

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING – MINUTES

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

5:00 pm

Virtual – MS Teams & In-Person



ATTENDANCE

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

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum

Quorum established.

2.0 Constitute Meeting

2.1 Call to Order

The Board Chair calls the meeting to order at 5:00 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

No presentation

4.0 Agenda & Minutes

4.1 Approval of Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the May 28, 2025, Public Board Meeting agenda as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari
Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in favour. CARRIED.

4.2 Approval of Minutes

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the April 23, 2025, Public Board Meeting Minutes as presented.

Moved by: Dan Swystun
Seconded by: David Petersson All in favour. CARRIED.

4.3 Business Arising from Previous Minutes

No business arising.

5.0 Consent Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the May 28, 2025, consent agenda as presented.

Moved by: Jane Omollo
Seconded by: Rick Hamilton 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

Bill noted that he had sent the board members an email with detailed explanation of amendments to the policies. However, during the review process, the index accompanying the policies was inadvertently overlooked. As a result, it was later identified that a policy titled "Board Membership" had been listed but not yet developed. Bill assured the board that this policy will be addressed in the coming months and does not present a significant challenge at this time.

MOTION

BIRT, that the Board of Directors approves the May 2, 2025 reviewed and revised Board Policies, Operational Guidelines and Table of Contents.

Moved by: David Petersson
Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari All in favour. CARRIED.

7.2 The Board Assessment Feedback Survey - Update

The DSSAB template feedback summary is presented to the board members, and the data shows the following board sentiment: seven were supportive of the DSSAB report template, two opposed, two had mixed sentiments and one was cautious about adopting the template.

Ali will coordinate with the Leadership Team to develop a template.

7.3 Board Annual Work Plan/Committee Input

The Chair stated that at the Services and Advocacy Meeting, the Committee members suggested the following changes to the Annual Work Plan:

- At line 13 of the document, the Training and Orientation – it was originally designated to the Governance Committee, but it was revised to include the Services and Advocacy Committee.
- The description was revised to include the wording “level setting as described in the strategic plan”.

The Finance Committee should consider reviewing the Annual Workplan at their June meeting to determine what tasks to be modified or added.

Wes recommended that the Board consider maintaining the Annual Work Plan as a living document, rather than requiring formal approval of each revision through board motions.

7.4 Youth in Transition Program – Update

Brenda reported that the Youth in Transition job posting was released over a week ago, and interviews are scheduled to begin tomorrow. As part of the selection process, candidates will be required to complete a work basket. She also noted that three internal candidates are among those that will be interviewed.

7.5 Slate of Directors – Notification of Re-election

The Chair noted that, in accordance with policy, Board members whose terms are expiring and who wish to stand for re-election at the upcoming AGM in the fall are required to notify the Secretary and copy Uju with their intention. The members up for re-election are Jane Omollo, David Petersson, Dan Swystun, and William (Bill) Johnson. It was further clarified that the process is not stringent; an email indicating their intention to seek re-election is sufficient, and a formal written letter is not required.

7.6 National Volunteer’s Week Appreciation

Ali acknowledged the board of directors’ dedication to AFS and provided them with volunteer packages for their extraordinary service.

7.7 Insurance Review

Jacob reported that there have not been any significant changes to the current insurance policy, and the increase in cost is minimal. However, he suggested that the Board consider issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) next year, given the longstanding relationship with the current broker and provider. He also noted that the policy includes cybersecurity coverage, which is increasingly difficult to obtain in the current market.

Ali noted that there are few insurance companies that will provide coverage for organizations like AFS because we are considered ‘high risk’.

Jacob suggested that we revisit the insurance renewal in the in-camera section of the January Board meeting. The Insurance Review section of the annual work plan will be updated to indicate January 2026 as the next review period.

MOTION

BIRT, that the Board of Directors approves the insurance premium renewal cost of \$92,942.00 (inclusive of provincial tax) from Dawson and Keenan Insurance Ltd.

Moved by: Patricia R. Lofstrom

Seconded by: Lucia O'Connor All in favour. CARRIED.

7.8 Ministry Funder Contract and Report Back Execution

Jacob advised that a formal documentation by the Board authorizing the CEO, along with any senior leadership personnel designated by the CEO, to sign off on contracts and Ministry report submissions would be ideal. This would eliminate the need for routine Board approvals, particularly in light of the upcoming two-month Board recess in June and August.

MOTION

BIRT, that the Board of Directors of Algoma Family Services authorizes the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and those members of Senior Leadership designated by the Chief Executive Officer to review, approve, and sign funding contracts and agreements on behalf of the organization. This authorization also includes the submission of all supporting documentation and required report backs associated with such contracts, in accordance with funder requirements and organizational policies.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton

Seconded by: Jane Omollo All in favour. CARRIED.

7.9 Urgent Funding Request to Support Indigenous

The Chair presented a draft letter to the Board for approval, intended for submission to the MPPs of Algoma and Sault Ste. Marie, the MP for Sault Ste. Marie, and the Ministry of Health Program Advisor. Patricia confirmed that this matter had previously been discussed at the Services and Advocacy Committee meeting. Ali added that the \$200,000 funding request outlined in the letter would support the recruitment of an additional Counsellor and a Child and Youth Care Practitioner to address the potential surge in demand for services. Each letter will be sent individually to the respective recipient, with the remaining three parties copied on the correspondence.

MOTION

BIRT, that the Board of Directors fully supports and approves the submission of a letter from the Board President to the Algoma – Manitoulin MPP, to the Sault Ste. Marie MPP and the Sault Ste. Marie-Algoma MP, and to the Ministry of Health Program Supervisor advocating for an immediate allocation of \$200,000 in interim funding to support Indigenous children, youth, and families affected by the termination of services previously provided through Jordan's Principle funding. The letter highlights the impact on Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, Waabinong Head Start Family Resource Centre, and other Indigenous agencies, and requests support to address the increased demand for services now being directed to AFS.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari CARRIED.

Opposed by Dan Swystun

Other Business:

8.0 CEO Report

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

- There will be a posting for a full-time indigenous counsellor – the staff who had this positions was re-assigned because they were on work accommodation.
- Brenda and Jacob completed a proposal for a Public Health Agency grant of up-to \$1.5 million. The grant will provide support for the development of a program that will prevent and address child maltreatment. We are working in partnership with Michipicoten First Nation, which is Lead Agency for the grant. The proposal was due today.
- The first DEI training was held on Tuesday, May 27th and the second session is scheduled for June 25th.
- Ali and Rick met with the MCCSS Minister Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, MPPs Chris Scott, and Bill Rosenberg at Queen's Park in Toronto to discuss the impact of tariffs on families in the North and to close the wage gap.

9.0 Board Committee Updates

9.1 Governance Committee Chair Report

The board members were encouraged to review the report in the board package.

9.2 Service and Advocacy Committee Chair Report

Patricia advised board members to review the report as contained in the board package.

10.0 Adjourn to In-Camera

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to adjourn to the in-camera segment of the meeting at 6:55 pm.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton

Seconded by: David Petersson All in favour. CARRIED.

11.0 Resume Regular Public Board Meeting

MOTION

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

Moved by: Patricia R. Lofstrom

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari All in favour. CARRIED.

12.0 Accept Motions Made In-Camera

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to accept In-Camera motions.

Moved by: David Petersson

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

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to adjourn the regular public board meeting at 7:32 pm.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton

Seconded by: Megan Bernard All in favour. CARRIED.

14.0 NEXT MEETING

- Next Regular Board Meeting June 20, 2025 @ 6 PM

Submitted by: Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant



CEO Report

May 28, 2025

Happy May! What a busy month of activities at AFS! I want to start with a shout-out to Emily Tremblay and the Children's Mental Health Week (CMHW) Committee for the over 30 events planned across the district to recognize this special week. It was our biggest week of events to date. Here is a link to the coverage by SooToday <https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/algoma-family-services-hosts-childrens-mental-health-week-events-10601983>

I want to thank Brian Kelly for filling in for me in providing remarks at the opening ceremony, while I was with Rick at Queen's part for our Family Service Ontario engagement with the Government. We certainly can take great pride with the success of the event, and I hope to share with you the recap once the committee has finished their briefing.

As we bring May to a close, we look with excitement to June. With the welcoming of summer, we also look forward to our Family Pride Event and also the second annual Pride Prom. These events that promote inclusion, community, and understanding, allow for a meaningful space for those that identify with the 2SLGBTQ community, and furthers AFS's leadership in this space as we deliver on our "Level Setting" strategic priority. We will share with you the dates of these events once confirmed, and hope you can join us in all the fun!

With that being said, please review our EDI Calendar in your board TEAMS folder, for the June recognitions.

Reconciling our Truth

Further, to my last report, we will be moving forward with the recruitment of a full-time Indigenous Outreach Counsellor. This decision was quite fortuitous as it came prior to the announcement of the Jordan's Principle funding cuts to First Nations. In light of the recent funding cuts, a motion will be presented to the Board requesting additional resources from the government to meet the anticipated increase in service demand from Indigenous families whose support was previously discontinued.

A shout-out to Dr. Stephanie Hayes, AFS Psychologist, who is working with members of the Michipocoten First Nation, and Brenda Clarke on a Public Health Agency of Canada Preventing Family Violence Program Grant.

The grant is offered to design a program specifically targeting the prevention and addressing of child maltreatment.

Grant Overview

- Funding Amount: Up to \$1.5 million per project
- Duration: Projects must run for a minimum of 3 years and up to a maximum of 5 years
- Start Date: Projects are expected to begin on April 1, 2026
- End Date: All projects must conclude by March 31, 2031

Goal of the Grant

The primary objectives of this funding opportunity are to:

- **Prevent and address child maltreatment** by delivering and testing health promotion interventions.
- **Build and share evidence** about effective approaches to prevent and address child maltreatment.
- **Strengthen the capacity of service providers** through evidence-based training and resources.

Interventions may include:

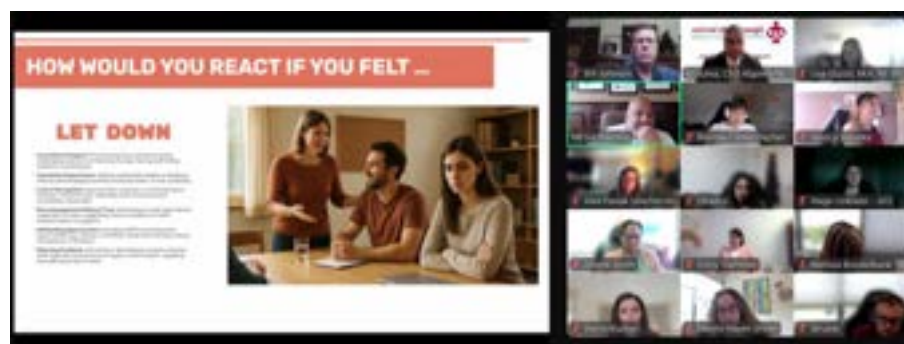
- Building skills and knowledge for safe and healthy relationships.
- Addressing risk factors at the family, community, and societal levels.
- Equipping service providers with tools to recognize and respond to child

The grant proposal is due today, May 28th. The program Dr. Hayes and team has developed is called *Mashkawizii: Developing an Indigenous Approach to Child Maltreatment Prevention through Community Engagement, Two-Eyed Seeing, and Collaboration, led by Michipicoten First Nation in partnership with Algoma Family Services.*

We wish Dr. Hayes and team all the best in the completion of this proposal.

Level Setting

As mentioned last report, the first of the Board training will commence on May 27th and the second session will be held on June 25th, 2025. These virtual sessions are from 2:30 PM - 5:00 PM each day. Please confirm with Uju, if you have not received a link from MESH. Thank you to all who participated in our first riveting session!



Connecting the Dots, Closing the Gaps

As mentioned in my opening, Rick joined me at Queen's Park for our meeting with the government, specifically MCCSS Minister Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, MPPs Chris Scott, and Bill Rosenberg, amongst many other members of government. Key to our engagements were conversations regarding the impact of tariffs on families in the North, the necessity to close the wage gap, and hopes that the provincial budget to be released on May 15th would address the concerns. I was very impressed with Rick's engagement of the government staff, as his voice as a community member carries more resonance than my voice as a paid staff. Thank you, Rick for participating in this event, and the Family Service of Ontario conference!



On the service front, we have identified two sites for our Genesis program, one at Holy Angels, and the second the classroom at the LIT. We are working on the details to determine where the program will move. The program must move from its current location at 90 Chapple so the DSSAB can build more child care spaces at that site.

On the HR Front, a couple of key leadership recruitments will be closing this month, such as the LIT Supervisor and Clinical Manager. Both are essential in helping us move services forward. New is a part-time Facilities Maintenance Worker position, which will also be concluded this week. With the CAS shared service maintenance worker no longer providing service to AFS, the new maintenance person will help us ensure more timely attention to maintenance needs at a reduced cost than depending on contractors.

If you are able to assist with food deliveries for the **Every Breakfast Counts** program this summer, please let Uju know. She will then share with you the available spots once known. Also, the Community Strong event needs volunteers to assist with the races. This event is June 20 & 21st. If you can assist or know others who could help, please let Uju know. She will pass your information to Jessica, who will be in contact with you on your assignment.

On Monday, May 26th, the Rebound Volunteer Recognition Dinner, themed "Volunteers Paint the Future", was held at the Grand Gardens. We thank Bill, Patricia, Dania, and Lucia for participating in the event. This school year, we completed 11 groups, with 164 youth participating in these groups. Over 1217 volunteer hours were contributed to make this happen. Truly awesome!



Finding a Better Way

On the service front, we are experiencing an increase in demand for Counselling and Therapy. This can be attributed in part to the death of a 15-year-old in Sault Ste. Marie, as well as the tragedy in Vancouver, where 11 people were killed at a Filipino cultural festival. A shout-out to the AFS team for making themselves available to provide additional single therapy sessions to address the tragedies, and our intake team for managing the additional calls for service.

As previously mentioned, in our discussions with the Government, we made a specific ask for financial relief to assist community-based agencies attend to the impact of tariffs on families. For every displaced worker, there is typically a family attached. As the government prepares relief packages for displaced workers, to also keep service providers in mind to meet the demand for service.

On the **HART's Hub** front, the proposed budget has been finalized and submitted to Ontario Health for approval. Discussion is taking place on identifying the potential of an alternate site to the current CRC on Wellington. These discussions are embargoed and I will provide an update once the embargo has been lifted.

With regard to the Algoma OHT, in our May meeting, a motion was tabled to set up a different and smaller governance structure, as the thought in terms of the "wheel spinning" that is happening on purpose, may have more traction with a smaller group. This proposal stemmed out of a recommendation brief from Elaine Pitcher who facilitated an OHT member session earlier this year that Bill attended with me. I will apprise you of the outcome of the vote on the governance structure once known.

On the financial front, our year-end Audit is underway. A shout out to our Finance and Administration team for all their preparatory work for the audit. The outcome of the audit will be shared with the Finance and Operations Committee, and presented to the full

board at our June meeting. There is no financial report for this meeting. The report will be provided as well at the June meeting.

On the French Services front, I am pleased to share we received an additional \$11,900 to enhance translation for our website. Brenda is working with Emily on this translation. Speaking of translation, the Administrative Assistant team is continuing with learning French with sessions held this month.

On the building front, the following work is happening or completed:

McNabb Office

- painting continues at the McNabb office,
- construction of an office across from my office (previously a pod)
- design plans for doors on either side of the reception space to restrict access to the main areas
- quotes for three flag poles in front of the office

LIT

- quotes on an exterior door for the classroom wing
- repair to the front door overhang that was damaged over the winter

Youth Hub

- elevator installation and kitchen renovation to commence by end of month

Investing in our Awesome Team

The first week of May was also recognized as Child and Youth Care Worker Week. We celebrated this week in recognizing our CYCPs at the LIT, Care and Treatment, ITS, and at the Youth Hub. Our CYCP classification of staff is our fastest growing segment of staff. With the addition of the Youth in Transition Program, we welcome an additional CYCP to our awesome team!



Stephanie and two members of our Family and Adult Services Team are in Ottawa this week for the first conference on Partner Assault Response service providers. As I shared, with the Services and Advocacy Committee, sadly the incidents of IPV have not decreased since this board and municipalities declared IPV as an epidemic. Our hope is this conference will shed light on new approaches that will help curb the incidence of IPV.

Our Tele-Mental Health Team and our Birth to Six Team participated in conferences this month. While the meal, travel and accommodation costs for these conferences continue to increase, some of these costs are offset by subsidies from the government. Otherwise, we incur the full cost, and believe in the value and necessity of our in-person participation at these conferences.

Reminders and Notices

- Family Pride Event - Tuesday, June 10th from 5:00 - 8:00 pm at 90 Chapple Ave.

In closing, it has been a busy review period with Children's Mental Health Week, Child and Youth Care Practitioner recognition week, conferences, annual audit, construction/renovations, and our preparations for Family Pride and our second annual Pride Prom are well underway for June. With all that activity, we also experienced a ramping up of service demand, and our HR Team has been busy filling vacant positions.

A Jordan's Principle funding cut to First Nation service providers will have an impact on AFS service demand, and the proactive advocacy for resources by the Board will hopefully allow us to attend to some of the Indigenous children, youth, and their families who have lost service.

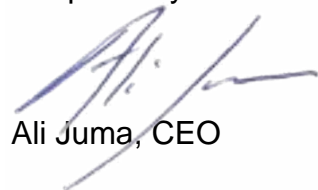
It is with great appreciation to the AFS Awesome Team and the Leadership Team for their steadfastness during a busier-than-usual time. It is when we are challenged and learning that we are at our best. While it may not always feel that way, given the exhaustion that comes with elevated service demands, the AFS team tenacious resolve sees us through, not by luck or chance, but by a deep conviction in being there for our community in their time of need, and ability to be there for each other when the going gets tough.

I look forward to our first district board meeting in Elliot Lake next month. Your willingness to take time out of your busy schedules is a true reflection of your dedication and commitment to AFS. For this, and in recognition of Volunteer Week, we have a gift for you as a token of our great appreciation for your extraordinary service to AFS.

I leave you with this,

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless."
– Sherry Anderson

Respectfully submitted,



Ali Juma, CEO

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 21, 2025
12:15 pm
Microsoft Teams – Virtual



ATTENDANCE

AFS Board of Directors: ☒ Wes Lavergne (Chair) ☒ William Johnson ☒ Megan Bernard

AFS Staff: ☒ Ali Juma, CEO ☒ Brenda Clarke, Director, Community Services & Strategic Initiatives ☒ Obianuju Fadijo, Executive Assistant

Youth Representatives:

Regrets: James Agnew

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum

Quorum established.

2.0 Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 12:18 pm.

3.0 Review of Agenda

The committee reviews the agenda as presented.

MOTION BIRT, the committee approves the May 21, 2025, agenda as presented.

Moved by: William Johnson
Seconded by: Megan Bernard All in favour. CARRIED.

4.0 Approval of Previous Minutes

The committee reviews the minutes as presented.

MOTION BIRT, the committee approves the April 16, 2025, minutes as presented.

Moved by: William Johnson

Seconded by: Megan Bernard All in favour. CARRIED.

5.0 New Business

a. General Membership Policy (BoD-D-006)

The Chair noted that it was recently discovered that a General Membership Policy had previously been identified for development and was listed in the docket as “to be created.” However, no such policy was ever finalized or implemented. In light of this, it is in the organization’s best interest to proceed with the development of a comprehensive General Membership Policy.

Furthermore, the Chair highlighted that the current AFS by-laws permit the inclusion of general members who are not directors. Accordingly, the Chair will prepare a draft policy to be presented for approval at the Board meeting in June. The proposed policy will include provisions allowing individuals who reside within the agency’s service areas and are at least eighteen (18) years of age to become members upon payment of a five-dollar (\$5.00) membership fee.

b. Accreditation Loose-ends

The Chair highlighted that there are several areas requiring further attention. Brenda has been tasked with compiling a comprehensive list of items that need to be addressed. In addition, it was suggested that relevant extracts from Board or sub-committee minutes be reviewed, particularly where they pertain to quality, risk, or health and safety matters. In some instances, it may be necessary to provide evidence that the Board is reviewing these issues on a quarterly or annual basis.

Once the list has been finalized, the Chair noted that responsibilities could be delegated to appropriate individuals. Furthermore, certain tasks may be incorporated into the Annual Work Plan to ensure alignment with accreditation standards and to support ongoing compliance.

6.0 Ongoing Business

a. Policy Review

The Chair stated that the updated policies had been distributed to the Board members via email for their review and subsequent approval at the May board meeting. Bill noted that the email, sent on May 12, explicitly highlighted the specific changes made to the policies. Brenda clarified that document formatting is not considered for accreditation purposes.

7.0 Standing Items

a. 2025 Upcoming Tasks – Board Work Plan

The Chair outlined that the work plan for the May meeting includes a requirement for directors whose terms are set to conclude at the October Annual General Meeting (AGM) to formally indicate their interest in standing for re-election.

Bill noted that the directors up for re-election are Jane, David, Dan, and himself. He further clarified that, in accordance with our policy, each director is required to submit a written expression of interest to the Secretary, with a copy sent to Uju. The Chair emphasized that the communication does not need to be formal; an email expressing the director's interest in being re-elected will be sufficient. These emails should be retained for future reference. Bill confirmed that this item will be added to the agenda for the upcoming Board meeting.

b. Youth Advisory

Brenda reported that preparations are underway for Pride events scheduled for June. She also acknowledged the team's valuable contributions to the recently concluded Children's Mental Health Week. Additionally, the New Northern Mentality (NNM) Group organized a series of fundraisers to support attendance at the annual TNNM Conference in July. The goal is to send two to three youth participants to the event. Brenda further noted that, in the coming week, arrangements will be made for two to three youths to participate in the interview process for the three candidates applying for the Live-in Treatment Supervisor position.

c. Board Succession

This was already discussed under the Board Work Plan.

d. Presentation

The Chair noted that there would be no presentation at the May Board meeting, given the extensive agenda. Presentations will be staggered across future meetings to ensure adequate time for discussion of all items.

8.0 Other Business

No other business

9.0 Next Meeting

June 18, 2025

10.0 Adjournment

MOTION

BIRT, the committee moves to adjourn the meeting at 12:37 pm.

Moved by: Megan Bernard

Seconded by: William Johnson

All in favour.

CARRIED.

Submitted by: Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – SERVICES AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 22nd, 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"/> Rick Hamilton <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lucia O'Connor
AFS Staff:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ali Juma, Chief Executive Officer <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: Jane Omollo

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum Established.

2.0 Call to Order

Patricia R. Lofstrom calls the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

3.0 Review of Agenda

MOTION BIRT the Committee reviews and approves the May 22, 2025, agenda as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: Jennifer Geenen

4.0 Review Previous Minutes

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

Moved by: Jennifer Geenen

Seconded by: Rick Hamilton

5.0 New Business

a. Annual Work Plan

The Committee members reviewed the Annual Work Plan and recommended the following modifications to the template:

- In line 13 of the document - Training and Orientation; Services and Advocacy Committee was included as responsible for reviewing this task. Additionally, the description section was revised to include level setting, which is part of the strategic plan.

b. Budget

Ali noted that the provincial government released its budget without conducting the customary pre-budget consultation. The budget includes an investment of over \$400 million in the community-based mental health and addictions sector. As part of this investment, a 4% base funding increase has been announced, which translates to an allocation of \$281,175.08. We have reached out to our Ministry of Health (MOH) program advisors to confirm whether this amount represents the allocation designated for our organization. Additionally, we have inquired about any potential restrictions on the use of these funds in terms of service delivery.

Should this funding be confirmed as a base increase, we anticipate challenges in distributing the funds across programs that are not currently funded by the MOH. Once we receive clarification from our program advisors, we will be in a position to make informed investment decisions at the organizational level.

Ali highlighted that, in alignment with our strategic priority of advancing reconciliation, an Indigenous Outreach Counsellor was initially recruited in 2016. However, the staff member subsequently required workplace accommodation. As a result, the staff has since been reassigned, and we have initiated a posting for a full-time Indigenous Outreach staff member. Additionally, we are planning to engage a Knowledge Keeper to further support our outreach efforts.

Ali also noted that individuals receiving services under Jordan's Principle funding may increasingly turn to AFS for support. Jennifer confirmed that MP Terry Sheehan has been informed of the current situation and is actively seeking letters of support to advocate for increased funding for Indigenous mental health agencies, such as Nogdawindamin.

Ali recommended that this matter be brought forward at the May Board meeting, as any potential funding to address the anticipated rise in service demand would be expected to come from the provincial government. However, it is important to note that, to date, we have not observed a significant increase in demand directly attributable to the impact of Jordan's Principle funding.

Ali noted that, during the March Board meeting, he had anticipated that April would be a relatively quiet month in terms of service demand. However, due to unforeseen incidents—including the tragic death of a young boy and the distressing event at the Filipino community gathering—the service demand report for April reflected a notable increase in requests for support.

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:

- We had forty-five new referrals compared to twenty-seven referrals in the same period last year.
- The number of Single Therapy Sessions declined compared to the previous fiscal year, with 72 sessions recorded in 2024–25, down from 95 in 2023–24.
- There has been a decline in group program participation, which appears to reflect a broader trend rather than an issue specific to AFS.
- Greenspace has been operational for two months and serves as a measurement-based care platform that facilitates regular client screenings and assessments. To date, 41 clients have been enrolled, with 40 assessments completed—averaging four assessments per client. The platform is currently utilized within the Counselling and Therapy program. Notably, during a recent conference in Toronto, Brenda reported that AFS was recognized as the largest source of referrals among tele-mental health coordinating agencies.
- Violence against Women has decreased. We have eight people on the waitlist.
- The Anti-Human Trafficking has one year funding secured for this fiscal, but we have reached out to the program advisor, and we have learned that they are exploring the possibility of a permanent funding.
- Ali noted that the provincial government recently announced \$2.5 million in funding for a gender-based violence initiative, allocated to Women In Crisis (WIC). This funding is contingent upon collaboration with community partners to establish a drop-in center for women, which will be located in the former constituency office of Ross Romano and Chris Scott. WIC has requested that we provide services for men two days per week. In response, we will develop a service contract and a corresponding budget to support this engagement.

ii. Community Services Update

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

- Last month, the Youth Hub welcomed over 500 new visitors. To further expand our reach and ensure that youth in more remote communities are aware of our virtual services, we are planning outreach visits to Wawa and Elliot Lake.
- The Rebound Volunteer Banquet is scheduled for Monday, May 26th.

b. Finding a Better Way (Extraordinary Service)

i. Privacy/Incident/Complaint

No update

Serious Occurrence

Stephanie stated that there has been thirteen serious occurrences since the last report.

ii. Lead Agency

Brenda mentioned that she attended the last Lead Agency Meeting in Toronto on behalf of Ali. One of the major highlights is the provincial one-stop talk, which is like a virtual counselling service. Additional topics included ongoing concerns regarding wage parity across the sector. The meeting also featured a presentation from the Centre of Excellence for Mental Health, during which participants recommended that the Centre support the development of a lifespan approach to mental health care.

iii. Accreditation

Brenda noted that while some items may still come before this committee, the majority of the work has been completed, and the related policies are expected to be approved at the May Board meeting. Additional tasks, such as the extraction of meeting minutes, will also be addressed. Following the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Brenda is likely to schedule a separate session to brief Board members on the upcoming interview process. The site visit is currently scheduled for the third week of November 2025.

iv. Ontario Health Team (OHT)

Ali reported that three submissions were made by the Ontario Health Team (OHT) in response to the recently announced Primary Care Action Plan grant, which aims to expand access to primary care services. A response is still pending. Additionally, a proposal was introduced to restructure the OHT governance model by establishing a smaller group to oversee operational responsibilities. However, during the meeting, members expressed discomfort with proceeding to a vote due to the absence of some participants, given the significance of the proposed changes.

Dr. Bal, a new physician specializing in addiction medicine, visited the team at AFS. He is a family physician affiliated with Sault Area Hospital and also provides consultation services at the Group Health Centre. During his visit, Dr. Bal expressed an interest in exploring potential opportunities to collaborate with AFS.

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

i. New Funding and Initiatives/Partnership Updates

Stephanie mentioned the Women in Crisis funding, which was shared earlier.

d. Level Setting

i. French Language Service/Culture Linguistics

Brenda has confirmed that we have received \$11,000 in funding to support the French translation of the website. We are currently compiling a list of content to be translated and are leveraging free translation tools where appropriate. Additionally, the administrative staff are continuing their French language classes.

ii. Youth and Family Engagement

Brenda mentioned that during the Children's Mental Health Week, we did a parent engagement event on a Saturday evening, and it was well attended. Some parents from the district attended. We had about twenty-one parents attend. Overall, it was successful. From that, some parents expressed interest in participating in ongoing family advisory. We plan on incorporating a parent self-care component to keep them engaged and also schedule one or two meetings annually.

iii. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Updates

Stephanie mentioned that some board members have registered for the training. The first session of the training is scheduled for Tuesday, May 27th. Additionally, the Pride event is coming up in June – which typically features several activities.

e. Reconciling our Truth

Ali will draft a letter to the MP, MPP, and MOH Program Advisor advocating for urgent funding to support indigenous families impacted by the cuts in Jordan Principle's funding. Ali will forward the draft letter to the committee members for review. This item will be added to the Board meeting agenda.

7.0 Ongoing Business

a. Review Terms of Reference

Deferred

8.0 Other Business

9.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourns at 6:42 pm.