

## NCACDSS

### ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

JANUARY 13, 2021

Brenda Jackson, Tri-Chair inquired if there were any questions regarding the minutes, since there were no concerns the minutes were approved. Sharnese sent the minutes to all counties.

In 2019 & 2020, we saw little traction in the General Assembly, Rep. Dobson was a supporter of human services but no longer serves in the legislature.

Sharnese Ransome, NCACDSS Executive Director reported the Executive Committee was exploring a different approach for the next two years as it relates to lobbying services by considering a consulting firm that knows our business. A consulting firm who can develop advocacy practices across specifics and targeted priorities. Many organizations are moving towards this approach rather than having a lobbyist.

Over the past year, champion in the General Assembly for social services programs has dwindled and COVID-19 has drastically change direct contact with legislators. The virtual atmosphere has reduced the need to have physical presence and most advocacy efforts are done electronically. The current contractor for lobbying services has faced challenges in the last session related to reduced staffing capacity including they no longer have a lobbyist covering federal legislation. This has required in-depth involvement by the Association staff as it related to bill and committee tracking and monitoring of legislative activities. The average cost of a paid lobbyist can range in cost from \$90,000-\$125,000.

Ask Chairs for Advocacy and leadership as we look at consulting firms and building our scope of work which will be a narrow focus on specific priorities that have the great opportunity to move the needle. The focus will be around APS, Child Welfare, Family First, and Medicaid Transformation. We will also focus on items that will serve our families well and are achievable. The Executive Committee has engaged the Advocacy Committee leadership in the consideration of this approach.

Brenda asked while Directors consider questions for Sharnese, to look at the National Association of County Human Services Administration (NACHSA) and the fact that we are members of that association and how we will be working with Tom Joseph, the Executive Director and federal/congressional lobbyist. NCACDSS has four members on the NACHSA Board, including Brenda and Sharnese along with Glenn Osborne from Wilson County and Antonia Petroza from Wake County. Brenda is also an Officer on the Executive Board. NACHSA is also an affiliate member of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and partner on all advocacy issues related to federal legislation. We will continue to use NACHSA/NACo so we won't lose the federal advocacy efforts that we have through our membership with those national association.

In addition to this, think about how you use your Boards of Social Services and appreciate the partnership with NC Association of County Boards of Social Services is on the phone. Sharnese will have a meeting with County Commissioner's Association advocacy staff to see how we join efforts and how to utilize their lobbying efforts to make sure we are included. We need to make sure we are on the same team and that we are keeping each other informed. The Committee Leads discussed the importance of stakeholder collaborations especially those with similar legislative priorities or priorities where we don't need to take the lead but can support stakeholder organizations that are taking the lead on matters that align with our priorities or matters the Association supports.

Sharnese will be looking at resources that she can register for that will allow her to keep up with committees. She also sent the links for the various House and Senate pages. She asked everyone to please review so you can listen to the various Chamber, Senate and House sessions and meeting. It is important to know who your representatives are and they know you.

Suggested to send a welcome letter to Senators who will start more in person sessions, currently they are doing virtual meetings, find out their interest and familiarize them with your agency. Invite

them to visit your agency when they are in town. Reach out to them and find out what their interest is and familiarize them with your agency.

The Association relies on Directors to do the grassroots advocacy work and the critical work starts at the local level. Bookmark the links and sign up for the calendar's pages for the various legislative committees, key ones like Appropriation, so you know when they are meeting regarding a bill that is being presented and that is important to us. Sharnese opened the floor for attendees to ask questions in the chat box.

Brenda thanked Sharnese for all the good information and her hard work. She also stated advocacy starts at the grass roots level and that is the county level. It's important to keep the links and register for the information which is easy to get to. Please reach out to your legislators in this COVID environment even if it's though virtual, emails. There were no questions in the chat box, we can come back if there are questions.

Brenda said she was excited to have our guest to discuss APS and Guardianship joint strategies to see how we can partner and support each other. Brenda thanked Heather Burkhardt with the NC Coalition of Aging, she sent us a copy of their 2021 legislative agenda and goals and how we can partner.

Joyce Massey Smith and Karey Perez with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services they will discuss some of their legislative agenda and strategies, and annual survey that went out.

Brenda thanked the Adult Services committee for the road map. Brenda informed Heather, Joyce and Karey on the NCACDSS legislator priorities and strategies.

We started the process last month and already have as the agenda and priority items was adequate funding for local social services for APS and greater protection by evaluating state laws and improving behavior health services. We kept this legislative priority on our agenda but change the wording because it was beginning to be stale and hope the current timing may be good due the impact of COVID-19, the issue may get some traction. The impact on our vulnerable adults especially those in nursing home and assisted livings if attached to COVID, so we added some language around the impact of COVID. We need some updated data regarding our expenditure, list other priorities and asked them to support the road map. The five key areas we are asking to strengthen direct practice, which involves supporting staff regarding training, staffing criteria, caseloads and workloads similar to what child welfare has. Highlighted the challenges we have regarding disinterested public guardianship. We are working on our strategies regarding communication with our stakeholders, building the county infrastructure, the court systems, systematic factors around behavior. Members need to vote, and we are in the process of presenting our priority to our members. Our priority is having a general statement for the road map and members having to vote, we presented a draft to all members to review tomorrow.

Sharnese:

Our language may not be legislative priority, but suggested the language includes services for the support of children and families. If we are going in the direction, I think we are going it would be advocating with the Department, it will be the County Commissioners who are also the funding source. Brenda stated there is a work session to talk about the items on the legislative priority other than adult protective services and guardianship and that certainly something we need to move forward and talk about. Brenda thanked Sharnese for her suggestion.

Brenda reviewed Heather's priorities and strategies and said they looked great.

Heather Burkhardt:

Discussed the membership association that includes over 115 organization and individual advocates and similar to the NCACDSS we establish everywhere our priorities and legislative committee. Last year the APS legislative priority and this year it was submitted by several organizations. We want to keep this relevant and they focused on APS alone creating investment of state support and taking

the burden off counties who are making the biggest investment and Social Services Block Grant. This year is different because of COVID-19 and struggled with the relevancy and underfunded service structure already and bringing into light COVID.

Even though there is a legislative agenda, doesn't prevent us on focusing on other relevant issues, If the NC Association needs support to reach out to the counties there are a lot of things to get done. The agenda is separated into two areas, one that is critical, and the other is the ongoing needs and that's where APS falls, took into consideration the road map and the survey.

Other legislation agendas include:

- Transportation funding
- Cross cutting over multiple funds

Brenda:

We can support you and your organization, have you looked at legislation strategies to and consultation role. What are your strategies?

Heather:

Right now, I am the regular lobbyist for the coalition is to help cultivate championship in General Assembly. We depend also on our memberships to assist us. In March and April, we will have a legislative Day and coalition partnering with other agencies to focus on aging in the environment.

Virtual legislative Day, not sure how it will look, but we need to find other ways for.

Sharnese:

Asked about the coalition and legislation day and If we could join Heather in this virtual legislative day, it would help us with our advocacy work.

Brenda responded that she agreed and stated when we had it on our own there was not a lot of participation.

Heather:

My personal hope is with just the roll out of the vaccine these past weeks and focusing on age 65 and older would get the attention in the General Assembly. Looking at the sheer numbers of older adults, the challenges and the barriers of getting the vaccine and lining up early in some counties; hopefully, challenges won't be forgotten when the assembly starts.

Brenda:

Thank you Heather and we look forward to continued communication. Brenda offered the association services to help keep lines of communication open.

Joyce Massey-Smith & Karey Perez:

Joyce

We are in the middle of developing the budget. Today focuses on work with the CSF envisioning sessions. Hopefully, a huge launch is coming together and APS. Focus on everyone coming to gather at envisioning sessions. Tarheels, all stakeholders.

There is a lot of support amongst stakeholders and county agencies. Coming together and sending legislative priorities, a copy of the priority if the letters once it's compiled, Karey's team did a good with the survey. Karey sent a report to everyone and there was a decrease in the summer but picked up.

They hired a replacement for Mary Edwards, Rebecca Freeman is the legislative contact and a good resource to NCACDSS.

One thing that has hampered us is the lack of designated funding stream at the federal and support at state level. How do we get the state to have a role financially when county is responsible for adult safety?

The way the General Statute is written, gives the responsibility to the county regarding APS. How to shift focus to state responsibility. Good to hear about relationships with Senator Burr. The last stimulus package 50 million to Elder Abuse. We need to think about strategies and investments on strategies.

We have to approach different; we say nationally that APS is 20 years behind CPS.

Karey was asked about the survey trends and highlights.

Karey:

We are developing a report to highlight trends to develop an app to talk to different advocacy groups and collect stories and real data, but putting data behind stories a lot easier for individual to give money. Real stories, real data, want to package data that will be helpful to get funding for DSS agencies.

Brenda:

We will be very dependent on data and this will help with talking points and moving n priorities forward. We have struggle to promote how the state handles APS.

Jan: Attempted to collect stories, Angela Ellis can connect with Ms. Karey to discuss stories.

Brenda:

Based on our last month meeting, we had a small meeting on Economic and Adult tri- chairs team. Emailed on 1-12-21 to capture priorities. Try to promote state funding for adult Home Specialist.

Need to update survey data. Based on conversation with Heather and Joyce, other talking points to add or use of the information they provided.

Brenda opened the floor to feedback:

Sharnese said this was something important to think about, we will need to be careful and strategic as wo what is attainable.

Brenda stated there was a lot of great stuff on the agenda; we can support others that can be helped.

#- Combine bullets instead of having them spread out, because it can be seen repetitive; audit finding and charge back

#- we had the item on the agenda just changed it to match the agenda

#-Stayed alone items, as we talk about child welfare, Family First, we will talk about the use of money for that as well, so we don't need a stand-alone item.

The number 3 bullet didn't change

#- 4 deleted, but since the meeting issue with grater need based on the letter from the secretary reasons relative lack of needs that would capture this and disinterested guardians.

We want to present to Executive Board tomorrow. No one had concerns they could not support. Not a lot with federal legislation because of time.

Minutes submitted by:

Christine Dowdell