

Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative Board Meeting

September 11, 2024

8:00am – 10:00am

Hybrid via Zoom and in person at 450 Syndicate Street North, St. Paul

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT	Darlene Fry, Tonya Long, Nicolee Mensing, Rena Moran, Hoang Murphy, Rebecca Noecker, Erica Prosser, Erica Valliant, Jackie Turner, Daisy Vang, Gaolia Xiong, Mai Chong Xiong
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT	Dana Abrams, Hannah Corbett, Emmanuel Donaby, Camila Mercado Michelli
STAFF & GUESTS PRESENT	Nicole MartinRogers, Laurie Davis (Advance Consulting – Collaborative Coordinators) Kathy Kimani (St. Paul Public Schools) Dr. Benita Amedee (Wilder Foundation School-based Mental Health) Joe Munich (Generation Next) Laura Brinkmeier and Samara Herrick (Head Start)
Meeting called to order by Mensing at 8:03 am.	
Children’s Fire	Gaolia Xiong is leaving the board as youth representative, and she lit the Children’s Fire with a quote “I believe that children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way, and show them all the beauty they possess inside” (Whitney Houston). She thanked the board for having her be part of this work. It was amazing and unique that this board allows opportunities to connect. The board expressed thanks to Gaolia for her service as Youth Representative to the SPCC board since 2023. We’ll miss her!

Consent Agenda

Motion by Noecker to approve the minutes from the June 12 board meeting and accept the information contained in the August update from Advance Consulting, as well as the finance reports for June, July and August. Second by Murphy. Motion approved.

Youth Outcomes Plan: Focus on Mental Health

As part of our ongoing effort to dig deeper into Youth Outcomes Plan goals, the board asked to hear more about the mental health of young people in Saint Paul. We invited three guests – Kathy Kimani from SPPS, Benita Amedee from Wilder Foundation’s school-based mental health services, and Laura Brinkmeyer and Sammie from Head Start. Kathy started with some slides. She talked about the challenges in getting to quantitative outcomes around mental health, given how many factors impact mental health. Kathy said that she also sees a need for more general social emotional supports, not just mental health diagnosis and clinical services. Outcome data is currently mostly qualitative. Kathy is interested in hearing more about what kind of data would be helpful. So many factors impact mental health of our young people. SPPS does use a school climate survey including questions such as “is there an adult at school who can help me?” SPPS does not currently aggregate the data to look at it at a district level; it’s only provided back to schools for school-level planning. It’s hard to find an immediate measure of mental health improvement. What can we measure, and within what time period. Commissioner Moran asked for more info about how our children are doing – suspension, absenteeism, referrals, and more. Commissioner Xiong said that the school environment survey is a good proxy, and said she’d be interested in seeing the questions. The Healthy Minnesota Partnership group is also very focused on mental health issues this year. A clear gap is culturally relevant and bilingual mental health services. Ms. Tonya talked about data from IEPs and 504 plans as being relevant to this discussion, and also we don’t know who we are missing in using these broad categories and only looking at kids who are on one of these services or who have a specific diagnosis.

Benita Amedee from Wilder’s mental health and wellness presented next. Wilder provides outpatient services to children and adults. They are providing culturally specific and more general services. University of Minnesota did a study in 2023 about school-based mental health, finding that access to care is easier/improved in school settings. Wilder’s culturally-specific programming has focus on African American, Karen, Hmong, Latinx students, as well as more general mental health services. Most referrals come from school staff. Mostly the students with most significant behavior issues get referred, but they are also working with school staff to increase focus on less obvious needs (i.e., students who are NOT acting out but still need support). Wilder is in 26 schools in Saint Paul (district and charter), with caseload of 18-20 students per clinician. Wilder did some research last year, which was more qualitative, which shows 87% of parents said their child’s life was better as a result of services, 80% reported better ability to parent. Dr. Amadee can send that report. Anxiety has increased, which coincides with increase in trauma. They focus a lot on self-regulation (i.e., problem solving under stress). Other

measures – attendance / are they staying in class? Less fighting? Wilder also got a grant to work with students who have substance use disorder, now in year two in four high schools. With regard to gaps – need more therapists, especially therapists of color, Spanish speaking therapist, East African community therapists. It's key to have staff who can connect culturally with families, especially in cultures where mental health is less understood and/or if there is stigma around mental health treatment.

Laura and Sammie from Head Start shared information about Head Start's work with younger children. Head Start finds that 25-29% of children are affected by a mental health issue. 70% of Ramsey County youth had a mental health disorder that affected their life at home, school or in community. About 17,000 children 0-5 in Minnesota have a serious mental health issue, particularly anxiety, depression, and trauma. The trauma focus is much more intense since the pandemic. Often it's the teacher noticing externalizing or internalizing behavior. Young children often share emotional distress by acting out. The day treatment classroom is already almost full one week into the school year, which indicates increased demand/need compared with prior years. They are identifying kids earlier, which is obviously much better than not identifying the need until the child goes to K. Part of the issue is that families are not getting their most basic needs met, and it's hard for families to follow-through with therapy for their child if they are worried about food, rent, transportation, etc. There is a need for parent education about what is typical vs. atypical child development. Other gaps – transportation to access treatment services, needing to take time off of work, copays. Treatment completion rates for outpatient care are low. It's really better to meet the families where they are. They consider the treatment unit the parent/child, so it's key to meet them where they are together. Head Start/Frasier have some outcome data for day treatment – early childhood service intensity instrument and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire.

Director Valliant shared her family's experience during COVID with online therapy for her kids. She talked specifically about the challenges of not having culturally specific therapists. Parents' jobs also make it challenging to be responsive to immediate mental health issues and to be able to take advantage of therapy. Wait lists are not a good proxy for need, since families may be very discouraged and often don't even get ON the wait list. Ms. Tonya also spoke about her own family's challenges with the legal system (getting custody of a grandchild after the child's mother's death), and the help she's getting from the Native American Community Clinic. Caregivers may not have legal custody, which makes it nearly impossible to get help. Specifically, children who have lost a parent have increased barriers accessing services. There is a class called Circle of Security, which is an evidence-based parenting class for parents with young children. Lutheran Social Services has kinship support services.

SPCC Admin: Youth Representative

Gaolia Xiong is not able to serve a second year as youth representative, so Youth on Boards shared a new nominee, Iyannah Burns, whose background was included with the board packet.

Motion by Moran to appoint Iyannah Burns as Youth Representative to the SPCC board. Second by Long. Motion approved.

SPCC Administration

Mensing gave an update on the RFP for administrative support, which is required this year. Mensing has been working with Ramsey County to get that published. They county assures SPCC that there will be time to get the RFP process done by the end of the year, when Advance Consulting LLC's contract ends.

SPCC received a letter from Ramsey County Commissioner Frethem, via County Manager Ling Becker, which was included in the board packet. Nicolee Mensing and Advance Consulting asked for some clarifications by email, and those questions/answers from Becker were sent to the board in a separate email. Commissioner Moran talked about how we live in our silos, and we need to know if we are doing best practice, if there are things we should stop doing. Commissioner Xiong said this comes from the joint powers partners (CAPRW, school district, City, and County). Turner said it's always good to take a look at our work and how we can do better. She was not aware that SPPS had asked for this evaluation, but she does support it. Commissioner Xiong said the Superintendents do support this effort.

Motion by Turner to have the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative to be part of this evaluation. Second by Fry. Tabled until the October meeting so that all partners can be in the room and so additional questions can be answered.

Long pointed out that an external consultant always brings challenges – it needs to be a hometown consultant so they understand the context. They need the tenacity to look deeply into the work happening, from an equity standpoint. Mensing asked what the process will be for selecting the evaluator. Xiong said they haven't gotten that far yet, but agreed we should be asking those questions. Moran and Xiong both agreed the selection needs to include a racial equity lens. Turner asked what the intent of the evaluation is – is it to inform the County, or to evaluate the individual collaboratives. Xiong said that Ramsey County would pay for the evaluation and will be providing the results to the joint powers partners. Moran asked if the evaluation questions are the right ones. Mensing asked if the board wants to take action or to bring it back next month? Valliant observed that there may be some discomfort understanding the process and the questions. There may be an intent behind this that is not being shared – she doesn't have an issue with an evaluation in general, but she would like us to be clear on the intent. MartinRogers pointed out the last evaluation questions (i.e., family resource center model) is somewhat

presupposing an answer. Turner pointed out the City is not still in the meeting for this discussion, and she will also touch base with the Superintendent about the district's position. Moran wants all parties to feel comfortable and is OK with tabling this until the October meeting. Commissioner Moran has more questions and stated Commissioner Frethem was the one who put this together. Moran would like to invite Commissioner Frethem to the next meeting to help us understand the genesis of this proposal. Long talked about supporting the idea of evaluation but wants to understand if this is really about how money gets disbursed. The consultant needs to know the community and have context. Turner shared that Ramsey County is supporting all three collaboratives with direct and in-kind support. The city and the SPPS are getting a lot of return from the resources they are putting into SPCC, in terms of support to community agencies in St. Paul. She pointed out that the Children's Mental Health Collaborative is providing navigator services, but not direct mental health services. She also pointed out SPPS's desire to continue focus on the city's youth, specifically, and to keep the city engaged as a critical partner. Basically, she talked about not wanting to lose the focus on Saint Paul, specifically, which is integral to the SPCC. There is a need to revisit the evaluation questions, and those should be tuned up before the SPCC proceeds with participating.

Partner Updates

Tabled due to lack of time.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Roll call votes for September 11, 2024, Saint Paul Children's Collaborative Meeting

	Motion 1 – Consent Agenda	Motion 2 – Youth Rep	Motion 3 – evaluation (tabled)
Donaby (absent)			
Fry	YES	YES	
Long	YES	YES	
Mensing	YES	YES	
Mercado Michelli (absent)			
Moran	YES	YES	

Murphy	YES	YES	
Noecker	YES	YES	
Prosser	YES	YES	
Turner	YES	YES	
Valliant	YES	YES	
Vang	YES	YES	
Xiong, G	YES	YES	
Xiong, MC	YES	YES	