

**Richland County Youth and Family Council Meeting**  
**January 9, 2025**  
**1:30 p.m.**  
**Richland County Children Services/Microsoft TEAMS**

**The following members were:**

**Present:** Kevin Kimmel, Lisa Benson, Michele Giess, Tara Lautzenhiser, Kevin VanMeter, Lori Bedson, Dan Varn, Darrell Banks

**Absent:** Sherry Branham-Fonner, Megan Wheeler, Hannah Crouch, Jodie Perry, Wendy Thompson, Tiffany Ellenberger, Stan Jefferson

**Administrative Staff Present:** Toby Borders, Michelle Miller

**Present via Microsoft TEAMS:** Joe Devany, Stevanie Brown, Jenette Smith, Jessica Caughlin, Sherry Gibson, Hannah Delong, Kaye Clark, Jean Taddie

**Guests:** Rico Woods, Anne Vermillion, Allison Ross, Katie Gatten, Aurelio Diaz, Alissa Arms, Whitney Lindsay, Julie Litt, Sharonda Wilson, Tracy Franko, Kathy Goodwin, Miles Parsons, Jackie Williams

**1. Call to Order & Introductions**

President Dan Varn called the meeting to order at 1:43 PM and began introductions. A quorum was established with 6 voting members in attendance.

**2. Approval of December 5th, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting (December 5, 2024) was made by Kevin K. and seconded by Michele. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

**3. Treasurer's Report**

Toby reviewed the financial report with Council members. Toby briefly reviewed the budget sheet (first page of the report) with the members and called their attention to the second page which includes the detailed transactions. Toby informed members the staff expenses for the period were higher since there were three pay periods during the report period. Additionally, Toby advised members the expenses for the Strong Families/Safe Communities grant were higher due to an effort to clear expenses through the end of the year. The next financial report will include expenditures that may not have been received or processed before the Richland County Auditor's office suspended processing payments so the office could close out the year.

Kevin K. made a motion to approve the financial report. Darrell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

**4. Old Business**

**A) Director's Report**

**1) Youth Services RFP**

Michelle informed members that Finance Committee reviewed and approved a Request for Proposals for Youth Services to be released on February 3, 2025. Target services emphasized within the Request for Proposals includes, literacy achievement (non-school hours); newborn/infant health and wellness; suicide prevention; youth violence prevention; youth behavioral health and addiction; youth and family health and well-being; transportation; and youth homelessness.

**2) Communication Boards**

Michelle informed members the Council has purchased and will distribute communication boards to younger youth, especially youth involved in Early Intervention. Communication boards will be distributed to youth/families only through an agency referral. The service will be augmented by speech therapy services provided by Richland Newhope (Julie Litt) when appropriate.

### **3) Task Timer Kits**

Council is making Task Timer Kits available to youth to help youth learn to better manage their time. The kits are available to youth through an agency referral only.

### **4) Kindergarten Readiness Kits – Summer Bridge Activities**

Council is making Kindergarten Readiness Kits available to families preparing a child to enter Kindergarten. Michelle will work with the schools to identify up to 150 children who will be entering Kindergarten in the 2025-2026 school year.

### **5) R.I.S.E.**

Council kicked off the new year with the first R.I.S.E event of 2025 on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Youth and Family Council hosted the event at Richland County Job and Family Services. There were 32 community representatives in attendance at the event.

## **5. New Business**

### **A) Administrative Agent**

Michelle informed members only Richland County Job and Family Services consented to provide administrative duties for the Council during the 2026 state fiscal year. Michele made a motion to have Richland County Job and Family Services continue to provide the duties of the administrative agent for the Council. Kevin seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote. Lori and Darrell abstained from the vote.

### **B) Shared Plan**

Michelle provided members with a hand-out outlining the updates she will provide for the Shared Plan that will be submitted to the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) on January 15, 2025. Michelle stated DCY is requesting updates/reviews of the plan three times per year. Kevin K. made the motion to approve the updates to be submitted to DCY. Lori seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

## **6. Council Reports**

### **A) Early Intervention FFY23/SFY24 Annual Performance**

Julie provided an update of the county's Early Intervention program through December 2024 and annual performance. The Early Intervention program exceeded the state target rates for compliance and performance for all indicators except "Parents Know Their Rights". The program has received eight lead referrals this year which is consistent with the referrals made in 2023 and 2024 (8 and 7, respectively).

## **7. Updates/Announcements**

Tara (Richland County Children Services) informed members the agency is working with local hospitals for accreditation of CAC interviews and that the space for the interviews is almost complete.

Travis (Village Network) informed members Village Network is recruiting foster parents and is interested in forming relationships with community partners.

Kevin (Mid-Ohio Educational Service Center) stated the Student Speech and Language Pathology Program is up and running and will employ 25 students to make them aware of the role/function of the Speech

Pathologist in the school in an effort to “home grow” Speech Pathologists for the area. According to Kevin, Mid-Ohio Educational Service Center received a grant from the Richland County Foundation for the program. Students will receive an “A” permit to work in the school district through the next school year (senior year) and will continue to be employed in this role as they complete their degree programs.

Allison Ross(Catalyst Life Services) stated Catalyst will host the 46<sup>th</sup> annual All-Star Game in March. The game involves area senior high school basketball players. Additionally, she informed members Catalyst is facilitating a “Signs of Suicide” program at Madison Comprehensive High School.

Miles (Wayfinders) stated Wayfinders has received 70% of the funds needed for the new location construction through its Capital Campaign. According to Miles, construction should begin during the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2025, with an expected opening date of the facility in 2026. The facility will be located beside the old People’s Hospital which now houses the Sheriff’s Department.

Aurelio (NECIC) reminded members RCT is gathering information from transit riders to help the RCT Board make decisions about transportation for the county. Aurelio stressed, although there were fewer homicides in the county in 2024, the community needs to plan activities for youth, especially during the summer months. According to Aurelio, a Coalition has been formed to educate youth about abuse of drugs and alcohol and preventive measures; however, there needs to be a younger presence participating in the Coalition. The Domestic Violence Shelter is hosting an “Expressions” event to enable individuals to use art and poetry to tell their stories. The art exhibition, Clean Slate, is scheduled on February 22, 2025; youth are encouraged to participate.

Michele (Board of DD) stated construction of Sterkel Park is almost complete. The park will open when other parks around the city open, with a ribbon cutting ceremony in March, possibly.

Katie (Mansfield/Richland Public Library) stated Winter programming started this week. She added, the Library is already starting to plan its summer activities.

Brian (Catholic Charities) stated Catholic Charities is taking applications for the medical bills/prescription program. Catholic Charities continues to partner with Richland County Job and Family Services to provide employment related services and various agencies to address homeless issues.

Darrell (Richland County BOC) informed members the Board has finalized a \$46 million budget for the county for this year. Darrell added construction has started on nine new bathrooms, hallways and the new Land Bank office at the Courthouse.

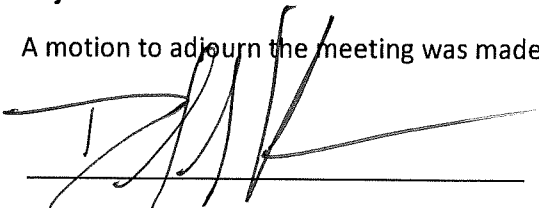
Dan (United Way) stated United Way is beginning strategic planning for the next three years. He would welcome assessments completed by other agencies within the past few years.

Stevanie Brown (Buckeye Community Schools) stated Buckeye Community Schools is accepting donations of clothing for high school students. Stevanie stated this is needed since The New Store doesn’t provide clothing to older students.

Joe (Head Start) informed members Head Start is fully staffed at this time and would have room to expand based on current federal funding.

**Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Darrell and seconded by Kevin.



Dan Varn, Council President



Michelle Miller, Executive Director