

# **Durham County Board of Social Services**

## **Regular Session Minutes**

**September 25 , 2024**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, September 25, 2024. The DSS Board Meeting was hybrid, in-person attendance in Conference Rooms 2421/22.

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

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs received an excused absence from the DSS Board meeting.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Deputy Director Valery Dambreville.

Assistant Directors: Margaret Faircloth, Jovetta Whitfield, Latoya Chambers (Interim), Kimberly Lincoln (Interim) and Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman.

DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, , Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Susan Lee, Pamela Purifoy, Tonia Gay, Emma Perry, Lee Little, Carole Trimble, James Hart, Jim Wolak, Nakia Johnson, Thomas Williams, Christie McMillian, Shelia Dorsett, Monica Cohn, Rubi Fuentes, Franciska Elliott and Montrella Springfield

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith called September 25, 2024, regular meeting to order. The decorum was read by Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith.

### **Public Comments**

Antoinette Hawes 5610 Cassville Court Minister Raziq Zaidi, Nation of Islam, Jamie Morrison and Amanda Wallace, were present. Attendees were given five minutes to voice their concerns.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith asked board members to review the approval of the proposed agenda. Board member Wendy Sotolongo offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Dionne Moore seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes		

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the August Regular meeting was unanimously approved. Board member Wendy Sotolongo offered the motion for approval of the minutes from the September Regular Meeting followed by the second from Board member Charles I. Mitchell .

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		
Board member Wendy Sotolongo	Yes		
Board member Dionne Moore	Yes		

### **Operations Division Presentation**

**Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman, Jim Wolak, Shelia Dorsett, Quannah Jackson-Brown**

A copy of the presentation will be placed with the minutes.

#### **Facility Manager – Jim Wolak**

The Mission is to provide operation and logistic services and support to DSS. Collaborate with DCo Departments to ensure facility, services, and support requirements are achieved and manage daily processes and procedures efficiency and continual improvement. Nakia Johnson handles office supplies, stock needed supplies around the agency along with other responsibilities. Thomas Williams has worked at DSS for 24 years and manages fleet vehicles along with other duties. DSS has 30 vehicles staff are utilizing daily, and maintenance is very important. Facility staff support all staff with various needs within the agency.

Areas of responsibility include project management, security, mail, fleet, equipment, supplies, printer/copiers and contingency support.

Facility Operations collaborates with other county departments.

## **Program Integrity – Shelia Dorsett**

Program Integrity Unit works hard to protect tax money for citizens. Approximately 120 referrals per month. Staff are required to review facts and figures to decide on a recipient who received too much in benefits, establish a claim and collect. Intentional claims are the hardest due to court proceedings.

Between October 2020 and June 2023 Durham received five charge letters from USDA. The USDA removed a retailer's ability to accept EBT. The retailers and recipients who have transactions meet the definition of trafficking which causes the USDA to disqualify recipients. The five letters resulted in 1302 referrals which do not include other referrals. Approximately 259 claims for disqualifications totaled \$1.2 million in trafficking benefits. Rubi Fuentes presented more details of the investigation process.

Karolin Moreau Assenc and Monica Cohn from Program Integrity also attended the board meeting.

## **Child Support – Quannah Jackson-Brown**

Franciska Elliott shared her journey from a temporary processing assistant in Child Support to Senior Child Support Agent. Ms. Elliott was a lead worker in the Customer Information Center and participated in the County Leadership Academy. Various experiences and opportunities prepared Ms. Elliott for Senior Child Support Agent to ensure the well-being of children and provide families with support for thriving.

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman thanked staff and the DSS Board for the opportunity to share information about Operations.

## **Chair Report**

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith acknowledged administrative support staff for their assistance.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith mentioned the November and December regular board meeting dates will be changed due to the holidays. Currently, looking at November 26<sup>th</sup> and December 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am. Board members will review their schedules.

## **Director's Report- Director Maggie Clapp**

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville presented the Director's Report.

Aging and Adult Services Assistant Director Travis Williams was formally introduced to the DSS Board. Assistant Director Travis Williams gave a brief introduction and emphasized excitement for the opportunity to work at Durham County DSS.

One highlight, NCDHHS is working with the Federal Government due to the increase in fraudulent activities targeting EBT cards.

## **Aging and Adult Services (AAS) - Assistant Director Travis Williams**

Assistant Director Travis Williams submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Travis Williams reported Crisis Services' August Emergency CIP timeliness rate was 100% and non-emergency applications timeliness rate was 99.81%.

AAS is reviewing strategies for moving forward and speaking with Finance about temporary employees to assist with LIEAP.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith commented on Adult Protective Services federal guidelines and the final rule establishes national standards for protecting vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Even with the challenges in AAS staff are being proactive and developing long term strategies along with plans for rapidly increasing demand.

On behalf of the DSS Board many thanks to the AAS team.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo commended staff on looking at extending family visits beyond normal hours. It will be extra work on staff, but families will greatly appreciate visiting their children after work.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield stated there may be some requests coming to the Board. Board member Wendy Sotolongo agreed to assist if help is needed.

The Annual Adoption Gala to celebrate adoptive families, this year will be a “Sneaker Ball”, November 2, 2024. The DSS Board will receive additional information.

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

Interim Assistant Director Kimberly Lincoln submitted the CATD report.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the challenges with resignations, however, they are working to fill the vacancies. The resignations were in the Call Center, staff are working hard to maintain the call volume which continues to come in from citizens. Temporary employees are being considered and interviewed to hire permanent staff. Calls are being answered at 99%.

The Quality Assurance and Training Team are reviewing scores for Medicaid numbers. Staff are working with Medicaid and FNS to brush up on skills.

The reception area continues to ensure that lobbies are open even when short staffed. Shatana Rouse continues to move staff around to make sure the lobbies are available to the public.

Interim Assistant Director Lincoln recognized Senior Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy for supporting DSS with the Public and social media.

### **Medicaid – Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason**

Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Program Manager Nancy Santos reported on behalf of Interim Assistant Director Cynthia Cason.

Single audits are in process and no findings at this time.

Staff visited Pruitt Health Nursing Facility on August 27, 2024

to discuss updates on the Long Term Care Medicaid Program.

As of August 14,163, individuals enrolled in Medicaid Expansion and approximately 540,000 have enrolled in North Carolina.

Medicaid continues to pass the monthly report card. Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) timeliness rate for August was 80%, which did not reach the goal of 85%.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo inquired about pending applications and what it would take to get staffing levels at a good place. There are 10-12 vacancies in Medicaid.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith acknowledged Medicaid staff.

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

Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers submitted a written report.

Interim Assistant Director Latoya Chambers reported Nutrition Services Recertification timeliness for August was 96.12%.

Sun Bucks Program closed August 31, 2024 and the applications for 2025 are available. The State of North Carolina served over 1,000,000 children, over \$120M was issued.

Work First Cash Recertification and Application Teams continue to meet timeliness, 100% for August. The CQI Analyst acknowledged staff and might contact them about the Operation Rescue Plan.

Child Care continues to work with the Child Care Services Association to help families select a provider. As of September 17, 2024, a wait list is in place and possibly will speak with the Board regarding the priority groups. Applications will not be accepted for childcare, but staff will continue to work with families.

Work First Employment Services had six participants receive new employment in August. One was hired at Duke University as a financial counselor at \$20.26 per hour and two were hired at FedEx as package handlers at \$18.00 per hour.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith applauded staff for their work and partnership with CCSA. Vice Chair Beatty-Smith inquired about the childcare wait list. There has not been a wait list for three years and due to ARPA funding. Now the funding has ended the wait list has been implemented. Board member Wendy Sotolongo asked about funding authorized by the legislature. Staff have not received information and will contact the state representative.



## **Vacancy Report – James Hart**

James Hart submitted the Vacancy Report.

Critical positions continue to be filled, and the vacancy rate is at 11.5%, trying to reach 10%. Turnover has more of an impact which occurs in Child Welfare, FEI and Medicaid. Currently, there are over twenty selection packets being processed which are in hot spot areas.

James Hart pointed out staff have to train for weeks, and the probationary period was extended to revamp training. It takes approximately 1 year or more for staff to be a functional case worker.

Reclassified positions are being filled, which demonstrates leadership reassessing the agency's needs. Reallocating in hot spot areas yields a more stability. County Human Resources was acknowledged for assisting with the hiring process.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the time it takes to fill positions. HR Analyst James Hart conveyed the goal is 90 days from when the position is posted. Child Protective Services, Permanency Planning and Income Maintenance have continuous listings. Applications have to be screened through Human Resources, interviews scheduled, required background checks along with internal equity reviews. Depending on the position, candidates from other counties have to complete cases which might take a month for an official start date. Ninety days is a State requirement.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked James Hart for sharing information regarding the hiring process.

Senior Operations Officer mentioned Shelia Dorsett, Program Integrity Supervisor is a board member and past president of the United Council of Welfare Fraud. Ms. Dorsett continues to be influential at the national level with policy and training.

The DSS Board was invited to an agency wide event beginning at 2:00pm. On behalf of the DSS Board, Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith recognized staff for a wonderful job even through challenges.

**Finance - Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth**

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth submitted the Finance Report.

**Business Operations - Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman**

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted the Business Operations Report.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith moved to adjourn the meeting with a unanimous vote from the DSS Board

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairperson

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Date

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Secretary to the Board

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Date