

AFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS – SERVICES AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 16th, 2025
5:00 pm
Microsoft Teams – Virtual



ATTENDANCE

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

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 October 16, 2025, agenda as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari

Seconded by: Jennifer Geenen

4.0 Review Previous Minutes

MOTION BIRT the committee approves the September 18, 2025, meeting minutes, as presented.

Moved by: Dania Kuzbari
Seconded by: William Johnson

5.0 New Business

Child and Youth Care Worker Program Advocacy Letter – Update

- Sherri Smith, who is the Interim President of Sault College, responded to the advocacy letter regarding Sault College Child and Youth Care Worker Program (CYC).
- Her response confirmed receipt and acknowledged the concerns raised. She stated that the decision to suspend the CYC program was due to persistently low enrollment, program retention challenges, and a significant financial deficit. However, they are actively exploring potential paths forward.
- It was noted that the Sault College and Algoma University are both facing low enrollment. These institutions are exploring distance education programs, including online diplomas from other colleges.

6.0 Standing Items

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

i. *Service Demand Report*

No service demand report was presented. Stephanie provides her report highlighting the following:

- **Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program:** A second counselor has been hired and is currently in training. Case-load assignments will begin in November, completing the program's staffing needs. Recruitment was delayed due to communication from the lead organization, Health Sciences North.
- **Indigenous Outreach Worker Position:** The job description was revamped following consultations. A high volume of qualified applicants has been received. Shortlisting is in progress, and the team is optimistic about the outcome.
- **Trails to Wellness Program:** Two revamped Trails to Wellness groups are currently running and fully enrolled, which is a positive shift from previous challenges with low group enrollment.
- **Violence Against Women (VAW):** A Children Who Witness Violence training session, which is funded through annual VAW capacity-building dollars was held. Approximately 100 participants from across Algoma attended the two and half day in-person training, including clinicians and district staff.

A new collaboration agreement has been finalized, following a directive from MCCSS. The agreement addresses coordination between child welfare and VAW services for children exposed to intimate partner violence. A consultant funded by MCCSS supported the update process across Northern Ontario. The launch event is scheduled for next week, with three sessions involving: Nogdawindamin, Children's Aid Society, Women in Crisis, Victim Services, and Algoma Family Services. A joint committee, co-chaired with Children's Aid Society, will oversee ongoing implementation and updates.

ii. *Community Services Update*

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

- **Virtual Hub:** The Virtual Hub is performing well, with upcoming virtual events planned over the next three weeks. A community open house is scheduled for November 18th, from 5:00 to 7:30 pm aimed at welcoming adults in the community and reducing stigma. There will be refreshments, activities, and opportunities to meet staff and the nurse

practitioner. Invitations will be sent to schools, school boards, parent advisory committees, and key partners.

- **National School Food Program:** The National School Food Program funding has been made permanent. Algoma received approximately \$300,000 last year, increasing the program's budget by 50%. Staff will work with schools to plan future use of funds, including equipment and program improvements.
- **Website Maintenance:** The website is undergoing updates. A mirror copy is being worked on and will be re-integrated soon.
- **Live-In Treatment:** This has been added to her portfolio following Brian Kelly's departure. Emily Milito has been hired as the new manager and will be starting on October 27th. Compliance efforts are underway to prepare for ministry inspections. The first-ever Team Day for live-in treatment staff will be held at Thompson Farms, which includes morning team-building activities and afternoon recreational events. Casual and full-time staff will participate, with coverage arranged for the facility.
- **Transitional Housing:** The new transitional housing site is located at 61 Wellington, across from the former Holy Angel School. Currently, one youth is residing in the unit. The Foundation Intern has agreed to take on the Proctor role. He is in the process of moving into the unit. An application review committee met earlier in the week to assess potential youth candidates. A few tentative youths have been identified. Pending agreement to the tenant rules and conditions, the unit is expected to be fully occupied with three youth and one Proctor by November 1st.

b. Finding a Better Way (Extraordinary Service)

i. Privacy

There was no privacy breach.

Complaints

One complaint related to the Transitional Housing unit was received. A suggestion was made by Jennifer to host a community information session to address the concerns from neighbours and reduce stigma.

Serious Occurrence

There were 11 serious occurrences.

ii. Lead Agency

- Ali is currently attending lead agency meetings in Toronto. The first in-person Community of Practice meeting is scheduled for December 3–4 in Toronto. The meeting will focus on Knowledge sharing across agencies, identifying best practices, selecting a focus area for collaborative progress.

iii. Accreditation

- A briefing session for board members is scheduled for November 3rd at 5 PM, ahead of the November 11th site review interviews.
- The session will be recorded for those unable to attend. 35–40 minute presentation - Open Q&A throughout.
- The goal is to help board members feel prepared and confident going into the interview.
- The interview will be conducted with all board members together, not individually

iv. Ontario Health Team (OHT)

Deferred

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

i. New Funding and Initiatives/Partnership Updates

- The embargo on the Heart Hub has been lifted and we are anticipating a formal announcement. A soft launch has occurred, though details remain limited.
- Ongoing work includes planning for youth outreach workers, with a meeting scheduled for October 31st to discuss further. Future meetings will explore how housing and outreach services will be rolled out in connection with the Hub.
- We received \$121,000 in funding from School Food Infrastructure and federal sources. Funds will be used to purchase a refrigerated delivery van to support food distribution. The van will be branded with AFS and used to extend food delivery reach, including to Wawa and Elliot Lake. Refrigeration capability allows for safe transport of fresh food over longer distances, addressing previous limitations.

d. Level Setting

i. French Language Service/Culture Linguistics

- Quality Improvement Plans for French language services were submitted this week. Submission was delayed due to the absence of a submission portal, which became available recently. Website updates for French content are expected within the next 2–3 weeks.

ii. Youth and Family Engagement

- Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles visited the Youth Hub during a Youth Advisory committee meeting.
- She engaged in meaningful dialogue with youth and expressed interest in returning for a formal, intentional meeting with Northern Ontario youth.

iii. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Updates

- Ongoing Education Sessions are being held for staff through Mesh.
- A monthly DEI newsletter featuring community events have been distributed to staff.

e. Reconciling our Truth

- There is an upcoming medicine walk as part of a service planning team day activity for the psychology team.
- A proposal was made to organize a medicine walk for board members with a traditional knowledge keeper. There was a suggestion to schedule one in the spring or warmer months, as the walk involves being outdoors for about an hour.
- The walk will be added to the To-Do List and revisited when weather permits.

7.0 Ongoing Business

a. Review Terms of Reference

Deferred

8.0 Other Business

9.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:53 pm