

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: May 9, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation and Shakita LaGrant McClain, Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services.

Subject: From the Director, Department of Transportation and the Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services providing an Informational Report regarding an update on the Social Development Commission (SDC).

File Type: Informational Report

POLICY

The Social Development Commission (SDC) was created in 1963 under Chapter 66 of the Wisconsin State Statutes which authorizes and regulates the establishment and operation of social development commissions in Wisconsin. Subsequently, the Wisconsin Legislature passed legislation describing the functions of “community action agencies” in Wisconsin (Wis. Stats 46.30), and in 1964, SDC became the community action agency for Milwaukee County. Thus, SDC is both an intergovernmental community relation-social development commission and community action agency.

BACKGROUND

Late last month, SDC abruptly shut down after suspension of its Weatherization Assistance Program, SDC’s largest program, due to the misallocation of funds. The Wisconsin Department of Administration is currently undertaking a forensic audit of SDC operations related to weatherization and other state and federal grant dollars.

Fortunately, there has been minimal impact to programming and services for Milwaukee County-DHHS with the closing of SDC. DHHS provided funding to SDC for AODA prevention services which is currently under review. Behavioral Health Services (BHS) holds one 2024 contract with SDC for \$364,619 which was funded through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant. To date, SDC invoiced BHS a total of \$31,396 for services it provided from January to March 2024. BHS holds contracts with two other providers that will continue to deliver prevention services. And plans are currently underway to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) on May 16, 2024, to award the balance of \$333,000 remaining in SDC’s contract.

The mission of the SDC is “empowering Milwaukee County residents with the resources to move beyond poverty” through programs and services that address issues specific to employment, education, finance, health, and wellness. Overall, SDC oversees about 30 programs with 85 employees. It has a \$30.5 million operating budget.

Pursuant to the by-laws of the SDC, the board of directors for the agency is made up of 18 members, each of whom holds the title of Commissioner. Commissioners are nonpartisan and must include representatives from clergy and minority groups. One-third of the commissioners are representatives of public officials; one-third are representatives of the low-income residents of the County; and one-third are representatives of private agencies and organizations in the County.

The board of directors has within its general power to determine policy for the agency and direct the general management and control of its affairs. Milwaukee County’s appointed representative to SDC’s board of directors is Donna Brown-Martin, Director of the Department of Transportation.

DHHS Response to SDC Closure and No Wrong Door Implementation

DHHS is committed to ensuring that every person who was served by SDC and reaches out to DHHS will be connected to services, resources and/or programs. DHHS consists of Aging and Disabilities Services (ADS), Behavioral Health Services (BHS), Child Support Services (CSS), Children Youth and Family Services (CYFS), Housing Services, and Veterans Services. We serve more than 80,000 individuals in our community per year in partnership with more than 4,000 providers. Therefore, we are well positioned to assist in navigating individuals in need to appropriate resources.

Further, DHHS has implemented a No Wrong Door model which means a person can and will be served no matter that person’s entry point into DHHS. Individuals are treated with dignity and have access to holistic care as well as services and resources provided by our community partners. In response to the situation, DHHS is developing a No Wrong Door website as another tool to connect residents to services and resources and enhancing the No Wrong Door messaging strategy.

With the closing of SDC, DHHS leadership has ensured that its workforce received an updated service list for internal services and programs as well as a referral guide for calls related to SDC (please see the attachment). These tools will assist our staff in initiating a “warm handoff” when directing community members who need service support because of SDC’s closure.

Additionally, DHHS is in the midst of a robust Mental Health Awareness Month campaign which features County Executive David Crowley in public service announcements highlighting Milwaukee County mental and behavioral health services and commercials directing residents to the mental health navigation tool, <https://www.healthymke.com/well>, developed in partnership with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This item is aligned to Milwaukee County's strategic plan (2A Apply a racial equity lens to all decision, 3A Invest upstream to address root causes of health disparities and 3C Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities), and the DHHS strategic plan.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes only.

FISCAL EFFECT

There is no fiscal impact to this informational report.

TERMS (If applicable)

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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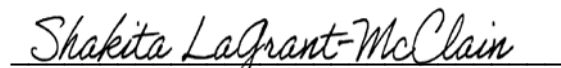
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APPROVED BY:



Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Department of Transportation



Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- DHHS Services List
- Referral Guide

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk