
Sponsor: Social Services

Meeting Date: 9/20/2022

Title: Restructure of Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council as
Community Advisory Council

File Number: 2022-473

Background and Rationale:

The Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) was established in 1979 to advise the Ramsey County Board on human services-related programs and services. Currently, the Ramsey County CAC has seven committees:

1. Adult Mental Health Advisory Council
2. Adult Services Committee
3. Children's Mental Health Council
4. Children's Services Review Panel
5. Disability Services and Support Committee
6. Low Income Committee
7. Substance Use and Recovery Committee.

Three of the seven committees are required in order to receive state and/or federal funding and have additional responsibilities according to state mandate and federal law:

- Adult Mental Health Advisory Council - Minnesota Comprehensive Mental Health Act of 1989 (Minnesota Statutes, section 245.484, subdivision 5).
- Children's Mental Health Advisory Council - Minnesota Comprehensive Mental Health Act of 1987 (Minnesota Statutes, section 245.466, subdivision 5).
- Children's Services Review Panel - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires each state to create citizen review panels to meet and report annually on efforts to ensure that the state is in compliance with child protection requirements; the Children's Services Review Panel is assigned by Minnesota Statutes, section 256.01, subdivision 15 as a Citizens Review Panel.

The CAC bylaws, originally adopted in 1987, state that the CAC reports to and advises the Ramsey County Board, on behalf of Ramsey County residents, on issues related to services delivered. Substantive revisions to the bylaws require Ramsey County Board approval - the most recent revision was approved in 2017 (Resolution B2017-181) to align the county's vision, mission and goals with the work of all committees providing resident input to the county.

The proposed changes include repealing all previous resolutions regarding the Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council and approving its restructure as the Ramsey County Community Advisory Council, an entity that would report to and advise Social Services, Financial Assistance Services and the Health and Wellness Administrative Division instead of the Ramsey County Board. Resolutions to be repealed include:

- Resolution 79-665 adopted on June 4, 1979, established the Ramsey County Community Human Services Advisory Committee.

- Resolution 79-681 adopted on June 18, 1979, established the Income Maintenance Division Citizens Advisory Committee as a subcommittee of the CAC.
- Resolution 81-698 adopted on August 10, 1981, described the responsibilities and duties of the CAC.
- Resolution 2002-410 adopted on November 26, 2002, ratified changes to the CAC bylaws.

It is recommended the authority to appoint CAC members and approve the CAC bylaws be delegated to the County Manager or designee. This change would provide autonomy to the CACs as it relates to appointments, reporting requirements, and Open Meeting Law.

Historically, CAC membership has not been representative of the cultural, ethnic, racial and socioeconomic diversity of county residents. In alignment with Ramsey County's strategic priority of Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power, it is also important that community have a stronger voice in the appointment process, along with those within the county who provide services, and can discern and recommend applicants who are representative of the population and knowledgeable on issues related to services delivered for membership on committees.

As a formal advisory group to the Ramsey County Board, the CAC has been subject to the state Open Meeting Law, which requires all meetings to be conducted in-person and be open to the public. For many community members, the requirements of the Open Meeting Law are a barrier to participation on CAC committees because they do not have easy access to transportation, do not have childcare available, or they have a physical disability that makes travel difficult. The restructuring of the CAC from a board-appointed advisory group to an informal advisory group would allow both the members and the public to participate virtually, and largely improve community participation as a whole.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Repeal Resolutions 79-665, 79-681, 81-698, and 2002-410 regarding the Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council.
2. Approve the restructure of the Ramsey County Citizens Advisory Council as the Community Advisory Council to partner with and advise Social Services, Financial Assistance Services and the Health and Wellness Administrative Division.
3. Delegate to the County Manager or designee the authority to appoint members to the Community Advisory Council and to approve revisions to the bylaws.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McDonough, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board