**Durham County Board of Social Services**

**Regular Session Minutes**

**April 20, 2022**

The Durham County Board of Social Services monthly meeting was held on Wednesday, April 20, 2022. The DSS Board meeting continues to be 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 Durham County Department of Social Services was represented by the following: Director William Rose, Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman; Assistant Directors: Krystal Harris, Jovetta Whitfield, Rhonda Stevens, Margaret Faircloth, and Janeen Gordon. DSS staff attending included: Candice Leathers, Latoya Chambers, Meghan Russ, Nancy Santos, Kalindra Ellerbe, Lee Little, John Margolis, Quannah Jackson-Brown, Shontelle Smith, LaVelle Chesney, Quanesha Archer, Lynn Thomas, Pamela Purifoy, John Kenion, Jasmine Cherry, Emma Perry and Loretta Roberts

The following staff from Alliance Health were present: Chief Executive Officer Rob Robinson, Chief of Staff Sara Wilson and Director of Foster Care Support Paige Rosemond

Melissa Gordon-Pitts, Assistant Director of Social Work at Duke University Hospital was present.

Community partner James Svara was present.

DSS Human Resources Analyst James Hart attended the meeting.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Danielle Briggs was present.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs called the DSS Board meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

**Public Comments**

No public comments

**Approval of the Agenda**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the proposed agenda. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith offered the motion to approve the proposed agenda and Vice Chair Dr. 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 Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members to review and approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on March 16, 2022.

Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion to approve the minutes and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The minutes 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 Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Chair Report**

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged all of the staff hosting different events in the community while continuing the work within DSS. All Durham County Government employees will be celebrated and recognized this month for National County Government Month. Chair Commissioner Jacobs mentioned the new Omicron BA.2 variant and cautioned everyone to start masking up again and stay safe. She also encouraged everyone that is 50 and older to remember to get their second booster shots. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs inquired about discussing the foster care Medicaid issue. Director William Rose will be covering this issue in his report.

**Director’s Report**

Director William Rose submitted a written report.

Director William Rose informed the board members about the budget meeting with the county manager at the end of March. The department prepared an excellent budget presentation that included the priorities, strategic plans, and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.

The state is considering creating a specialized Medicaid plan for foster care children to focus on holistic care. The Child and Family Specialty Plan has been delayed until 2023 and the state would like feedback. There are some mixed concerns in terms of the administrative level. Director William Rose invited Chief Executive Officer Rob Robinson and Chief of Staff Sara Wilson to present their view of this specialty plan.

Chief Executive Officer Rob Robinson shared a PowerPoint presentation about the Child and Family Specialty Plan with the board members. Alliance Health LME/MCO (Local Management Entity – managing services for uninsured or underinsured individuals) (Managed Care Organization – managing care for individuals with Medicaid); Alliance Health is located in six counties: Durham, Wake, Johnston, Cumberland, Orange, and Mecklenburg. In the midst of preparing to become a Tailored Plan, Alliance Health is responsible for the behavioral/physical health and pharmacy services for the citizens of the six counties with severe mental health substance use and everyone with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This statewide plan would serve all 100 counties and around 31,000 kids would be eligible for the Child and Family Specialty Plan (CFSP).

Significant concerns: (1) the proposed statewide plan will negatively impact existing collaborations, between Alliance and other county partners (2) potential disruption of Alliance’s service expansion plan to support the foster care population (3) many of the key elements of the proposed CFSP would duplicate those of the Tailored Plans (4) the plan does not take into consideration provider capacity issues and workforce shortages, including strained bed capacity for children/youth with complex needs requiring placement (5) timing of the Request For Proposal relative to Tailored Plan implementation (6) potential for additional confusion for members Recommendations: (1) delay implementation of a single statewide CFSP to prevent more system disruption for the Medicaid population and enable the benefit of current service and infrastructure investments to be realized (2) fully enroll the youth in Behavioral Health I/DD Tailored Plans, on a regional basis aligned with the Tailored Plan regions, launching December 1, 2022, to

ensure that they and their families receive integrated care as timely as possible

(3) efforts and resources (state and local) should be immediately utilized to address identified service gaps and systemic challenges across the state

(4) take action to improve and ensure standardization of key areas across LME/MCOs including provider networks, transitions of care, and service authorizations/passthroughs

Director William Rose and Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield encouraged the board members to support the recommendations from Alliance Health. There are some concerns about disruption of services to families and children if this specialty plan continues. Board member Janice P. Paul asked if the General Assembly legislated and then delegated this plan to NC DHHS and if so, did it have specifics and can NC DHHS tweak outside the legislation. Chief of Staff Sara Wilson answered that the legislation requires the department to have a plan that either enrolls kids in the Tailored Plan or they could create another specialty plan, so the legislation does not mandate that there has to be this specialty plan or that it has to be statewide. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman inquired who oversees the Tailored Plan. Chief Executive Officer Rob Robinson replied that Alliance manages the Tailored Plan and offers treatment and support for mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual/ developmental disabilities to a smaller number of the population. The Child and Family Specialty Plan (Foster Care Plan) enrollment will accept 31,000 kids and their families with Medicaid that are involved with DSS. Vice Chair Holsey-Hyman agrees that the board members should support the CFSP and is concerned that the citizens may get confused with the plans and not get the services that they need.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs stated that there was a consensus that the board members will support Director William Rose in sending a draft letter to the Board of County Commissioners and the County Manager. The letter will be asking NC DHHS for an extension of the deadline to implement the Child and Family Specialty Plan and make necessary revisions relating to Durham County.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked the board members for approval of the draft letter. Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion and Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman seconded.

The draft letter 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 Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Director William Rose for his great report. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the child fatality protection team report. Director William Rose responded that Christy Malott would be presenting to the Board of County Commissioners in August 2022 and will plan to have a presentation for the board members as well.

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

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens introduced the new Redeterminations Team Program Manager Emma Perry. Assistant Director Stevens highlighted that the department received a notice on April 14, 2022, that there has been a 90-day extension on the public health waiver for Medicaid until July 16, 2022. The department is meeting with the representative to start planning on how to manage the work. Food and Nutrition Services is experiencing a great deal of client calls about benefits due to the auto-extension ending and staff vacancies. There are some parts of the waiver continuing through June where certain 6-month certification periods will be extended. This will only apply to individuals that have not previously received an extension. The following waivers are being utilized: telephone interviews and signatures, several Program Integrity claim extensions, and some information around timelines. It is imperative that this information is documented. The department received notification on April 18, 2022, that individuals are still receiving the maximum benefit. The state sent a transition guide to help the counties prepare for when the waivers are terminated. The greatest impact will be when the supplements stop, so the department is meeting to discuss the next plan of action.

Food and Nutrition Services has a partnership with Cooperative Extension and will be having a Durham World Hunger Day tentatively on June 4, 2022, from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm at Central Park. The department has various staff volunteering to assist.

Durham is one of the 31 counties that will go back into the Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit (REDA) taking place for the next ten months.

Food and Nutrition recertifications did not meet the mark this month due to the volume and the number of people being recertified. The department is exploring all options to assist with processing these cases.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Rhonda for her great report. She acknowledged the department for exceling in all of the other certifications and knows that the department will get back on track. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the strategy to start preparing clients regarding the extra benefits terminating. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens replied that this subject was discussed on a call last week about sending information out to the community. The department is exploring sending out communication as the waivers transition out and does not have a full solution yet that will not have a major impact.

**Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) – Krystal Harris, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Krystal Harris submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Krystal Harris highlighted that Program Integrity is still working on the USDA charge letter received a few months ago. It has been a lengthy process to complete and there has been an increase in hearings and appeals based off of the charge letter. The deadline to finalize this process is October 2022. The department has reached out to the state to see if there is flexibility with completing the hearings. There may be a Facebook group of individuals that have been contacted about the charge letter, because they are using the exact language when asking for a hearing. The staff is working overtime to undertake this task.

QAT has hired Joanne Otuonye as the new Aging & Adult Services Supervisor. She joined the department on Monday, April 18, 2022. The department is happy and very excited to have this position filled. The other supervisor position has a recommendation and a start date. Assistant Director Krystal Harris will share with the board members once it has been announced. The Interpreter position has also been filled. The internal candidate was promoted within CATD and will start on May 2, 2022. The department has three positions left to fill to be fully staffed.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Krystal Harris for her great report and the wonderful update about the new hires. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked about the privacy issue challenges and the increase of the number of calls in the call center for the month of March. Assistant Director Krystal Harris replied that the department is working on addressing the privacy issues by continuing training with staff. There will be a refresher with the supervisors next month. Program Manager Lynn Thomas will be presenting some information to share with the supervisors and managers to ensure that staff is following the privacy side of compliance. The calls have increased greatly due to the changes in Food & Nutrition Services. Assistant Director Krystal Harris had a conversation with Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens to change the protocol for addressing client calls. The influx of calls is pertaining to FNS recertifications, changes and the waivers ending. In order to assist staff to manage the applications and recertifications the Call Center Supervisor Evelyn Hammiel and Assistant Director Harris developed a temporary plan to help mitigate the issue. Assistant Director Harris is hopeful that the numbers in April will be an improvement based on what has been implemented. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith congratulated Senior Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy for being selected for the newly created PR Advisory Board at NCCU. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman is interested in attending the next 7 Habits of Highly Effective People virtual training. Assistant Director Krystal Harris remarked that Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy and Program Manager Candice Leathers are facilitators for this training and will notify the board members of the next training.

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

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield submitted a written report.

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith acclaimed Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield on all of the impressive activities that have taken place and planned for the month of April for child abuse and prevention awareness and wished the department continued success.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield highlighted that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The staff participated in the following activities: (1) wear blue on April 1, 2022 (2) proclamation presented on April 11, 2022 (3) setting up an information table presenting the partnerships with Public Health and the fire department along with distributing gun locks and smoke detectors (4) tying blue ribbons on the trees outside of the HHS building (5) statewide webinar (6) a panel lunch and learn will be held on April 25, 2022 to allow staff and the community an opportunity to ask questions about CPS, the processes and procedures (7) partnering with Exchange Family Center for the pinwheel planting and will send the logistics when available

The community continues to be generous with donations. The department has received donations from several churches to include 300 easter baskets to deliver to families. The Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta donated diapers and wipes for the second time. The department also received donated duffel bags for our youth.

Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield is optimistic that the Duke Endowment Grant was successfully submitted on April 1, 2022 and hoping that the grant is approved for the research on racial equity and child welfare.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield for her great report and concurred with Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith’s comment. Chair Commissioner Jacobs appreciates all of the partnerships created in the community. Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman thanked Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield and staff for presenting to her child welfare and leadership classes. Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith requested contact information to forward to some churches and community service organizations interested in donating items and whatever is needed. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield responded that she can be contacted directly and will connect them with the appropriate program area. The recruiter will also send the churches information about fostering/adoption and trying to encourage them to also become licensed resource parents.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Vice Chair Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith for their comments. Chair Commissioner Jacobs inquired if Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield would be coming to the Board of County Commissioners proclamation for Foster Care Month in May. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield answered that she will be attending. Chair Commissioner Jacobs requested insight on the foster care numbers trending down. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield noted that in-home services and investigations are trying to keep children with kinship care as much as possible focusing on moving toward and implementing Families First. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs acknowledged the significant decrease in foster care noting that July was 320 and as of March it is 294. Assistant Director Jovetta Whitfield said that adoptions are happening, children are returning home and guardianships are occurring, but the complexities of the cases remain.

**Aging and Adult Services (AAS) – Janeen Gordon, Assistant Director**

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Janeen Gordon highlighted that two National Association of Counties (NACO) Awards were submitted. Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) has ended for the year and the state has additional COVID-19 dollars only for the recipients that received funds to continue to obtain catch up dollars. May is Older Americans Month and a proclamation has been submitted. There will be a World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk/Run in June 2022. The Home and Community Care Block Grant funding will be focusing on providing in-home aide services for those at risk for placement. The department has some recommendations to discuss for the Low-Income Homeowner Relief program.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked Assistant Director Janeen Gordon for her report and hopes her department will be recognized for all of their innovative work.

**Business Operations (BO) – Kelly Inman, Chief Operations Officer**

Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman submitted a written report.

Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth commented that all of the department’s points were covered at the budget meeting. The county manager is supportive of the services at DSS. She highlighted that the expenditures are slightly above benchmark along with revenue. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if some of the vehicles were covered in this year’s budget. Assistant Director Margaret Faircloth replied that this item will be on the Board of County Commissioners agenda action form on May 2, 2022. The savings due to COVID-19 support the department in purchasing vehicles this fiscal year. Chief Operations Officer Kelly Inman informed the board members that the department will be receiving $280,000 in additional revenue for SNAP relating to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Director William Rose recommended that it be a reimbursement to the county in addition to giving the budget department additional revenue. Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens suggested that it would be a great incentive for the income maintenance caseworkers. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs advised that Director William Rose and Assistant Director Rhonda Stevens decide on the best use of the funding.

Chair Commissioner Jacobs proposed that Senior Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy release a report at the end of this fiscal year on the ways that DSS has benefited the community during COVID-19 with helping to administer the following programs: (1) LIEAP (2) water assistance (3) emergency assistance (4) food and nutrition assistance (5) rental assistance, etc. This report will also be a reflection on the great work over the past two years. Director William Rose stated that this could be the framework for doing an annual report and would be a good opportunity with all of the supplemental services offered during COVID-19. This topic will be added to the next leadership agenda.

**Old Business**

Director William Rose revisited the Low-Income Homeowners Relief program and made the following recommendations for policy to include the analysis from James Svara: (1) Durham County resident (2) lower the number of years required to be in the home from 10 to 5 years (3) increase the percentage of the tax bill being paid for the lower tier at 30% AMI or below (4) include banks in the notifications (5) open the application timeframe from August 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023 (6) campaigning in June and July 2022 with targeted outreach events; If the recommendations are approved the last step would be for county legal to review to ensure that they are in line with the tax laws, subsequently the department would adopt them as policy going forward. Deputy Director Catherine Williamson-Hardy suggested to change the wording to reflect whichever is smaller 60% or $1,500 not to exceed $1,500, since there is a concern about not expending the money. Director William Rose commented that basically the goal is to increase the amount provided as a subsidy to the lower and middle tier. Director Rose agreed to making this change in wording. Assistant Director Janeen Gordon stated that the projections will need to be reviewed after making this change. It is better to make this recommendation in favor of the residents. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs reiterated that the intent is not for individuals to leave the state plan and come to the county-funded plan. She acknowledged that Jim Svara suggested having a special carve out for Habitat for Humanity homeowners. Tax Administrator Dwane Brinson does not support this, because it does not include the other low-income homeowners that purchased homes as well. He suggested that Habitat for Humanity create a special fund to assist the homeowners within the first five years with paying their taxes. Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs asked if the board members could give direction to pass it on as approving this framework. Director William Rose replied if the board members support the recommendations in addition to one final revision with the tiering then it would be passed to legal for a final review.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs said if there is a consensus with the board members she will entertain a motion. Board member Janice P. Paul offered a motion and Board member Charles I. Mitchell seconded.

The motion 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 Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**New Business**

Adult Protective Services Supervisor John Margolis presented a PowerPoint to the board members to share information about the multidisciplinary team with Duke Assistant Director of Social Work Melissa Gordon-Pitts cofacilitating. The motivation behind creating the multidisciplinary team is to improve interagency communication, collaboration, and coordination around combating mistreatment of disabled individuals and seniors.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs thanked John Margolis and Melissa Gordon-Pitts for their presentation and the important work that they are doing. John Margolis sent the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk/Run June 2022 flyers to the multidisciplinary team members and to Senior Public Information Officer Pamela Purifoy to ensure that the information is shared with the community. Board member Janice P. Paul inquired if the multidisciplinary team focus is on physical/emotional abuse or neglect/financial exploitation or all of the above. John Margolis answered that the focus is on all the above. Chair Commissioner Jacobs asked if John Margolis and Melissa Gordon-Pitts are the full-time coordinators of the team. Melissa Gordon-Pitts said for the time being they are maintaining and managing this effort. The goal is to find other ways for the rest of the team members to be more involved and for this to continue for years to come. Chair Commissioner Jacobs expressed that she appreciates their leadership and partnership and to let the board members know of any way that they can support the team.

*Universal Personnel Evaluations*

Director William Rose informed the board members that Durham County has converted to universal evaluations which are due at the same time to include his evaluation with the board members.

**Unfinished Business**

Board Action Items – no changes

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs requested a motion to adjourn into closed session. Board member Charles I. Mitchell offered a motion to move to closed session and Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith seconded.

The motion 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 Janice P. Paul Yes

Board member Jacqueline Beatty-Smith Yes

Board member Charles I. Mitchell Yes

**Closed Session N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a) (6):**

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.

Chair Commissioner Wendy Jacobs adjourned the DSS Board meeting at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted

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Chairperson Date

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Secretary to the Board Date