

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

August 28, 2024

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, in conference room A with a virtual option via Microsoft Teams.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance: Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs, Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith; Board members: Wendy Sotolongo, Charles Mitchell, and Dionne Moore.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director Maggie Clapp, Deputy Director Valery Dambreville, and Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman.

Assistant Directors: Jovetta Whitfield, Margaret Faircloth, Kimberly Lincoln (Interim) and Latoya Chambers (Interim)

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Meghan Russ, Janilza Balbuena, Lee Little, Nancy Santos, Jacqueline Proctor, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Lynn Thomas, Pamela Purifoy, Tonia Gay, Emma Perry and Loretta Roberts

James Hart, Senior Human Resources Analyst attended the meeting.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the August 28, 2024, regular meeting to order and read the public charge.

DSS Board Introduction of New Member

The new board member Dionne Moore was introduced.

Public Comments

Sheryl Smith, Amanda Wallace, and a male Durham County citizen commented. The public comments consisted of child welfare concerns, a community town hall on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, and a NARCAN concern.

Review and Approval of the Agenda

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

The agenda was unanimously approved.

<u>Board member</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		
Board member Charles Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes		

Approval of the Minutes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to approve the July 17, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Board member Charles Mitchell offered the motion to approve the minutes and Board member Wendy Sotolongo seconded.

The minutes were unanimously approved.

<u>Board member</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		
Board member Charles Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes		

Spotlight: Aging and Adult Services – Crisis Services

A very informative presentation by Program Manager Meghan Russ and Crisis Services Social Worker Janilza Balbuena. Program Manager Meghan Russ discussed the following federal/county assistance programs: **Federal** - Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP); **County** - Energy and utilities, rent, burial assistance, prescription assistance, food cards, Eviction Diversion, Opening Doors, and unclaimed bodies. The social workers will assess every individual for the variety of services and apply all of the different eligibility requirements. In July - 1,245 applicants were evaluated among 12 social workers and 441 households were eligible to receive financial assistance. Crisis Services Social Worker Janilza Balbuena explained the application process from the social worker's perspective. *The clients are challenged with the following:* (1) scheduling an appointment with the call center at 7:30 am to be assessed or coming into the office with only ten minutes within the timeframe for a same-day appointment (2) submitting the documentation (fax, email or bringing the documentation to the office and having it scanned to their social worker) and (3) programs/policies have not been revised in years or the amounts

The social workers are challenged with the following: (1) overbooked with appointments and (2) multiple types of programs with different processes.

Program Manager Meghan Russ informed the board members that the policies for Eviction Diversion and Opening Doors have been revised and the income federal poverty limit has increased from 150% to 200%. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs suggested that Crisis Services Social Worker Janilza Balbuena do a presentation at the next City/County Joint Meeting.

Board Chair Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs will discuss this later due to time limitations with having a closed session.

Director's Report

Director Maggie Clapp submitted a written report.

Director Maggie Clapp informed the board members that the department is continuing to reallocate positions to the divisions in desperate need.

Highlights: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) Training has been renewed for foster, kinship, and adoptive families. There have been recent legislative

changes to the Safe Surrender Law allowing applying for an ex parte order once the notification has been initiated instead of waiting for notification completion. This change will be effective October 1, 2024, and will assist in reaching permanency planning sooner.

Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Latoya Chambers, Interim Assistant Director

Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers submitted a written report.

Highlights: In July, there were six probationary employees who reached permanent status. Two participants in Work First Employment Services reported new employment. Work First Cash and Applications continue to meet timeliness expectations.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the partnership with the Child Care Services Association (CCSA). Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers replied that it is going well and continuing to assist CCSA in trying to place families with proper childcare. There will be another childcare event in September. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers for her report and complimented her on the great news.

Medicaid – Cynthia Cason, Interim Assistant Director

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Highlights: Director Maggie Clapp reported that Medicaid Expansion continues to surpass the number of applications that the state expected. Program Manager Nancy Santos stated that Medicaid is doing well and continues to pass the report card. The Tailored Plan launched on July 1, 2024, and 6,000 individuals are covered under this plan. Alliance Behavioral Health is our managed care company.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked how many people are eligible for the Tailored Plan. Program Manager Nancy Santos responded that it depends on what the individual is eligible to receive to determine if they will fall under the Tailored Plan instead of Medicaid Managed Care.

Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Kimberly Lincoln, Interim Assistant Director

Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln submitted a written report.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked about the low QC scores for Adult Medicaid. Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln answered that Quality Assurance & Training (QAT) is working and addressing this training issue. Director Maggie Clapp added that we are continuing to hire new employees and focusing on staff training. Program Manager Candice Leathers informed the board members that QAT is engaging in micro-learning opportunities where staff will learn targeted pieces of policy and then apply them. The clinics will be held throughout the months of September and October focusing on the most common error trends.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo requested an explanation of the numbers listed in the Lobbies/Reception section under average wait time, average appointment duration, etc. Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln replied that the CIC division will be recalculating the wait times and average appointment times. The future reports will have a breakdown of the data.

Highlights: Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln informed the board members that QAT is constantly looking for ways to assist with resources, training issues, and error trends. QAT has also developed desk reference guides for the top errors made within Medicaid. The division has a Hearing Officer vacancy, and the other staff members are being trained to handle the hearings. The call center charts will be changing in appearance for future board reports. The call center is experiencing an increase in calls and received over 1,500 additional calls in July in comparison to July of last year. There has been a significant decrease (50%) in dropped calls from July of last year. The team is looking at ways to revamp the handling of the calls to ensure that all of the calls are received. The incoming calls will be tracked by divisions. Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln created a spreadsheet that each staff member will monitor and change as needed while tracking the calls.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln and her team for their great work.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo was excited to hear about the Homebuilders Program and asked about the capacity for referrals and the criteria. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield answered that the capacity is based on what Homebuilders can provide. There are currently three slots open. Staff have been trained and are looking at cases that can be referred. Homebuilders will work with the families for a 4-to-6-week period. Social Work Program Manager Shontelle Smith remarked that Homebuilders can work with families for up to a total of 40 hours and support families at the point of removal. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if the three slots will be open and reserved for Durham County. Social Work Program Manager Shontelle Smith answered that Homebuilders does not have a waitlist and the department will always have an opportunity to refer families. The capacity is three due to staffing and because it is a new service.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo asked for an elaboration of Traverse. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield stated that Traverse is a case management system that has been implemented for one month in Aging and Adult Services and Child Welfare. Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the reporting process to assess Traverse. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield said check-ins will continue with the project manager and tweaking the developed workflow processes. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about tracking the performance measure. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield responded that she has requested, and Director Maggie Clapp approved to have reports built into the system. Northwoods is working on this process.

Highlights: Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield informed the board members that Blue Cross & Blue Shield has been selected to serve as the children and family specialty plan for foster care. The tentative transition month is December; however, Alliance has shared that it may be extended to January 2025 or July 2025. The annual LINKS Kickoff and field day are on September 17, 2024, from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm at Forest Hills Park 1639 University Drive Durham, NC 27707. The kickoff will focus on the programs and services that youth and young adults can receive while meeting staff. There has been a change in the local Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) and Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) structures, and they will be combined as one team effective January 2025.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo expressed her gratitude to Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield for her leadership. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs was delighted to acknowledge that 560 children received backpacks. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield thanked the community for their participation. The additional backpacks were distributed at the Stop the Violence Event on August 10, 2024.

Aging and Adult Services (AAS) – Valery Dambreville, Deputy Director

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville submitted a written report.

Highlights: Deputy Director Valery Dambreville informed the board members of a state-level change with more support/initiative with the elderly population. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs questioned how it will be expressed. Deputy Director Valery Dambreville responded that on a monthly basis, there is a directors' call regarding assessing the need for policy changes and housing for senior citizens. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed her appreciation for Aging and Adult Services partnering with NACo's Familiar Faces Initiative Pilot.

Finance Office – Margaret Faircloth, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth submitted a written report.

Highlights: Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth mentioned that Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) trips have decreased from 11,000 to 6,600 due to the Tailored Plans. The department continues to work with Alliance to ensure the customers are receiving transportation. Finance is in the middle of a single audit and has weekly meetings with the single audit team. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth met with County Finance yesterday and the roll forwards are in process which pauses carrying the money over. There are multiple contracts waiting to go through and County Finance is working on the technical issues with posting revenues. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired if it was a staffing issue. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth replied that there was a change in staff roles.

Business Operations – Kelly Inman, Senior Operations Officer

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Highlight: Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman highlighted that August is Child Support Awareness Month. The celebrations consisted of a proclamation with the Board of County Commissioners, a staff-wide training that included our partners, and a Child Support Information Session in the Health and Human Services building. Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman recognized Program Manager Quannah Jackson-Brown for organizing an amazing Child Support Awareness Month. Program Manager Quannah Jackson-Brown and her team are committed to changing the narrative around child support and focus on mediating family dynamics and building families. Board member Wendy Sotolongo expressed her appreciation for the idea of changing the narrative and not just collecting money but helping support families. Board member Wendy Sotolongo asked about court involvement with the Fatherhood Initiative. Program Manager Quannah Jackson-Brown answered that the Fatherhood Initiative representatives come to court and speak with our legal and judicial partners. Child Support is working ongoing with several different fatherhood initiatives. Program Manager Quannah Jackson-Brown thanked Director Maggie Clapp, Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman, and everyone for their support.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs commented on the ongoing facility projects and utilizing the veteran services space. Director Maggie Clapp informed Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs about the building custodian issue. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested to hear more about the Stop the Violence & Project Safe Neighborhoods Event. Program Manager Quannah Jackson-Brown replied that it was a wonderful event on August 10, 2024. The event highlighted great initiatives while addressing the concerns of helping the Durham community. Non-profit organizations were present to ensure the youth have constructive activities and are productive.

Vacancy Report

Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart submitted a written report.

Highlight: Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart informed the board members that there has been a great extent of work around the reallocation of positions and strategic decisions are being made on a weekly basis. There is consistent feedback from

staff along with resourcing areas that have high retention. This process results in the ability to exceed the extended impact that an additional position would have in a fully staffed area. HR is intentional about building support for the supervisors and is currently working with the UNC School of Government to provide additional training. The CATD division will have more information about retention going into the new year. Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart applauded the staff for working very hard in their jobs, filling positions, screening applications, and looking at new ways to attract and retain staff. HR will continue to partner with schools, hire multiple graduates from local universities, and look forward to further engagement with the local universities.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart about cross-training opportunities regarding succession planning and retaining staff. Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart replied that while providing staff with tools for advancement there are policies in place regarding career advancement. HR is looking forward to the new year of identifying ways to provide staff with opportunities to gain and develop their skills. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the timeline of the work with the UNC School of Government. Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart answered that the initial training being provided for the supervisors will be around managing for respect no later than mid-October to November. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Senior Human Resources Analyst James Hart for his hard work.

Approval of DSS Board Governance Policy/Procedures

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs for her assistance with the Board Governance Policy and Procedures. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to approve the revised Board Governance Policy and Procedures. Board member Wendy Sotolongo offered the motion to approve the revised policy and procedures and Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The Board Governance Policy and Procedures were unanimously approved.

<u>Board member</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes
Board member Charles Mitchell	Yes
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes

Adjournment

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the August 28, 2024, regular meeting at 10:42 am to a closed session.

- ❖ 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.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to entertain a motion for the board to move to a closed session. Board member Charles Mitchell offered the motion to move to a closed session and Board member Wendy Sotolongo seconded.

The board moved to a closed session with a unanimous vote.

<u>Board member</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		
Board member Charles Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes		

Respectfully submitted,

Chairperson

Date

Secretary to the Board

Date