

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING – MINUTES

Wednesday, September 24, 2025
5:00 pm
Virtual – MS Teams & In-Person



ATTENDANCE

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

MINUTES

1.0 Quorum

Quorum established.

2.0 Constitute Meeting

2.1 Call to Order

The Board Chair calls the meeting to order at 5:04 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

Youth in Transition Worker

Lori discusses the role she plays as the Youth in Transition Worker. She helps these youth learn essential life skills to live independently. The housing model involves a fourplex where three units are occupied by youth and the fourth by a volunteer adult called a Proctor, who acts like a university floor supervisor—monitoring activities, ensuring rules are followed, and providing guidance. The youth must adhere to a living agreement that includes rules like no pets, smoking, or drugs, and restrictions on overnight visitors. This initiative builds on a previous success where a young woman transitioned from a treatment program to independent living with support. The current goal is to expand to a total of nine units over the next two years.

There is currently one youth in the property. Lori and the team are helping the youth settle and plan for his future. He's a hard worker and may benefit from hands-on training programs that teach skills like drywall installation and home renovation. This could lead to stable employment and affordable housing.

Lori actively researches transitional housing options and collaborates with other community organizations to find resources. The Hub model supports youth not just with housing, but also with employment, food security, and life skills.

Lori is excused from the meeting.

4.0 Agenda & Minutes

4.1 Approval of Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the September 24, 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 June 20, 2025, Public Board Meeting Minutes as presented.

Moved by: Dan Swystun

Seconded by: Wes Lavergne All in favour. CARRIED.

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the July 30, 2025, Public Board Meeting agenda as presented.

Moved by: Lucia O'Connor

Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in

favour. CARRIED.

4.3 Business Arising from Previous Minutes

No business arising.

5.0 Consent Agenda

MOTION

BIRT, the board approves the September 24, 2025, consent agenda as presented.

5.1 Board Correspondence

- 5.2 AFS Foundation Report, *Jessica Lopatka**
- 5.3 Community Services & Strategic Initiatives Report, *Brenda Clarke**
- 5.4 Finance & Administration Director's Report, *Jacob Bruzas**
- 5.5 Human Resources Director's Report, *Arlene Smith**
- 5.6 Service Demand Report, *Natalie Young**
- 5.7 Director of Service Board Report, *Stephanie Fetherston**

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

6.0 Items Removed from Consent Agenda

No items removed from consent agenda.

7.0 New/Ongoing Business

7.1 Board Report Template - Update

The leadership team reviewed a reporting template provided by DSSAB and after brief discussion, it was determined that the DSAP template does not meet the needs of the agency's leadership reporting structure.

Each director currently submits reports with significant variance, highlighting the need for a standardized format. A new internal template will be developed and brought forward for review. However, there is no requirement for board approval of the new template unless deemed necessary.

Ali shared that the executive summary of his recent board report was generated using Copilot, summarizing an 8-page document into key activity areas. Feedback on the AI-generated summary is welcomed to help refine future outputs. Board members were invited to share comments or suggestions with Ali, either during or after the meeting.

7.2 Accreditation Update

Brenda stated that the Accreditation site reviewers will visit from November 10–13. They plan to interview the board on Tuesday, November 11, without staff present. The interview will last about an hour, after which regular agenda items can continue.

The board was praised for being well-prepared as all documents and policies were submitted by mid-June. Only minor follow-ups were needed.

Brenda will schedule an interview prep meeting prior to the accreditation site visit. A poll will be sent to confirm board members' availability and preferred time. PowerPoint and summary document will be shared at the prep meeting. The board members are advised to review the prep materials prior to the interview. The meeting will be recorded for any board member who is unable to attend.

No extensive prep required; questions will be operational and familiar. Some of the likely interview questions to expect from the accreditation reviewers are: Board governance and self-awareness, succession planning and executive staffing, diversity and inclusion efforts, Board training and development, CEO reporting and performance appraisal, contingency planning for CEO absence, Board planning tools (e.g., work plan spreadsheet).

7.3 Executive Officer Nominations

- I. **President Nomination:** Bill (Incumbent) accepted the nomination. This will be Bill's third term as President. He encouraged grooming future leadership. As the sole nominee, a formal resolution will be passed at the end of the AGM to appoint Bill for another one-year term.

MOTION BIRT, that the Board approves William Johnson to continue as President of Algoma Family Services commencing at the AGM of 2025 for a one-year term.

Moved by: Wes Lavergne
Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in favour. CARRIED.

- II. **Vice President Nomination:** Patricia (Incumbent) was nominated in absentia. Confirmation of her willingness to continue is pending. The Chair to follow up with Patricia before the October meeting. If she accepts, a motion will be passed at the AGM.
- III. **Secretary Nomination:** Incumbent: Dania (Incumbent) accepted nomination to continue for another term.

MOTION BIRT that the Board approves Dania Kuzbari to continue as Secretary of Algoma Family Services commencing at the AGM of 2025 for a one-year term.

Moved by: Wes Lavergne
Seconded by: Dan Swystun All in favour. CARRIED.

- IV. **Treasurer Nomination:** Dave (Incumbent) is dealing with family health issues and may reduce participation. He is willing to remain on the board and likely continue as Treasurer in a limited capacity. The Chair offered to support by temporarily chairing the Finance Committee if needed. The Chair to confirm Dave's willingness to continue as Treasurer before the AGM. In the event that he no longer wishes to continue as Treasurer, we can attend to the issue in the November Board meeting.

Final confirmations for Vice President and Treasurer roles to be completed before the October meeting. Formal resolutions for officer appointments to be passed at the AGM.

7.4 Directors for Re-election

The Board reviewed the previous year's Slate of Directors and discussed updates for the 2025-2026 term. The directors up for re-election are **Dan Swystun, David Petersson, Jane Omollo, and William Johnson**. The updates to the slate will include:

- Changing their term start year to 2025 and end year to 2028
- The Chair will be in his second term, while Dan, David and Jane will be in their first term
- The completed term column will be updated to one (1) for the Chair and no change for the rest of the board members since they filled vacancies.

The updated Slate of Directors for 2025-2026 will be presented to the Board at the October 22nd board meeting.

7.5 Urgent Funding Request to Support Indigenous – Update

Ali stated that we did not experience a high volume of demand for our service because of the reduction of the Jordan's Principle funding. He believes that some of those programs provided by First Nations were extended, and some staff retained through other program funding.

7.6 Memorandum of Understanding between Algoma Family Services Foundation and Algoma Family Services

Rick recuses himself from the discussion due to a potential conflict of interest. The MOU has already been approved by the AFS Foundation board. However, there were some suggested changes to the wording under Indemnification. To change "for" in line 5 to "including but not limited to" and to add "and" in line 7 before from. Once revised, Bill's signature will be affixed and sent to the AFS Foundation for them to initial the change.

MOTION BIRT, that the board approves the amended Memorandum of Understanding between Algoma Family Service Foundation and Algoma Family Services.

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

Other Business:

Lucia attended the Indigenous Governance Workshop. She described it as a powerful and unique learning experience, distinct from Western-style training. The workshop was structured around Indigenous traditions, including a talking circle and teachings centered on a sacred bundle containing items like a candle, feather, and medicines. Key themes included:

- Respectful and holistic governance: Emphasizing connection to land, spirituality, and community.
- Governance as a circle: Moving away from linear, checklist-based approaches like Robert's Rules of Order.
- Four-directional framework: East – Thought, South – Feeling, West – Understanding, North – Action.

This model encourages participants to reflect deeply before making decisions, fostering inclusivity and shared responsibility. Lucia highlighted that this approach promotes equality and collective decision-making, aiming to decolonize governance practices and create more meaningful engagement in board settings.

The Chair encouraged Lucia to document her insights from the workshop in writing. The write-up could then be shared with the Governance, Services and Advocacy Committees for further discussion and potentially brought to the full board.

Lucia shared details about Truth and Reconciliation Day events at Algoma University on September 30th. She encouraged everyone to wear orange shirts and highlighted a candlelight vigil happening at 7:00 pm in front of Shingwauk Hall, the former site of the Shingwauk Residential School. The vigil honors children who never returned home from residential schools, especially those connected to that location. The event will include drumming, community gathering, and possibly refreshments, and is open to everyone.

8.0 CEO Report

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

- Every Breakfast Counts program successfully delivered over 9,500 meals to children via community hubs.
- September was FASD Awareness Month. Youth from DARE program created a handmade trophy and medals to honor their involvement.
- Opening of the Women in Crisis (WIC) Community Center in the Wishart building. It is a one-stop support hub for women experiencing gender-based violence. Male counsellors also support men in abusive relationships.
- The START program was discontinued.
- Hired a new Clinical Manager in Elliot Lake
- Welcomed 15 student placements in September

9.0 Board Committee Updates

9.1 Service and Advocacy Committee Chair Report

The Chair reported that during the Committee meeting, it was agreed to resend the advocacy letter originally addressed to the President of Sault College, David Oraziotti, in support of the Child and Youth Care Worker Program. The letter will be updated to reflect the current Acting President of Sault College, Sherri Smith, as the recipient. Once revised, the Chair's and Vice-President's signatures will be affixed prior to its submission.

The board members were encouraged to review the meeting minutes included in the board folder.

10.0 Adjourn to In-Camera

Jennifer exited the meeting at 6:21 pm.

MOTION

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

Moved by: Lucia O'Connor

Seconded by: Dania Kuzbari All in favour. CARRIED.

11.0 Resume Regular Public Board Meeting

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to resume the regular public board meeting at 7:22 pm.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: Rick Hamilton All in favour. CARRIED.

12.0 Accept Motions Made In-Camera

No in-camera motions.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION

BIRT, the board moves to adjourn the regular public board meeting at 7:23 pm.

Moved by: Dan Swystun

Seconded by: Wes Lavergne All in favour. CARRIED.

14.0 NEXT MEETING

- Next Regular Board Meeting October 22, 2025 @ 5 PM

Submitted by: Obianuju Fadjo, Executive Assistant