

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

February 21, 2024

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, February 21, 2024. The meeting was virtual.

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

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

Assistant Directors: Margaret Faircloth, Rhonda Stevens, Jovetta Whitfield, Cynthia Cason (Interim) Kimberly Lincoln (Interim).

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Pamela Purifoy, Tonia Gay, Emma Perry, Lee Little, Carole Trimble, and Montrella Springfield

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the February 21, 2024, regular meeting to order. The public charge was read by Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs.

Public Comments

Amamda Wallace attended via Teams.

Ms. Pettiford attended via Teams.

Sheryl Smith attended via Teams.

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the proposed agenda. The proposed agenda requires amending to add the approval of minutes. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda with amendments and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved with an amendment.

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		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs returned to Public Comments for guest to speak.

Sheryl Smith questioned the status of her case and asked about community based programs offered by DSS.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked Director Maggie Cveticanin to follow-up with Ms. Smith because of the public meeting.

Director Cveticanin inquired about Ms. Smith being represented by an attorney because DSS will not be able to speak about an open case. Ms. Smith stated she is not represented by an attorney in this case. Deputy Director Dambreville mentioned Ms. Smith informed him that she had an attorney. Board member Wendy Sotolongo pointed out that there is a difference between the two types of cases, Ms. Smith would not be entitled to an attorney for a RIL. Deputy Director Dambreville replied to the conversation did not relate to the RIL. Ms. Smith continued to state that she did not have an attorney. Deputy Director Dambreville plans to reach out to Ms. Smith and give her an update.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to approve the minutes for January regular meeting. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered a motion to approve the minutes Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

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		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		

Chair Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs Requested a motion to accept an excused absence from Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered the motion and Board member Wendy Sotolongo seconded. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman attended the meeting.

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		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		

Board member Charles I. Mitchell wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs and the DSS Board thanked Director Maggie Cveticanin and DSS staff for adjusting everything the past two months related to the building. There have been coordination with the County and other partners. The communication, and transparency to keep everyone safe along with Medicaid Expansion rollout. Director Maggie Cveticanin thanked the DSS Board for their support.

Director's Report

Director Maggie Cveticanin submitted a written report.

Director Maggie Cveticanin reported the last few months have been challenging, but staff stepped up with positive attitudes. Queen Street area was closed even though the readings were zero. Staff are sharing work areas. The boiler readings are still at zero on the roof where the issue occurred. Terracon is scheduled to come February 23, 2024, and test the Human Services building for air quality of all pollutants including carbon monoxide. Monday, February 26, 2024, the engineering firm is scheduled to come back since they determined the boiler was the issue. County staff contacted a vendor to repair the boiler and it was completed on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, and the readings have been zero. Staff safety is important and medical information is available.

The first quarter of Medicaid Expansion, approximately 500 applications are being received in other States and North Carolina is averaging 1000 per day. This is great for the Durham community which means Medicaid staff are working hard to process applications quickly with limited support.

Northwoods new case management systems started this month. Felicia Cameron is the Project Manager. The project is going well, and staff are excited and Northwoods stated DSS staff are the most excited teams they have worked with on the case management system.

The consulting firm working with Child Welfare on best practices are shadowing some of the supervisors.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about the number of cases being processed at the county level versus the state.

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason conveyed that since December DSS has received over 6000 applications. In January 3040 applications were processed and only 70 went through the straight through process. The straight through processing must meet the State criteria which is processed through the system.

Interim Assistant Director Cason is planning to contact the State relating to opportunities to lessen the criteria and more applications can go the straight through process. During December MAGI applications received were 1700 and 115 went through the straight through process. February 20, 2024, staff processed over 1500 applications and 10 went through straight through process. The state representative will be coming in February which will give staff the opportunity to discuss increasing the number of straight through applications to assist staff.

Interim Assistant Director Cason communicated the numbers requested by the DSS Board. Starting December 1, 2023, 7033 individuals joined Medicaid Expansion that automatically switched from family planning and became eligible. January 1, 2024, the numbers increased to 7980, February 1, 2024, 8716, 976 joining Medicaid expansion roll. Approximately 1700 individuals have joined the Medicaid expansion role since December. It is anticipated that by April or May will be the halfway point the State anticipated for Durham County. Staff are trying hard to process applications on time. There are some overdue, staff are working hard to ensure that the quality of work meets expectations.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason and suggested a Medicaid event to celebrate a milestone if the number 10,000 or 11,000 applications are processed. That will be uplifting to recognize staff for their achievements. Director Maggie Cveticanin agreed and will review opportunities.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged the projects for professional development and case management established to assist staff.

Director Cveticanin mentioned CCR will be starting in February to review FEI policies and practices, as well as Medicaid. Applications have been increasing in Food and Nutrition over the past few months. The Family Economic and Independence Division was acknowledged for their hard work processing FNS applications.

The DSS Board meeting was paused for public comments. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked callers to please state their names and the DSS Board gave them a few minutes to speak.

Amanda Wallace and Miss Pettiford.

Ms. Wallace conveyed the need for a hybrid option for a public meeting to give the public an opportunity to speak face to face. Ms. Wallace requested to talk about the family policing system, the service Durham County run in Child Welfare and the fact this it is ripping families apart disproportionately. She mentioned a report by the Safety and Wellness Task Force and Durham County is the second slowest county in NC to reunify children. Children sleeping in the building with carbon monoxide poisoning. Ms. Wallace asked if there is some type of written policy by Durham County that stops her from advocating for families?

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Ms. Wallace and suggested scheduling a meeting to get questions answered. The request is not on the agenda to be discussed. The reason the board meeting is not in person today is because of some of the issues dealing with in the building.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs moved forward with Miss Pettiford. Miss Pettiford is concerned about her children in DSS custody. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked Miss Pettiford for her telephone number and Deputy Director Valery Dambreville will call her.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked them for their public comments and continued with the agenda.

Family Economic Independence (FEI) – Rhonda Stevens, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens indicated Food and Nutrition staff are busy. There has been an increase in the number of people applying for benefits. From November through January the number of applications have increased to approximately 400 applications. Due to turnovers and promotions new staff are being trained and with the increase in numbers the timeliness for applications and recertification are attributing factors. Positions are being filled but time is needed to build staff up to do the work. Meetings are being held regularly to make sure we are moving forward. Last month Work First rates were low, with new staff processing applications. The Family Economic and Independence Division had a Black History Month event which was coordinated by staff. The event spotlighted Durham's history and it was a sip and stroll where you could sip drinks and stroll around. Staff were asked to unplug their devices and walk around and learn about Durham's Black History.

Director Maggie Cveticanin added each division was asked to put on any type of event or art to celebrate Black History Month. FEI was first and Director Cveticanin conveyed she learned about Durham. At the end of the contest, staff will receive incentives.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked if the display was still up for viewing? It is important to recognize other gifts, talents and interest staff have in their lives. The display has been removed, pictures maybe available. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith acknowledged staff for different things going on within the agency.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about Medicaid Expansion connecting people to more services they may be eligible to receive. Assistant Director Stevens conveyed there is a possibility because of the increase of applications in Food and Nutrition.

There are ePASS opportunities to educate individuals on services provided by DSS. The QR code document have different locations where a smartphone can link to the QR code and information about the agency can be viewed. Additional information will be provided in the March.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs agreed with the approach and thanked Assistant Director Stevens for the report.

Medicaid – Interim Director Cynthia Cason

Interim Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report and shared the Medicaid Report under the Director's Report.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about challenges in Child Welfare. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield spoke about the issues with child placement around resource parents, or higher level of care. There may be legislation coming up about the issue. Staff continue to work with Alliance to locate placements for children, however, some of the issues are not under DSS control. Resources are needed for mental health providers. Families are not refusing to pick youth up from the hospitals. Families are seeking help and support in the home. DSS is working with the hospitals, Alliance, and the families to keep the youth in their homes. Hospitals are in need of beds for medical issues.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked how the hospitals are responding to the mental health needs of youth. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield conveyed they are calling for DSS to pick up the children from the hospitals and we are trying to educate them about the local mental health entity to find placements or to help the families. DSS is trying to keep children in their homes with the support families need.

Director Maggie Cveticanin mentioned this is a crisis throughout the State and the Director's Association is having discussions with the State.

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville is attending the Eastern Regional Meeting where discussions regarding this issue will be discussed. We do not have kids staying in our building every night that is happening in other counties. Many providers moved to telehealth during COVID, making it unsafe to take on children with challenging behaviors. Chair Commissioner Jacobs extended support from the DSS Board.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo posed a question about the children in the juvenile justice system and meeting with the judge. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield replied the meeting with the Chief District Court Judge had to be rescheduled. Deputy Director Dambreville met Chief over juvenile justice. There will be a follow-up meeting regarding the number of youths ordered into care by juvenile justice, for the same reason parents are refusing to pick them up due to mental health and criminal activities. DSS is being called to do an assessment or they are being ordered into care. Board member Sotolongo asked is this some of the same issues families are not able to access needed resources. Assistant Director Whitfield conveyed that is some of the issue.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith posed a question about the completed 25 adoptions this fiscal year being consistent with each year. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield stated that it is right on base line. It was under 25 our baseline that the State set at 21. Durham County has exceeded the baseline based on the average the last three years of adoptions.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs emphasized there are no public comments on agenda items, only board members speak at this time. There are no open discussions on the agenda items.

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

Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln highlighted the Quality Assurance Team completing the policy portion of the large Medicaid training for the large group hired in January. Currently, working on the mentoring phase for the trainees has been a challenge due to space issues. The team has done a great job reorganizing and refocusing efforts on making sure trainees' needs are being met.

They have been asked to present the QC Tool at the quarterly QA network of counties meeting in March. Program Manager Candice Leathers is preparing to attend and present along with Interim Assistant Director Lincoln.

The Records Management Team is continuing to support the Call Center, lobbies and where assistance is needed. The lobby supervisor and staff working hard to ensure that clients' needs are being met.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln and CATD staff for helping to make the process smoother for people coming to the agency for services.

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

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville submitted a written report.

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville highlighted Adult Protective Services. Durham DSS created a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to collaborate with other agencies to protect the aging community. There are few counties in NC facilitating partnership meetings. Partners include Duke Hospital, Special Victims Unit, Durham Sheriff Department, Durham Police Department, Durham Community Resource Connection and Durham Center for Senior Life.

Another highlight is the Northwood project that is impacting Aging and Adult and Child Welfare.

A regional cluster meeting is coming up with the opportunity to meet with other counties in the region to discuss patterns and trends identified within the county and region.

Sustainability and Benefits started in 2024 lead by Program manager Meghan Russ. Four supervisors highlighted going above and beyond duties are Prudence Glover (Special Assistance In-Home Aide Supervisor), Tammie Tate (Home-Centered Care Supervisor, Ana Perez, and Sherry Rogers Crisis Services Supervisors).

NC PRO funds have ended; however, we continue to service the community. This was a large amount of funding lost.

A meeting was held with Legal Aid to create a process or a relationship to assist families running into eviction. The goal is to improve the process because time is essential with evictions. Looking at a process where information needed for court is available to keep families and individuals from being evicted. Staff have reached out to other counties to analyze their processes.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked about losing NC PRO funds and the impact. Deputy Director Dambreville explained the County funded program was based on rental assistance from over ten years. Families received three or four thousand dollars. Program manager Meghan Russ articulated the average assistance provided was \$6,000.00 per individual or family. With the county programs the maximum if combined \$2600.00. You would have to be eligible for multiple programs to lump the different amounts together. If qualified for one program you may only receive \$200.00. County funded programs are much smaller than federal funded programs. The same volume of calls from clients continue, but the level of funding is no longer available. Deputy Director Dambreville suggested Program Manager Russ elaborate on improving the process with Legal Aide. Staff are working on improving the speed when processing applications. So, tracking the application, the amount of time

pending, holding for five day and if verification does not come in they are not eligible. If they come in, process in a timely manner for the information to get to Legal Aide and don't slow up the court process. Other counties have been contacted, but there is not a lot going on. Their federal funding has been depleted and they are referring clients to various resources. Wake county has a long waiting list just to get contacted to see if they can apply for the program.

Deputy Director Dambreville added there was a Continuous Quality Improvement Process and DSS did well above with the region. Program Manager Lee Little answered the CQI meeting with the State was the previous week. The representative talks about the performance measures for Aging and Adult Services including Adult Protective Services, SA-In home, Group Care Monitoring and Guardianship. Durham has scored 98 and above in the last few meetings. The APS score was 197. Billing and coding for the State reimbursement is higher than last year.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Deputy Director Dambreville, Program Managers Lee Little and Meghan Russ for the report and great work. A meeting was held with Legal Aide Attorneys regarding the housing crisis in Durham. The next City/County Joint meeting will include reviewing what can be done in next year's budget around improving rental assistance and eviction diversion. The effectiveness of policies and what organization should be leading the program.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo inquired about the multidisciplinary team and if DSS had an opportunity to participate in the School of Government training around establishing multidisciplinary teams. According to Lee Little Durham is working with UNC School of Government and they will be at the meet Thursday. Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs added she and former Clerk of Court Archie Smith were a part of the pilot team for MDT. She has been involved from the beginning in trying to encourage other counties to move forward with setting up a team.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledges Aging and Adult Services staff for attending the Meals on Wheels event showing their level of dedication and support. The other issue requiring attention is the long wait list for food insecurity.

Business Operations (BO) – Kelly Inman, Chief Operations Officer

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman highlighted DSS did a great job with the No Notice Shelter on January 18th and January 19th due to the power outage in Durham. County Manager Sowell was very complimentary to DSS and Public Health with how they responded. Staff came to work Thursday unknowingly about sheltering, but everyone came together and provided services to the community.

Information Technology is entrenched in Northwoods with project management moving data over to the new platform.

Child Support top single collection of \$38,000.00 and was on the shoutout list. Congratulations to Dee Robinson!

Assistant Director Faircloth moved forward with the budget presentation. A copy will be placed with the minutes.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth did not include Medicaid Expansion in the board report due to change. Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Team moved to Business Operations. Transportation for January was the highest of all last year except for one month. This could be contributed to Medicaid Expansion.

Budget Review FY 2024-2025

Pause for FY2024-25 Budget

- Expected to absorb inflationary increases within our existing budget.
- No new positions, but we can reclass a vacant position to align with current changes or needs and
- To reallocate dollars within our existing budget

DSS has abided by the request.

- Maintain a flat budget.
- Reallocating some dollars within our budget, umm, to support Agency wide initiatives to support court services.
- Guardianship services and aging and adult services were adding 39,000.
- Administrative contract that services things like language line Support agency growth.

State Budget Narrative Highlights

Hold harmless funding from NCDHHS will no longer be available for SFY 2024-2025

Medicaid Expansion increase Funding for FY25

Changes anticipated in SFY 2024 into SFY2025 will enable counties to increase IV-E reimbursement for case management costs for candidates for foster care.

New Emergency Placement funds are being provided to assist county DSS in preventing children from staying in the office.

No funding for Adult Essential Services in FY25

State-County Special Assistance – No cap, no waiting list standard monthly payment is 100% of the monthly payment if individual resided in an adult care home.

Internal Revenue Service's requires local and federal criminal background checks for employees and contractors who have access to federal tax information.

State Funded Energy Payments

Payments made directly by the State to Vendors

Low Income Energy Assistance

Emergency Energy Assistance

Decrease in County Budget of Approximately 2.49M in Expense and Revenue lines.

DSS budgeted a minimum amount for vendors that have not enrolled in the energy portal.

Eligibility is complete at the agency level.

Division of Child Development and Early Education

Subsidized Child Care Program - Direct Services decreased \$2,867,143.

Subsidized Child Care Program - Service Support decreased \$119,465.

Durham County Community Initiatives increased YTD \$224,094 from the previous year.

Homeowner Tax Relief Program spent approximately \$302,000 and need to maintain the shared Admin expense of running the program.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth asked the Board if they had questions. Director Maggie Cveticanin conveyed the PowerPoint is available for the DSS Board.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Faircloth and asked the Board if they have questions. Chair Commissioner Jacobs emphasized DSS can pull down money due to State and Federal funding. More money will be coming to support children and families so how do we make sure the money is spent. We don't want to be in the same position with child care knowing that is a complex issue. Is DSS getting ready and making sure a system is in place. Director Cveticanin answered DSS do not want to leave money on the table knowing the need in the community, we are reviewing and working to bring other services to assist family's needs. Chair Commissioner Jacobs have concerns about losing child care funding therefore there needs to be an all hands on deck approach. Director Cveticanin indicated COVID impacted child care and other services.

Director Cveticanin mentioned the County Manager indicated there would not be any positions. The County Manager was asked if Medicaid Expansion additional positions would probably be required with the number of applications. Since still onboarding new staff we will not request. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked the percentage of the positions paid for by the State. Assistant Director Faircloth stated 75% for Medicaid with an additional 25% received from Medicaid expansion dollars.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo inquired about the DSS Board role around the budget. Assistant Director Faircloth explained this year is different due to the pause. Usually, DSS Leadership comes to the Board with priorities so the Board would be aware of what is being presented to the County Manager. Chair Commissioner Jacobs thinks it is still important that people understand exactly what the budget is even if it is paused.

Chief Operating Officer Kelly Inman recognized Assistant Director Faircloth and staff on the budget. The format was good and could be delved a little deeper next month or send details from the working papers.

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Vacancy Report - Director Maggie Cveticanin

James Hart submitted the Vacancy Report.

We are at 10% since September 2021 and continue to work on retention. Turnover was due to staff promoted to other positions. Normal average turnover in Child Welfare. Currently, completing time studies to ensure positions are in the right place.

DSS Board Training - Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs facilitated a board training refresher.

Social Services Boards: Practical Guidance for Board Members. Content from Aimee Wall, UNC School of Government: County Social Services Agencies and Local Governing Boards: Roles and Responsibilities 2012.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs articulated the basics of a board member which include rights and responsibilities. The presentation will be forwarded to the DSS Board.

The DSS Board thanked Senior Assistant County Attorney Briggs for the training. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if an orientation guidebook be created for the DSS Board. Director Cveticanin will work to create the notebook for the DSS Board.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairperson

Date

Secretary to the Board

Date