

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

September 20, 2023

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, September 20, 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, Board members: Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, and Charles I. Mitchell.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman was absent.

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, and Interim Directors Lee Little and Cynthia Cason.

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, 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 September 20, 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 Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from August DSS Board meeting required approval. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered the motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 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		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Chair Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged Staff presentation at the BOCC Work session. The presentation included Low Income and Rental Assistance Programs. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested the presentation be a part of the joint City/County meeting on October 10, 2023. The City and County partners on the Low Income Homeowner Relief Program. A total of \$26 million dollars has been distributed in rental assistance. Currently, the City and County have not discussed a plan for the future.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about Medicaid Expansion because the State budget has not been approved. The casino issue has been separated from the State budget.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about the DSS Board appointments from the State. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith has been appointed for a second term. Board member Charles I. Mitchell was appointed by the BOCC for a second term. The State Social Services Commission is reviewing another candidate for the DSS Board and will send information when completed.

Director Report

Director Maggie Cveticanin reported Medicaid Expansion will be part of the vote along with the budget. A date has not yet been given for the implementation.

A meeting has been held with the County Manager Kimberly J. Sowell about staffing requests before Director Cveticanin arrived at Durham DSS. The discussion regarded the need for new positions and the County Manager understood the need and agreed to support. The plan is to evaluate vacancies because other positions are needed around the agency. Director Maggie Cveticanin distributed a draft for Medicaid Expansion Request.

Data was based on the NC Department of Health and Human Services anticipating Durham will receive approximately 21,622 new clients from Medicaid Expansion. Since 2019, Durham Medicaid enrollment increased by more than 15,000 participants. The request for 37 new FTEs is based on the formula determining Medicaid staffing. The formula included the current number of cases divided by the current number of participants and the anticipated Medicaid Expansion participants. This does not include staff needs in other areas of the agency. Equipment will be required along with a location for new staff. Working with Public Health regarding space due to staff working remote and possibly community locations.

Director Cveticanin conveyed NC DHHS took operation of Nash County DSS effective September 12, 2023, due to child welfare services concerns.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked if there will be some capital costs. There will be multiple elements to put in place which include hiring, training, and locating new staff. Lincoln Community Health,

a clinic is opening in Lakewood Shopping Center, courthouse and libraries are options to locating staff. The library has a technology mobile with computers. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith referred to the recruitment effort and broad net regarding recruiting. Leadership talked about 37 FTEs and no particular date. What is the recruitment plan? Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy mentioned doing a mass hiring like the previous event due to the response of 130 applicants. Leadership is confident positions can be filled quicker than the traditional process.

Director Cveticanin stated that teams are currently evaluating training and there has been a discussion about extending probation from six to nine months. The reason for extending probation is to give staff more time to adjust to being on the floor and handling caseloads. New hires will have to be in the office five days during the probation period. Working on-site will be more beneficial with hands on and support. Retaining staff is important, Orange County has pulled all staff back to the office weekly.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith agreed with staff in the office for five days during probation. Performance is critical as employees go through the probation period.

Director Cveticanin emphasized the formula utilized was similar to other counties and size. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about the cost of the expansion and how much would be paid by the County and State. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman conveyed the positions are 75% reimbursed for regular Medicaid. It is approximately \$35,000.00 per month. In addition, an advance of \$177,000.00 will cover when we go live. The average amount is about \$15,000.00 and will have \$140,000.00 left for ramp up and should receive \$35,000.00 per month. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth added when the budget is approved the upfront funds should last through October. Currently, waiting for final guidance from the State. During implementation of Medicaid Expansion, we should be at 100% and will continue.

Director Maggie Cveticanin spoke with Deputy County Manager Joanne Pierce about presenting the need for positions to the County Manager. Leadership is continuing to look at any positions internally that can be utilized.

Also, Senate Bill 625 relating to Child Welfare is basically holding parents accountable and taking children into custody. If a parent or guardian does not pick up their child from the hospital that was admitted under mental health issues after 48 hours of being cleared medically. Providers are not being held accountable. DSS is not equipped to handle behavioral health. This will increase the number of children coming into care. Directors were asked to talk to the BOCC for support. Director Cveticanin will send out talking points.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the letter request for the DSS Board and BOCC? Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested permission to write a letter from the DSS Board relating to Senate Bill 625. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered the motion for Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs to write a letter on behalf of the DSS Board relating to Senate Bill 625. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

Board member	Yes	No	Abstained
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		
Unanimously approved by the DSS Board.			

Director Maggie Cveticanin highlighted the Director's newsletter and DSS mascot Coconut. Director Cveticanin thanked Pamela Purifoy for assisting with the newsletter. The monthly newsletter is comprised of staff and updates on news relating to the agency.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Justice Services Center.

Cynthia Cason returned as Interim Assistant Director of Medicaid. Due to the Medicaid Expansion and the expected growth of Durham, Medicaid will be a separate division beginning October 1, 2023.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Director Cveticanin for the report and enjoyed the newsletter along with meeting DSS new mascot. Chair Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged Director Cveticanin shadowing staff and thanked Cynthia Cason for assisting with Medicaid.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the treatment programs for the families at Justice Services. Cognitive behavioral therapy will be available. Chair Commissioner Jacobs stated that this should have an impact on families trying to get into free programs and it would be great to track as a model for others.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about plans to place the new employees and the current space or some other space. Director Cveticanin has spoken with Public Health and plans to do a walk through in the area. Hoteling staff and placing staff in the community has been discussed.

New hires will be in the office five days; therefore, they will have to be in the building. Chair Commissioner Jacobs mentions space at the administrative buildings. The County purchased a new shopping center in Hope Valley. The Board of Elections will be moving into the old Kroger.

Family Economic Independence (FEI) Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens informed the DSS Board individuals that requested replacement of benefits because of the August power outage, 1400 have been served, approximately 281 are left.

Also, additional hiring packets have been forwarded in addition to those listed in the report. Staff are working to get positions filled from the job fair.

Numbers for recertification were not included in the report. Staff are looking at the numbers and next month they will be aligned with the information received from the State. For the month of August there were 1775 terminations and 1532 were related to MAGI and 243 were without Medicaid. Interim Director Cynthia Cason will have a different report that breaks out the numbers in a little more detail.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens and recognized the presentation to Public Health. Also, mentioned people having problems with skimming. Early in the year calls were received from clients about using their EBT card or being scammed. Recently, information was received from the State where the USDA approved action on what to do with the cases. One hundred eighty individuals have made reports and guidance is coming from the State on what is needed to reach out to clients. Other states are experiencing the same thing with people EBT cards. More information will be provided because some people's benefits will have to be replaced. The State has broken down the time depending on when the benefits were scammed and the action which is a longer process. Scamming is not at one store; therefore, it is hard to determine. Program Integrity is involved, and people have been asked to fill out police reports.

Staff attended a provider update meeting with Freedom House related to substance abuse waivers ending in FNS. DSS worked with Alliance and has a staff person on site to assist individuals referred for Work First and FNS. Freedom House is the entity within Alliance who work with these cases.

The DSS Board thanked Assistant Director Stevens for the FEI report.

Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) –

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy asked Program Managers Lynn Thomas and Candice Leathers to report in on their areas.

Deputy Director Williamson-Hardy reported that the Call Center calls increased by over 4000. The call received went from 15,000 to 19,000 and we have not felt the impact of Medicaid Expansion. Currently, not sure what's driving the numbers other than changes occurring around policies or people calling to inquire. If the trends continue this will impact on the high quality rate of answering the telephone. Staff are at 97% and it is worth noting the last two fiscal years they were at 99%. There is a decrease, but they are doing extremely well.

Program Manager Candice Leathers reported the focus is on FEI Medicaid. Meetings are held weekly, and great work has taken place.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy stated that Leadership have determined that the income maintenance classification probationary period will be extended to nine months. We want to make sure that a clear plan is in place so the new staff will be in a different place. Program Manager Leathers conveyed staff are creating things that work for the program, new hires and support existing staff in QAT. There are discussions with the program to make sure service is being delivered beneficial to new staff.

Program Manager Lynn Thoms mentioned working diligently with programs with all the changes with various policies and child welfare transformation.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked everyone for reporting and accredited the great work. Chair Commissioner Jacobs followed-up on the safety issues and two lobbies concern as well as cleanliness. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman stated a walk through with General Services about some of the lobbies do not have a barrier to the public. Working with General Services to evaluate if some type of barrier can be placed in the lobbies. There is a new contract and cleaning issues are being addressed. Staff can submit tickets related to their concerns.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy conveyed looking at the previous incidents which occurred at the agency, it is fortunate there have not been any serious injuries. We appreciate General Services assessing the issues, but this may be at another level. Deputy Director Williamson-Hardy encouraged Chief Operating Officer Inman to move forward with the issue. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield emphasized the incidents seem to be increasing and mentioned previous incidents. She has been speaking with staff about safety issues and requested staff to add home visits and school addresses to the EIO Board for their safety.

Chief Operating Officer Inman has been working with Todd Andrews. Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested the Durham County Interim Security Manager needs to be involved. The Security Manager has been involved and everyone needs to come together for discussion. The DSS Board is concerned about safety and will assist if needed.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about staff having DE escalation Conflict CIT Resolution training. Leadership is working on having the training on a regular basis. Currently looking at providers who render the training in-person. Chair Commissioner Jacobs informed staff the County has an internal CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) trainer located in Justice Services

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 a fatality in August which was a suicide. Director Cveticanin asked if suicide prevention awareness is needed for staff and resource parents. The State is beginning to look at this as well. Unfortunately, suicide is becoming a common issue child welfare service is having to deal with along with resource parents.

Assistant Director Whitfield mentioned a recruitment event, partnerships with local churches, and recruitment of resource parents. A recruitment event was held at the River Church, and they were excited to participate. The congregation is a younger group willing to spread the word and host additional events. They have a strong partnership with other churches and their mission is to focus on the safety and well-being of children.

LINKS Kick-Off and Field Day was held on September 19, 2023, and was a successful event. Staff interacting with the youth in the field events. Youth displayed leadership skills and will be asked to serve on the Family Engagement Committee. This was one of the best turnouts for the event. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield acknowledged staff for support and encouraging young adults.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs conveyed Laylon Williams works with Alliance and partners with NAMI who does the training. Director Maggie Cveticanin plans to contact Alliance regarding suicide prevention training.

Interim Director Lee Little and several AAS social workers completed the certification for the CIT program.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs recognized youth attending a conference in Denver. Also, the outreach to the Latino community.

Program Manager Shontelle Smith responded LINKS funds were for the youth and young adults to attend the conference in Denver. North Carolina support and funds are set aside. Staff work with the Business Office yearly to make sure funds are available for youth or young adults to attend. Six young people or young adults and two staff will attend.

Assistant Director Whitfield stated someone reached out to DSS from the State office regarding the Latino community and DSS is seeing an increase in reports. With the recent incidents this is the perfect time to bridge gap with the Latino population.

Program Manager LaVelle Chesney added an email was received from NC DHHS wanting to discuss how to bridge the gap between DSS and the Latino or Spanish speaking communities. The discussion was about the issue of distrust, especially with undocumented families. We need to participate outside the agency in their events. There was also talk about interpretation and translation services for communicating with Spanish speaking families so they will understand and forwarding information translated so they can understand. Staff are waiting for them to send dates.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs mentioned the City/County Refugee and Immigrant Coordinator located at Cooperative Extension and she can send an email connecting staff because there are a lot of programs geared toward immigrant families and Spanish speaking families.

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 supervisors, one for APS intake and our guardianship supervisor for Adult Protective Services was able to attend the National Conference on Adult Active Services in Boston. It was a good rewarding experience for both supervisors to bring back new energy and examples of how people around the country or agencies are dealing with Adult Protective Services and provided supportive services for that population. A CQI with the State Representative and mandated services received 97% or greater.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs appreciates the focus on Home Centered Care and inquired about people who don't qualify for Medicaid.

Interim Director Little cited when contacted or called for services, clients receive referrals, and sent to food pantries or placed on waiting lists. Sometime additional funds are available, emergency Meals on Wheels for seniors over the age of 60. Chair Commissioner Jacobs is concerned about making sure seniors are receiving food so they can stay at home.

Director Maggie Cveticanin asked if ARPA funds are available. Counties around the State are seeing a huge increase in applications. Counties are using ARPA funds to hire temporary staff. Director Cveticanin reached out to County Finance for clarification.

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. State continues to reimburse and when the funding authorizations come in the State will do a true up.

Program Manager Quannah Brown-Jackson added Child Support Services received the NC Child Support Council Award for outstanding achievement in Merit contributions in the areas of Child Support. It was presented to Durham County Child Support Services for working for children program. Staff were excited about the recognition, colleagues, several child support professionals, attorneys were present. Staff continues partnerships and collaborations, and Program Manager Brown-Jackson is on the Employment Subcommittee with LRC. Staff are connection participants to resources because the largest barriers to paying child support are unemployed and underemployed.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman highlighted moving forward with Northwoods Traverse purchase. Currently, in the contract process and hope to officially kickoff the implementation in January. A detailed list is executed because when the contract is in place, we will have access to all educational materials and start planning for implementation.

The incident mentioned the weapon found during the screening process. Nighthawk secured the building and kept the building locked down until the issue was resolved. Director Cveticanin said things are escalating and it is good to have security. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the process involving weapons. Chief Operations Officer Inman explained the process. Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested the process revisited and look at signage on the door visible for clients. Board members commented on the safety issue.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed thanks to Program manager Quannah Brown-Jackson and Child Support Staff for attending Project Safe Neighborhood sponsored by the Sherriff Department. Dana Thomas attended the event and staff plan to attend National Night Out on October 4, 2023. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about recognitions and awards posted on DSS website. Board member Beatty-Smith thanked Pamela Purifoy for adding the recognition to Scoops. Program Manager Brown-Jackson is not familiar with the posted, however planning to submit the recognition for Durham County Team Excellence Award. She saluted the Child Support staff for their accomplishments.

Also, the recognition is on LinkedIn and on NC Child Support Council page.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs reminded everyone of the Pride Parade scheduled for Saturday, September 23, 2023, beginning at 9:30am along the East Campus Wall.

Chair Commissioner Jacob asked about the approval of money for Northwood Traverse. Chief Operations Officer Inman was not aware the request had to be approved by the BOCC because it was ARPA funds. Contract usually does not go before the BOCC. The request must be placed on the agenda.

Vacancy Report – James Hart, HR Analyst

James Hart, HR Analyst reported DSS is in a good place. Working on onboarding staff from the job fair with experience and coupling with CATD. A new hire from the job fair started work and in the past the key performance indicator for time was 90 days. Now onboarding is within 35 to forty days, which is cut in half. A large number of new hires from the job fair will start October 2, 2023. There has not been a high number of turnovers in the last months which are possibly attributed to sign-up bonuses, flexibility, and benchmarks. DSS is in a better position than FY 21 during the hiring freeze. Now there is a blueprint to accommodate very quickly and turn things around. Management is looking at how to do things differently around interviewing, reviewing some of the competencies. Retention will be the focal point. Personal leave has been approved to care for family members. Some of the positive notes around requirements must deal with some internal rethinking staff.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs talked about the new family policy leave and Durham is one of the first counties to have parental leave that includes adoptive and birth parents up to 12 paid weeks. Family leave will be paid for six weeks including grandparents and others. Five mental health days paid, and you don't have to give a reason. These days are on an annual basis.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked staff for their attendance and moved forward to closed session.

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

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 Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded. The DSS Board returned to open session with no action taken.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the DSS Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairperson

Date

Secretary to the Board

Date