**Durham County Board of Social Services**

**Regular Session Minutes**

**April 23, 2025**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, April 23, 2025. The meeting was hybrid, in-person Conference Room A.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance:

Chair Charles I. Mitchell, Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith, Wendy Sotolongo, and Dionne Moore .

Commissioner Stephen Valentine received an excused absence from the board meeting.

The Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director Maggie Clapp, Deputy Director Valery Dambreville, Assistant Directors: Jovetta Whitfield, Travis Williams, Cynthia Cason, Bila Louima, Latoya Chambers and Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman.

DSS staff attending included: Felecia Cameron, James Hart, Nancy Santos, Candice Leathers, Meghan Russ, Pamela Purifoy, Theresa Long, Crystal Anderson, Laura, Foy, Shewanda Edwards, Jackie Proctor, Emma Perry, Anthony Sturdivant, Clarissa Davis, and Montrella Springfield.

Inaugural Leadership Academy Tanza Moye, Carla Pike, Joanne Otuonye, Shelbia Green, Andrea Miles, LaTusha Tyson, Indiah Rounds, Bridgett Cumberbatch, Destini Hall, Nichole Wilson, Anquinnette Lewis and Felicia Robertson .

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell called April 23, 2025, regular meeting to order and read the decorum.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell requested a motion to excuse Commissioner Stephen Valentine from the meeting. A motion was made and the DSS Board voted unanimously to excuse Commissioner Stephen Valentine.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

Chair Charles I. Mitchell called for a motion to move into closed session and the stature was read. Board member Wendy Sotolongo offered the motion to move into closed session and Board member Dionne Moore seconded.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

The DSS Board returned to the regular meeting, no action taken.

**Public Comments**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell asked for public comments from virtual attendees. Five minutes were allotted for attendees to speak.

Walidaah Burns spoke about reunification with her child. Antoinetta Hawes talked about DSS and the court system. Minister Raziq Zaidi, Nation of Islam mentioned House Bill 612. Amanda Wallace supported Walidaah Burns and expressed concerns. Maria Mejia was present at the meeting and addressed her concerns.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell asked board members to review the proposed agenda for approval. The agenda was amended to reflect the DSS Board move to a closed session at the beginning of the regular meeting. Also, the monthly insight presentation from Child and Family Services was removed. A work session for May 14, 2025, was added to the agenda. Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion and Board member Wendy Sotolongo seconded the motion to approve the amended proposed agenda.

The amended agenda was unanimously approved.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from February 26, 2025, and March 26, 2025, regular meetings were reviewed and approved by the DSS Board with a unanimous vote.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

Senior County Attorney Danielle Briggs requested amending the motion regarding the May 14, 2025, Work Session to include the 9:30 am start time. A motion was offered to include the start time for the work session. and seconded. The DSS Board voted unanimously.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

**Board Chair Report- Chair Charles I. Mitchell**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell moved forward with the recognition of the Inaugural DSS Leadership Academy.

James Hart, Employee Retention & Engagement Manager spoke briefly about the Inaugural DSS Leadership Academy for 2025. Staff were given an opportunity to give a brief introduction.

Director Maggie Clapp had a vision for DSS to have their own Leadership Academy. The academy will focus more on social services and provide mentorship components.

Deputy Director Valery Dambreville and James Hart took the lead in planning the strategics for the leadership academy. The Executive Leadership Team reviewed the applications and provided feedback. The DSS Board congratulated staff and thanked them for their commitment to the citizens of Durham.

**Director’s Report- Director Maggie Clapp**

Director Maggie Clapp submitted a written report.

Director Maggie Clapp mentioned DSS first orientation program for new staff. Anthony Sturdivant, IT Manager, James Hart, Employee Retention & Engagement Manager, and Bila Louima, Assistant Director Customer Accountability and Talent Development along with other staff created the DSS Orientation Program.

The Fatherhood Initiative was created to engage fathers in the community. Staff have taken the initiative to move forward with the program. TaQuan Lynch Child & Family Social Worker attended a conference in which the initiative was presented and met individuals in other states where the program has been successful. The DSS Board will receive additional information.

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

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers reported the third month of MOU performance standards for Food and Nutrition Services and Work First Cash have been met. Work First Cash applications were at 99.21% and recertifications passed timeliness expectations with 100%. Food and Nutrition Services passed applications timeliness expectations with 97.16% and recertifications timeliness at 97.73%.

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers highlighted the four staff from the division participating in the inaugural leadership academy. Kimberly Huckleberry has been hired as supervisor for unit 446 which is a promotion.

Child Care Subsidy will be pulling from the wait list beginning May 1, 2025. Additional funding was received from the State. Families that have received approval will receive letters. There are 365 children currently on the wait list.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo asked about the Work First applications being denied. Assistant Director Chambers conveyed most people are using Epass, which is an online portal and people are not eligible.

**Medicaid – Assistant Director Cynthia Cason**

Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Cynthia Cason conveyed Medicaid Special Assistance met the MOU.

The agency passed March 2025 Medicaid Report Card. Medicaid for the Disabled (MAD) timeliness rate of 98%, and (45-day processing) the state’s goal is 90%.

Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) timeliness rate for March 2025 was 100% and the state’s goal was 85%.

Special Assistance for the Disabled (SAD) timeliness rate for March 2025 was 97% and the state’s goal was 85%.

Beginning July 2025 children ages 0-5 currently enrolled in Medicaid will be eligible for continuous enrollment through the month of their 6th birthday. Children ages 6-18 will have a 24-month certification period, and the state will automatically update. The exceptions are death or relocating to another state. Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith commented on the expansion of the age group.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked Medicaid staff for their hard work.

**Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Assistant Director Bila Louima**

Assistant Director Bila Louima highlighted 19 staff from FEI and Medicaid scored 100% on their QC reviews. Kina McKinney’s unit scored 100%. There were approximately 31 staff scored between 96% and 100%.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell acknowledged staff for their quality of work.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. May is Foster Care Month, the proclamation will be drafted, and activities will be planned throughout the month.

Staff are involved in several pilot programs.

Graduations are coming up in June for young adults in child welfare. An activity or event will be planned to acknowledge graduates.

The MOU measures for home visits are 97%, which exceeds the state 95%. Following the discussion relating to after-hour visits, one member of staff extended their hours to 7:00pm.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell thanked Child & Family Services management and staff for their commitment to the parents and youth.

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

Assistant Director Travis Williams submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Travis Williams highlighted Adult Protective Services (APS) was benchmarked at 95% for abuse and neglect, and APS evaluations involving financial exploitation reached 100%. Emergency and non-emergency applications were at 100%.

Conversations will be held with community partners regarding the upcoming budget.

Aging and Adult Services will hold an Aging Fair on June 12, 2025, at the Human Services Building from 9:00am-4:00pm.

AAS management was acknowledged for having all vacancies filled.

**Operations – Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman**

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted the Operations Report.

Senior Operations Officer Inman reported on the multiple IT Projects. Northwoods will be begin installing the case management tool for Child Support.

Program Integrity reviewing online payments for clients.

Microsoft Excel classes are being offered to staff and have been successful.

A question relating to shelter captains. DSS is required to operate a shelter for the community in case of a disaster or inclement weather. Emergency Management has scheduled a refresher training for staff. Shelter captains are supervisors and managers.

**Finance - Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth**

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth submitted the Finance Report.

Shewanda Edwards reported that a fiscal compliance monitoring is scheduled for May 8, 2025, conducted by the State. They review two months of expenditure through the reimbursement process. This information has been submitted to the State for review.

The budget has been submitted to the County Manager and Budget for review. There are approximately 12 audits in process within the Finance Division.

**Vacancy Report – James Hart, Employee Retention & Engagement Manager**

James Hart, Employee Retention & Engagement Manager submitted the DSS Vacancy Report.

James Hart mentioned the vacancy rate is around 11%, which is good for the size of the agency. Currently, looking at positions due to the hiring freeze. There is an exemption process in place for hiring.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell thanked management for the reports. The DSS Board recognized DSS Administrative Professionals.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell requested a motion to adjourn the DSS Board Meeting. The DSS Board Meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairperson Date

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Secretary to the Board Date