

January 26, 2021

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held virtual (zoom) with the following in attendance were: Commissioner Pamela T. Thompson, DSS Board Member; Ms. Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair; Dr. Ernest Eason, DSS Board Member; Ms. Edna Parker, DSS Board Member; Reverend Ronald Shive, DSS Vice-Chair; Ms. Adrian Daye, Director; Ms. Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director of Services; Ms. Ayoka Baldwin, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations; Ms. Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager; Mr. Robert Ring, HR Director; Ms. Latawyna Hall, Adult Services Program Manager; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney; Mr. Jason Cole, IT Director; and Andrea Rollins, County Managers Office were present.

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the newly elected Pamela T. Thompson, County Commissioner to Alamance County Social Services board.

Public Comment:

None –

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

November/December items on the consent agenda approved. Edna Parker made motion to approve and seconded by Dr. Ernest Eason.

Oath of Office – New Board Member: Carmen Morrow

Pamela T. Thompson, Alamance County Commissioner appointed by Boards of County Commissioners to serve on the board of Social Services in December 2020. Ms. Morrow, Clerk to Board administered Oath of Office to new board member. The appointment will end on June 30, 2024.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Candice Gobble

Ms. Gobble reported on December Expenditures and Revenues. Ms. Gobble reported we are operating in 3rd Quarter for Revenues – we have received quarterly allocations.

	DECEMBER 2020	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$5,252,439.00	45%	\$4,089,703.00	36%
EXPENDITURES	\$8,928,640.00	45%	\$8,654,776.00	44%

Ms. Gobble reported on the new line item which relates to funds in day sheet coding for Child Protective Services.

ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	Budget FY 20-21	Revenues	Rev Rec %	Balance	% Left
333044 CPS	\$190,513	-\$56,414	100%	\$246,927	0%

Ms. Gobble reported we have new liaison at the State who has been a great help! She has helped us identify ways to maximize our funding. She has been a great asset for our fiscal staff.

Ms. Gobble reported we did spend all of Adult Protective Services/Child Protective Services (APS/CPS) funds that were allocated to use for COVID purchases for both of these services. As we move into January funding, we are hopeful that we will receive the reverted funds we returned and will be able to use until May 2021.

Ms. Gobble reported on the following Expenditure line item:

ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	Budget	Expenditures	Spending %	Balance	% Left
497261 LIEAP - CARES	\$253,296	\$0	0%	\$253,296	100%

Pandemic Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) funds were all issued in the month of January. We did use \$126k of normal LIEAP funds to cover the pandemic payments.

Fraud: See report –

Unit	December 2020	December 2019	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$5,750.00	\$13,217.07	\$32,609.01	\$100,914.11

Collections remain suspended for all programs due to COVID-19.

Ms. Gobble reported Kelly Drogue, Fraud Investigator has left DSS to pursue another job at the State level. We are currently searching for a replacement.

Ms. Gobble reported Program Integrity staff continues to receive fraud referrals – all collections continue suspended until January 2021.

Services – Ms. Lynette Wellons/Assistant Director of Services -

Ms. Wellons reported we are hopeful to receive the reverted funds – we have submitted report. We have a list of items ready to order to support staff.

Adult and Family Services Program Manager: Ms. Latawnya D. Hall

Child Support – (Statistical Report Information)

Unit	December 2020	December 2019	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$861,790.71	\$873,550.79	\$5,530,811.20	\$5,359,170.04

Ms. Hall reported Child Support currently has seven vacancies. We continue to work diligently in the midst of many vacancies. We have come up with a plan – we will interview two days during the week. Child Support staff continue to go to court and follow protocols.

Ms. Hall reported we are actively working on Child Support goals.

Adult Services –

Ms. Hall announced Person Under Guardianship (P.U.G) Christmas Event went very well in December. We took a different approach this year and requested gift cards for each P.U.G. to avoid shopping during COVID. We distributed gift cards to facilities to purchase gifts for 138 P.U.G.

Adult Services staff are actively obtaining consent forms for P.U.G. to receive COVID Vaccine from primary care physicians. They are able to receive the vaccines at facilities. The consent process includes primary care physician, customer and approval of Social Services director. Director Daye added we developed the consent process to include the primary care physician recommendation before approval given.

Adult Services Unit has two vacancies to fill – we are actively recruiting. We continue to meet priorities and meet the needs of the individuals we serve.

Adult Protective Services reports are up, but manageable.

Question: Does Social Services offer a career fair to handle all vacancies? How do you find the right people?

Due to COVID – we have not participated in any career fairs. As an agency, we recruit at several college career fairs. We also post on every job posting site. Our challenge is the pay especially since we are surrounded by Counties that offer higher starting salaries (Guilford, Orange and Durham). We are considered a training ground for staff – in the majority of exit interviews, we are always told Alamance County DSS is a great place to start your career. We have noticed during COVID and the strides we have made with flexibility and offering telework to majority of our staff – turnover is down. Director Daye added we are one of the few counties that offered telework to our Economic Services staff.

Director Daye expressed at each New Employee Orientation she asks new staff “What you brought you to Alamance County”? Responses are recruited by other staff and they have heard “It’s a great place to work”.

Children Services Program Manager: Ms. Angela Cole/Ms. Ayoka Baldwin

Ms. Cole reported the following:

- Brief overview of services she manages: Child Protective Services, Intake, Assessment, On-Call and Community Response Program Grant (manages with Ayoka Baldwin)
- We currently are recruiting for vacancies – we conduct Child Welfare Interview Blitzes (one day interview process with all supervisors included)

- Reports continue to pick back up – staff are at caseload standard (10 or more) – severity of cases of abuse and neglect are still occurring. Ms. Cole thanked Crossroads for always assisting social services with cases.

Question: What do you all do for self-care? Do you all promote self-care?

Yes – we have Mary M. Shaw, Child Welfare Clinical Services/Trauma Specialist who conducts the following all sessions via zoom:

- “We Care” sessions – self-care sessions to be able to have a good work life balance
- Meditation sessions – every Monday morning
- Supervisors have conversations with line staff to promote self-care
- Provided 10-minute massages for all Social Work staff (SW Appreciation Month) – massages were donated time.

Ms. Baldwin reported the following:

- Brief overview of services she manages: In-Home, Foster Care/Adoptions, LINKS (Independent Living Services for Foster Children) provides services and resources to young adults who are between the ages of 18-21 and Community Response Grant.
- Christmas Celebration for Foster Children was a huge drive through celebration – the event went smoothly – each family received dinner and each child received gifts. Kudos to Tammy Minnis and Christy Roessler.
- We distributed all educational tools purchased for foster children with APS/CPS Cares Act Funds which were: laptops, headphones, printers, and printer ink and laptop bags.
- We continue to visitation with families following the new protocol regarding wearing of masks at each visit. We sent letter to each family participating in visitation processes from Director Daye outlining the protocol. We provide masks if needed. It seems to be going well.

Economic Support: Ms. Jamie Hatfield

Ms. Hatfield gave brief overview of Economic Services which include: Medicaid (Adult and Families & Children), Food and Nutrition Benefits, Work First (WFFA), Special Assistance and Training. Economic Services has two program managers – Danae Pickard will start February 1, 2021.

Ms. Hatfield reported the following:

- **FNS Benefits Extended** - North Carolina has accepted the option to automatically extend all Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) cases that have a six- month certification period. Automatic extension will alleviate the need for FNS households to leave their homes to mail or deliver their recertification forms or to retrieve required verifications, reducing potential exposure to COVID-19. This automatic extension will apply to all FNS cases with a six-month certification period that ends between November 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- We usually focus on data, but not we are focusing on quality not timeliness. We are focusing on 2nd party reviews to prevent errors which will help outline training for new staff.

- **Implementation of Managed Care** – Medicaid Transformation – Go Live Date is July 2021 for Alamance County. Open Enrollment begins March 2021- June 2021.
- **Telework** – The majority of Economic Services staff are teleworking – all newly hired staff are currently working in the building due to training. Ms. Hatfield gave kudos to IT staff who have transitioned all staff to WFH. We conduct weekly zoom meetings with staff.
- **NC FAST Certification** – We continue online training for all Economic Services staff and any staff who uses NC FAST. Alamance Co. DSS went live October 1, 2020 as a pilot for NC FAST Certification. The State has created new policy/certification guidelines for all staff who use NC FAST will be required to pass NC FAST Certification. The timeline for current employees is for 18 months. All new staff certified before any entering completed in NC FAST system.
- **There are two functions:**
 - **Core Function** – any staff who makes changes in NC FAST (Energy, Food & Nutrition Services, etc.) will complete 50-question functionality test (pass/fail with at least 70%). Staff will also participate in web-based training.
 - **Level 1 Programmatic Certification** – any staff who will make eligibility determination for any of the services: Traditional Medicaid, FNS, MAGI, Cash Asset/Work First, Special Assistance, Energy & Child Care. This test is not Pass/Fail. Every staff will build profile and take a test. With this level, supervisors will receive a detailed report of what is current and what is not current.
- **COVID Screeners** – Due to recent uptick in foot traffic at HSC and the increased COVID cases in Alamance County – Director Daye felt the need to request screeners for HSC. We currently have two screeners on-site (1 (FT) and 1 (PT)) posted at the main entrance of the building to screen customers before entering the main lobby of building. The screeners ask a series of questions to assist customers, each customer is given sticker to determine what department (PINK – Health Department and Social Services (different color for day of week). All Economic Services (Medicaid and Food Stamp) applications are located in the main lobby for easy pickup – drop boxes are available for drop off (inside and outside of building). All other services (Child Welfare, Adult Intake, Child Support) continue to report to main lobby.

Family Justice Center – Skye Sullivan

No report. YouTube awareness video forwarded via email to Board Members highlighting services at Family Justice Center.

Operations – Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations

Ms. Gobble reported on the following services:

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of December 31, 2020

Vacancies	24
New Hires	0
Interagency Transfers	1
Resignations	3

We currently have 25 vacancies. We continue to advertise and post jobs. We continue to receive applications and interviews are steady. Out of the 25 vacancies – 11 are Economic Services and 7 are Child Support.

Question: Does the 11 vacancies in Economic Services halt any services to citizens?

No – Economic Services staff continue to work diligently on applications and meet timeliness standards for all services. Supervisors monitor reports daily and move around cases if needed.

Energy Programs: Candice Gobble

Ms. Gobble reported on the upcoming Low-Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP) Program – the program started December 1, 2020. Due to COVID - funds for LIEAP issued as automatic payments to a targeted population that received LIEAP payments in 2019-2020. The automatic payments helped social distancing efforts and eliminate face-to-face contact for the more at-risk population. Those payments have been made to heating source for the at-risk population.

The automated LIEAP payments for each household based on heating source type:

- \$300 for Coal or Wood
- \$400 for LP Gas, Natural Gas, Kerosene, Fuel Oil, Energy other
- \$500 for Electric

As of January 2021, we have taken over 1,107 applications for LIEAP – the applications have been taken through many different avenues – drop off at agency and/or through online portal (E-Pass). We have several part-time staff who work in the Energy unit.

Child Care: Candice Gobble

Ms. Gobble reported the State has received some additional COVID funds for child care services. We are not sure how much has been allocated to Alamance County and not sure of the requirements. The spending co-efficient for child care is above 100%. We have 100 children on child care waiting list – not able to pull off the waiting list as of yet. The parent fees continue to be waived.

Ms. Gobble reported Alamance Partnership for Children has received additional funds that are targeted towards children 0-5. We are waiting to hear how the additional funds will be appropriated.

Question: Who is the child that makes the waiting list 100?

There are specific criteria to make the waiting list. The numbers have decreased dramatically over the past few years. The last time we pulled from the waiting list – we pulled over 65 children of the list.

IT Report: Mr. Jason Cole

Mr. Cole reported the following:

- VOICE Over IP – Economic Services staff are now able to answer desk phones without cell phones. We now have 68 staff using the new program.
- We recently conducted audit of Document Management System – we have scanned over 28 million documents.
- We are currently working with County IT regarding phone outages at HSC campus during business hours due to new COVID Vaccine Hotline. The phone system is only equipped to take a certain number of phone calls and right now they have been averaging 3,500 calls. The issue is that DSS is not able to receive or make phone calls during certain periods of the day. The outage affects our abuse hotlines (Child Protective Services/Adult Protective Services) as well as affects our Energy programs.

Action: Commissioner Thompson requested Jason Cole send her email outlining the problems with phone system to take back to County Manager.

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

Director Daye reported as you are all are aware, turnover has been a major concern here at Social Services. For over a year, DSS has attempted to address the matter beginning with the Top Three turnover positions. The positions are as follows:

1. IMC II (Economic Services)
2. SW III (Adult & Child Welfare)
3. SW I/A&T (Child Welfare)

The plan included using lapse salary to increase the starting and current salaries for these positions in the current budget. Director Daye announced Alamance Co. Commissioners approved the request at the January Commissioners meeting approving 4% increase for both. Director Daye thanked County Commissioners, Andrea Rollins and Candice Gobble for all of the hard work with this request.

Director Daye announced effective February 1, 2021, all IMC II, SW III, and SW IA&T staff and supervisors will receive a 4% increase. In planning for next year's budget, DSS will focus on identifying and addressing the next high turnover positions.

Director Daye expressed Alamance County has a different tax base than surrounding counties – Guilford and Orange. There are counties within the State that did not allow Economic Services staff to telework.

Director Daye reported we have seven positions at the County for reclassifications - we are focused on internal training for staff. Once positions are approved, will report back at the next meeting.

Director Daye reported Medicaid Transformation is moving forward. However, the State of NC still does not have an approved budget. We are asking Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) what happens with no approved budget. We will continue to keep you in the loop as we move forward.

Director Daye announced we are currently working on proposed FY 2021 – 2022 budget. The budget proposal will be presented at March DSS Board Meeting.

New Business:

Confidentiality/Ethics Presentation – Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney

Confidentiality – Why Is this Important?

- We respect our clients and want them to feel their private/personal information is protected
- Almost all information held by the Alamance County Department of Social Services is protected and/or confidential
- The NC Administrative Code says that employees can be disciplined for wrongful release of information.
- The wrongful release of information could result in law suit

General Rule –

North Carolina's public records law provides a broad right of access to records of public agencies. The main statutes that define the scope of the law are contained in Chapter 132 of the NC General Statutes. There many exceptions that deals with public records that can be found in other statutes and administrative codes.

There are many parts of records that are closed to the public – this is the same for DSS. Every unit within social services has own set of rules as it pertains to confidentiality. There are Federal laws as well as State laws.

General Statutes

NCGS.108A-80 – It shall be unlawful for any person to obtain, disclose or use to authorize permit or acquiesce in the use of any list of names or other information concerning persons applying for or receiving public assistance or social services.

10A.NCAC.21A – Client records are confidential.

There are many statutes and polices which apply to specific program areas.

Board Access to Records -

NC Gen. Stat. § 108A-11 - Every member of the county board of social services may inspect and examine any record on file in the office of the director relating in any manner to applications for and provision of public assistance and social services authorized by this Chapter. ***No member***

shall disclose or make public any information which he may acquire by examining such records.

Misuse of Confidential Information - § 14-234.1. -

- (a) It is unlawful for any officer or employee of the State or an officer or an employee of any of its political subdivisions, in contemplation of official action by himself or by a governmental unit with which he is associated, or in reliance on information which was made known to him in his official capacity and which has not been made public, to commit any of the following acts:
- (b) Acquire a pecuniary interest in any property, transaction or enterprise or gain any pecuniary benefit which may be affected by such information or official action; or
- (c) Intentionally aid another to do any of the above acts,
- (d) Violation of this section is a Class I misdemeanor

Thoughts to Ponder:

- When is it appropriate as a board member to request to review a case record?
- Are you acting in your capacity as a board member or as a personal representative for a client?
- If acting as board member, are you authorized to act pursuant to statute or policy?
- What do you do with the information once accessed?
- Can you go back to an individual who made an inquiry to discuss what you learned in reviewing file?

Attorney Hamlett discussed example regarding child fatality in Alamance County. A local reporter approaches you as a board member to request information. You bring the issue to attention of DSS Director. Attorney Hamlett added we developed a matrix on how to handle issues with the media regarding cases.

- Is it appropriate to review the record?
- Can you release information?

(See NCGS 108A-8, 108A-11 and 7B-2902)

Ethics -

Ethics refers broadly to the standard of moral behavior that the public generally expects from persons who hold public office . . . and to the legal requirements and prohibitions that regulate the conduct and behavior of social services board members and local government officials.

John Saxon, Handbook for County Social Services Board 2009, (UNC School of Government, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2009).

Ethical Expectations for Public Officials –

- Discharge responsibility faithfully, diligently and competently;
- Comply with applicable laws;

- Act in the public interest and for the public good and not use their offices for private benefit;
- Provide responsible and effective public leadership;
- Act honestly, courteously and fairly when discharging their public responsibilities; and
- Maintain high standard of morality and integrity in their personal affairs.

NCACBSS –

- The mission of the North Carolina Association of County Boards of Social Services is to inform, educate and empower Board members to become more aware of their duties and responsibilities.
- Adopted a model code of ethics to encourage its members to act in an ethical manner.

<http://www.ncacbss.org/index.html>

§ 14-230 – Willfully failing to discharge duties –

- (a) If any clerk of any court of record, sheriff, magistrate, school board member, county commissioner, county surveyor, coroner, treasurer or official of any of the State institutions, or any county, city or town, shall willfully omit, neglect or refuse to discharge any of the duties of his office, for default whereof it is not elsewhere provided that he shall be indicted, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. If it shall be proved that such officer, after his qualification, willfully and corruptly omitted, neglected or refused to discharge any of the duties of his office, or willfully and corruptly violated his oath of office according to the true intent and meaning thereof, such officer shall be guilty of misbehavior in office, and shall be punished by removal therefrom under the sentence of the court as a part of the punishment for the offense.

Prohibition from Benefitting from Public Contracts –

§ 14-234. Public officers or employees benefitting from public contracts; exceptions.

- (a) (1) No public officer or employee who is involved in making or administering a contract on behalf of a public agency may derive a direct benefit from the contract except as provided in this section, or as otherwise allowed by law.
- (b) (2) A public officer or employee who will derive a direct benefit from a contract with the public agency he or she serves, but who is not involved in making or administering the contract, shall not attempt to influence any other person who is involved in making or administering the contract.
- (c) (3) No public officer or employee may solicit or receive any gift, favor, reward, service, or promise of reward, including a promise of future employment, in exchange for

recommending, influencing, or attempting to influence the award of a contract by the public agency he or she serves.

Conflict of Interest –

A conflict of interest is a transaction or arrangement that benefits an officer, board member, or employee on a personal level. People other than board members may also present a conflict of interest, including board members who are related to employees, immediate relatives of board members, and dual-capacity individuals (a person who is an employee that also serves on the board).

<https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/avoiding-conflicts-of-interest-on-a-board-of-directors/>

Conflict of Interest –

- It is important to consider if, as a board member, you have any outside commitments, personal or otherwise, that would divert you from your duty as a board member.
- Conflicts can be real, potential or perceived.
- Try to avoid all forms of conflict.
- Make disclosures (Be Transparent)
- If a conflict is real and significant, it may be cause to ask for resignation or removal.

Resources –

- *Handbook for County Social Services Boards 2009* John L. Saxon *Substantial material for today's presentation was borrowed from this resource.*
- North Carolina Association of County Boards of Social Services
- *Ethics, Conflicts and Offices: A Guide for Local Officials-* A. Fleming Bell, II
- General Statutes
- NC Administrative Code

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, February 23, 2021** via Zoom.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date approved: _____