

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

August 16, 2023

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, in the DSS Board Room with a virtual option via Microsoft Teams.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance: Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs, Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman; Board members: Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, and Charles I. Mitchell.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director Maggie Cveticanin, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman; Assistant Directors: Jovetta Whitfield, Rhonda Stevens, Margaret Faircloth, Antowan Pickett, and Interim Lee Little.

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Jennifer Moon, Tonia Gay, Nancy Santos, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Lynn Thomas, Emma Perry, Pamela Purifoy, and Montrella Springfield.

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

James Hart, DSS Human Resources Analyst attended the meeting.

Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the August 16, 2023, regular meeting to order.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs read the Public Charge and moved forward with Public Comments.

Public Comments

No public comments

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested the board members to review and approve the proposed agenda. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from June and July DSS Board meetings required approval. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered the motion to approve the minutes from the June 21, 2023, and July 19, 2023, DSS Board meetings. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded the motion.

The minutes were unanimously approved.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Chair Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged James Hart, HR Analyst and staff involved in the recruiting event. James Hart was interviewed by a reporter from WTVD and did an excellent job. Also, Pamela Purifoy, Senior Public Information Officer was recognized for getting the information out.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged Quannah Jackson-Brown for the presentation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) relating to Child Support Awareness Month.

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved a Guaranteed Income pilot that will be focused on children and families. DSS will possibly be a very important partner identifying potential participants.

Staff used people who participated in the ERAP program as a point of reference, however, the goal is to specifically identify children and families who are at 30% AMI or below. There will be 125 recipients receiving \$750.00 a month with an additional \$100.00 a month for completing a survey. This overlaps with different goals within DSS. The Early Childhood Action Plan has been adopted by the County. With these things in place especially now that additional COVID funds have ended we can see the impact on families. Funding for the program will be for two years.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned the outages due to the storm. People are without power; schools have been closed and the libraries are open to assist until power is restored. Approximately one third of Durham is without power.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked board members for comments.

Director Report

Director Cveticanin inquired about the Guaranteed Income Pilot start date. Chair Commissioner Jacobs stated probably later in the fall. They are contracting with several organizations and will be a part of a national accountability organization. They will have to complete an RFP along with other requirements.

Director Maggie Cveticanin and other DSS staff attended the Social Services Institute in Hickory North Carolina, August 2, 2023, through August 4, 2023. Medicaid expansion was the main focus. We are still on target for October 1, 2023, even though the budget has not been approved.

Straight-through processing for specifically identified Medicaid applications and recertification have been implemented. Applications qualifying for straight-through processing results percentages are not high. Also, a State supervised Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) an option where Medicaid applications would have eligibility determined without the county having to process. This process will not be available at the beginning of the expansion when large numbers are anticipated. Eastpointe and Sandhills are merging, they manage behavioral health services for Medicaid and some insured individuals in different areas of North Carolina. They will serve approximately 100,000 in twenty-one counties. Currently, this does not affect Durham due to the targeted new child welfare plan. The Cost Modeled Rates SL2023-14 provided two increases for foster care payments effective July 1, 2023. This was not in the budget because the State had not released the information. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman indicated Durham has been making kinship payment and now we are being reimbursed for kinship placements which help to offset the increase in the board rates for foster care.

Director Maggie Cveticanin mentioned the job fair held on August 5, 2023, and the effort by staff to interview 130 individuals in three hours. Staff are moving forward with preparation for new hires.

On August 10, 2023, a meeting was held with the Director of Public Health to discuss Medicaid Expansion. Assistant County Manager Joanne Pierce and Director Krystal Harris attended the meeting. A joint video for the community was discussed to get critical information out. Pamela Purifoy, Senior Public Information Officer will work with Public Health staff on the script.

Director Cveticanin, Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield, and Child Welfare Managers attend open house on August 14, 2023, hosted by Alliance. The new respite program Savin Grace will serve four female and two male youth for 45 to 60 days.

Director Cveticanin met with the County Manager about space for the new FEI staff. DSS Director will have a walk through with the Public Health Director to look at available space.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith commented on the professionalism, commitment to excellence and team work shown at the career fair. The opportunity to meet some of the applicants and thanks to DSS staff.

Director Cveticanin emphasized feedback from applicants included great experience and they were impressed with the process.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith for representing the DSS Board.

Director Maggie Cveticanin pointed out that other departments will be impacted therefore an assessment will be made of those vacancies. The information will be provided to the County Manager in a few weeks.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about an assessment county wide regarding space and the possibility of people working in different locations. One of the County Manager's newsletters listed 73% of staff working remote which that is an opportunity to utilize office space. Director Cveticanin mentioned the library, Lincoln and places in the community would make staff more accessible to provide service. There will be further discussion about HIPAA and security.

Family Economic Independence (FEI) Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report in her absence.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens informed the DSS Board about the FEI Division Meeting on August 8, 2023. The first meeting since COVID. The meeting was a training day for all staff. Meetings continue around Medicaid and Food and Nutrition preparing for the cases that need to be touched as part of the unwinding from the pandemic, as well as Medicaid Expansion. Training is proceeding to refresh staff skills and try to get all the vacancies filled from the career fair.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy pointed out when staff were asked to stand if first time attending an all staff meeting since 2020, it was 75% of the room. FEI workforce have not done regular work of the income maintenance caseworker because they came when rules and regulations were under COVID expectations. There is a need to bring on a new workforce for Medicaid Expansion and the majority of the current workforce in FEI is new to them. They have not taken or processed applications according to the policy requirements, which highlights the need for more QAT staff.

Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Antowan Pickett Assistant Director

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Antwon Pickett reported Program Integrity completed 102 investigations during the month of June and completed 50% four charge letter referrals. They are on target to complete by state deadline.

Talent Development Coordinator working with divisions to continue to push out Covey. The coordinator continues to support various divisions on leadership and soft skills.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about the charge letters. Candice Leathers, Program Manager replied to the letter relates to numerous amounts of fraud from a particular location. The State will open a charge letter and send the county a list of all the clients that have purchased from the store who have food and nutrition benefits. Program Integrity staff review the claims to see if they are valid or if a claim needs to be established.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith acknowledged the two interns starting August 20, 2023.

Director Maggie Cveticanin highlighted the number of increased calls through the Call Center. This area needs to be evaluated due to Medicaid Expansion.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs mentioned the LGBTQ training and suggested connecting with them as a resource. Natalie Watson is the Director, and the center is located on Broad Street.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked how many people have been dropped from Medicaid? Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens stated staff are in the process of unwinding those cases. The numbers are not available because there was a window of time through the end of July. The information will be added to the report for August. The State is creating a dashboard for counties to review cases. North Carolina opted to put some different processes in place so there will not be a large group terminating at one time.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Antowan Pickett for the report.

Child and Family Services (CFS) – Jovetta Whitfield, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield asked the Board if they had any questions.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield reported several staff and 18–21-year-olds are attending the Independent Living Conference at the Daniel Memorial in Colorado.

The LINKS Kickoff for youth and families is scheduled for September 19, 2023, from 5:00pm-7:00pm at Forest Hills Park on University Drive. Information will be provided to resource parents, youth and others about the program and hopefully encourage more participation in the Independent Living and LINKS program. The Kempe Conference is coming, pictures have been taken as part of the program. The committee requested to come and speak with staff so we can put everything in writing and post on social media. DSS Staff met with Public Health because they are interested in forming a committee that includes patients from the clinics and improving outcomes.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed thanks and recognized the work with the Housing Authority relating to the FYI and FUP voucher.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted There are a few FUP vouchers available, so the MOU is being updated. The FYI vouchers are different in it appears in communicating with the Housing Authority that there are changes from HUD and those are hard to obtain as the FEP vouchers. The programs are different which cause confusion with families, but they are being reviewed. There has been talk about developing a MOU or MOA to outline the expectations. This is separate for your adults aging out of foster care. Only one worker is handling this due to the short staff. The worker is communicating with Durham Housing Authority and the other barrier is renters are not accepting the vouchers.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked about the request from WTVD 11. An article was submitted last month that highlighted Mecklenburg and another county speaking about youth sleeping in the agency and hotels. They wanted to hear from Durham's experience and gather data.

Aging and Adult Services (AAS) – Lee Little, Interim Assistant Director

Interim Assistant Director Lee Little submitted a written report.

Interim Assistant Director Lee Little highlighted two supervisors attending the US Aging Conference. Some of the highlights included best practices with aging, healthy aging, adult protective services, and dementia friendly communities. A meeting was held with Duke Hospital and Durham Housing Authority to meet the needs of the community with a rise in guardianship and adult protective services.

The Low-Income Homeowner Relief Program started August 1, 2023. Applications were received on the first day. Duke researched the program last year. Ninety percent of the participants shared positive feedback. Interim Director Little will forward the survey results to the Board.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about DSS presenting to the BOCC and will the remaining rental assistance be included. The presentation on August 28, 2023, will include finance and budget. The report on rental assistance will be in September. Chair Commissioner Jacobs emphasized the reporting on the remaining rental assistance is time sensitive and plan for the work session in September. Chair Commissioner Jacobs stressed presenting on the different funds for rental assistance and the amount distributed for the ongoing need in the community.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman and Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth

A written report was submitted to the DSS Board.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth pointed out the State hasn't passed the budget. A meeting was held with the Budget Office on budget estimates and to evaluate what can be improved and which suggestions were received. Contracts are being executed faster and three positions have been posted.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about the impact since the State has not approved the budget. Assistant Director Faircloth stated reimbursement is claimed and the State give the reimbursement and once the budget is approved some of the money is returned.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs posed concern about the safety of the parking deck. Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Lee Little and all staff for their support with the accident. Director Maggie Cveticanin spoke with Assistant Director Joanne Pierce about the issue.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy mentioned the cleanliness in the building due to the contract changing.

Director Maggie Cveticanin met with Greg Marrow, IT Director, and the discussion was productive. He agreed to work to identify the project manager and build that in the budget. DSS spoke with Traverse, and they offered a start date of November 15, 2023, however, due to the holidays the date has been moved to January.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the lobbies since in-person visits have increased. Lobbies are being evaluated for safety due to an incident. Director Cveticanin plans to talk to General Services about the concerns. De-Escalation training will be provided for staff. Panic buttons are in the lobbies, but probably have not been tested since returning to the lobbies. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy mentioned the storm and staff were moved to the basement. It was challenging because there was no communication with everyone in the building. Staff assisted with communicating with everyone to move down in the basement due to the storm. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about having items to assist during shelter in place. Deputy Director Williamson-Hardy pointed out the storm came without warning and for the safety of staff recommended everyone go to the basement even though restrooms are used for shelter in place. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs suggested speaking about the inability to communicate at the county director's meeting.

Vacancy Report – James Hart, HR Analyst

James Hart, HR Analyst thanked everyone for making the job fair possible. The Committee of individuals in FEI worked to complete the processes. A meeting was held to celebrate the event and to review the feedback. A discussion about what could be done to make it better and should a model be created to plan for other areas within the agency. Also, strategized moving forward with the ranking candidates. There is a master list of the individuals interviewed along with the different they ranked and assessing their experience. Frequently asked questions were in the packets for candidates so they will know the expectations following the interview process.

Approximately 75% of staff in FEI were hired after 2020 and 40% of the agency have been hired after 2020. Staff having to adjust to the new normal. The

main focus is the process of filling positions in FEI and working to hire 20 or more to fill IMC II vacancies.

Child Support Services – Quannah Jackson-Brown, Program Manager

Quannah Jackson-Brown acknowledged the Child Support Team for job well done the past fiscal year. August is Child Support Month. An event was held and was successful. Klunita Thompson, Sonya Hawley, Sasha Reyes-Fernandez, Leslie Hargrove, Terry Phillips passed out child support information on the first floor of the Human Services Building. A training event is scheduled, and a virtual learning event is scheduled for August 31, 2023. Andrea Hooks was nominated for Manager of the Year. Program manager Jackson-Brown congratulated staff on their accomplishments.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs pointed out National Night Out and the event will be a great opportunity. Child Support staff have received information on the event.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if staff had anything else requiring the DSS Board attention and thanked everyone for attending.

The DSS Board moved to closed session. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs read the stature.

NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6)

To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.(General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, appointment, or removal of a member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in an open meeting.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion and Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded. The DSS Board returned to open session with no action taken.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the DSS Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairperson	Date

_____	_____
Secretary to the Board	Date