

SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

M I N U T E S

December 19, 2024 Regular Meeting

The regular meeting of the Human Services Commission was held on Thursday, December 19, 2024 at 9:30am in person in the Born auditorium at 170 Otis Street and remotely via Webex and telephone for disability accommodations.

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON SCOTT KAHN, President
JAMES MCCRAY, JR., Vice President
SALLY COGHLAN MCDONALD

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY VIA WEBEX DARSHAN SINGH

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON Trent Rhorer, Executive Director, SFHSA
Elizabeth LaBarre, Commission Secretary
Dan Kaplan, Deputy Director – Finance & Administration
Anna Pineda, Deputy Director – Economic Support & Self-Sufficiency (ESSS)
Susie Smith, Deputy Director – Policy, Planning & Public Affairs
Joan Miller, Deputy Director – Family & Children’s Services (FCS)

CALL MEETING TO ORDER President Kahn called the meeting to order at 9:35am.

ROLL CALL Commission Secretary Elizabeth LaBarre took roll and noted the presence of Commissioners Kahn, McCray and Coghlan McDonald in person in the Born auditorium. Commissioner Singh was present remotely via Webex from his home and his wife, Olivia Singh, was sitting next to him to assist him with the Webex features.

AGENDA President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the meeting’s agenda yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission adopted the agenda as posted.

NOVEMBER 21, 2024 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the November 21, 2024 regular meeting minutes yielded no responses.

On motion of Vice President McCray, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the adoption of the November 21, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT Executive Director Rhorer provided updates on Human Services Agency (“SFHSA” or the “Agency”) programs and federal, state and local policy and activities as they relate to the Agency.

President Kahn’s call for public comment yielded no responses.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR (2024)

President Kahn presented Jessica Mateu-Newsome, Program Director with Family & Children’s Services, with the 2024 Manager of the Year award, an engraved desk clock, which she graciously accepted with thanks to all. One of Jessica’s daughter, Maya, was in attendance to support her mother. Also in attendance was Jessica’s husband, Jonathan Newsome. Jessica received a standing ovation.

CONSENT CALENDAR

President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the consent calendar yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the consent calendar, comprising actions taken by the Executive Director since the November 21, 2024 Regular Meeting in accordance with Commission authorization of December 19, 2024:

1. Submission of request to encumber funds in the total amount of \$34,530,548 for purchase of services or supplies and contingency amounts.
2. Submission of 6 temporary positions for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period 11/16/24 to 12/13/24.
3. Submission of 40 temporary appointments for possible use in order to fill positions on a temporary basis made during the period 11/16/24 to 12/13/24.

COMMISSION BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS

BAY AREA COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Cindy Lin, Food Coordination Manager, presented the request to modify the existing grant agreement with BAY AREA COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

President Kahn’s call for public comment yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with BAY AREA COMMUNITY RESOURCES for the provision of the Community-centered Grocery Access Program; for the period of December 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025; in the additional amount of \$364,955, plus a 10% contingency, for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$2,216,451.

MULTIPLE GRANTEES (APA FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES, SELF-HELP FOR THE ELDERLY,

Cindy Lin, Food Coordination Manager, presented the request to modify the existing grant agreements with MULTIPLE GRANTEES (APA FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES, SELF-HELP FOR THE ELDERLY, YMCA/CHINATOWN, YMCA/MISSION).

President Kahn’s call for public comment related to the APA FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES grant yielded no responses.

YMCA/CHINATOWN,
YMCA/MISSION)

On motion of Vice President McCray, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with APA FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES for the provision of food support for targeted neighborhoods; for the period of December 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025; in the additional amount of \$334,788, plus a 10% contingency, for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$1,735,589.

President Kahn's call for public comment related to the SELF-HELP FOR THE ELDERLY grant yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with SELF-HELP FOR THE ELDERLY for the provision of food support for targeted neighborhoods; for the period of December 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025; in the additional amount of \$234,845, plus a 10% contingency, for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$1,367,463.

President Kahn's call for public comment related to the YMCA/CHINATOWN grant yielded no responses.

On motion of Vice President McCray, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with YMCA/CHINATOWN for the provision of food support for targeted neighborhoods; for the period of December 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025; in the additional amount of \$90,433, plus a 10% contingency, for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$509,474.

President Kahn's call for public comment related to the YMCA/MISSION grant yielded no responses.

On motion of Commissioner Coghlan McDonald, seconded and unanimously carried, the Commission approved the request to modify the existing grant agreement with YMCA/MISSION for the provision of food support for targeted neighborhoods; for the period of December 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025; in the additional amount of \$92,304, plus a 10% contingency, for a revised total grant amount not to exceed \$541,699.

GENERAL PUBLIC
COMMENT

President Kahn's call for public comment yielded five responses.

1. Claudia Sagastume, FCS emergency response worker, "Currently FCC operates at a 50% vacancy for protective service workers. Not only for children in San Francisco... but for staff that are responsible for assessing and ensuring the safety of children and youth. Currently, protective service workers are required to work a regular shift and mandate after our shift. In addition to the staff shortage, PSWs are working beyond their regular work shift to keep up the workload resulting in workdays exceeding 12 hours. This leads to unsafe decision making due to exhaustion. We're being asked to make decisions about children's safety under stressful conditions without

adequate sleep... This is not acceptable and this is extremely dangerous. Many seasoned workers who have been here ten years or more are leaving or retiring early due to the dissatisfaction with the agency. New hires are quitting before the probation period ends. Many state that they are overwhelmed and feel unsupported. Many new hires rather pay back their... education fund than stay employed with the current working conditions at FCS... in a meaningful way that results in changes.”

2. Isirisi Alfaro, FCS emergency response worker, “The San Francisco Human Services Agency no longer has the reputation it once had, where graduates with a master's in social work wanted to come to San Francisco Child Protective Services. Now San Francisco Child Protective Services is viewed as the least desirable county to work for. A union survey revealed that over 50% of respondents are actively seeking other jobs, stating reasons that include burnout, high caseloads, micromanagement, low morale, a toxic work environment, poor management, unfair treatment, and ineffective leadership has contributed to high turnover and low morale. Many employees stay solely due to supportive supervisors despite concerns about program managers and directors. The union and staff have made several recommendations to management on how the agency could be supportive during these challenging times. While there has been some assistance in these areas, it has not been enough to relieve the workload and we are requesting some tangible action steps to address these concerns. This statement includes a list of requests that we've proposed by have been proposed by staff. We urge the commission to implement these recommendations within 30 days to prevent further attrition and ensure the safety of children under our care. It is crucial that the commission act to address this public safety crisis. We stand ready to work collaboratively towards solutions that restore stability, morale and safety in our program. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter, and I would like to say as a relatively new worker, I have witnessed other workers come and leave our agency because of the high burnout rates and because of feeling overwhelmed and exhausted and not feeling heard by management. It is a huge disservice to the families that we work with because if we go out into the field and are trying to assess safety, but we can't even make sure that we ate or make sure that we had a proper night's sleep, how are we going be able to work with families? It's critical that we are there to support families. We get that. But what we're asking for is that management and leadership take accountability and to create alternative solutions so that we can put things into practice. I always go by the statement I grew up with is I will listen to what people have to say. I will work collaboratively with people, but if I don't see any action, how can I trust you as I... go on with working with this agency? So I appreciate your time and thank you so much.”
3. Alia Howard, FCS emergency response worker, “I love being a... [protective services worker]. I pursued a master's degree so that I

could become a 2940 with the City and County of San Francisco, the city that I grew up in and that I love with all my heart. Ever since I graduated college, I have worked for the City and County, and I love working with the community that I work with. I am here to speak of the tremendous crisis we're facing with retaining workers in the workplace. I am an emergency response worker who has been with the agency for almost two years now and I have seen many new workers come and go. I know many have [other] reasons for leaving, but a common trend is expectations of the job itself are unrealistic such that we are required to work for more than 9 hours a day, demanding us to be available for an emergency response at 5:30 when your shift ends at 6 p.m. Each referral requires at least 2 hours if we're not able to locate the family. Some nights we are out until midnight responding to those emergencies, sometimes causing us to miss meals or [miss being] with their loved ones. We work on a rotation basis and we're extremely short staffed that sometimes there are only two to three workers on rotation. For a city that has over 800,000 people, I urge this commission to demand management address this chaotic work crisis by increasing budget for workers and increase our pay rate to attract more candidates and retain those of us who are burning out. In emergency response, there needs to be more protected time to access resources such as EAP and wellness support to address the burnout in workers. By giving workers protected [sic] time, it allows workers to access resources without neglecting our basic needs. Thank you.”

4. Jessica Navidad, an SFHSA staff member with FCS emergency response, provided public comment about shortage of staff and retention issues within the FCS emergency team, “You know, the 1st thing I want to say before I start is that we're not here to be adversarial. We're not here to be, you know, in any type of conflict with you. I'm here, especially this morning out of sheer pure mental physical emotional exhaustion. I'm having a hard time right now and not breaking down and crying because the emotional impact that this job is having on me personally is beyond words sometimes. I have been working for the agency for 13 years now. I've been in CDU. I'm a court officer now. I've recently been moved to help with [the] family service unit, so I've done it all. I can do any function in this place and I do that because I'm a hard worker, I'm a team builder, I believe in our team, I believe in CPS, I believe in our mission, and especially I believe in helping children. As a child that grew up in poverty and surrounded with abuse and a lot of the things that we see in all the families that we deal with, this is not just the job, it's the career that I chose because it's where my heart is. I want to help children. I was that child that needed help and when someone came to help me that really inspired me to become a social worker. And lately I've been questioning my decision to do that and I hate myself for that because I love people. I love helping people. I love helping children. But what I'm trying to convey to you guys is that I have nothing left to give and I'm here to pretty much warn you guys that we as a workforce are

telling you we are falling apart physically, mentally, emotionally. I've given blood, sweat, tears to this job, and over the weekend I gave a tooth. Yes, a truth. I was working over the weekend on Saturday and Sunday, 14 hours each day. I was on a call. It was very frustrating because in the middle of the night, you're the only person dealing with a number of crises. I have the police yelling at me, "When are you gonna come pick up the 16 year old that we're not gonna arrest?" It's 4 in the morning I'm telling them I'm dealing with a 9 year old who's autistic who was found in the middle of the night, nobody knows who this kid is. I said I'm sorry, the nine year old is a priority over a 16 year old at a police station right now. I broke my tooth because I was so frustrated I had a pen in my mouth, I bit down, the tooth went flying. I'm sitting there at 4 in the freaking morning trying to like literally wanting to cry and laugh at the same time because it's ridiculous. I just broke my own tooth because I'm so frustrated. I'm so tired, I'm so stressed. So I just want to put this on the record, children's lives are at risk. I'm putting this on the record now. If a child dies in San Francisco because we're out here, barely making it through the night, through the day, I'm telling you the exhaustion, it's hurting my soul, and I just want you guys to take that into consideration. We're not here to attack anyone. Our managers are suffering just like we are. I have good relationship with all my program managers, all my directors because I want to build those relationships. I'm not here to be adversarial. I'm here to give you guys a warning. If nothing changes, children's lives are going to be at risk and children will die, and it will be on our conscience. Thank you."

Staff signatures and a "call to address the crisis in FCS" document are included with these minutes as an attachment.

ADJOURNMENT

President Kahn adjourned the meeting at 10:14am.



Elizabeth LaBarre
Commission Secretary
Human Services Commission

Posted: 1/3/25

December 19, 2024

San Francisco Human Services Commission

Subject: Urgent Call to Address Crisis in Family and Children Services (FCS)

Dear Members of San Francisco Human Services Commission:

Family & Children's Service (FCS) staff are here today to present deep concerns about the dire state of our program. Since the Pandemic, FCS staff have been overwhelmed by unmanageable workloads and stress, which has led to unprecedented staff shortages. Currently, FCS operates at a 50% vacancy rate for Protective Services Workers (PSW), with other classifications similarly understaffed. A severely understaffed child welfare workforce is a safety issue not only for SF children under the care and supervision of the Human Services Agency, but for the staff that are responsible for assessing and ensuring the safety of these children and youth.

Currently, Protective Service Workers are required to work a regular shift and a mandated after hours shift. In addition, due to the staff shortage PSWs are working beyond their regular work shift to keep up with the workload resulting in workdays exceeding 12 hours. This leads to unsafe decision making due to exhaustion. PSWs are being asked to make decisions about a child's safety under stressful conditions, and without adequate sleep or a reasonable rest period in between. This is not only unacceptable but is extremely dangerous. An overworked, sleep deprived staff working under already stressful conditions is creating circumstances that will likely result in a fatal error.

Many seasoned workers some who have 10 or more years of service are seeking employment elsewhere or retiring earlier than they wanted, due to their dissatisfaction with agency management. New hires quit before completing their probation period, citing feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. Some PSWs feel so overwhelmed, that they would rather pay back their Title IV-E educational loan then stay employed under the current working conditions in FCS. Many workers have serious concerns about the effectiveness of the current deputy director, directors and managers and are seeking assistance from the Commission to address these concerns in a meaningful way that results in changes.

The San Francisco Human Services Agency no longer has the reputation it once had where graduates with a master's in social work wanted to come to work for San Francisco CPS. Now, San Francisco county CPS is viewed as the least desirable county to work for due to the mismanagement of the agency.

A Union survey revealed that over 50% of respondents are actively seeking other jobs, stating reasons that include burnout, high caseloads, micromanagement, low morale, a "toxic work environment, poor management, unfair treatment, and favoritism.

Ineffective leadership has contributed to high turnover and low morale. Many employees stay solely due to supportive supervisors, despite concerns about program managers and directors.

The Union and staff have made several recommendations to management on how the agency could be supportive during these challenging times. While there has been some assistance in these areas, it has not been enough to relieve the workload. All supervisors and managers should be assisting PSWs with their caseload.

We are requesting some tangible action steps to address these concerns.

Proposed Immediate Actions:

1. Cap caseloads at 15 cases per worker and referrals at three per week, and anything over that limit that results in PSWs working overtime should be compensated with pay and not comp time.
2. Eliminate the case expectation of FSU workers to complete all compliance visits within the first two weeks of the month, because the state requirement only mandates that visits be conducted once a month, but not specifically in the first two weeks of the month.
3. Eliminate the requirement that PSWs record all case notes within 24 hours after client contact, and not threaten or discipline PSWs that are not able to keep up with this demand.
4. Eliminate the requirement that court reports be submitted 30 days in advance. Two weeks in advance is sufficient enough time for this process.
5. PSWs and PSS should not be required to conduct own CFT meetings, this is not only unethical due to intrinsic bias, but is better served by having a 2940 CFT Unit that objectively facilitates the meetings.
6. Temporarily freeze hiring of additional supervisors and combine small units to optimize supervisory roles until staffing reaches an acceptable level.
7. Implement retention bonuses for PSW staff for those who have reached milestone years of years of service and as an incentive for Title IV-E Program PSWs to work beyond the required 2 years of service. Avoid token gifts and focus on tangible financial incentives.
8. Eliminate the requirement of new hires to work in office five days a week. This requirement is not necessary to be an effective worker and is a reason why some new workers leave before they complete their probation.
9. Assign newly hired PSWs with prior child welfare experience to units that align with their expertise. New hires have left the agency before completing probation because they were not assigned to a unit that was the most effective use of their skills.
10. Utilize the FCS Training Unit to address retention and support. Provide one on one support to new PSWs, accompany them on home visits, assist them with time management, and address new PSWs concerns.
11. Conduct evaluations of management's leadership and communication skills, with actionable plans for improvement.

We urge the Commission to implement these recommendations within 30 days to prevent further attrition and ensure the safety of children under our care. It is crucial that the Commission acts decisively to address this public safety crisis.

We stand ready to work collaboratively toward solutions that restore stability, morale, and safety in our program. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

The Staff of Family and Children's Services (FCS)

