

## **Durham County Board of Social Services**

### **February 15, 2023**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. The DSS Board meeting will continue to be virtual until further notice.

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

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman; Assistant Directors: Rhonda Stevens, Jovetta Whitfield, Janeen Gordon and Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

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

DSS Human Resources Analyst James Hart attended the meeting.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the February 15, 2023, Durham County DSS Board meeting to order at 3:01pm.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the Public Charge. The Board of the Durham County Department of Social Services asks its members and citizens to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous manner, both with the Board and fellow citizens. At any time, should any member of the Board or any citizen fail to observe this public charge, the Chairman will ask the offending person to leave the meeting until that individual regains personal control. Should decorum fail to be restored, the Chairman will recess the meeting until such time that a genuine commitment to the public charge is observed.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked everyone to state their name and address before speaking.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs proceeded to move forward with the review and approval of the proposed agenda.

Board member Janice P. Paul moved for the acceptance and approval of the proposed agenda. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded.

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved by voice vote.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested a motion for the approval of minutes from January 18, 2022, regular meeting.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The voice vote was unanimous by the DSS Board.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

### **DSS Board Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs reported the Board of County Commissioners met with Durham Delegation. There is an item on the legislative agenda relating to issues discussed in the board meeting. The concern about the end of the public health emergency and the impact on residents. Also, highlighted In-Home Adult Services and asked for assistance since the State provides funding to manage the program.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs attended the National Association of County Officials meeting and there were discussions relating to social services issues. Chair Commissioner Jacobs also attended a Mental Health Summit with the Surgeon General and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Alarming data was shared including that one in three girls in the United States have considered suicide. Suicide is the second highest cause of death in the United States for the 10-14 years of age range. The Suicide Emergency number to call is 988, however, youth are using the text and chat features rather than calling. There was discussion around the impact of social media. Strengthening relationships, connecting, gathering together and talking can assist with the mental health issue.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested attending the performance at Hillside High School “State of Urgency”. Students from Durham Public Schools are gaining knowledge about the impact of violence in the community.

There is a bill in the General Assembly to abolish the permitting of guns in North Carolina. Chair Commissioner Jacobs encouraged everyone to speak out against the bill because gun permits will not be required.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs mentioned that Medicaid expansion and the impact on counties was discussed at the NC Caucus Meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs continued with the review and approval of board reports.

## **DSS Director's Report – Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw**

Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw referred to her report highlighting budget work, meeting with leadership and connecting with staff.

The Public Health Emergency is set to end on May 11, 2023, when the national emergency declaration expires. Among other “PHE ending changes”, guidance on Medicaid Redeterminations has been released and training on it is underway.

House Bill 76 was introduced, if passed Medicaid expansion would be effective January 1, 2024. DSS will need to implement some operational changes in order to process cases and deliver timely, accurate and uninterrupted benefits. Personnel, procedural and technology changes will be required. Filling current vacancies must be a priority as there are multiple changes coming that will impact DSS and the community.

Approximately 55,000 children receiving NC Health Choice coverage will move to NC Medicaid beginning April 1, 2023, and additional benefits will be available along with savings to families.

Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid is retiring, and Jay Ludlam will be taking the position March 1, 2023.

The state estimates and budget narrative were received on February 14, 2023. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman will present the budget for FY23-24.

A new Online Bed Registry has been announced, DSS was not initially named a provider to be in the registry to participate. This should prove helpful in identifying available beds more quickly in treatment facilities.

North Carolina Healthy School data as recently released showed 10% of high schoolers attempted suicide in 2021.

North Carolina's economy is being hindered by child care obstacles. A report shared with the Board revealed a significant number of parents having to miss work due to a lack of childcare options and that approximately 16,000 child care centers closed during the Pandemic.

Per more data reviewed, roughly 2.5 million children in the US are living with “grand families” and face higher rates of hunger and food insecurities.

In sharing some local activities, Interim Director Bradshaw stated 1) a strategic planning session was recently held with leadership regarding recruitment. Each division presented their current process from the beginning to end. Leadership is working to restructure the Agency's recruitment procedures and

will be looking at a hiring event to fill vacancies, 2) All-Staff Sessions have been scheduled in February with plans to cover and provide updates around the items in a late January All Staff Message, 3) the County Manager's recently released reorganization of the executive leadership team was provided by email which will be shared with Board Members and 4) Board Members advised that parking may be our Agency's greatest challenge soon if adequate parking slots are not available when the numerous impending changes related to the PHE unwinding occur.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith commended leadership on reviewing organizational procedures. Board member Beatty-Smith questioned the Medicaid redetermination process related to the continuous enrollment. Interim Director Bradshaw advised around the phased approach embedded in the Consolidations Appropriation Act approved by Congress in December. She added the State is sending down additional guidance and staff will receive a great deal of related training. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens agreed and suggested additional conversation on this at the March meeting.

Noted was that the 75/25 federal administrative reimbursement will continue until next year and will save millions of dollars. This has been added to the budget narrative and estimates received on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw for the outstanding report and how she is bringing everyone together including staff to solve problems, focus on communication and collaboration at every level. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about foster children transitioning to NC Health Choice and data relating to the online bed registry. What will happen to people after they are released from treatment? Will there be a tracking system for placement and costs? Since there is a crisis about child care, how can the resources currently available be utilized? How can the Board assist in these areas? Chair Commissioner Jacobs also asked about the construction issue with parking?

Interim Director Sarah Bradshaw recommended Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield speak on foster care children transitioning to NC Health Choice and Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens talk about the Child Care Crisis. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield did not have the percentage of youth transitioning. Most of the youth will remain on Medicaid direct for foster care. The youth that move over to the Tailored Care Management (TCM) have more of the severe mental health, substance use disorders and enrollment in NC Innovation Plan will remain with Alliance Health. It is a small percentage of the foster care population that includes ages 18-21. Adoptive cases will remain on Medicaid direct unless they are in the category for TCM. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens stated childcare staff continue to process applications and work

reports as well as provide outreach in order to ensure the public is aware that childcare funding is available. It was mentioned that the entire state is well underspending in child care and the spending coefficients are impacted by numerous factors – including eligibility criteria and the funding formula followed at any given time. Interim Director Bradshaw commended Janice Blackstone, Child Care Supervisor, for recently advocating with the state to reinstate some former policy that would allow job seeking parents to be eligible for child care.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reported the time frame for parking is now two to three weeks for the 300-block parking and space planning has started. Space will be available for the public and will be interim parking until the 500 block is completed. Peri Mann with Engineering was acknowledged for assisting with the project. One complicating factor is the Roxboro Street deck used for the DSS fleet and extra 43 spaces is up for repairs which will begin in March or April. Upon completion of the deck 700 spaces will be available to curtail parking for DSS, Library and Public Health.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Director Bradshaw for the detailed report.

### **Vacancy Report – James Hart**

James Hart, HR Analyst, highlighted the efforts around recruitment to review the processes. Working on different partnerships to help externally. Reviewing internally what can be cut out and strengthened.

Board member Janice P. Paul asked if there is an increased interest in people coming back to work since COVID and seeing the physical access to the building as an impediment or sort of getting ahead of itself. James Hart communicated we are entering into a state now of layoffs from companies, so people are starting to understand the impact of their choices or lack thereof with employment decisions. Flexibility is always good. Across the board with positions throughout the county, a large volume of applications are not reflecting some skill sets needed for some positions, therefore, trying to close the gap between the requirements. We can internally develop bridges for some gaps and work to do a better job of broadcasting positions.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs conveyed a topic of conversation at multiple conference about requirements for jobs. There needs to be amendments to make jobs more inclusive or accessible to people.

### **Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Rhonda Stevens**

Assistant Director Rhonda Steven conveyed new hire packets have been forwarded since the report was submitted. Also, highlighted a group of staff working steady since March 2022 and passing the report card monthly since April 2020. Focus has shifted with emergency allotments going away.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about things FEI is doing within the organization or in partnership with community organizations educating people on the changes. Information is still flowing via press release. Internally, information has been shared with staff to be able to respond to customers, via Internet, flyer with the QR code for resources. There is a situation with EBT card skimming, information has been released and letters are expected to go out to families.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about all hands-on deck, no wrong door approach for the entire staff. It is one of the topics discussions on the agenda in the all-staff meeting. It was noted that DSS is collaborating with the county around some potential uses of County ARPA funds in areas such as to address food insecurities.

### **Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason**

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason spoke on the emergency allotments ending and preparations. Temporary staff have been hired due to the anticipation of receiving lots of calls in reference to the changes. The Call Center Supervisor, as well as the Manager, have been working with the temporary staff, providing training and getting them ready to answer the calls efficiently. The staff will also assist with changes may report.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs commented about Program Integrity being fully staffed and the need for bi-lingual staff. She advised El Centro is a good resource. Interim Assistant Director Cason advised she would contact El Centro.

### **Child and Family Services – Jovetta Whitfield**

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield did not have an opportunity to speak with county attorneys regarding the Impact of Durham Safety & Wellness Task Force on DSS and A/N/D Court. There are concerns possibly about any recommendations because it is not their jurisdiction. She furthered advised youth are having to stay throughout the day and sometimes overnight in the building or a hotel. Two staff members must stay with youth who have serious

mental health needs, and aggressive behavioral needs. Looking at trying to secure a contract for security in the building to be with staff in the evening. Working with Alliance and other partners including the State making numerous referrals. Assistant Director Whitfield suggested this to be elevated because there is concern not just for having appropriate placement but the safety of staff. Youth challenges are the reason they don't have placements. Some can't be maintained in secured facilities because of aggressive behavior.

The state is focusing on training for supervisors and managers which will begin in April. The initiation rate for investigation assessments for January is 90.6%. Federal measures changed for child welfare beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> based on the reviews from across the nation.

Board member Janice P. Paul mentioned changes in court judges and hope the District Court seat does not get eliminated because this is important for the children and families of Durham. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Board member Paul for the information.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs posed a question relating to the status of Alliance building a regional youth facility. Assistant Director Whitfield stated the home is being built in Durham but does not know the status. A facility is in Wake County that can be utilized but sometimes there are denials because of the situation. She advised DSS is trying to staff these cases at the state level.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs acknowledged the various new programs in the report. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield conveyed Alliance is trying to be innovative and create things to support child welfare and children in foster care. One program is the Mobile Outreach Response Engagement Stabilization(MORES). Some wrap around programs to help resource parents birth parents and kinship providers. Behavioral specialist are being placed with youth that need to maintain placement. More behavioral specialist are needed, there are 4 supporting Durham and Orange.

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### **Aging and Adult Services – Janeen Gordon**

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the In-Home Aide Program not requiring case management. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon conveyed it is an entitlement program. Food benefits are given to the clients, however, AAS does not monitor what they purchase. Clients are given the maximum benefit, but the health, safety and well-being of clients cannot be monitored. This is about the transformation of special assistance in-home in order to allow the program to have a parity so everyone who is eligible can receive the service. On the other hand, viewed within the context of those who are currently unable to be discharged because there are no appropriate placements. DSS doesn't have

the authority to make sure clients are receiving services needed. There have been discussions about these concerns with the state because the policy has not been finalized. Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested sending a letter outlining concerns to the state. Assistant Director Gordon has reached out to the program representative at the state about the concerns including placement, the policy and implications. There are many lives at risk especially with the largest waiting list. A lot of calls are coming in to the agency.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the maximum amount per month. The maximum amount is \$1671.00 and there is automatic qualification for long term care Medicaid.

Interim Director Bradshaw acknowledged Assistant Director Gordon's advocacy and sharing related to this concern.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon highlighted the Burial Assistance Program and the Low-Income Water Hardship Program. Burial assistance is not a required DSS program. The program is funded by the County Emergency Assistance Fund. The program provides proper burial for unclaimed bodies and provides additional burial assistance for those without insurance. The Low-Income Water Hardship Assistance Program is federal grant funded. Applications have increased with household needing assistance.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs applauded staff for providing such services to people in the community.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman mentioned evictions in McDougal projects. There is approximately 75 to 100 evictions a day. People are being evicted for \$50.00 and some people did not know how to complete paperwork.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested contacting Durham Housing Authority.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked everyone for the information and moved to Business Operations.

### **Business Operations –Kelly Inman**

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman reported Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth was unavailable and she will be leading the budget presentation.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman communicated starting in March, Child Support will reconvene two full court weeks monthly. This will be huge for enforcement and establishment.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about virtual appointments. It was advised that DSS is working on this, and the scheduling software is in the process of being updated.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman provided a Budget Presentation via PowerPoint (attached to the minutes for details).

This included outlining 15 position requests: Aging and Adult Services SA- In Home needs (position reclassifications); Child and Family Services needs two FTEs to assist with further Families First Prevention Act rollout; three FTEs for internal agency support; 3 additional FTEs for AAS, 3 FTEs for Processing Assistants in AAS and Child Support and 1 FTE for Deputy Director.

She advised other priorities requests included 2 vehicles, County ARPA Funds, and Northwoods – Traverse Case Management.

Interim Director Bradshaw pointed out that, with all the vacancies, there may be some position reallocation needs in the coming weeks, as mid-year requests.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if the budget includes detailed narrative and rationale. Chief Operations Office Inman indicated paragraphs, studies, metrics and statements of importance are in the budget file. It is hard to prioritize because all the requests are important. Positions carry reimbursement, the fleet must be maintained, additional dollars needed for home aide services and Laserfiche along with Scheduler in need of upgrade. Parking will be back online, and payments will restart, and postage has increased. Other highlights from the budget estimates are LIEAP funding increased, Crisis Intervention Program increased to help support the community. Low-Income Water Assistance funded through September 2023. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman provided details regarding the budget requests.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Chief Operations Officer Inman and emphasized the need to advocate for state funds.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved for the DSS Board to go to closed session 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 events 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 or performance character fitness appointment or removal of member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill vacancy among its own membership, except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by public body. Having

final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting. Chair Commissioner Jacobs entertained a motion to approve going into closed session for the reasons stated.

Board member Janice P. Paul offered the motion and Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs moved forward with a voice vote.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

The voice vote was unanimous.

The DSS Board returned to regular meeting. No action taken.

The meeting was adjourned by a majority vote.

Respectfully submitted

_____	_____
Chairperson	Date

_____	_____
Secretary to the Board	Date