**Durham County Board of Social Services**

 **Regular Session Minutes**

**March 26, 2025**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, March 26, 2025. The meeting was hybrid, in-person Conference Room 2421/22.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance:

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

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.

Insight Presentation Medicaid: Emma Perry, Diamali Corbett, Katisha Suggs, Marquia Bullock, Tonya Bailey, Hermina Hyacinth, Shalonda Daye, Jennifer Wireman, Kimberly Hicks, and Kenee Demory.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell called March 26, 2025, regular meeting to order and read the decorum.

**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. Sheryl Smith, and Antoinetta Hawes talked about DSS and the court system. Minister Raziq Zaidi, Nation of Islam mentioned a meeting with the City. Amanda Wallace supported Walidahh Burns and indicated the court date and if the child was not back with the mother there would be a problem. Maria Mejia (by phone) was present at the meeting.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell asked board members to review the proposed agenda for approval. Board member Wendy Sotolongo offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Board member Commissioner Stephen Valentine seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved.

**Board member Yes No Abstained**

Chair Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Commissioner Stephen Valentine Yes

Board member Wendy Sotolongo Yes

Board member Dionne Moore Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of February 26, 2025, regular will be available at the April meeting for approval.

**Division Insight – Adult Medicaid**

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

Adult Medicaid is a session on Medicaid. Program manager Emma Perry introduced the presenters.

Medicaid Myths include only people with children can get Medicaid, only disabled and older people are eligible.

Private Living Arrangement (PLA) Medicaid

Health insurance for individuals and couples aged 65 and older, and individuals blind or disabled according to the Social Security definition of disability.

There are traditional Medicaid income limits which include bank accounts, life insurance policies, real property, vehicles and other resources.

Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Programs (MQB) covers Part A and B Medicare premiums, there are three types of MQB, and this is a limited Medicaid program.

Family Planning Program (FPP) has no age restriction and other restrictions are also limited to Medicaid Program.

Medicaid Expansion started December 1, 2023, and you had to be between the age of 19 and 65. The application process for kids is 45 days and 90 days for 65 and older. Applications can be submitted through fax, e-mail and telephone.

After applications recipients are required to recertify to continue benefits.

Exparte reviews are completed every six to twelve months depending on the type of Medicaid.

Long Term Care comprises of assisted living community, home health services, skilled nursing community and adult family home.

Specialty programs consist of long term care, community alternatives program, program of all-inclusive care and special assistance. Income requirements vary.

Transfer of Assets can go back 3-5 years depending on the care and services.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell thanked staff for a great presentation and acknowledged leadership.

One question regarding the mailing decisions back to the applicants rather than sending email and does the agency receive a lot of returned mail .

Is there a ration between mailing and emailing decisions to the applicants.

There are a lot of returned emails which have to be worked, however there is no ration between mailing and emailing.

Clarification about how the deductible is determined for individuals eligibility over the income amount. The State provides a formula which calculates based on the gross income.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Another question related to statistics for each program mentioned in Adult Medicaid. The State provides the number of recipients for each program.

Board member Sotolongo inquired about staff cross-trained for the types of Medicaid. Adult Medicaid has approximately fifty staff. Training lasts 10-12 weeks and there is a different training for long term care. It actually takes a year for staff to understand the policies and procedures.

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

Chair Charles I. Mitchell expressed with new administration at the federal and state level along with the new administration over Health and Human Services there are a lot of changes. Chair Mitchell thanked staff for their work. There are uncertainties but everyone has to continue to move forward.

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

Director Maggie Clapp submitted a written report.

Director Maggie Clapp mentioned Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina work requirement is moving forward.

DSS worked with UNC School of Government to provide four trainings, managing with respect. Supervisors, Program Managers, Assistant Directors and Director attended one of the training sessions. Feedback from staff was good.

DSS Leadership Academy starts March 31, 2025. Staff have been selected and will be notified. There will be 12 participants involved for 12 months.

Director Clapp attended The LINKS cooking skills event held on March 18, 2025, for youth learning how to cook.

Director Clapp expressed concern about health insurance additional costs to staff or less benefits covered. Staff might have to choose between insuring their children or spouses.

Director Clapp and Assistant Director Faircloth have a meeting with the County Manager to present the budget. The hiring freeze which went into effect July 1, 2024, now includes DSS. Social Workers and Child Welfare positions are exempt.

Director Clapp plans to advocate for Income Maintenance Caseworkers due to the 75% reimbursement. This area has the largest turnover, staff are going to the surrounding counties.

Work continues with Allie4Outcomes, and the contract with CCR has ended. Allies4Outcomes will support with implementation of the SOP and recommendations. Kerri Beatty was acknowledged for assisting with writing the SOP.

Commissioner Stephen Valentine inquired about the impact of the work requirement for Medicaid recipients. Assistant Director Cynthia Cason conveyed people will lose Medicaid benefits. Staff will continue to take applications and if approved additional steps will be added to the eligibility process. The concern is geared toward older and disabled people that are unable to work.

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

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers reported the second month of MOU performance standards for Food and Nutrition Services and Work First Cash. Work First Cash applications and recertifications passed timeliness expectations with 100%. Food and Nutrition Services passed applications timeliness expectations with 97.16% and recertifications timeliness at 97.37%.

Assistant Director Latoya Chambers highlighted the program had favorable exit interview with More Than A Job previously known as F&S ENT program. Durham County was acknowledged for the introduction letter sent to participants and did not have any negative findings.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo asked if FNS applications are being tracked with the possibly of increase due to changes. Assistant Director Chambers conveyed applications are tracked, the average is approximately 600 but fluctuates. The focus is to decrease the number of denials and terminations.

Director Maggie Clapp recognized Assistant Director Chambers and FEI for meeting timeliness and passing the State MOU.

**Medicaid – Assistant Director Cynthia Cason**

Assistant Director Cynthia Cason submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Cynthia Cason conveyed Medicaid has worked hard with open enrollment and Medicaid Expansion. Adult Medicaid staff presented the process and gave details on eligibility requirements. The main concern is work requirement for Medicaid which will impact elderly and disabled people. This will also have an impact on urgent care, hospitals and emergencies due to people not having insurance.

Medicaid passed the report card for Medicaid for the Disabled with 97% and Special Assistance for Disabled at 100%. Special Assistance for the Aged was 50% and a plan is in place.

There are currently 14 vacancies and 4 are pending in Human Resources. Interviews and reference checks are moving forward.

Commissioner Stephen Valentine inquired about staff working in the community. Medicaid has staff at Lincoln Community Health and Urban Ministries. The plan was to have someone at the jail, but it did not work out therefore applications are being sent through the mail.

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 since the beginning of 2025, new hires for Family and Children Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services, Child Care and Adult Medicaid passed their final exam with at least a 90%. There was a total of 18 new hires.

The staff development specialist for Food and Nutrition Service has aligned record review finding according to the State.

Staff continue to work through challenges in the different programs.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield explained the National/Federal Standard for Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care is 40.5%. The report is from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024. This is cohort data and not fiscal year or calendar year.

* NC is at 28.3% = 1389 children exited foster care in 12 months out of the 4900 who entered during this federal fiscal year.
* Large Counties – 22.5% = 306 children exited foster care in 12-months out of the 1361 who entered during this federal fiscal year.
* Durham County – 11.1% = 6 children exited foster care in 12-monhts out of 54 who entered this federal fiscal year.
* Region 3 Counties – 20.4% = 186 children exited foster care in 12-months out of 910 who entered this federal year.

There are several counties that range in size in Region 3, such as Alamance and Guilford counties. The other counties: Forsyth, Chatham, Casewell, Davidson, Davie, Orange, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Yadkin, and Surry.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield emphasized the challenges with reunification. Families dealing with mental health and substance abuse. Autism services have been discussed in the child protection team meetings. Evaluating partner training and educating staff with a skill set, and tools needed to manage cases. Services are challenges due to lack of resources.

Reviewing what can be done in addition to reviewing cases quarterly of kids who have been in care more than 24 months.

Board member Wendy Sotolongo inquired about four spots in Region 3. Assistant Director Whitfield clarified this is a part of Families First which is a second geographic area. Durham has made most of the referrals. A meeting was held with Chapin Hall, Crossnores and NCDHHS. Crossnores mentioned increasing staff which will increase slots.

Child and Family Services is looking into moving into expanding visit to 7:00pm weekly and weekends. The timeframe depends on the hours and times of visits along with staffing. Visits have to be in the community due to the security concerns.

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

Assistant Director Travis Williams submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Travis Williams highlighted APS was benchmarked at 96% for abuse and neglect, and APS evaluations involving financial exploitation reached 100%. Emergency applications were at 100% and non-emergency at 98.99%. The third quarter Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) visit for APS and Guardianship continues to meet and exceed state benchmarks.

Durham is one of the counties participating in the Multidisciplinary Team along with other community agencies.

Two promotions, Danielle Harris Home Care Center Supervisor and Contessa Sawyer accepted the Program Manager position.

Approximately, 575 on the Home Delivered Meals waiting list. More people needing services, volunteer numbers are low and trying to recruit partners to assist.

Vice Chair Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked Assistant Director Williams for the AAS report.

**Operations – Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman**

Senior Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted the Operations Report.

Senior Operations Officer Kelly acknowledged Program Integrity, $1,000,000 collection.

Child Support will be implementing Northwoods software case management tool.

IT Manager Anthony Sturdivant has been with the agency for five months and doing a great job. A report will be submitted next month which includes projects.

There has not been a resolution relating to the building issue responsibilities.

**Vacancy Report – James Hart**

James Hart submitted the Vacancy Report.

James Hart mentioned the training facilitated by UNC School of Government about respect. Currently work with the strategic plan with core values and respect is the number one goal. Additional work coming in regards to the hiring freeze and the time frame will increase to receive approval for exemptions. Thanks to the management team and Patrick Draughn for moving hiring packets through the process.

**Finance - Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth**

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth submitted the Finance Report.

Director Maggie Clapp mentioned Laura Foy and staff are working on DSS contracts. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth is in class therefore Shewanda Edwards will present the proposed budget.

A copy will be attached to the board report.

To maintain the budget DSS is not requesting new positions

* Dollars will be reallocated within the existing budget. Approximately $226, 174 will be reallocated to support needs and expenditures.
* Most of the reallocations are inflationary increase.
* Travel - Increase client visitation which includes out-of-state (State mandated)
* Guardianship – Provide protection adults facing vulnerability and helps fulfill guardianship responsibilities.
* One request – Additional fund for Adoption Assistance IV-E payment ($500,000.)
* Total Expenditure request $66,833,464.
* Revenues approximately $959,953 increase.
* Revenue budget $38,612,792.

The State provides an estimate of State and Federal funds to be available, and budget narrative.

Subsidized Child Care Program direct program funds and service support decreased.

Homeowner Tax Relief Program YTD funds increased from 2024.

Questions around decrease in childcare. There is a priority list for childcare that includes Child Welfare, homelessness, and teen moms. Sometimes at the end of the year, counties that have funds left will be reallocated.

A budget update will be provided at the April meeting.

Chair Charles Mitchell thanked staff for attending the meeting and recognized Social Work Month.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell moved forward with the board training facilitated by Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danille Briggs presented Practical Guidance for Board Members with content from the UNC School of Government County Social Services Agencies and Local Governing Boards.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs clarified the duties and responsibilities of the DSS Board.

* Hires the DSS Director
* Advise public officials
* Establish local policies
* Monitor and evaluate programs
* Assist with budget and funding.

The Board has no authority to:

* Hire or fire DSS employees
* Establish qualifications and salary schedule
* Adopt personnel policies
* Hear employ grievance or appeals

Monthly meetings are required and abide by the Open Meetings Law. A public notice is required for meetings along with minutes.

Appointments, dismissals, salary, personnel policies, appointing and removing board members cannot be part of a closed session.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs pointed out guidance around situations at the meetings.

Board members thanked Senior Assistant County Attorney Briggs for the training and partnership with the DSS Board.

Chair Charles I. Mitchell requested a motion to adjourn the DSS Board Meeting.

The DSS Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned by the DSS Board members.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary to the Board Date