

April 28, 2020

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held virtual with the following in attendance were: Commissioner Amy Galey, DSS Board Member; Heidi Norwick, Chair DSS Board Member; Dr. Ernest Eason, DSS Board Member; Reverend Ron Shive, DSS Board Vice-Chair; Edna Parker, DSS Board Member; Ms. Adrian Daye, Director; Ms. Kelly Inman, Assistant Director of Operations; Ms. Latawnya Hall, Adult Services Program Manager; Ms. Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Candice Gobble, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, Attorney; Ms. Sherry Cooper, Business Officer; Mr. Robert Ring, HR Director; and Mr. Jason Cole, IT Director were present.

Ms. Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair opened the meeting. Ms. Norwick wished staff well and thanked all staff for their service during these challenging times.

Public Comment:

None –

Question: Are meeting notices publicized? *Yes, Social Service Board meeting schedule is posted on the County website as well as Social Services website.*

Question: Are you seeing a decrease in clientele due to COVID-19?

Director Daye expressed we have seen a decrease in foot traffic due to we have tried to minimize face-to-face interactions as much as possible. We do have customers who come into the building to receive applications and other services.

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

March items on the consent agenda were approved. Ms. Edna Parker made motion to approve and seconded by Reverend Ron Shive.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Sherry Cooper

The target rate for revenues is 67% for March. Revenues are 1% less than last year. The target rate for expenditures is 76%. Expenditures are \$67,331.00 more than previous year. Expenditures are 7% less than target rate.

Fraud: See report -

Unit	March 2020	March 2019	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$13,128.75	\$20,774.79	\$148,064.18	\$122,568.71

The Fraud Unit attended State Program Integrity training. There were 10 Food & Nutrition disqualifications. The unit is adjusting very well to new workflow due to COVID-19 and maintaining 100% timeliness.

Ms. Inman included with Performance Management and MOU requirements we will notice some changes with measures, but the mandates for the MOU have been waived.

Services – Ms. Adrian Daye, Director -

Adult and Family Services Program Manager: Ms. Latawnya Hall

Child Support –

Unit	March 2020	March 2019	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$1,113,485.29	\$1,144,832.98	\$8,142,044.10	\$8,196,378.60

Ms. Hall reported child support has made paper applications for child support services readily accessible to the public during business hours to continue to meet mandated timeframes. Child Support staff are conducting interviews through telephone or video conferencing, if necessary.

Ms. Hall reported all child support staff are teleworking with the exception of child support reception/clerical staff.

Ms. Hall reported continuous quality improvement plans for 3rd and 4th quarter have been suspended.

Ms. Hall reported Adult Services unit has not seen a decrease in workflow due to COVID-19. All Adult Protective Services reports continue to be initiated within mandated guidelines while maintaining the safety of our citizens as well staff.

Staff follow DHHS guidelines when making facility visits. Staff who are visiting facilities should ask the staff and any other persons about exposure to COVID-19 – if person has been exposed or have symptoms, proceed with the visit and take the reasonable precautions which include:

1. Offer mask to customer and/or staff
2. Staff wear an isolation/surgical mask and gloves
3. Maintain 6 feet or more distance, if possible
4. Once visit is concluded – staff discard the face mask and gloves in disposable bag
5. Dispose bag
6. Sanitize hands

We have been creative with some visits, we have conducted outside on the front porch during the pandemic.

Guardianship – The unit is flowing as normal – we continue to receive a lot of evaluations. The statistical report lists (22) for the month of March. We are trying to use collateral staff as much as

possible with gathering information such as In-Home aides and documentation will show why the visit was not conducted with the customer.

Adult Home Specialists - Adult Home Specialists continue to monitor facilities. As of last month, we conducted at least 2-5 visits.

Ms. Hall reported monitoring scheduled with State Representative has been cancelled until further notice.

Ms. Hall reported we continue to have staff meetings, individual conferences as well as staffing of cases via Zoom for all units.

Children Services Program Manager: Ms. Lynette Wellons/Angela Cole

Ms. Cole reported Child Welfare Unit continues to deliver mandated services while maintaining the safety of our children/families. Initiation of CPS Assessments continue and we follow the same CDC and DHHS guidelines presented by Adult Services.

We have experienced some challenges with school not in session and not having that extra support with school social workers and other school partners. The reports have been reduced due to school not in session.

Question: Is there a concern?

Yes, we are trying to gear up and prepare staff on what to expect when the pandemic is over and goes back to some type of normalcy. We do anticipate a rise in cases. Currently our reports have been more egregious – we received 10 cases and 2 of those cases have made the news (1) Domestic Violence case and (1) infant with head injury.

Ms. Cole reported we have filled all but one vacancy, but we have completed interviews. We are hopeful to offer this position soon.

Ms. Cole reported as we continue through this challenging time of COVID-19 – we are trying to keep our staff uplifted, we have hosted Spirit Week for all Social Workers and other fun activities throughout the month.

Ms. Cole announced “Ring Out” Child Abuse event has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Alamance County DSS is proud to be a part of a community that takes such a collective effort to protect children at-risk and prevent them from future harm. It is because of these partnerships that we have collectively been able to make positive, life altering differences in the lives of many children.

Ms. Cole reported the following data from **Fiscal Year July – 2018 – June 2019** –

- Alamance Co. DSS received **2,390 reports** of alleged child abuse, neglect and dependency; which is an increase of 125 reports from the previous fiscal year.

- Of those 2,390 reports, **1,270 met the statutory criteria to assess for concerns of abuse, neglect or dependency** involving 2,628 children.
- Of those reports, **170 children were found to have been abused, neglected or dependent** and **141 children were found to be in need of further child protective services** giving at total of 311 children who received post assessment/investigative services through In-Home services or Foster Care.
- **738 children** were recommended to receive services outside of child welfare’s involvement to include services like mental health, medical care or remedial care to name a few.

Over the last year, Alamance Co. DSS has had an average of **80 children in Foster Care**. While the amount of children entering foster care continues to be on the rise state and nationwide, Alamance Co. DSS works diligently in determining permanent outcomes for children outside of foster care and has established permanency for 74 children over the last fiscal year with support and assistance from our many valuable partners.

Question: Are you seeing a slow down with court for permanency?

Ms. Wellons reported that Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney has been working with the courts and on the process with other attorneys on court cases. There have been some court cases held through online/virtual system and there have been some cases continued. Ms. Wellons reported we continue to meet the mandated timeframes for permanency and continue to be on track to fulfill the requirement.

Ms. Wellons reported the following:

- MAPP Classes are temporarily postponed due to COVID-19. There are 30 potential candidates who are enrolled with MAPP who completed two weeks of classes. These candidates are still interested in starting back whenever feasible.
- We continue to re-license Foster Care placements – some requirements have been waived. DHHS had a goal for re-licensures of family foster homes during COVID, and that was to ensure that no foster children had to move due to an expired license, so they implemented waivers for re-licensures that would be sufficient to maintain the license and the placement.
- We have very limited parent visitations – we have reached out to parents and created a modified process. We are offering video (FaceTime, Skype, etc.) or telephone visitations. For those missed face to face contacts, they will be added and will be conducted once the pandemic is over.

Ms. Wellons reported changes to Statistical Report –

M E A S U R E	MARCH 2020	MARCH 2019	CURRENT YTD	PRIOR FY
CHILD WELFARE				
# OF YOUTH ENTERED FOSTER CARE 18-21	0	0	2	7
# OF YOUTH EXITED FOSTER CARE 18-21	0	1	2	3

# OF ADOPTIONS COMPLETED	0	5	19	26
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Economic Support: Ms. Candice Gobble/Ms. Jamie Hatfield

Ms. Hatfield reported the following:

- Customers coming into the agency continue to be “triaged” at ground floor reception.
- We have set up application stations in the front lobby of paper applications for Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits and Medicaid applications. All applications are placed in the drop box below the application station.
- Customers continue to have access to apply for benefits via epass.com and via phone for economic services.
- Worked with Jason Cole to create online portal for changes for customers to access via web – Since the portal has been created, we have received 210 submissions.
- Worked with Jason Cole to create documentation portal for information to be submitted via website on April 10th. Since the portal has been created, we have received 29 submissions.
- We continue to receive information and questions via ASKDSS email system

Question: Will you be able to continue to portals after COVID-19 on your website? *Yes, we will continue these portals.*

Ms. Hatfield reported since April 1st, we have received 342 changes to existing FNS cases. We have received 1,125 FNS applications. We have shifted staff around to handle the increase of applications. We have received permission for overtime due to COVID-19 due to influx in cases. We do have some staff teleworking but the majority of staff are on site handling the cases.

Question: In terms of increased Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) applications, are you able to separate COVID-19 applications vs. normal applications from every day need? *We currently are not tracking – it may be difficult due to customers may lose a job, but not related to COVID-19.*

Ms. Gobble reported we receive updates from the Division daily regarding Economic Services which has been challenging.

The following updates were reported:

- A nationwide waiver was approved under the Families First Response Act to allow ABAWDs who are not meeting the ABAWD work requirement to be exempt from the work requirement until the public health emergency is lifted.
- North Carolina will be issuing FNS supplements up to the maximum allotment – automated supplements will be issued for March and April and now has been approved for May as well.

- A waiver was approved to waive the requirement to complete interviews prior to the approval of applications and recertification's.
- Waiver approved by USDA recently to provide Pandemic FNS Benefits (P-EBT) to households with school aged children who would be eligible for free and reduced lunch if schools were open
- NCFASST sent out letter to recipients in error regarding the maximum allotment and it has confused customers. With the help of reception staff, they have been able to handle the increased phone calls and answer those questions for all questions.
- Worked with Jason Cole to update the website to display COVID-19 changes
- We adopted the "Spirit Week" from Child Welfare to help restore staff morale as we continue to work through the pandemic – We have created a wear "Red" day for Super Hero's.

Legal – Jamie Hamlett –

Ms. Jamie Hamlett reported Wendy Walker, the new Attorney who started on February 28th is now presiding over Adult Services and Child Support cases. She was working with Kristina Marshall, contract Child Support Attorney before COVID-19.

Ms. Hamlett reported Judges are trying to find ways to conduct juvenile court. The docket has been reduced during the pandemic. The highly contested cases are not being heard. We do have a fuller docket this coming week and continue to hear cases over WebEx.

Family Justice Center – Kelly Inman –

Ms. Inman reported FJC is up and running and serving customers. With the pandemic and stay at home orders can be a pressure cooker for domestic violence cases. Domestic Violence court is still occurring. Legal Aid is gearing up and preparing for increase in cases.

Ms. Inman reported we have filled the Elder Justice Project Coordinator position – Kristie Coffey accepted the position and started last week. Kristie comes from Alamance Partnership and is a former Alamance Co. DSS employee.

Ms. Inman reported Director Position continues to be vacant, we have scheduled some interviews to be conducted this week.

Operations – Ms. Kelly Inman, Assistant Director of Operations –

Ms. Inman reported with the anxiety associated with face to face interactions during the pandemic, we are focusing more on staff with secondary trauma. Mary Shaw, Trauma Specialist has set up

sessions to help staff deal with trauma. She sends out messages weekly to staff with links to help ease trauma issues.

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of March 31, 2020

Vacancies	24
New Hires	3
Interagency Transfer	3
Resignations	0

As of April 28, 2020 - There are 20 current vacancies within Social Services.

- Economic Services (10) of the current vacancies. Mr. Ring added this is the perfect time to recruit new talent during the pandemic. People are looking for employment and there are some great candidates applying.

IT Report: Mr. Jason Cole

Mr. Cole reported DSS has 115 laptops – staff are teleworking with an increase in providing remote support to those staff. We used some vacant laptops that were available in Child Welfare for Economic Services staff to telework. Now that positions have been filled we will bring those back so new Child Welfare staff will be able to conduct pre-service training. We received 10 new laptops for be able to switch out for teleworking staff.

Mr. Cole IT Unit continues to work on Social Services website and social media platforms.

Director’s Report – Ms. Adrian Daye, Director –

COVID-19 – Director Daye expressed to Board Members we continue to work to navigate services through COVID-19. DSS Management Team has done an excellent job working through the challenging updates from DHHS. Management Team has rolled out changes to services with units through this crisis.

Director Daye gave kudos to Alamance County Emergency Management staff who submitted our requests for PPE for staff. Director Daye gave a shout out to OT Sports who donated cloth masks for staff, as well one of our Foster Parents who also donated cloth masks. We currently are ahead of the game with PPE.

Telework – We have assigned staff who continue to telework but with the increase in applications for services we called back “stand by” employees in Economic Services and other units who staff were on rotating schedules. We have received some feedback from staff who feel they are at-risk with normal schedules and we are sending those requests to County HR to handle with the new FMLA policy.

Director Daye announced Kelly Inman, Assistant Director of Operations will leave the agency on May 15th for a new opportunity. Director Daye thanked Ms. Inman for her years of service to the citizens of Alamance County.

New Business:

None

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, May 26, 2020** in the Boardroom located on the first floor at the Human Services Building.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:
Carmen L. Morrow

Date approved: _____