

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING – MINUTES

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

5:00 pm

Virtual – MS Teams & In-Person



ATTENDANCE

AFS BOARD MEMBERS:	William Johnson, Chair James Agnew Patricia R. Lofstrom Dan Swystun	Rick Hamilton Jane Omollo Jennifer Geenen	Dania Kuzbari Wes Lavergne Megan Bernard
REGRETS:	David Petersson	Lucia O'Connor	
STAFF/LEADERSHIP:	Ali Juma Stephanie Fetherston Brian Kelly	Arlene Smith Jacob Bruzas Theresa Coccimiglio	Obianuju Fadjo Kristine Service

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum

Quorum established.

2.0 Constitute Meeting

2.1 Call to Order

The Board Chair calls the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

2.2 General Welcome

The Board Chair welcomes everyone to the meeting, both in-person and online.

2.3 Land Acknowledgement

The Board Chair provides the land acknowledgement.

2.4 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest declared.

3.0 Presentation

The Alternative for Youth (AFY) team comprising Theresa and Kristine provided a presentation of their program to the board.

4.0 Agenda & Minutes

4.1 Approval of Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the March 26, 2025, Public Board Meeting agenda as presented.

Moved by: Patricia R. Lofstrom

Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in

favour. CARRIED.

4.2 Approval of Minutes

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the February 26, 2025, Public Board Meeting Minutes as presented.

Moved by: Dan Swystun

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari All in favour. CARRIED.

4.3 Business Arising from Previous Minutes

No business arising.

5.0 Consent Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the March 26, 2025, consent agenda as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: Patricia R. Lofstrom All in favour. CARRIED.

6.0 Items Removed from Consent Agenda

No items removed from consent agenda.

7.0 New/Ongoing Business

7.1 Policy Review for Accreditation - Update

The Chair stated that the working group, consisting of himself, Wes, and Rick met with Brenda on March 18 and 19 to review the board policies and accreditation standards. The amended versions are being reviewed. The goal is to have the revised policies approved in the April or May board meeting.

7.2 Skill Board Matrix/Summary - Update

The Chair reminds board members to update their area of experience/expertise in the skills matrix document. Patricia requested that she provide representation for the north district because it is her work-designated area. The Chair noted that in the interim, she could provide a voice for the North districts pending the addition of a north district board member.

7.3 The Board Assessment Feedback

The Chair mentioned that the Board Assessment feedback survey will be rolled out before the next board meeting in May 2025. A copy of the draft survey is available in the board Team's folder.

7.4 Board Annual Work Plan/Committee Report

The Chair stated that the Board Work Plan was revised in compliance with the accreditation standards. The Board subcommittee members were encouraged to review and provide their input to the work plan as needed. This agenda item will be brought back to the next board meeting for a review of the updated work plan.

7.5 Joint Board Training

The Chair pointed out that in the review of the accreditation standards, the board is required to participate in joint board training. Ali noted that this training is rotational, with each of the five sister agencies taking turns to host. While AFS organized the training in 2024, it is now the Children's Aid Society's (CAS) turn to host the event. However, it is unlikely to be held as the meeting typically occurs in the spring, unless it is rescheduled for later in the year.

7.6 EDI Training

The Chair encouraged the board members to participate in an upcoming EDI training by MESH, which is also a requirement by accreditation standards. There will be a separate EDI training for leadership and board, which will be communicated to the board once the date is confirmed.

8.0 CEO Report

8.1 Ali Juma provides the CEO Report as provided in the board package. Highlighting the following:

- There were several staff trainings this month
- The Anti-Human Trafficking Program funding has been extended to
- We received \$10,000 funding from the Ministry of Health (MOH) for data collection
- The Jordan's Principle funding has been extended to 2026, which averted major crisis for taking up services provided by indigenous agencies.
- The Ministry issued a full license for eight beds at the Live-in Treatment (LIT).

9.0 Board Committee Updates

9.1 Governance Committee Chair Report

The Committee Chair, Wes advised board members to review the report as provided in the board package.

9.2 Services and Advocacy Committee Chair Report

The Committee Chair, Patricia advised the board members about the advocacy for Child and Youth Care Program and encouraged board members to sign the electronic letter in support of the campaign.

10.0 Adjourn to In-Camera

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to adjourn to the in-camera segment of the meeting at 6:36 pm.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton
Seconded by: Patricia R. Lofstrom All in favour. CARRIED.

11.0 Resume Regular Public Board Meeting

MOTION BIRT, the board moves to resume the regular public board meeting at 7:29 pm.

Moved by: Megan Bernard
Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in favour. CARRIED.

12.0 Accept Motions Made In-Camera

MOTION BIRT, the board moves to accept the In-Camera motion

Moved by: Patricia R. Lofstrom
Seconded by: Jane Omollo All in favour. CARRIED.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION BIRT, the board moves to adjourn the regular public board meeting at 7:30 pm.

Moved by: Patricia R. Lofstrom
Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in favour. CARRIED.

14.0 NEXT MEETING

- Next Regular Board Meeting April 23, 2025 @ 5 PM

Submitted by: Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant



CEO Report

March 26, 2025

Happy Spring! As we welcome spring, we recognize the season of renewal, we welcome the opportunity, as we bring our fiscal year to a close, to reflect and transfer our learning into a new fiscal year. It is a busy month for reports, purchases, and planning. I extend my great gratitude to the staff and leadership team for their dedication and hard work during a busy time.

Of the many highlights of this report, is the recognition and acknowledgement of the 5000th visit to the youth hub. An incredible accomplishment for an incredible program!

With the provincial election now behind us, we are now in preparation for the Federal Election. I am pleased to share with you our proposal to have the Community Wellness Bus funded was granted and announced last Friday. This federal funding of \$3.5 million will allow AFS to now permanently support this program alongside our community partners. We have been supporting this vital program since November of 2020 on an in-kind basis, and at an opportunity cost of staff providing this service at the cost of not being able to attend fully to our waitlist for service. Find the article here. <https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/funding-secured-for-247-community-wellness-bus-10416744>

We also learned last week we will be receiving additional one time funding of \$10,000 to support our data collection to be spent by March 31st.

On that note, I have a great report for you, and I encourage you to check out the Diversity Calendar for the month of April posted to the Board Team Folder.

Reconciling our Truth

A crisis was averted with the announcement that Jordan's Principle (JP) funding has been extended until 2026. Earlier this month, Nogdawindamin issued termination of services to clients whose service was supported through JP funding, as well as, layoff notices were issued to the staff supporting those services. In a similar situation three years ago, the Ministry requested that AFS assume a caretaker role for Indigenous children and youth mental health cases carried by Nogdawindamin. At the time, I advised the Ministry this would not be possible given AFS cannot manage the current waitlist for services, yet alone take on the cases that Nogdawindamin would not longer be servicing unless the Ministry would provide additional funding. I also advised that AFS would not take on the liability of being in a caretaker role for active files we could not service. Fortunately at that time, JP funding was extended, and once again it has been extended. Nonetheless, the fact remains a long term funding solution is required or we will be back in a similar position in 2026. Find the link to a statement by the Federal Indigenous Services Minister, Patty Hajdu below

<https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2025/03/statement-by-minister-hajdu-on-jordans-principle-funding.html>

As shared with you in my last report, cultural competency training will occur over two sessions at the end of this month and into April. Reference this in my previous report.

Level Setting

The second phase of our DEI capacity building through MESH started this month. Staff were provided with a link to sign up for the following sessions:

- Diversity Intelligence Overview
- Virtuous Loop: How Inclusive Teams Build Community and Drive
- Understanding Yourself: The First Step in Building You Inclusivity
- Moving from Understanding Differences to Empathy to Compassion
- The Power of Communications in Building Inclusive Environments

This training will be offered over the year allowing staff to sign up for a session at their convenience.

Investing in our Awesome Team

A busy month for training as the team members were trained in:

- Crisis Intervention and Prevention (CPI)
- Suicide Intervention (ASIST)
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Trauma Informed Supervision
- Working in a Unionized Environment
- Mental Health Certificate for HR Professionals

I am very please to share that Anti-Human Trafficking Program funding has been extended for this year. As you may recall, the five year funding for this program of \$1.2 million comes to an end on March 31st. With the extension comes much relief for the staff providing this service, and the clients relying on our service. Our hope is to ensure ongoing annualized funding will be secured for this program.

With regard to our service recognitions, we acknowledge the following staff for their extraordinary service:

Chera McCutcheon, Counsellor - 20 years

Ali Juma (me) - 10 years

Please see the HR Director's report in the Board Teams Folder.

Connecting the Dots, Closing the Gaps

On March 5th, a Community Collaborative meeting was held in Elliot Lake. Community service providers provided presentations on their services. In addition to the presentation made by our East Algoma Team, the Anti-Human Trafficking Team also presented at this meeting. Board Director, Rick Hamilton, participated in the meeting and we were appreciative of his attendance and representation of AFS.

With the ever changing service landscape, these collaborative meetings service to provide essential information on services available.

With regard to the Live-in Treatment Licensing, we were non-compliant in six areas. These areas have since been addressed, and a licensing exit meeting will be held on April 1st. We will be issued a full license for eight beds. I extend my great appreciation to the LIT Team and the support of Natalie Young, Director of Business Analytics and Continuous Improvement for their hard work in preparing for licensing and also addressing the non-compliance areas.

With regard to overall services, service demand remains consistent. No notable spikes or decreases to mention. As you are aware, the impact of the tariffs will translate into a higher demand for service, which we anticipate will be realized in approximately two to three months time. However this is a fluid situation and the degree and scope of the impact is yet to be fully realized. The teams have been placed on alert to prepare for a potential spike in demand. I have also asked the leadership team to complete risk management plans with regard to managing services if we experience a significant increase in the cost of providing service due to the tariffs. For example, an increase in the cost of program materials, equipment, food, etc. It is a matter of planning for the worst, and hoping for the best.

I am pleased to report our VAW waitlist for service has decreased to two persons. A shout out to the Family and Adult Services for their diligent work in providing timely access to services.

Finding a Better Way

We are in the process of reviewing our group therapy program, as group participation rates have dropped. Stephanie has formed a working group with counsellors to explore how to improve participation in groups. The group program is an important pathway to timely service, and a key approach in our reduction of our counselling and therapy waitlists.

A key highlight, is the launch of Greenspace this month. Greenspace is a platform that offers a variety of evidence-based mental health assessments and tools designed to support children and youth. It provides over 400 assessments that cover various aspects of mental health, including trauma, ADHD, autism, and more. These tools are used to help clinicians and mental health professionals better understand and address the needs of young individuals. In addition to assessments, Greenspace aims to improve the overall mental health care experience by facilitating better communication and tracking progress over time.

Parents can access and use the tools provided by Greenspace. When a child or adolescent is added to the platform, parents, guardians, or teachers involved in the child's treatment can also be included. Each participant can create an account connected to the child's file and complete assessments independently. This collaborative approach helps ensure that everyone involved in the child's care can contribute to and monitor their progress.

Greenspace is a an example of Measurement-Based Care (MBC) because it integrates systematic data collection and analysis into the mental health care process.

This month we were successful in securing partnership agreements to support the retention of our third psychologist, Dr. Jenna Thompson. This agreement will have Dr. Thompson conduct a limited number of assessments for each partner agency on a purchase of service agreement. A shout out to Stephanie Fetherston for her work with our community partners on this agreement.

Please see the Senior Director of Services report in the Board TEAMS folder.

With regard to finance and property management, the flooring for the first and third floors of the McNabb office has been completed. Painting of these floors has now commenced. As well, renovation of the McGregor meeting room on the third floor of the McNabb office is also in process. This work is to be completed by March 31, 2025.

I am pleased to report that AFS was successful in receiving \$400,000 in CIRF funding to replace the roof at 205 McNabb.. Also, our funding application for \$160,000 to renovate the Youth Hub kitchen and the electrical panel for the hub was approved. We have until the end of next fiscal year to complete both projects..

In the disposition of the surplus, we have also approved the replacement of 36 office chairs, purchased additional sit stand desks, purchased an AWD mini-van, and computer equipment upgrades.

I have approved the creation of a part-time Maintenance Worker position to address our growing maintenance need across our facilities with the addition of the Youth Hub and the LIT. This was approved to ensure more timely attention to maintenance matters, as well as reduce the cost of this maintenance which is currently contracted out.

Please see the Director of Finance and Administration's report in the Board Team Folder.

With regard to our community services, please mark your calendars for the Rebound **Volunteer Dinner** taking place **May 26th**. Location TBD. It is always great to have board representation at this dinner and for you to learn more about the life changing impact this awesome program has on the youth.

Speaking of the Rebound Program, I am please to report the program will be launching four to five PreVenture online groups. The PreVenture program is an evidence-based prevention initiative designed for youth aged 12-18. It uses personality-focused interventions to promote mental health and reduce the risk of substance use.

Key aspects of the program:

- **Personality-Focused Workshops:** The program includes workshops that help students learn useful coping skills, set long-term goals, and channel their personality traits towards achieving those goals.
- **Mental Health Promotion:** By targeting specific personality traits, PreVenture aims to enhance mental well-being and delay the onset of substance use.
- **Proven Efficacy:** Research has shown that participating in just two 90-minute workshops can significantly reduce substance use and promote mental wellness in adolescents.
- **Global Implementation:** The program has been successfully implemented in various countries, including Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

We are excited to see these online groups start. Another program innovation!

Thank you for your time in reviewing the Board accreditation standards last week with Brenda. Your diligence ensures AFS remains a service provider our clients, funders, and community can trust and rely on.

In our effort to ensure our services are inclusive, our Administrative Assistant team has been taking basic French classes from the Centre d'éducation et de formation pour adultes (CEFA). Congratulations to the AAs on the completion of the first course! According to the staff participating, they are learning a lot and also having some fun.

Please see the Director of Community Services and Strategic Initiatives report in the Board TEAMS folder.

In closing, March is an incredibly busy and productive month for AFS. I do want to extend our appreciation for the great work of the teams, especially the Finance and Administration Team, HR Team, and BA/CIP Team as they complete fiscal year end purchases and payments, while also preparing for the new fiscal year.

As I celebrate my 10 year anniversary at AFS, I am incredibly proud of the transformation of our agency and the extraordinary work of the staff, leadership team, and Board in making our services more accessible, more efficient, and timely. We are certainly not the same agency I joined 10 years ago. With that being said, it remains my great honour over a career of 34 years, to serve AFS as your CEO. Thank you for your continued faith and confidence in my leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ali Juma', is positioned above the printed name.

Ali Juma, CEO

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 19, 2025
12:15 pm
Microsoft Teams – Virtual



ATTENDANCE

AFS Board of Directors: ☒ Wes Lavergne ☒ James Agnew ☒ Megan Bernard
☒ William Johnson

AFS Staff: ☒ Brenda Clarke, Director, Community Services & Strategic Initiatives ☒ Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant

Youth Representatives:

Regrets: Ali Juma

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum

Quorum established.

2.0 Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 12:20 pm.

3.0 Review of Agenda

The committee reviews the agenda as presented.

MOTION

BIRT, the committee approves the March 19, 2025, agenda as amended.

Moved by: Megan Bernard

Seconded by: William Johnson

All in favour.

CARRIED.

4.0 Approval of Previous Minutes

The committee reviews the minutes as presented.

MOTION	BIRT, the committee approves the February 19, 2025, minutes as presented.		
	Moved by:	Megan Bernard	
	Seconded by:	William Johnson	All in favour. CARRIED.

5.0 New Business

a. Duration of Board Meetings

The Chair observed that board meetings frequently extend beyond the scheduled two hours. To address this, the Chair requested suggestions from committee members on techniques or methods to enhance meeting efficiency and maintain board member engagement. Furthermore, the Chair highlighted that several board members had raised this concern in their board evaluation feedback.

One suggestion is to stagger the presentations, as they typically consume approximately thirty minutes of the board meeting time. Alternatively, the board could consider omitting presentations for months when there are more pressing matters to address.

This agenda item will be revisited at the next committee meeting to allow the CEO and committee members to contribute and brainstorm ideas.

6.0 Ongoing Business

a. Presentation

The Alternatives for Youth will be providing a presentation to the main board on March 26th.

b. Policy Review

The Chair stated that he met with Brenda, Bill, and Rick on Tuesday, March 18th to review and update the board policies. They are scheduled to reconvene today, March 19th to review the accreditation standards

7.0 Standing Items

a. 2024 Upcoming Tasks – Board Work Plan

The annual work plan is due for review. The other board committees will be reminded to review their work plan to provide updates and modifications as necessary at the Board meeting.

Regarding ongoing board training and orientation, the board members have been invited to attend an EDI training. Additionally, Brenda proposed that the board consider taking a tour of the building as part of their training.

b. Youth Advisory

Brenda reported that the Youth Advisory Council has been meeting monthly and is planning activities for Children’s Mental Health Week (CMHO) in May. Regarding the Family Advisory, there is a plan to organize a parent-focused

event centered on parenting or wellness. Current parents of clients will be invited to participate in this event, which will be held at the Youth Hub during or after CMHO.

c. Board Succession

No update

8.0 Other Business

No other business

9.0 Next Meeting

April 16, 2025

10.0 Adjournment

MOTION

BIRT, the committee moves to adjourn the meeting at 12:39 pm.

Moved by: Megan Bernard

Seconded by: James Agnew

All in favour. CARRIED.

Submitted by: Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – SERVICES AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 20th, 2025
5:00 pm
Microsoft Teams – Virtual



ATTENDANCE

AFS Board of Directors:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patricia R. Lofstrom (Chair) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Geenen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dania Kuzbari <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jane Omollo
AFS Staff:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stephanie Fetherston, Senior Director of Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brenda Clarke, Director Community Services & Strategic Initiatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Obianuju Fadijo, Executive Assistant
Youth Representatives:			
Regrets:	Rick Hamilton	Lucia O'Connor	Ali Juma

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum Established.

2.0 Call to Order

Patricia R. Lofstrom calls the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

3.0 Review of Agenda

MOTION BIRT the Committee reviews and approves the March 20, 2025, agenda as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: Jane Omollo

4.0 Review Previous Minutes

MOTION BIRT the committee approves the February 20, 2025, meeting minutes, as presented.

Moved by: William Johnson
Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari

5.0 New Business

a. Advocacy for Child and Youth Care Program (CYCP) at Sault College

The Chair informs the board about an electronic letter initiated by the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care seeking support for government regulation of the Child and Youth Care Program. The committee members were invited to complete the electronic advocacy letter in support of the campaign.

6.0 Standing Items

a. Investing in our Awesome Team (formerly Awesome Team)

i. *Service Demand Report*

Stephanie provides a summary of the service demand report and highlighting the following:

- There was an increase of referrals in February than in previous months, which also increased our single therapy sessions (STS). The intake stood at 52 while the STS was 89.
- The waitlist for counselling and therapy jumped to 102 as there appears to be low enrolment for groups, which usually helps to reduce the number of people waiting to receive services.
- Crisis follow-up, which are referrals from the hospital decreased.
- We had a long vacancy in East Algoma for intensive treatment services (ITS) position, which required us to fill it with a child and youth care practitioner. However, the staff member happened to be an unregistered social worker, but ITS requires psychotherapy. Fortunately, the staff has been registered. We are planning to re-open the position and anticipate that she will be the successful candidate.
- We have partnered with Community Living Algoma, Children's Aid Society, and THRIVE to retain a third psychologist. Additionally, we may still collaborate with Nogdawindamin; however, due to some uncertainty regarding the Jordan's Principle funding, we may have to wait until the spring to determine if they can purchase some assessments from us.
- We have all four Community Support Counsellors and will be having a student placement as well.
- We are currently running two virtual Partner Assault Groups for men. There will be a group for women in the spring while another in-person group session for men in the summer.
- We have 16 on our waitlist for the Violence Against Women (VAW) and anticipate that the number will decrease as we have filled the maternity leave.
- The Anti-Human Trafficking team had about 27 caseloads, following the extension of the age range for service recipients from 17 to 25 years.

ii. *Community Services Update*

Brenda provides a summary of the Community Services report. Highlights include:

- AFS received \$352,000 for the Student Nutrition Program. The Ministry communicated that any surplus fund could be carried over to the next fiscal.
- We have been invited by Breakfast Clubs of Canada to apply for School Food Infrastructure funding. The Student Nutrition Program team will develop a proposal for the fund application, which is due April 7th. We plan to have a drop off location for the food program and thus have reached out to Harvest Algoma to provide storage services since we do not have a warehouse.

- The Youth Hub celebrated its five thousandth unique visit with some light refreshments and draw prize.
- There will be an invitation from Rebound for the Volunteer Appreciation, which will be held on a Monday in May. A formal communication will be sent to the board through the Executive Assistant.

b. Finding a Better Way (Extraordinary Service)

i. Privacy

Stephanie stated that there was one internal privacy breach, where an email containing a medical note was sent to the wrong recipient. However, no significant information was contained in the medical note. The individual was informed, and the email was successfully recalled.

Serious Occurrence

We have had fourteen serious occurrences since the last report. A majority of the SO is due to the Live-in Treatment while the rest are due to office closures because of inclement weather.

ii. Lead Agency

No update

iii. Accreditation

Brenda stated that the board policy review sub group met to review the board policies and accreditation standards on March 18th and 19th. There are additional changes that need to be made to the board policies to complete the process. For example, the accreditation requires scrap booking when certain topics are discussed in certain meetings. Bill stated that Wes updated the work plan and will inform other board committees at this month's board meeting to review what tasks to include in the annual work plan.

iv. Ontario Health Team (OHT)

No update

c. Connecting the Dots, Closing the Gaps (Busting Barriers)

i. New Funding and Initiatives/Partnership Updates

Brenda stated that we received \$160,000 funding for kitchen renovation at the Youth Hub.

d. Level Setting

i. French Language Service/Culture Linguistics

Brenda noted that the administrative staff just completed a beginner's course and will be registering them for another course towards the end of April or beginning of May.

ii. Youth and Family Engagement

Benda mentioned that they are planning a parent support night for parents, guardians, and caregivers of current clients around the children's mental health week.

iii. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Updates

Stephanie stated that there will be an upcoming EDI training for staff and leadership that will be facilitated by Leeno from MESH. The training will be conducted in-person and virtual but has several optional dates and is self-paced. Brenda noted that Board members who have already attended an EDI training can provide a completed EDI training as proof of completion for accreditation purposes.

e. Reconciling our Truth

Stephanie noted that the agency was invited by the Children's Aid Society to participate in a blanket exercise. Ten of our staff have registered. Additionally, Stephanie mentioned that we had an OAP event

for service providers regarding how to embed indigenous practices in our services. The grant ends on March 31st, 2025.

Stephanie will extend the blanket ceremony invitation through Uju to the board members via email for those board members interested in attending.

7.0 Ongoing Business

a. Review Terms of Reference

Deferred

8.0 Other Business

9.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourns at 5:56 pm.

MOTION BIRT the Committee adjourns the meeting at 5:56 pm.

Moved by: Jane Omollo

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari