

Morris County Advisory Committee on Women
July 20, 2021, 2021, 5:30pm to 7:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Kasey Errico, Pam Bennett-Santorio, Eileen Specchio, Karen O'Keeffe, Joann Bjornson, Donna Boyce, Sydney Ugalde, Xiomara Guevara

Guest: Rebecca Sherrod-Capozzi, Associate Director, Child & Family Resources, Inc.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. O'Keeffe called the meeting to order at 5:34pm and welcomed attendees.

2. Review of April Meeting Minutes: The Committee reviewed the June 15, 2021 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Bjornson, seconded by Ms. Specchio.

3. Presentation by Rebecca Sherrod-Capozzi, Associate Director, Child & Family Resources, Inc. on the impact of Child Care per the County Needs Assessment

Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi began her presentation with a view from a national level. For women in the workforce across the country, roughly half of all essential workers are women (about 27 million). During the Pandemic, 63% of the 27 million women had difficulty securing child care.

It is speculated that across the United States, 500,000 child care slots may be lost due to permanent closures of child care centers, reducing the supply. There has been a 20% loss nationwide of child care staff. In Morris County, there are 256 child care centers and 6% have closed since January 2021. Child care centers are now open, however there are waiting lists as there is not enough staff/teachers to fill vacancies. In Morris County, 80% of the child care assistance applications we have received are single women, mostly minorities. Out of that 80%, only 6% are over income for the program. That speaks volumes to women in the workforce as the income threshold for a family size of two is \$34,840.00 (as of 7/2021). That means that most of our applicants, who are single women, do not have an income over \$34,000.00.

Regarding the United in Care initiative, United Way is partnering with child care centers across northern, central, and southern New Jersey, trying to increase capacity. Child and Family Resources (CFR) and all the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies in New Jersey, inspect, and regulate child family care providers. 100% of our family child care providers in Morris County are women. They are small business owners who provide high-quality child care within their homes, while sustaining a small wholesome environment. They are trained in CPR and First Aid, and complete 20 hours of training in professional development annually. They also have to attend an orientation on how to become a child care provider. Providers will need to go through an extensive background check, an announced, and two unannounced monitoring's each year. Observations are also conducted, and providers are given technical assistance if needed.

Increasing the number of family child care providers will not only increase access to affordable childcare for parents but also increase the women entrepreneurs in Morris County. FCC providers are one of the only childcare options that have odd hour child care for working parents.

Links for the PBS News Hour week long child care segment:

- The first segment is: The market controls child care costs in the U.S. Can that be changed? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pidv-z95cdQ>
- The second segment is: Combining job training, child care could be 'magic road' to single moms' economic security <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLj65iekG1M>

- The third segment is: Parents in Shickley, Nebraska desperately needed child care. Public schools stepped up <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDUVPX8xsKI>
- The fourth segment is: Could the military child care system be a model for the nation? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnTuu4U1Hbc>
- The fifth segment is: Can Americans resolve partisan divides to create a national child care system? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BytcOmSnuRk>

Q and A

Ms. O’Keeffe asked about lack of staffing. Is this an issue due to low pay? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that in Morris County, this is the issue her agency is hearing. However, staff that have children receive a discount for their children attend the child care centers where they work, reducing open slots.

Ms. Boyce stated that child care centers are small business owners. Are these businesswomen eligible for any State small business COVID relief assistance? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that her agency helped providers with applications for the NJ Economic Development Small Business grants. Her agency did receive grants through CARES funding, and provided PPE and lunch items to providers.

Ms. Ugalde asked that other than the teacher, do staff from child care centers have a college education other than the 20 hours of training in professional development. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that they could, once all the background checks are completed satisfactorily.

Ms. Specchio asked that could the lack of child care be due to fear of spreading COVID? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that yes, it was a large part of the issue.

Ms. Boyce asked about reimbursement distinction between a formal center and a home based center. What is the rate differential in Morris County? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that for example, a licensed child care center for an infant would be \$1,024.25 per month. For a home based child care provider, \$670.28, which is about a \$400.00 difference between a licensed center and home based center.

Ms. Errico stated that there are people who are providing child care in their homes who aren’t getting licensed. Are there barriers that would prevent someone from going through the process of getting on your list? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that in New Jersey, you don’t have to be a registered child care provider, so it’s not regulated here, and there are barriers. In January 2021, CFR had to insure that everyone that lived in the household and the child care provider themselves, had to get background checks, out of state checks, and carry checks. If there are pets in the home, we have to have a record. CFR staff goes into the home for inspections, (attics, basements, outside, etc.). Provider’s need a medical check-up and provide documentation from their physician stating that they are able to care for children on their own. Providers are also required to have a substitute in case of an emergency. For renewals, which occur every three years, providers have to submit all this information again. The documentation that is required can be overwhelming, resulting in a barrier.

Ms. O’Keeffe stated that clearly the most urgent need is the lack of staff. Once this is addressed, where do you see this going? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that there are a lot of waiting lists, because of the staff shortage. With preschool expansion coming to Morris County, there will be a lot of space for preschoolers. We definitely need to increase the capacity for infants and toddlers in Morris County. When you have a preschool daycare, it’s difficult for a child care center to function or to make a profit with just caring for infants and toddlers, because it’s so expensive. They can only have four children for one teacher. If those four children pay \$1,500 per month, you have \$6,000, and have to pay the teachers, cleaning supplies, the cost of the facility, etc. Definitely increasing the infant and toddler capacity once things open back up and fully staffed it will help with the capacity issue in Morris County.

Ms. Bjornson stated that a lot of mothers had to take time off, quit their jobs, or were unemployed during COVID because of child care needs. With schools opening back up, and dealing with the Delta variant in September, are you aware of any working mom’s having return to work issues? Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded yes. Currently they cannot be eligible for their program until they have a letter from their employer stating they are going back to their job, and work the hours so

they would be eligible for child care. So most likely they are having trouble with the transition of staying home or going back to work, and then interviewing, and then getting the employment letter so they can start child care the day they go back. There definitely is an issue.

Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi stated the CFR did provide emergency child care during the pandemic. In addition to assisting their current clients with emergency child care, CFR helped an extra 10,000 families just with the emergency health care system. As long as you were an essential worker, you got emergency child care.

Emergency child care is no longer available. To date CFR numbers are down. Monthly they used to serve 2,500 families, now their case load is about 1,200 families.

Ms. O'Keefe asked what is currently an urgent need besides staffing. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi responded that CFR applied for and received COVID Relief funding in Morris County. She is hoping that with this funding, it will help solve some issues. However, this biggest issue is parents can't find a job. When they do find a job they can't get child care right away. We are hoping that with the extra funding it will help bridge gaps.

Ms. Errico asked if there are enough family based child care resources to address alternate kinds of work schedules (nontraditional 9 to 5 jobs) that many may have to work in order to make ends meet? Ms. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi stated right now in Morris County, there are 37 family child care providers. There used to be close to 100, but all the new regulations after the Obama Administration, authorizing the Block Grant, there's so much paperwork with the regulations, (just to keep children safe while in care), there was a reduction in child care providers. So, increasing capacity would definitely help with odd hour work schedules for low income families.

Ms. Specchio asked how do people hear about your services? Ms. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi stated that staff tries to participate in as many committees as possible. They do partner with all of the other community nonprofits in Morris County. We also partner with WIC. When WIC checks are distributed, we set up a table, and speak directly to WIC participants. Recently staff has been emailing corporate offices in Morris County (Marshalls, Home Goods, TJ Max, etc.) that are hiring.

Ms. Errico asked if there is staff available to assist people who are interested in becoming a child care provider with all the paperwork that's involved. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi stated that it's all done online now. During the pandemic, CFR was able to help people with stabilization grants to purchase tablets and laptops, CFR also loans out laptops now. Also, people can come to CFR for assistance, or through Microsoft Teams meetings.

Ms. O'Keefe stated that for women becoming a child care provider is an entrepreneurial move. Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi replied that child care for families is a huge part of their budget. If families don't have to budget for their child care needs and the women choose to provide child care for other children, they have a way to earn income. As long as they are registered through CFR, they can receive the subsidy rate and receive child care assistance. CFR can also advertise that they are a child care provider.

Ms. O'Keefe thanked Ms. Sherrod-Capozzi for participating as a guest speaker and providing the Committee with a multitude of information on child care in Morris County.

4. Discussion regarding the creation and definition of sub-committees: Ms. O'Keefe thanked committee members to providing information on their interests.

- **Seeds of Change Subcommittee:** Ms. Bennett-Santoro, Ms. Specchio, and Ms. Ugalde are taking the lead on this subcommittee. The goal is to have the Seeds of Change Award in March, 2022. Ms. Bennett-Santoro stated that in 2018, the award was presented in April, and in 2019 in November. Ms. Kisatsky confirmed that she has the information on who the applications were sent to. Ms. O'Keefe stated that it was decided that next year's award will be in March to tie it into Women's History Month. Ms. Bennett-Santoro stated that the award process needs to be worked on now as the subcommittee only has 6 months to work on it. A letter and nomination form needs to be sent out asking area nonprofits to nominate a staff person or volunteer that fits the award criteria. A deadline to receive nomination forms needs to be

established. The Committee will then review all the nomination forms and determine the appropriate candidate. The chosen candidate will then need to be contacted, as well as the Board of County Commissioners so the award date can be put on the Commissioner's agenda for the presentation. Ms. Kisatsky will forward the nomination form from 2019 to the Committee for editing. Once she receives the edited form back, she can forward the form to area nonprofits. Per Ms. Kisatsky, in addition to sending the nomination form, she will also ensure that all Human Services Committees distribute the form at their respective meetings.

- **Membership Development Subcommittee:** All Advisory Committee members are included in membership development.
- **Public Relations/Media Subcommittee:** Ms. Mueller was unable to join the meeting this evening, but has taken the lead in this subcommittee. Ms. O'Keeffe thanked Ms. Specchio for compiling the list of Women's Calendar Events. From an awareness perspective, Ms. Specchio stated that some of the events would be great to feature/highlight in the County E-newsletter. Ms. Errico stated that having the links included in a blurb is very helpful to Brian Murray, the Director of Communications for the County.
- **Project Implementation/Action Subcommittee:** Ms. O'Keeffe stated that this subcommittee will need to meet ASAP and discuss some of the different ideas that we want to explore. It was discussed to come up with three ideas and then discuss them with the full Committee. Ms. Boyce, Ms. Bjornson, and Ms. O'Keeffe are interested in participating in this subcommittee. Ms. Bjornson and Ms. Guevara stated they are available in August to discuss topics. Ms. Bjornson will also look into Best Practices related to Advisory Committee guidelines and responsibilities. Ms. Boyce stated that she will join Ms. Bjornson, regarding membership development, and review several applications that she has for perspective candidates for the Women's Committee. Ms. Errico mentioned that we should continue to link with the HSAC as they make recommendations for grant information. Ms. O'Keeffe stated that we are still waiting for a Needs Assessment Presentation. However, at this point, we have enough information to move forward with a project ourselves.

5. **Public Section/Questions** - None

6. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 6:43pm. The next meeting will be held on September 21, 2021.
****There will be no meeting in August.**