

Durham County Board of Social Services

Regular Session Minutes

May 19, 2021

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. The DSS Board Meeting was virtual due to COVID-19.

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, Jovetta Whitfield, Rhonda Stevens and Janeen Gordon. DSS staff attending included Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Kalindra Ellerbe, Candice Leathers, Lee Little, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Sharyn Flood, Quanesha Archer, Pamela Purifoy, Elizabeth Granby, Shontelle Smith, Darlene Whitfield, and Montrella R. Springfield.

James Hart from Durham County Human Resources attended the meeting.

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney was present.
Gina Upchurch, Senior PharmAssist, Janet Bettger, Associate Professor Duke School of Medicine and Nursing, Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy

Lara Khalil, City-County Youth Initiatives Manager and staff from Youth Listening Project Alliance Frazier, Nori McDuffie, and Jaylen Segers.

Chasity Locke, Les A. Hamashima, County IS&T.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the May 19 , 2021 regular meeting to order.

Public Comments

No public comments

Approval of the Agenda

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked board members to review and approve the agenda. Board member Charles I. Mitchell moved to approve the agenda as written and Vice Chair Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded.

The agenda was unanimously approved by voice vote.

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		

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the regular meeting on April 19, 2021, were approved by the DSS Board. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered a motion to approve the minutes and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.

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		

Chair Report

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs will report later.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs continued with the New Business items on the agenda. The agenda reflects the good work DSS is doing in the community.

Director William Rose thanked the DSS Board for approving presentations from Senior PharmAssist. Gina Upchurch is doing a lot for Durham Partnership for Seniors. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon and Program Manager Lee Little represents DSS.

Director Rose mentioned having Gina Upchurch return to talk about Durham Partnership for Seniors.

Senior PharmAssist – Gina Upchurch

Ms. Upchurch acknowledged DSS staff for their work.

Senior PharmAssist has been in place for 27 years. They are located in Durham Center for Senior Life. Anyone can make referrals. Transportation, translation, home visits (excluding COVID), and telehealth. Senior PharmAssist has been opened during COVID.

Senior PharmAssist provide a card for individual to use at pharmacies. Cards are used for co-payments for those below 200% federal poverty guideline. The funds assist those who are not receiving assistance via Medicaid or Medicare Part D.

Ms. Upchurch is a Pharmacist and help with Medication Therapy Management, Tailored Community Referral and Medicare Insurance Counseling. Janet Bettger assist at Lincoln Community Hospital with referrals. Senior PharmAssist is NC SHIP (Seniors' Insurance Information Program) for Durham County.

During COVID additional services were added which included telephone reassurance calls, strong coalition ties and PPE/Health self-monitoring devices.

Senior PharmAssist have blood pressure monitors, scales and other monitoring devices available for seniors. Gina Upchurch asked DSS to help get this information out to the community.

Demographics were presented relating to adults 60 and older increasing and changing in race. Data gathered shows income, savings and home equity are higher for White Medicare beneficiaries than Black or Hispanic.

Since COVID work has begun with upstream to resolve current problems.

A week before COVID hit a Consensus Report was released about seniors being isolated and feeling lonely. There is a 45% increase in the risk of mortality and smoking cigarettes.

Durham's Partnership for Seniors and More are discussing needs and focusing on:

- Outreach and Messaging
- Shared database of resources and digital divide
- Connection agencies and initiatives with volunteers

Senior PharmAssist received a \$50K grant and the focus for this money is to hire community health promoters.

Durham's Partnership for Seniors and Durham's Partnership for Seniors now is working to become a non-profit.

Master Aging Plan in Durham will be County funded and led by consultants working with Triangle J. The two recommendations are to create full-time positions for implementation of the MAP and supporting CHW/CHP in fracture.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program – Janet Prvu Bettger, Associate Professor – Duke Schools of Medicine and Nursing, Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy Duke University

Janet Prvu Bettger thanked the DSS Board for the opportunity to present at the meeting.

Ms. Bettger explained digital divide which is the gap between whom have ready access to computer, internet, and can use them for what they need, and those who do not.

North Carolina ranks last among states in internet usage at home.

Many housing complexes are without broadband in fracture. Internet services and cellular broadband are expensive. Some school age children and older adults cannot afford devices required for internet.

Durham Housing Authority does not have Wi-Fi in the complexes due to structural issues.

Digital Equity in Durham working to provide every Durham resident technologies, tools and skills needed for affordable internet. To reach digital equity internet services, devices, technical support, applications and online consent are needed.

Emergency Broadband Benefit started on May 12, 2021. FCC program to assist households struggling to afford internet during the pandemic. This is a temporary program to help with monthly broadband bills. Eligibility requirements are income at or below 135% of federal poverty guidelines or loss income due job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 and household income for single below \$99,000 and joint \$198,000. One discount per household. Also, participating in Lifeline, SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit, SSI, Free and Reduced Lunch or Breakfast (2019-2021) and Federal Pell Grant. Durham Service Providers are available. There is an application process for consumers and assistance to complete is available.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Gina Upchurch for the amazing work she is doing in the community for many years.

DSS Staff have ideas on how to partner with this program. Director William Rose informed the DSS Board staff are already communicating through social media, information in lobbies and telephone. DSS leadership will meet to discuss additional outreach to assist clients.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens and staff are talking about ways to connect better with seniors and will reach out to Senior PharmAssist.

Gina Upchurch inquired about outreach for rental assistance.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon communicated DSS is working closely with landlords that have tenants in the age range. The emergency rental assistance currently pays for internet and may be a good match to give the information to landlords. Landlords can distribute information to residents to help those in need which will help the digital divide.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked about community partners working with the ERAP program. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated it could be non-profit contractors and volunteers, currently there are a wide arrange of individuals advocating and interested that those individuals that don't have what they need receive it.

Gina Upchurch asked Janet Bettger about any navigating assistance from entities she is working with on the project.

Janet Bettger agreed to assist with training and will meet with Assistant Director Janeen Gordon.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs suggested involving natural partners including Durham Veteran Affairs that are providing mobile services, Durham Public Schools families and Durham Housing Authority communities.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thanked Gina Upchurch and Janet Bettger for their presentations. Chair Commissioner Jacobs conveyed the Master Aging Plan was not in the budget and was inquired about in the budget meeting. Hearing from advocates and experts in the community is needed. Gina Upchurch stated it is being written and should be completed by next BOCC meeting.

Director Rose thanked Gina Upchurch and Janet Bettger.

Director Rose introduced Lara Khalil, City-County Youth Initiatives Manager.

The DSS Board was informed the project began in 2019. Director Rose recommended Board members review the report. DSS is youth focused with child welfare, economic assistance programs and child support. Director Rose believed it would be great to see the work completed and move forward.

Nori McDuffie thanked the DSS Board for the invitation and opportunity to present. A brief introduction was given from Alice Frazier, Nori McDuffie, Jaylen Segers and Lara Khalil. Nori McDuffie shared the focus is to provide a high-level overview of the project and recommendations.

Lara Khalil highlighted the core value “Young people should have a voice in the decisions that affect them and their communities”. They are currently located in the City Manager’s Office.

Two focus of work are creating new opportunities for youth to be decision makers in local government and huge charge to find ways to improve local government youth services for ages 5-24 years so they can meet the needs of the community.

There was a need to be in partnership with youth and hear the needs before creating solution.

Purpose

- Understand how to better engage and communicate with youth and their families
- Understand the barriers/facilitators for participating in youth services
- Find solutions that could guide their work, set priorities for OOH and other depts/orgs
- Build trust and new connections with young people and their families, and community orgs

Ms. Khalil thanked LINKS program as a partner.

Alice Frazier explained the Listening Project Team roles which included:

- Youth-Adult Selection Team
- Office for Youth
- Youth-Adult Board
- Youth Ambassadors
- Consultant Team
- Community Partners

Focus was on Black, Brown and Indigenous Youth:

- Youth Who Aren't in School and Aren't working
- LGBTQ+ Youth
- Youth experiencing houselessness
- Youth experiencing economic hardships
- Immigrant and Migrant Youth
- Youth who have had interactions with law enforcement

Nori McDuffie started with outreach which incorporated community events, recruited and trained youth ambassadors and staff and hosted listening sessions. Drafted recommendations, hosted listening sessions and finalized the report in 2021.

The challenges shared were

activities and programs hard to access

Youth Leadership opportunities are few and when they are youth do not know.

Welcoming places for youth are often unwelcoming especially downtown.

Transportation does not meet the needs of youth.

Durham is Diverse but youth serving in organizations is not.

Safety for youth has a sense of unsafety in Durham specifically at schools and at home.

Lara Khalil conveyed the recommendations February 11, 2021:

Retreating to identify OOH priorities

Advocating/advising on Comprehensive Plan and Transit Plan updates

Road tour to share broadly with stakeholders

Convening stakeholders around shared priorities

Launched new Grant Funding Program from Durham County to advance the priorities

Restructure of Durham Youth Commission to support authentic civil engagement

The work will continue.

Board member Charles I. Mitchell commented/questioned about the report being released around the same time Southpoint Mall required that youth have a chaperone. Glad the recommendation in highlighted and working with young people with diverse backgrounds. Is there a plan for training sessions to ensure that stakeholders are appropriately serving minority youth?

Lara Khalil doesn't have plan to implement currently but it is one of the recommendations. The findings are not new, there is work already happening in these areas. There are some places OOH can have an impact and some places where people can be brought together to talk about the same issue, resourcing so it can become a reality. The office is not planning a have a diversity training.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith thanked the presenters for what is being done for youth. There is a long list of partners, will the office take on new partners that are interested in the programs working with youth and connect with someone?

Lara Khalil indicated yes that is a goal of the office to expand their network. The age group is 5-24 years, for ages 5-12 the caregivers were engaged and 13-24 the youth were engaged.

Director William Rose commended on partnership, and how DSS deal with these issues. How can we be a bigger partner as an agency, maybe DSS can go a step further and offer opportunities for mentorships and volunteer opportunities to come and interact with client base. There are internal issues with perception, there are opportunities with the types of services provided by DSS.

Board member Janice P. Paul asked how adults hold harmful bias against youth. What is the approach to dispel the issue? This was heard in listening project youth people didn't feel they were being heard whether in school or other places they tried to interact. They talked about adults what happens when young people speak adults interrupt and won't let them speak. Young people should be seen and not heard.

Board member Janice P. Paul conveyed the need to educate adults about the needs of youth.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked for amazing work of the report and results. Thanked Director Rose for inviting the group to present at the meeting. Time and effort have been put into this report and a lot of time don't go anywhere. The implementation of the recommendations need to move forward.

Director Rose agreed the recommendations and how they can be implemented. Youth need to be in leadership positions, involve with decision making, policy, position of power. Hope this is a beginning.

Legislative Update

More updates monthly,

1. Senate Bill 693 – Expedited Permanency Bill which has been modified. Director Rose will get more information on the modifications. Looking a revising local courtroom and may have an impact. One item is the General Assembly being able to get any information on a case and directors are opposing. This was removed from the final bill.
2. Foster Care Bill of Rights - this is being modified as well, the concern is taking away from parent’s rights and shifting rights to foster parents.

These bills will be watched very carefully due to impact.

The American Rescue Plan – Big and a lot coming for DSS, funds will be filtered through the State. One, extends food stamps allotment to September 30, 2021 and increase 15%.

Extend Pandemic EBT to 2022 for kids who are remote. Available to children under 6 as long as they are not receiving free or reduce lunch.

\$1B in SNAP, not sure when this will come, will learn more.

Child Care is an issue, CARES Act has been paying co-pays, American Rescue Plan will add addition \$15B added Child Care Block Grant to help stabilization grant estimating \$24B for Day Care, \$1B for Head Start.

There is a lot of money coming for Child Welfare but currently don’t know how it will be received. Adult Services is receiving \$1.4B in Older Americans Act funding directly to the area in Aging for Triangle J. \$750M for senior nutrition program.

\$460M In-Home Services, Adult Day Care, \$45M for Disease Prevention, \$145M for grandparents taking care of grandchildren.

These are few of the allocations coming which has to be worked out.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs thank Director Rose for update.

Durham Property Tax

This is a program coming out of the Tax Office and supported by the Board of County Commissioners. This is a budget program which has not been officially approved. A program to assist homeowners at 30 AMI or lower income brackets can apply to remain in their homes through a tax support program.

The program will be administered through Aging and Adult Services. There are three positions allocated for the program. Director Rose requested an additional program manager in Aging and Adult Services. Looking at American Rescue Act to fund position.

The County has recommended the DSS Board to formally support this program. Software is needed for the program estimated at \$50, 000.

Board member Jaqueline Beatty-Smith asked how many residents will be impacted. Director Rose reporter approximately 3,237 households would potentially qualify. Residents cannot be receiving other State tax subsidy funds.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs communicated this has been a City/County project for two years. A lot of conversations about the impact of gentrification, fixed and low-income residents. Pressure on urban neighborhoods homes property taxes are increasing. There are limited strategies in the State of NC, local governments have limited tools to address some of the issues. One strategy is a tax grant to try to help take some of the economic pressure off people so they can stay in their home. Chair Commissioner Jacobs supports this pilot program.

DSS Board suggest since City/County program, request city share cost \$192,000 condition and \$50,000 for software. Also, suggest staff approach City about assist funding with administrative cost. The DSS Board has to direct because coming out of DSS. Vote needed today, time sensitive.

Board member Janice P. Paul moved that the DSS Board support and approve adoption of the pilot program with the suggestion that County and City work collaboratively and share in cost of administration. Chair Commissioner Jacobs requested amending the motion to be more specific. Board member Janice P. Paul motioned to amend that the DSS Board adopt a resolution to approve the program and to work collaboratively with the City with the implementation of this program particularly with respect to share funding for the cost of administration. Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded amended motion.

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

The motion for the DSS Board support was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Director Report

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose highlighted several items.

1. Director Rose reported DSS will be presenting to the BOCC on May 27, 2021, focusing on ten positions requested. Meeting to determine 10 priority positions out of 19.
2. Director William Rose reported COVID policies, keeping mask mandates. There has been a breakthrough with people vaccinated getting COVID and spreading. Continuing to work remotely due to the parking project and will not be opening lobbies until maybe the fall. With the restrictions being lifted by the Governor, Director Rose inquired about continuing meeting virtual.
3. The Focus group held Monday night with LatinX was interesting, there are some trust issues with DSS in the Latino community.

Very honest group regarding concerns with Social Services, however, they were grateful for DSS listening to them. Working on strategies to start engaging with them, Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens has put together a great advisory group to look at strategies.

4. ERAP rough start, met with Commissioners to offer apologies to the community. During the launching the URL broke and people were calling.

Chasity Locke, Rebecca Hartigan, Felicia Cameron and others worked to get the website started. The website opened later that day. Other issues came up and the project team is working on 24/7. First weekly 1500 applications, some are duplicates. Landlords and clients are applying.

Continue to have problems with five non-profits with computer and technology errors, more training.

Authorizing benefits will begin this week, ready to be reviewed and authorized. Payments will not begin this week, waiting for Phase 2 still being developed. Payments should begin in of May or early June.

Received notification on Friday, DSS had to submit on Monday to get Phase II ERAP funds which is coming from American Rescue Plan. This had to be completed at a different portal Director Rose had not received qualification because he did not have a passport. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon had to complete. Director Rose acknowledged Chief Business Officer Kelly Inman and Assistant Director Janeen Gordon. ERAP Phase II is different from Phase I. DSS might not be qualified to work on ERAP II, will have conversation with the City.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon conveyed the project is big and staff have been engaged daily. Working to make sure this is successful by working with landlords. Landlords are reaching out to DSS which is making this a community partnership. Continue to work with non-profits, live virtual training scheduled to work through issues. Working to get 1800 applications moved for review. Program manager Lee Little mentioned community partnership including the community and County departments. Program manager Little recognized all the teams that assisted with the project.

Chasity Locke attended for Rebecca, from IS&T perspective agreed to comments from DSS staff. Les Hamashima IS&T Assistant Director commented on the project.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs shared gratitude to the County department working on ERAP. This is critical because the eviction moratorium ends in June. The partnership with the landlords is awesome. On behalf of the DSS Board, DSS has been formed relationships in the community.

Thanks to Pamela Purifoy for communications forwarded to the community. Chair Commissioner Jacobs did not get a lot of complaints. Thanks to all for the groundwork. Board members also commended staff. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked how much expecting for ERAP II. Director Rose stated City \$6.6M and DSS approximately \$800,000. More information will be available in June.

Vacancy Report

Human Resources Analyst James Hart provided a report.

Recruiting in full swing, twenty new hires and new packets are being received daily.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about Child Care Waitlist.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens stated there are no families on waitlist. Clients can come in the office and apply for child care subsidy.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs commended staff for their continuous hard work.

Assistant Rhonda Stevens highlighted May is Income Maintenance Month.

Customer Accountability and Talent Development – Krystal Harris, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy reported ERAP has impacted the Call Center. There is a shortage of staff, but they are managing and working hard.

Child and Family Services – Jovetta Whitfield, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

May is National Foster Care Month.

The first edition of Durham County Resource Parent Newsletter launched May 5, 2021

Aging and Adult Services – Janeen Gordon, Assistant Director

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon Made a correction relating to Opening Doors assistance.

Business Operations – Kelly Inman, Chief Operations Officer

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman shared expenditures through April are at 72.

Revenues delayed by one month are at 66%, and Salaries are at 79%.

Danielle Briggs, Senior Assistant County Attorney conveyed at the last meeting the DSS Board talked briefly about Duke Community Health Research Study involving pandemic impact on Social Services employees. There had been discussion in Legal as it pertain to the request. There was a study participations request from another county department, the HR department was consulted, as well as, Legal. There is not a policy in place that directly addresses the issue but what the current policy stands kind of suggest that all those types of research projects in request for personnel participation be directed to the County Manager's Office. The previous request concern on the County side is they don't want it to appear as though the County is endorsing any particular research project or encouraging personnel to participate or provide their health information within these studies. Talking with Director Rose and looking at past history on this particular study it seems as it the department felt comfortable. Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs suggested having another discussion about it on whether to take back through County Manager to say this situation is not the same. If Director Rose want to give staff an opportunity to participate, go back to the County Manager's Office with more detail. Director Rose thanked Senior Assistant County Attorney Briggs. Board member Paul asked if the Board need to make a recommendation or motion? Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs stated it needed to go back on the agenda for discussion and make on motion on how to proceed.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy will contact representative from Duke about the timeline and was grateful for the information.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs was thankful for the information which can be utilized in future request.

Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy clarified Child Care does not have a wait list and customers are applying when they come in the door and they are not being placed on a wait list. The process has been changed; advertising may have more people coming in the door. There are citizens coming in for child care but we are in a position to spend for the end of the fiscal year, they are not being placed on a wait list, they are being served as they present themselves. Currently Child Care is at 96% spending due to COVID.

Pamela Purifoy Public Relations reported information had been released regarding Child Care and others are passing this on. There should be an increase in people coming in to apply.

Unfinished Business

COVID-19 Updates

Updates have been covered.

Board Action Items

No additions

Adjournment

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted

Chairperson	Date
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Secretary to the Board	Date
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