

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – SERVICES AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 18th, 2025
5:00 pm
Microsoft Teams – Virtual



ATTENDANCE

AFS Board of Directors:	☒ Patricia R. Lofstrom (Chair) ☒ William Johnson	☒ Dania Kuzbari ☒ Lucia O'Connor	☒ Rick Hamilton
AFS Staff:	☒ Stephanie Fetherston, Senior Director of Services	☒ Brenda Clarke, Director Community Services & Strategic Initiatives	☒ Obianuju Fadijo, Executive Assistant
Youth Representatives:			
Regrets:	Jane Omollo	Jennifer Geenen	

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum Established.

2.0 Call to Order

Patricia R. Lofstrom calls the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

3.0 Review of Agenda

MOTION BIRT the Committee reviews and approves the September 18, 2025, agenda as presented.

Moved by: Rick Hamilton

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari

4.0 Review Previous Minutes

MOTION BIRT the committee approves the June 19, 2025, meeting minutes, as presented.

Moved by: William Johnson

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari

5.0 New Business

No new business

6.0 Standing Items

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

i. *Service Demand Report*

Stephanie provides her Director's Report highlighting the following:

- August numbers were consistent with other years.
- We had 44 single therapy sessions and 59 in July
- We have had a couple of leaves of absences in counselling and therapy team and as such have not had many staff doing STSs, but we have been able to meet the demand.
- The Birth to Six have been successful at not having a waitlist
- In follow-up of group sessions review, we have changed to an evidenced based manualized program called "TRAILS" for depression and anxiety and it will be rolled out this fall.
- We recruited a fifth Clinical Manager for the district
- Crisis follow-up was slow during the summer as we did not receive many referrals
- The Care and Treatment program has some challenges with serving more complex children. We will be partnering with local school boards to continue to provide effective services to clients.
- We have an intern for the Psychology team that will assist with addressing the waitlist. The internship position is funded by generous donation of the Dr. Carol Fick Estate.
- We lost some of our contracts for the Employee Assistance Program, but we have re-assigned the counsellors to lower the Violence Against Women (VAW) waitlist.
- We are at the fifth year of the Anti-human trafficking funding contract, but we received communication from the Ministry that they will continue to fund the program.

ii. *Community Services Update*

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

- The total number of visits declined in the summer because there were days that we had groups attend. Additionally, the weather appears to have an impact on attendance. For example, when it rains, we tend to see fewer people at the Hub.
- We did some pop-up days at Elliot Lake and Blind River. We still plan on going out to St. Joseph's Island.

b. Finding a Better Way (Extraordinary Service)

i. *Privacy*

We had two privacy breaches, which are both minor.

Serious Occurrence

Stephanie stated that we recorded sixty-eight serious occurrences for the months of June, July, and August. Most of the incidents involve AWOL and missing medication. These incidents are largely common for tier 4 youth, which the Ministry is aware of and is concerned about the management of such incidents.

ii. Lead Agency

- Stephanie is on the Steering Committee for Community of Practice – there will be an in person meeting in December.
- The Steering Committee has not been active for some years.

iii. Accreditation

- The accreditation all submitted on September 2nd.
- The interview is scheduled for November the 11th at 5 pm.
- Brenda will schedule a one-hour briefing meeting to provide Board members with insight to what the interview questions would look like and length. The meeting will also be recorded for board members who are unable to attend.
- Brenda will send a poll with possible dates and time to determine what would work best for everyone.
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iv. Ontario Health Team (OHT)
Deferred

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

i. New Funding and Initiatives/Partnership Updates

- The Women in Crisis received gender-based violence funding and they have contracted with us to provide early intervention Counselling services for men who have experienced domestic violence or involved in unhealthy relationships. Our counsellors will be working two days a week.
- We have funding for three potential Youth Outreach Workers to support the HART Hub.
- Discussions about reaching out to Women's Crisis Centre in Elliot Lake in regard to providing support for men in crisis.
- 211 provincial program – is another gender-based violence service that AFS supports. If men call 211, they will be connected to a single therapy session. If the person who called lives in the Algoma region, they will be connected to one of our counsellors. The program will launch in October.

d. Level Setting

i. French Language Service/Culture Linguistics

- We received funding for less than twelve thousand dollars to update the website. The website is currently undergoing upgrades and once completed, the French section will be revamped.

ii. Youth and Family Engagement

- We are planning on engaging parents with hand-on activities such as developing at least two parent events a year at the Hub. The next event is an open house that would provide information to parents of preteens or teens to better understand the type of services offered at the Hub.
- The Live-In Treatment is now under the Community Services portfolio. We are actively recruiting for a LIT Manager and hopefully will have the position filled by early October.
- The Hub elevator construction is still pending due to necessary groundwork that needs to be in place before the construction commences.

iii. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Updates

e. Reconciling our Truth

- We are currently developing our service plans and many of our teams are doing their team building activities choosing to engage in activities that relate to reconciling our truth. Some have

participated in Truth Walk through Algoma University. We are planning on some blanket exercises.

- We are recruiting for a new Indigenous Outreach Counsellor, but we did not get an uptake for that position. As a result, we consulted with the Indigenous Friendship Center, and they informed us about how colonial the job description appeared. Based on the advice, we are changing the job title to Indigenous Outreach Coordinator and ensuring the job description, including educational requirements aligns with the intended purpose of the role.

7.0 Ongoing Business

a. Review Terms of Reference

Deferred

8.0 Other Business

9.0 Adjournment

MOTION BIRT the Committee moves to adjourn the meeting at 6:05pm.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: William Johnson