



**COMMUNITY PARTNER and AD HOC  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
Thursday, December 11, 2014, 11 a.m.  
15506 County Line Road, Suite 103  
Spring Hill, FL 34610**

**Committee Members Present: Joe Mascaro, Chair; Dr. Amy Anderson, Marsha Carpenter, Dr. Steve Kanakis**

**Coalition Staff Present: Jak Jakubauskas, Betsy Kier, Kelli Torre**

**Others Present: Matt Baroni, DCF-Hernando; Rebecca Wilkinson-Shields, CPI-Pasco Sheriff's Office**

**I. Welcome and Introductions – Mr. Joe Mascaro, Chair**

Mr. Mascaro welcomed attendees and requested introductions be made.

**II. Review, Eligibility Priorities**

Mr. Mascaro gave a brief history of the increased enrollments from Protective Services and TANF clients that were brought to the attention of Coalition's Board members in July and August. An Ad Hoc Committee was created to discuss these increased enrollments with the partnering agencies that provided these referrals.

Ms. Kier explained that HB 7165 brought changes in eligibility referrals such as "courtesy referrals" are no longer being accepted. She explained that some of the partnering agencies may not realize how the changes in HB 7165 have impacted the Coalition's services. Ms. Kier distributed the (attached) School Readiness Services and Wait List Priority Policy and explained these are the priority levels as required by Florida's Office of Early Learning and are the current priorities for School Readiness referrals.

**III. Coalition's Enrollment History**

Mr. Mascaro explained the Coalition's wait list contained over 1,000 children when these preliminary discussions began and the growing number of Protective Services referrals were exceptionally high during May, June and July. Ms. Kier stated that during the summer months and the holiday season there seems to be a pattern of higher referrals for at-risk children.

Ms. Kier explained that referrals must have an open case and that "Parent Needs Assistance" referrals without an open case, are not allowable, as confirmed by DCF's Tallahassee office. Also, some clients, if terminated for non-compliance, have self-reported in the past to obtain another referral.

#### **IV. Review, Eligibility Procedures**

At this time, Ms. Kier distributed the (attached) Referral Requirements – General document.

Dr. Kanakis explained, as a psychologist, during the three months of May, June and July, he was inundated with dependency court cases. Mr. Baroni explained there has not been an increase in Hernando cases and Ms. Wilkinson-Shields inquired if a historical increase has been noted annually or for just this year. Ms. Kier briefly explained the Coalition’s termination policy and how the influx of at-risk clients affected the wait list. Ms. Wilkinson-Shields indicated she would reach out to her counterparts at Eckerd and YFA, as they also refer clients, to ensure the referring process is being done correctly.

Ms. Kier stated that Coalition staff members are willing to speak at community agency staff meetings directly to the staff who are writing the referrals.

A brief discussion followed on the 60 day period for referrals and how it affects clients under protective services. Ms. Torre explained that clients are notified within ten (10) days of their referral expiration and if a new referral is written before the case is closed, services will be extended for another 60 days.

Ms. Wilkinson-Shields requested to see a breakdown of Protective Investigation cases vs. case management cases and explained that the Pasco Sheriff’s office is not referring as many clients as the Safe at Home program who also refers parents needing assistance.

Ms. Kier explained the Coalition also has a resource and referral specialist at the Coalition’s New Port Richey facility who can work with the sheriff’s office. The Coalition also works closely with CareerSource and utilizes United Way’s 211.

A brief discussion followed on domestic violence and homeless referrals.

#### **V. General Discussion**

Ms. Wilkinson-Shields explained the Alliance of Community Partners meets quarterly and includes DCF, Eckerd, YFA and others. She will have the contact person send information to Ms. Kier. Mr. Baroni stated such a meeting is also held in Brooksville and will also have information sent.

Another discussion followed on housing a resource and referral specialist within the Pasco sheriff’s office as the Pinellas sheriff’s office has an individual on-site primarily for foster care placements.

Mr. Mascaro stated he would like to continue this discussion for at least one more meeting to further establish open communication. The next meeting will be held at the Coalition on Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 11 am.

Ms. Kier will provide several statistical reports for the next meeting as well as historical data on the numbers of referrals for at-risk children over the last several years.

Mr. Mascaro adjourned this meeting at 11:45 a.m. with no further discussion.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ramute "Jak" Jakubauskas  
Administrative Assistant