

**MINUTES**  
**COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES**  
**Friday – May 10, 2019 – 8:30 A.M.**  
**Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.**  
**418 Marion Street, Remsen, IA 51050**

**Commission Members present:** Mary Whisenand (Chairperson-via phone), Ajit Kumar (Vice-Chairperson) Kelly Busch (Secretary-via phone) John Murphy, Anna Brown (via phone)

**Commission Members absent:** Leland Shipley, Anna Hilpipre

**Staff Present:** Bill Brand, Christine Taylor, Greg Pieper, Donna Bura

**Others Present:** Lana Shope (Executive Director-ICAA), Dick Sievers (Executive Director-Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.), Tom Letsche (President-Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. Board of Directors), Rebekah Hungate (CCR/ Business Development Specialist), Laura Benson (FaDSS/Outreach Director), Sharon Heidesch (HR/Fiscal Director), Cindy Harpenan (WIC/MCH Director), Kendra Rensink (Head Start/Early Head Start Director), Julie Colling (Housing/ Energy Services Director)

- I. **Call to order-**Mary Whisenand called the meeting to order at 8:35 am.
- II. **Introductions-** Introductions were made.
- III. **Approval of the Agenda-**The Mid-Sioux Opportunity presentation was moved to the beginning of the agenda. Ajit Kumar moved that agenda be approved with the changes and Anna Brown seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- IV. **Approval of the February 14, 2019 meeting minutes-** Kelly Busch moved that the minutes be approved and Anna Brown seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- V. **Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. presentation-** Bill Brand and Mary Whisenand thanked Dick Sievers and staff for hosting the meeting today. Dick Sievers shared a slide presentation that was developed by the in house Marketing Committee made up of one person from each department. Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. was established as a Community Action Agency on September 27, 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act. The agency serves five main counties: Lyon, Sioux, Plymouth, Cherokee and Ida. The Child Care Resource Referral Department covers a region of 23 counties in Iowa. There are 112 employees and 15 Board of Directors members. There are five satellite outreach and emergency services offices located in Cherokee, Ida Grove, Rock Rapids, Le Mars and Sioux Center.

Programs and Services at Mid-Sioux Opportunity include: Head Start/CDC, Early Head Start, Child & Adult Care Food Program, Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, FaDSS, Iowa WIC, Maternal & Child Health, I-smile, Weatherization, LIHEAP and hawk-i. There are outreach services that help students with back to school supplies, emergency food, Food For Life (farmers donate beef), holiday gifts and food boxes.

Dick Sievers shared that the FaDSS program served 65 families last year. Over half (57%) of families increased their incomes. Dick shared that for every dollar invested in Mid-Sioux Opportunity FaDSS, it resulted in \$2.54 earned in wages and FIP savings which is one of the highest in the state of Iowa. Laura Benson added there are three FaDSS staff at the agency. She shared that last year, 25% of people were employed when they entered the FaDSS program and 75% were employed when they exited the program.

Dick informed the Commission that the Weatherization Program made energy efficient repairs to 40 homes last year. The repairs saved families about \$424 in the first year. Embrace Iowa, funded through the Des Moines Register, helped 18 households with appliances, car repairs, eye glasses and other emergency services. Julie Colling added that funding was cut for utilities but they were given additional heat and DOE funding. She shared that they should be able to do about 40 homes again this year. Julie's staff administer the Crisis Programs, Disaster programs and LIHEAP. Dick shared that the LIHEAP program helped over 2,000 families and over one million dollars in assistance was provided. ECIP (Emergency Crisis Intervention Program) assisted 202 families last year. Julie added the Moratorium was extended until May 13<sup>th</sup> this year instead of April 1<sup>st</sup> and anticipates there will be several requests for crisis funding after that ends.

Mid-Sioux Opportunity also administers the WIC (Women, Infant & Children) Program which is a special supplemental nutrition program. Dick shared that they serve approximately 1,536 individuals each month with food supplements and nutrition education. The WIC food package averages \$53.85 per month. Cindy Harpenan added that the food packages have begun to match the nutrition information given to participants which includes expensive things like whole grains. Participants are given EBT cards which are much easier to use. Another change is there is online nutrition training so that participants can go online to take their required classes and only have to visit the office twice a year. One of the biggest challenges right now is serving the increasing Hispanic population. There are limited resources for interpreters to help with the application process. Sioux County is a very accepting and giving county and Hispanic families feel safe there. Dick Sievers asked if Latino Affairs within the Department of Human rights could collaborate with Mid-Sioux Opportunity to provide technical assistance or information. Bill Brand responded that he will have Latino Affairs get in touch with the agency.

Dick shared that health services were provided to 250 pregnant women and approximately 4,700 children through the Maternal & Child Health Program. Also, many children received full hawk-i coverage in the five county service area. Cindy Harpenan shared that there is a major crisis with children receiving dental care within their service area because there are not enough providers that take state funded health insurance or uninsured patients. However, the I-Smile program provides dental screening for many children and pregnant women and assists with dental sealants and preventative care.

Mid-Sioux Opportunity runs Head Start and Early Head Start. Dick shared that they have 11 Head Start Centers and home based services in Ida Grove. Kendra Rensink added that they will be opening a classroom in Ida Grove to serve 3 and 4 year old children in September. The agency was able to partner with SHIP (Siouxland Human Investment Program) who will provide funding for 8 children and Head Start will provide funding for another 8 children. This is the first class in Ida Grove for 3 and 4 year olds. Home based services will still be available for pregnant women and children up to 3 years old. Dick explained that Early Head Start serves children up to the age of 2 which is mainly home based. Ninety parents attended parent workshops and 71% of all parents who had children in the Head Start programs worked or attended school.

Dick explained that the Child Care Resource & Referral program provides resources, education and advocacy to support quality child care and serves twenty-three counties in Northwest Iowa. About 1,422 child care providers received training through CCR&R. The program is funded through the Iowa Department of Human Services. Dick shared that Iowa has lost 40-45% of child care providers that were in place 5 years ago. However, there has been an increase in child care centers in Iowa as in home providers continue to drop. Rebekah Hungate added that the program has been trying to recruit new providers in the area. The agency partnered with Iowa Women's Foundation out of Eastern Iowa who focus on empowering women to be self-sufficient. The group went on a tour throughout the state to see what barriers were keeping women from working and through questionnaires, child care was found to be the biggest barrier. In the twenty three counties served, 6 communities have been working with the agency and foundation to recruit and maintain providers. They have also been making sure that child development is the main goal with current providers. Bill Brand asked if a group of people wanted to open a child care center, can the agency and the foundation help to get it started. Rebekah responded yes; they can help provide resources and information to get a center started. Ajit Kumar asked why we are losing so many child care providers. Rebekah responded that there are many reasons such as low unemployment, better wages, benefits and houses that may not meet health standards. Lana Shope also added that reimbursement rates are low for child care assistance. Rebekah responded that the reimbursement rates are going up with quality child care ratings (started in July). The higher the quality rating the better the reimbursement rate to child care providers. Julie asked what the going rate for childcare is. Rebekah responded that the current information says that the average is about \$140 per week for an infant and there is more information on their web site.

Lana shared that only 3 community action agencies in Iowa have the CRR&R program. Dick Sievers added that childcare is one of the Governor's priorities for the next session. Part of the CRR&R is the Child and Adult Care Food Program which is funded through the Iowa Department of Education. The program provides subsidies for nutritional meals and snacks to home providers to ensure children have a good meal.

Dick expressed that Mid-Sioux Opportunity's mission is to help families move out of poverty. To do this, they must maintain and follow federal standards and funding policies. Staff attended the Wipfli training at ICAA. Sharon Heidesch added that in order to administer these programs with only 3 fiscal staff, everyone at the agency works closely with each other and the programs to make sure to follow all standards and policies to achieve good audits. Tom Letsche added that he is very proud of the presentation given to the DCAA Commission today and also proud of the Directors who attended and participated. He will let the Board of Directors at Mid-Sioux Opportunities know how well they did today. John Murphy asked if it harder to help people get out of poverty. Dick answered yes, it is getting more difficult to move out of poverty for the long term. Families can get by but if something happens like a medical issue, they fall back into poverty. Mary Wisenand commented that she is impressed with all the work that Mid-Sioux Opportunities does and accomplishes and will continue to advocate for the programs. Ajit Kumar thanked the agency staff for the presentation they put together and was very grateful to be there for the Commission meeting. John Murphy stated that he also appreciated the presentation and information. Bill Brand commented that he is very proud of working with DCAA so that he can work with dedicated staff like the ones at Mid-Sioux Opportunity. Bill thanked staff for carrying on the mission since 1965 to form community partnerships to help fight poverty.

- VI. **Administrative Report-** Bill Brand thanked Dick Sievers and staff for hosting the meeting. Bill also thanked Lana Shope for being a loyal supporter of the Commission and attending the meetings.

Bill shared that one of the FaDSS program managers decided to retire. Tim Fitzpatrick was with the FaDSS program for 21 years and retired on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The DCAA is planning on hiring someone to fill that position. Bill updated the Commission about the FIP requirements to participate in the FaDSS program. Bill explained that FaDSS was created to help people who receive FIP assistance. The number of families receiving FIP has been declining although the number of families in poverty has not. The 2 Generation Strategies initiative which focuses on both the child and adult, will start its pilot project study on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Part of the focus will be to serve families that do not receive FIP to demonstrate that FaDSS is a model to help a wider range of families in the state other than families who receive cash assistance. Also the FaDSS program is working with Mathematica on a high quality research study that will use a control group and participant group. The study results will show how effective coaching strategies are in the FaDSS program to help families become self-sufficient. John Murphy asked how long people can receive cash assistance. Bill

responded 60 months for a life time and he is not sure if that is why less people are receiving FIP. It may be that people just do not apply for it since the benefit has not increased since 1989.

Bill updated the Commission about Operation: New View. John Wilson has been the Interim Executive Director for a little over a year and they are getting ready to hire a new one. DCAA and ICAA have been providing technical assistance for programs and financial systems. Lana Shope added that ICAA has written and submitted a grant for funding to help Operation: New View. ICAA will also help with hiring a new Executive Director.

Bill thanked the Commissioners for being on the DCAA Commission and for voluntarily taking the time off from work to travel to Remsen, Iowa. He shared that we need two more Commissioners to fill the nine positions. Both of the positions are to be filled by the low-income sector. Bill will communicate with local agencies to see if they have some suggestions for candidates.

- VII. **CSBG Report-** Greg Pieper reported that on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the DCAA received a letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Community Service (HHS/OCS) notifying us that all CSBG funds have been released for FY19. All agencies were notified. For FY19, Iowa's CSBG allotment was \$7,740,152.

The DCAA received a legislative update regarding the FY20 CSBG funding. The House HHS Labor Appropriations Sub-Committee approved a 6% increase or approximately 35 million dollars in the Appropriations Bill. The Senate will release the Appropriations Bill sometime this summer. Greg also shared that this is the year to submit a new two year CSBG FY20-21 State Plan and Application. Greg shared a handout with the detail of the timeline for completing and submitting the State Plan. During the week of August 12<sup>th</sup>, the draft State Plan will be discussed with the DCAA Commission for approval. Greg also shared a handout with information about the ACSI survey. OCS surveys the community action agencies every other year to see how satisfied they are with the State CSBG services. The survey will be available online on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> thru June 4<sup>th</sup>. States are then to use the results when creating their State Plans to explain how they will make operational improvements. If the results are received in mid-July as stated, they will be shared at the next Commission meeting during the ICAA conference.

Greg has collected and reviewed all the community action agency FY18 CSBG year-end reports. The data and information from the reports were used by the DCAA to complete their CSBG Annual Report which was submitted on April 22, 2019. When we receive approval of the report, we will put it on our website.

Greg shared that the DCAA's Needs Assessment Committee developed a client needs assessment and client satisfaction survey. Greg distributed a handout with the survey questions. Julie Colling asked about the length of the survey. Greg responded that they will be programmed into Survey Monkey and will take about 10 minutes to fill

out. Cindy Harpenan asked if there was a version in Spanish. Greg replied that he would look into that. Ajit Kumar asked if it was translated into Spanish would it be available on Survey Monkey. Greg responded that in the past, some agencies sent hardcopies translated in Spanish to clients and then the agencies input the information into Survey Monkey themselves. A QR code has also been created to link to the survey.

- VIII. **LIHEAP Report-** Christine Taylor gave an update on the LIHEAP program. All funding was received for FY19. Nationally, LIHEAP received an extra 50 million dollars for a total of \$3.69 billion. However, HHS exercised their right to retain 1% so some states received significantly less than they did last year. For FY20, DCAA has received an update from the House HHS Labor Appropriations Sub-Committee. They have included an additional 150 million in the Appropriations Bill for a total of \$3.84 billion for FY20.

Christine shared that YTD, then number of approved households is a little lower than last year and the Winter Moratorium was extended from April 1<sup>st</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup>. Crisis funding will be available for people who have shut off notices and can also be used for air conditioners, fans and temporary shelter. There has been a delay in updates from the Iowa Utilities Board for the Moratorium Report. Once that data has been updated, a new report will be issued. That report states how many people in Iowa are going to be disconnected or have been disconnected.

Since the last DCAA Commission meeting, LIHEAP administrative program monitoring has been completed at: MATURA, Operation: New View, MICA, Northeast Iowa Community Action, SCICAP and Mid-Sioux Opportunity. There were no major findings or issues. LIHEAP fiscal monitoring was completed at HACAP, IMPACT and Upper Des Moines with no major findings or issues.

Christine shared that she and John Burnquist, attended the 2019 HHS Conference. She received a lot of information from our federal partners and other states and discussed our performance measures.

Bill Brand added that they are involved in an initiative to review the process around deliverable fuels such as propane. Bill shared that the Weatherization State Plan was approved by the DOE and the FY19 contracts were effective April 1, 2019.

- IX. **ICAA Activities Report-**Lana Shope updated the Commission about ICAA activities. ICAA submitted an application for a \$100,000 grant to provide training and technical assistance for Leadership Development of the network. Operation: New View will received \$87,000 to help with their current needs. ICAA also submitted an application to the Department of Human Services for a new five year contract to continue with Disaster Case Management. ICAA signed a contract with the Iowa Finance Authority for approximately \$1 million to continue the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program.

ICAA received funding for a project called Caucus for Kids. The goal is to talk to every Presidential candidate and ask them five questions about children's well-being. There will also be a Caucus training session at the ICAA Training Conference at the West Des Moines Marriott July 17-18. Lana shared a handout about the training conference. The DCAA Commission meeting starts the event at 8:30 on July 17<sup>th</sup> followed by a luncheon at 11:00 with speaker Dr. Manuel Pastor, Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He will give a presentation called Keynote Address: Looking Forward: Equity, Growth, and Community in a Changing America. On the second day, there will be an awards luncheon to close the conference from 12:30-3:00. **This year, the Friend of Community Action Award goes to the DCAA Commission Chair, Mary Whisenand. It was a unanimous decision of the ICAA Board of Directors for Mary to receive the award.**

Lana shared that the Leadership Development training will be ending for this year and there will be over 40 graduates to date. The next class will begin in the fall. There are also two active new executive director mentoring teams in place and ICAA is assisting the MICA Board of Director in hiring a new executive director due to Arlene McAtee retiring this August.

ICAA and agency fiscal staff have developed a white paper about the needs for Fiscal Officers at community action agencies. Community Action fiscal operations are very complex. It has been distributed throughout the national network.

X. **Other-** There was no further business.

XI. **Adjournment-**Ms. Whisenand adjourned the meeting at 11:25.

Respectfully submitted  
Donna Bura