filled, judgement free outing for caregivers of children with disabilities/mental health struggles on Saturday, 02/26/2022 from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM, Hooper Community Center, 36 Broad Street, Oshkosh. Indoor games, hot chocolate, crafting, take home sensory snow, a movie, and more.
 - Habitat for Humanity – Almost Family offers personalized, individual goal setting for families interested in becoming future homeowners including navigating credit history to determine the next steps needed to pay off debt while increasing credit scores. Contact is Nicole Kordus at 920-967-8915 or NicoleK@foxcireshabitat.org.
 - Forward Service Corporation Service – Low income individuals can receive a free lifeline phone with unlimited data, talk, and text. Tablets are also available for \$20. The service is offered through Entouch Wireless. ID is required to register. Event is being held on Thursday, 02/24/2022 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at the Service Forward Corporation, 2201 Oregon Street, Oshkosh. For more information, contact Holly at 920-385-8924.
 - Family Voices of Wisconsin – Advocacy for Change is Family Voices of Wisconsin's annual policy conference for parents and caregivers of special needs children, ages 21 and under is being held virtually on 03/23/2022 and 03/24/2022 from 9:00 – 12:00. The conference will increase advocacy skills and connect attendees to state legislators. For more information, contact Lynn at lynn@fvofwi.org or <https://familyvoiceswi.org/advocacy-for-change/>.

4. Children's COP and CLTS Program Updates

- Service and Program Updates:

- **Elizabeth Wagner** stated that interviews are still being conducted under the contract with Lutheran Social Services for additional service coordinators. Referrals have increased since the start of this year. The division is utilizing interns to assist with outreach for the ADRC, possibly for children's programs, as well as supporting staff working with families.
- Elizabeth reported the Children's Long-Term Support program is undergoing a multitude of changes in 2022. The CLTS program has a five-year renewal cycle with a new cycle starting January 2022 following approval from the federal government. Some changes may be simple while others can be complex relating to services and rates. The state is providing informational sessions to counties and providers to learn about the changes. The state has been listening to feedback from families on wanting to self-direct services and providing support to families experiencing service gaps. Some of the focus areas are:
 - Discovery and career planning
 - Grief and bereavement services (for the family if a child in CLTS passes away)
 - A new health and wellness code (used for family inclusion, socialization, and/or memberships in the community)
 - Safety planning (broadens the ability to support some behaviors at home)
- The State will require providers to re-register on the CLTS provider registry if planning to provide any new services. At this point, the State continues to work on updating the CLTS registry with the new codes, so provider updates will take place once the State has completed this. The requirement for the new services is that providers need to bill WPS, the third-party payor for CLTS.
- Operations during COVID for CLTS:
 - No changes in operation
- Waitlist Updates:
 - The Family Support Team received 205 referrals in 2021 compared to 144 the previous year. This equates to an additional 1.5 position.
 - Each Service Coordinator currently serves approximately 48 youth while 40 is the goal. Considering the increase in referrals, Winnebago County will continue to add positions, when possible, with Lutheran Social Services in order to stay in pace, to the extent possible, with referrals received.
 - So far in 2022, a few cases closed with the majority being case transfers as the family moved to another county. One child transferred to adult services, one moved out of state and another was adopted and no longer needing CLTS services.

5. Birth-to-Three:

- Operations during COVID-19:
 - **Wendy Hein** reported that referrals have increased and are higher than pre-COVID. In 2019, there were 1039 referrals for the year. By 2021, referrals increased to 1130. In the month of January 278 children were enrolled. Staffing limitations continue with two full-time positions for speech and language pathologists open and 1½ positions open for early childhood special education teachers. She is working with neighboring counties and organizations to share staff when possible. A new early childhood special education teacher was hired, Erica Roberts, who has a master's degree in special education and a bachelor's in early elementary education.
 - Wendy reported work with Theda Care particularly around developmental screenings and incorporating the Ages and States Questionnaire results into their Epic system to automatically send referrals to the Birth to Three Program, when appropriate. This week and next week there are trainings with Theda Care Clinics in Neenah and Oshkosh. This has been in process for several years, so it is good to see this coming to fruition.
 - Wendy welcomed input from the group on particular information they would be interested in learning regarding her program.

6. **CCS/CST Youth Services:**

Operations during COVID-19:

- **Elizabeth Wagner** stated that **Cristie Siebenaller** of Winnebago County Behavioral Health had shared a written update that staff are continuing to meet in-person with clients in-home, at school, and in the Community.
- The therapy position has finally been filled and the intensive teams are now fully staffed. Two therapist positions remain open and applications are still being accepted.
- Due to lack of staff at this time, there is about a two to four month waiting period to access CCS or CST services.
- Youth 14 or older completed the yearly services satisfaction required by the State for CCS. From the data shared, clients seemed satisfied with the mental health services being received from the County.
- In the near future, a CCS Certified AODA clinician will be added to the team to meet the needs of clients with substance use concerns including children's services.

7. **2021 Focus Areas and Committee Role – Autism-related Service Gaps:**

- **Elizabeth Wagner** stated that in previous meetings, the Committee discussed gaps in services including children who have graduated from ABA and need further skill development or supports. What this support looks like depends on each youth and family. In some cases, ABA may be the identified need but insurance limits what can be offered and CLTS is unable to fund ABA services. Some of the new CLTS services may, however, offer increased access to supports or services that can have a positive impact on a youth's functioning. It was suggested to create a subcommittee to focus on this topic and to invite providers, families and anyone with an interest.
- **Angela Wade** shared that insurance is putting pressure on ABA providers when providing focused therapy services for older youth and have added increased requirements to approve renewals after a certain period of time. Providers face difficulty with the time intensive process of receiving approval from insurance companies for services. Angela is interested to learn about other service options for youth to access when ABA is no longer covered, such as Innovative Growth (exercise therapy newly contracting with CLTS) and Brain Balance, which could be beneficial as many cannot access ABA because some providers do not accept children over the age of 6 or 7. The providers who do accept older children have lengthy waitlists. Angela stated she would love to hear if there are other providers services beyond the scope of ABA as she is putting together a list of local resources in Oshkosh for her families.
- Elizabeth will email those individuals who show interest in joining this subcommittee to schedule the first subcommittee meeting on this topic in March 2022.

8. **2022 Meeting Dates:** The upcoming 2022 meetings of the Advisory Committee for Children's Voluntary Services have been scheduled at 12:30 PM for the following dates: **May 10, September 13, December 13.**

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:05 PM.
Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Wagner