

**Taylor County Shared Services Meeting
District School Board Meeting Room
January 29, 2024, 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM**

Present:

Donna Hagan, Tonya Bell, Brandi Turner, Cindy Hutto, Laura Blue, Gabrielle Aboki, Lisa Hill Boatwright, David Boatwright, Rhonda Brooks, Melissa Cephus, Jacob Clore, Katrina Fillyaw, Yolanda Gillette-Carlson, Sassafrass Mittleman, Maria Ortiz, Sebastian Plank, Jabrika Morris, Jerrod Pfeffer, Sebastian Plank, Lynne Smith, Victoria Taylor, Kohatha Vaughn, and Edwin Watkins.

Agencies Represented: Healthy Start Coalition, Healthy Families Seven Rivers, Taylor County Health Department, Big Bend AHEC, Family Network on Disabilities, ELC Big Bend, Battlefront, Taylor County School District, Partnership for Strong Families (PFSF), Early Head Start, FDLRS Miccosukee, Care Portal, Dads Against Prison, and Second Harvest of the Big Bend.

Tonya Bell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She reminded everyone of the Empower Hour she is hosting today, beginning at Noon, that is open to women ages 18-44 at the Hampton Inn. A vote was taken in reference to the Pinwheel event in April. It was voted that 20 April 2024 would be the best date. She also advised that the next Taylor County Shared Services will be held on 29 April 2024.

Donna Hagan, Executive Director of the Healthy Start Coalition of Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor Counties, Inc., advised that they are recruiting Doulas for all three counties. If interested, there is some mandatory training that they will have to go through.

Gabrielle Aboki with ELC Big Bend informed all that that they do school readiness, developmental screenings, and can provide financial assistance with childcare. She advised that there is a wait list for childcare assistance. They accept referrals for income-based, at-risk children.

Edward Watkins of Dad Against Prison stated that he helps empower youth to be equipped for peer pressure and is a haven for children. Every child should be mentally free.

Melissa Cephus with the Taylor County School District advised that she is a homeless liaison for the school system. They currently have 130 homeless students within Taylor County.

Sassafrass Mittleman of Family Network on Disabilities said that she can help families connect to state services. They serve people aged 0 to 26 years old. It is important to get the right diagnosis for each person.

Jabrika Morris is a Family Advocate for Early Head Start and she stated that they are having a Valentine's Day dance. She also advised that they have openings for 3 to 4 year old children.

Victoria Taylor introduced herself as a Provider Liaison with Healthy Start JMT. She told us that there are over 45 providers within our three counties.

Katrina Fillyaw with the Taylor County Health Department stated that they serve children, veterans, and adults. The county has received opioid lawsuit funds, and they provide mental health abuse services with these funds. They donated some of their funds to Battlefront. They were also given a grant to provide pool safety. They also have a community Health Improvement Plan to assist Alcoholics Anonymous. They are having an event on Feb 22nd at the Public Library. In March and April, they will be doing Diabetes Education events.

Kohatha Vaughn, Taylor County Health Department, spoke about Tobacco Prevention classes. They have Narcan available for no charge. In the March – April timeline they will be hosting a Touch a Truck event.

Yolanda Gillette-Carlson with Big Bend AHEC advised that she is bilingual. They offer federal incentive programs for Tools to Quit smoking classes. The class is held virtually during a four-week session. If people complete all four classes, they can receive a \$125 gift card. They also do Diabetes Education classes. The normal time frame to sign up for online Federal Health Insurance (formerly known as Obama Care) is over but it is now Special Enrollment time (life altering events make people eligible for this program). To receive these benefits, they must be legal residents.

Maria Ortiz, SNAP Outreach Coordinator, for the Second Harvest of the Big Bend was our guest speaker today and she told us about SNAP and program eligibility. SNAP offers benefits for individuals, families, seniors, veterans, and active military members, and people with disabilities. SNAP, Food Stamps, and EBT are all the same programs. It is safe for non-citizens to apply for others in the household that may be citizens or eligible resident aliens.

Jacob Clore of PFSF provided updates on the local children data. For the 2023 calendar year there were 18 children removed from their household. Fifteen of the removals were because of substance abuse in the household. One victim removal was due to household violence and the other two were removed because of sexual abuse. Jacob also advised that there is \$330 left in Taylor County's Council Budget.

Sebastian Plank, also with PFSF, stated that there are 57 children receiving out of home care. He stressed the urgent need for more foster homes. They currently only have two foster homes.

Notes taken by Laura Blue