

**Durham County Board of Social Services**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**November 18, 2020**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. Due to COVID-19 the DSS Board Meeting was virtual.

The following DSS Board members were in attendance:

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs, Vice-Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman, Board members Janice P. Paul, Jacqueline Beatty-Smith and Charles I. Mitchell.

The DCDSS Department was represented by the following:

Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy, Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman, Assistant Directors Krystal Harris, Brandon Mitchell, Jovetta Whitfield, Janeen Gordon and Rhonda Stevens. DSS staff attending included LaToya Chambers, Candice Leathers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Sharyn Flood, Quanesha Archer, Pamela Purifoy, Shontelle Smith, Lynn Thomas, Darlene Whitfield, Matthew Thompson, Celestine Boney and Montrella Springfield.

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the November 18, 2020 regular meeting to order.

**Public Comments**

No public comments

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked board members to review the agenda. Board member Janice P. Paul offered the motion to amend the agenda and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded. The agenda was approved unanimously by voice vote.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from September 16, 2020 and October 21, 2020 regular meetings, were approved with a unanimous vote by the DSS Board. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman offered a motion and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The minutes from the Special Meeting were approved with a unanimous vote. Board member Janice P. Paul offered the motion and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

## **Chair Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs conveyed appreciation and gratitude to DSS staff. Every month there have been new challenges. This month the Hope Program has been a challenge. Staff have worked hard on the program and it has been stopped. Multiple programs have been overwhelmed with applications and shutdown. Federal and State programs are ending which will cause hardship for the community. There is a surge in COVID, the super spreader is private events. Looking ahead for what lies for DSS, however, there are two vaccines being developed and will be rolling out in January.

## **Director Report**

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose informed the DSS Board about the presentation to the Board of County Commissioners which can be seen on Channel 8 on November 23, 2020. DSS and Emergency Management Services will present on services provided and the direction in the future. Director Rose conveyed funding will be depleted by the end of 2020. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon is working on several initiatives which will be communicated in AAS report. Director Rose expressed the concern for people being evicted next year if funding is not available. This could cause an increase of APS and CPS cases.

Director Rose pointed out several items on the Director's report.

- Medicaid Transformation website has been launched. DSS has started to promote so beneficiaries can start visiting the website for information. Enrollment will begin in March 2021. Director Rose suggested briefing new board members on Medicaid Transformation at the December meeting.
- Child Welfare Reform is starting to move forward. The State is developing the Safety Organized Practice Model. The model of practice includes safety focus, trauma informed, family centered and culturally competent. The goal for implementation is December 2023. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield has designated staff to work on this project.

- A preliminary budget was presented at the department head meeting. The impact of COVID has impacted the budget. The budget for 2021-2022 will begin and departments have been asked to look at budget reductions. Director Rose will be scheduling a leadership meeting to discuss the budget after the holiday. DSS is not anticipating a lot of expansion because revenues are unstable.
- Town Hall Meetings have been held with staff over the past three weeks. The meetings have gone well and a great way to reconnect with staff. Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman hosted the meetings. Good way to get dialog, feedback and talk about what DSS has experienced and the future. The plan is to continue and do targeted town halls until things can get back to normal. Not as much participation but have been good.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs expressed gratitude about Triple P Parenting being one of the programs adopted by the State since there is a partnership through Durham County. Director Rose communicated IV-E funds are flexible and does not have a cap. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs questioned since there is a partnership with Public Health would it be easier to move forward. Director Rose stated since there is a relationship it should be easier. The services are being utilized and a different funding stream will be used.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs was pleased Director William Rose was participating on the Jobs Plus Program with Durham Housing Authority and Safe and Nurtured Committee for Early Childhood Action Plan.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the concerns heard during the town halls especially staff balancing home and work. There was also a question about the new policy change, DSS staff not participating in research projects with Duke.

Director Rose communicated town halls were scheduled over two hours, which could have affected participation. Balancing life and work during the pandemic, self-care came up, challenges with phone services, and staying connected and keeping stress levels minimal. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy pushed self-care and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman talked about improving business processes.

The County Attorney's office recommended not participating in projects involving direct staff interviews and processes. This comes from companies wanting to come in and pilot in certain areas within the county. The concern is direct staff involvement. The change does not affect projects such as data

projects and predictive analytics within Child Welfare. Director Rose plans to meet with the County Attorney and will follow-up with the Board.

Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired about an event last year relating to mental health or self-care around the holiday. Assistant Director Krystal Harris stated a Lunch and Learn was held last year. During the town halls self-care has been big for staff. Assistant Director Krystal Harris plans to send something out for the holidays. Vice Chair Holsey-Hyman teach child welfare, and DSS staff have participated. Vice Chair Holsey-Hyman would like to share videos created by students relating to Child Welfare.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith requested being a part of the briefing on Medicaid Transformation. Director Rose suggested adding to the December agenda.

Congratulations to DSS new father James Hart!

### **Vacancy Report**

Savings from the hiring freeze will be provided in December. More information should be available in January. Exemptions have been requested in Child Welfare, Aging and Adult Services and Business Operations.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens conveyed the agency did not pass the October Medicaid report. An error was discovered on the report and information has been forwarded to the Medicaid Liaison. Other counties have noticed the same error. Currently, waiting from response from the State.

Staff are processing applications from Affordable Health Care. Approximately 277 applications received, therefore, a team is in place to assist with processing. The 277 applications exclude regular Medicaid applications. The Affordable Health Care will run until December 15, 2020

Board member Janice P. Paul asked if vacancies were due to COVID-19. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens stated staff are going to other jobs which include the State along with surrounding agencies. Child Care Social Workers are helping in other divisions. There was an additional question regarding Work First Recertification was a staff oversight. Assistant Director Stevens agreed there was an oversight and there were only 4 cases.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs pleased to see the Medicaid report failure for October was a technical issue and glad to see a team was put together to assist with applications received from Affordable Health Care. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the public knowledge of the Affordable Health Care enrollment. Director Rose shared the information and Pamela Purifoy, Public Information Officer (PIO) has shared on social media. There is communication with other PIO collaborating to get the information out to the community. Chair Commissioner Jacobs indicated Durham has a 14% unemployment rate and North Carolina has over 750,000 people without insurance along with \$355.00 checks running out. Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested getting this information to the public as well.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith inquired about the End Poverty Committee meeting and their focus. Are there future initiatives based on poverty and the role? Assistant Director Stevens conveyed the main focus is poverty, however, different things come up, but the last session was around impact of racism and poverty. A discussion was on the impact of the election, people being able to access voting. There are a lot of good discussion which come out of the group.

### **Customer Accountability and Talent Development – Krystal Harris, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs recognized the challenges in the division.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris is having conversations with internal IS&T and the County IS&T about QC Tools. There are challenges with recruiting of Staff Development Specialist for Long-Term Care.

Two positions have been reposted twice because of the knowledge required. In the Call Center there is one vacancy and one staff on FMLA which leaves four people.

Two positions for trainers working with Adult Medicaid. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy conveyed the division was seeking outside support but did not work out due to technology issues.

Leadership is brainstorming to recruit for the positions but still at a standstill. This is an opportunity to see how to grow staff internally because there have been few staff with expertise. This is a statewide issue with Adult Medicaid. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked how the Board can assist. Director Rose conveyed positions were upgraded positions but currently there is a struggle. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith works with a group helping with employment and suggested a link to share with the network.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield provided a report to the DSS Board.

1. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith reviewed challenges working with legal team and the court to suspend in-person family visits for 30 days. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield communicated Community Social Services Associates (CSSA) supervise family visits and transport kids to medical appointments. The in-person family visits resumed in June, but in October several staff had to quarantine 14 days, 1 on FMLA and have 2 vacancies. Out of 9 CSSA, only 6 are available to work and 4 had to be quarantined. A parent was asymptomatic and did not know along with foster children. The suspension was needed to help staff rebound and it was a capacity issue because only 2 staff were available. Program Managers Sharyn Flood and Shontelle Smith met with County Attorney and requested suspension of visits. Two weeks was approved, therefore, Program Manager Shontelle Smith met with staff to discuss improvements to ensure safety for all. Management will continue to monitor and enforce with parents the 3W's while visiting.
2. Chair Commissioner Jacobs emphasized the importance of wearing mask and protocols are in place. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted the strict protocols in place.
3. Vice Chair Monique Holsey-Hyman asked about Staff checking on children outside the County. Staff continue to monitor face-to-face and virtual.
4. Assistant Director Whitfield communicated there were a few fatalities, after cases have been closed within 12-month interval. Some had near deaths and families had to make hard decisions. Cases will probably be review by State Fatality Team.

5. Chair Commissioner Jacobs pointed out the decline in foster homes. Families are adopting and the State has a maximum number for children in the home. Due to COVID, MAPP training is virtual which decreased licensing.

### **Aging and Adult Services - Janeen Gordan**

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a report from Aging and Adult Services.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged the number on the waiting list for Home Delivered Meals decreased. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated more people were assisted through the Families First funding. The waiting list is reviewed, and some people do not want meals delivered to home.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the huge number of applications staffs processing and challenges. There were a lot of denials for CBDG and if the reasons being tracked? Yes, denials and reasons, some are not eligible, and some do not get back with additional information. The biggest challenge is getting the information required to complete the application. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked if the request is reasonable. According to Program Manager Lee Little the request is reasonable for qualification. A request could be a ledger, former employer, paycheck stub or laid-off due to COVID. Over 600 applications have been taken and \$559,775 has been spent out of \$1.77M

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated the HOPE Program launched on October 15, 2020. The State Program was \$2.4M shutdown on November 11, 2020 due to overwhelming number of applications in Durham County. Approximately 2300 applications were taken and there is a lot of processing to complete for eligibility and required documentation. Program Manager Little stated the program came with software which made it easier for applicants to download their documents.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about perspective from other counties. There were 3200 total applications 1200 were received from Durham. People are going from CDBG to Hope because of qualifications.

Congratulation from DSS Board members to Aging and Adult Services.



## **Business Operations – Kelly Inman, Chief Operations Officer**

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman emphasized DSS is on target with expenditures at 31%. There is at one-month delay in revenue numbers. The reimbursements are on October 30<sup>th</sup>, but the journal entries are not reflected on the report.

There is a \$766,000 savings in frozen salaries and with additional lapsed salaries \$1.42M savings.

Budget conversation with the percentages, DSS must be careful because State and Federal allocations cannot be reduced.

Looking to move in the Alliance space on the second floor soon. Toured the area and completion should be in January. More accurate information will be forwarded when received.

For the next couple weeks, screening will be in a module unit in the visitor's parking lot. This has been delayed, information will be sent upon receipt.

Director William Rose received clarity on the percentages, DSS Will be looking at the County match within the budget. Director Rose commended Chief Operations Officer Inman on the inter-department review. All the programs were involved and reviewed finance for each program at the current level.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman indicated CBDG and HOPE funds notice reimbursement tool for the HOPE program went live and will be utilized this week. Appreciate working relationship with Aging and Adult Services.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs is concerned about cuts in DSS and non-mandated services. People in community relying on right now. This is an important conversation.

## **New Business**

No new business this month.

**Unfinished Business**

**COVID Update**

COVID was covered in the programmatic reports.

Director William Rose informed the DSS Board, CARES funding is being used to purchase equipment for Aging and Adult Services and Child and Family Services.

**Board Action Items**

The Board Action Items were updated.

Director Rose recommended invited representatives for NC CARES 360 to the December meeting. Medicaid Transformation will be added to the agenda.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about additional items requiring the DSS Board attention.

The DSS Board adjourned to Executive Session to confidential pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(1) To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this State or of the United States, or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. Board member Janice P. Paul offered the motion and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

The DSS Board returned to regular session by declaration.

Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion to go into second executive session 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. General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, appointment, or removal of a member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by a public body having final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting. Statue 143-318.11 (6). Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

<b>Board member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs	Yes		
Vice Chair. Monique Holsey-Hyman	Yes		
Board member Janice P. Paul	Yes		
Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith	Yes		
Board member Charles I. Mitchell	Yes		

Board member Janice P. Paul motioned to return to regular session and Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs declared the exit.

The DSS Board Regular Meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted

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Chairperson Date

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Secretary to the Board Date