

July 27, 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; Ms. Adrian Daye, Director; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director of Services; Ms. Ayoka Baldwin, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations; Ms. Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. LaPorscha McCullough, Adult Services Program Manager; Ms. Wendy Roberts, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney; Mr. Jason Cole, IT Director; Ms. Skye Sullivan, FJC Director; Ms. Andrea Rollins, County Budget Analyst Director; and Ms. Selina Chalk, Budget Analyst were present.

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None –

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

June items on the consent agenda approved. Dr. Ernest Eason made motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Pamela T. Thompson.

Vice-Chair Nominations:

Nomination made that Edna Parker will become Vice-Chair to replace Reverend Ronald Shive due his term ending. Chair Heidi Norwick made motion and seconded by Dr. Ernest Eason.

New Board Member:

Due to Reverend Ronald Shive term ending June 30, 2021 – new board member nominations were discussed. Applications were forwarded to board members before meeting – three potential candidates. Vice-Chair Edna Parker made nomination to appoint Maria Hernandez as new board member. Motion seconded by Dr. Ernest Eason.

Action: Maria Hernandez nominated as new board member for Alamance Co. DSS Board. The term will begin August 1, 2021 and will end June 30, 2024.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Candice Gobble

Ms. Gobble reported on Expenditures – we will not know the final numbers until the end of July. We have started the new fiscal year with some ongoing projects – new key system for our agency vehicles, security camera project and restoring the restrooms at HSC. We will have three revenue

line items that will come over to this fiscal year. The fiscal team continues to meet to make sure we are on top of line items.

	JUNE 2021	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$11,377,340.00	98%	\$10,191,696.00	91%
EXPENDITURES	\$19,010,662.00	91%	\$17,640,535.00	89%

Fraud: See report –

Unit	June 2021	June 2020	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$7,754.00	\$23,200.70	\$74,085.46	\$273,078.72

Assistant Director Gobble announced we have filled the vacant fraud position with internal staff who will start July 1, 2021. The fraud investigator has returned to office full-time. The fraud unit held four administrative disqualification hearings – all clients found guilty of committing an intentional program violation. There were no agency errors discovered this month. Collections continue to remain suspended for all programs. The suspensions have been extended until December 2021. This will continue to impact revenues significantly.

Question: Is there a certain amount of fraud where a case will be prosecuted?

There are certain amounts that could be prosecuted ranging from \$100, \$1000 or \$10k. There is a process with Intentional Program Violations (IPV) regarding the amount of fraud. If DSS chooses to prosecute the recipient after the third violation, the sanctions can be criminal. Simple welfare fraud involving receipt of benefits under \$1000 is a misdemeanor. Receipt of benefits in excess of \$1000 can result in felony welfare fraud charges. Conviction for the crime of welfare fraud can result in jail or prison time. It should be noted that in many instances, DSS MUST refer a case involving an IPV to the district attorney for criminal prosecution. In these cases, the recipient may be entitled to a court appointed attorney.

Performance Management -

Assistant Director Gobble reported on the final 2020-2021 FY Performance Management Goals that ended June 30, 2021. We met 22 out of 25 goals for last fiscal year.

Specific Goal: Energy – DSS will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications within one business day for applicants with no heat or cooling source.

There were continued issues with reports not showing correct due dates impacted this goal. Each case that was overdue, were ePass applications. Although untimely, we had no CIP funds so our clients were not impacted by the late cases.

Specific Goal: Child Support – DSS will have 92.88% of paternities established for children born out of wedlock.

According to the waivers provided by the State, we are passing our goals. Without the waivers, we are off but the same information from last month applies. We are working to fill our vacancies, as we are almost back fully staffed. We have a part-time trainer assisting with training our staff. Once we are fully staffed and agents are properly trained, we will see our numbers increase.

Non-Cooperation's are a part of the reason we are not where we need to be regarding cases under order. We cannot non-coop cases where the client is receiving Medicaid due to COVID, which means we have a bunch of cases open that we aren't allowed to move. We also only have two establishment agents working cases at this time, which is why we aren't meeting our cases under order.

Specific Goal: Child Support—DSS will have 77.85% of child support cases under order establishing support obligations. For June, we are currently at 74.01%. The final total = 77.12%

This goal was not met as a result of several months of court closures, as well as turnover and have the staff needed to successfully manager all cases.

Assistant Director Gobble announced that for future reports – Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Program Manager will give Performance & Fraud reports going forward.

Assistant Director Candice Gobble reported DSS Boosters hosted a “Popsicle Pop Up” for all staff. Staff were invited to wear red/blue/white during the week of July 4th and attend the pop up with hopes to boost morale. Assistant Director Gobble reported it was great to see faces again.

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

Adult and Family Services Program Manager: LaPorscha McCullough

Child Support – (Statistical Report Information)

Unit	June 2021	June 2020	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$988,995.70	\$1,162,363.88	\$11,140,584.87	\$11,191,783.00

Alamance County Child Support is celebrating Child Support month for August. You recently received a “green” ribbon to wear to promote Child Support month. We hired a new Child Support Establishment supervisor who will started on July 26th. We started CS internal training for new staff with assistance from the contract trainer. We have one vacancy in Child Support for receptionist. We are currently receiving applications.

Adult Services -

Ms. McCullough reported we hired a new Adult Services Supervisor (internal applicant) who will start on July 26, 2021. We currently have one vacancy – Adult Home Specialist SW. We recently identified training needs within our Guardianship Unit – training will begin July 26th. We are in the process of discussing plans regarding Christmas for our Persons Under Guardianship (PUG) for December.

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

Ms. Angela Cole reported we are working as fast as we can with interviews to help manage caseloads. We continue to support staff when needed.

Economic Support: Ms. Jamie Hatfield/Ms. Danae Pickard/Ms. Wendy Roberts

Ms. Wendy Roberts reported we are working with Economic Services training team on training plans. We currently have staff who have never worked a case due to all of the pandemic waivers in place.

Ms. Hatfield reported the following:

- Medicaid Transformation started on July 1, 2021. We have encountered some challenges with transportation. We have received many complaints and reported to the State. The State has implemented an escalated process for transportation complaints. The process is set up to work to resolve all complaints within one day. We have submitted 5 complaints.
- We are currently interviewing staff for the vacant Economic Services Supervisor positions.
- We will begin IMC II interviews during the 1st week of August.

Question: Did additional funds occur for transportation with Medicaid Transformation?

No – Medicaid Transformation was only a change with plan.

Family Justice Center – Skye Sullivan

Ms. Sullivan reported the following:

- We have closed out the current grant year – we are on target to spend money for the current grant cycle – October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022.
- The Elder Justice Project Grant is scheduled to end September 30, 2021. We are applying for one-year extension.
- Governors Crime Commission Grant – we are at the end of year one. The GCC grant is set for two years. We are at 40% of budget for GCC. We are hopeful DSS will absorb two of these positions.
- We have seen one of the busiest months – we had 22 clients on Monday. The partners that are housed at FJC are short staffed and are very busy.
- Ms. Sullivan reported FJC will have two Domestic Violence billboards up in October to promote awareness. They will be located at Church Street and Interstate at exit 141. They will be up for two months.

Operations – Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of June 30, 2021

Vacancies	43
New Hires	7
Interagency Transfers	4
Resignations	6

Mr. Ring reported as of today we currently have 44 vacancies – 20% of our workforce which is one out of five positions. This is very significant and impacts every department within DSS. We have four new staff starting next week. There are 27 vacancies within Economic Services and 8 vacancies in Child Welfare. Interviews are being conducted.

Energy Programs: Candice Gobble

Assistant Director Gobble reported the Energy programs are now up and running effective July 1, 2021. As of July 6, 2021, DSS we had only expended \$33k. During normal Energy season, we usually expend \$10k daily. We have noticed a decline in customers requesting energy assistance. But are assisting customers with cut-off notices – Duke Power has started sending out. We do have staff ready and trained.

Question: Is Piedmont Natural Gas sending out cut-off notices?

We have noticed Piedmont Natural Gas is more flexible than Duke Power.

Child Care: Candice Gobble

No report.

IT Report: Mr. Jason Cole

We continue to work with County IT on new security cameras for HSC campus – there will be 33 cameras. We are finishing up cabling for the Ivey Building.

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

Director Daye thanked DSS Board for support letter to County Commissioners and County Manager regarding the request for current PT On-Call position to be moved to FT On-Call position. With all of the reimbursements from State and Federal reimbursement, the total reclass will come in at \$25k. This position would reduce comp time of other social workers who have to cover on-call. This position has been vacant for 8 months. We are hopeful the position will be approved under ARPA funds at the next Commissioners meeting.

Director Daye reported she and Assistant Director Gobble has worked closely with County Manager, County HR and County Finance regarding DSS Compensation Plan. This plan will help address high-turnover positions with a current vacancy rate of 20%. This plan will reward employees who have remained with Social Services, aid with recruiting and retaining new DSS employees and address salary compression created as part of an attempt to increase salaries of high-turnover DSS employees in FY 20-21.

The plan will be funded by budgeted salary and benefit dollars already included in FY 21-22 budget. The total cost of the compensation plan will be \$393,239.22 for all salaries and benefits. There are three bonuses – they are as follows:

Retention Bonus – this bonus is to acknowledge the difficult work performed by staff and to encourage them to remain employed with the agency. The staff person must have been employed for a period of one year or longer as of July 1, 2021.

Years of Service	Bonus Amount
1 – 5 years	\$1000
6 – 9 years	\$1200
10 – 14 years	\$1400
15 years & Up	\$1600
Staff in 5 High-Turnover Positions	\$2000

Sign-On Bonus – This bonus is to pay a financial incentive to encourage employment with Alamance County Social Service. This bonus is specific to 5 high-turnover positions: SW I/A&T, SW III (Child Welfare & Adult Services only), Income Maintenance Caseworker II, Income Maintenance Supervisor II and Child Support Agent II. This bonus will be paid in two installments \$1000 at the completion of the probationary period and \$1000 6 months after the completion of probation.

Referral Bonus – This bonus is to encourage current staff to recruit and refer potential candidates for employment with ACDSS. When an applicant who was referred by a current employee is hired and remains employed for a period of 6 months, the employee would receive a onetime \$500 referral bonus.

Director Daye also reported in this compensation request, AC DSS would like to address some compressions issues. There are 5 positions that require a salary adjustment. Estimated cost: \$13,391.09.

Director Daye expressed when the State & Federal waivers expire, we will have to offer paid over time to case workers to get applications, etc., completed. This will be critical.

Director Daye expressed she is very thankful to partner with County HR, County Finance and County Manager with their help with the compensation plan.

Action: The Compensation Plan will be presented at the August 2, 2021 Commissioners meeting. We are hopeful that this plan will make the agenda for that meeting.

New Business: Extended Foster Care 18-21 Program

Ms. Ayoka Baldwin, Child Welfare Program Manager introduced Ethan Raynor, LINKS SW who presented on the extended foster care program.

Overview: The Foster Care 18-21 Program extended foster care program is a voluntary program for those young adults who were in foster care when they turned 18 or were adopted or placed into a legal guardianship when they were 16 or 17 years old.

What is the Legal Basis for the 18-21 Program?

Legal Basis:

- This program stems from the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.
- In October 2015, the NC General Assembly revised statutes to extend foster care benefits and services to young adults 18-21.

Who is Eligible for the Program?

Program Eligibility:

An individual who has reached 18 years of age, but is not yet 21 years of age, and was in foster care upon his/her 18th birthday, may receive foster care services if the individual is:

- Enrolled in secondary education;
- Enrolled in postsecondary or vocational education;
- Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;
- Employed for or at least 80 hours per month, or;
- Incapable of completing the educational or employment requirements due to a medical condition or a disability.

What are the Outcomes to Promote Success?

- Economic Self-Sufficiency
- Safe & Stable Housing (this is huge for our young people to be able to have stable housing)
- Academic & Vocational Preparation
- Personal Support Network of 5 or more (the majority of FC does not have contacts – we try our best to help them connect with people)
- Avoidance of High-Risk Behaviors
- Normalcy
- Postponed Parenthood
- Access to Health Care

What is the Role of County Oversight?

Agency responsibilities include:

- Monthly contacts and quarterly in-home assessments
- Transitional Living Plans – we establish goals every 3 months
- Transition Support Team Members
- Independent Living Skills – help young person navigate
- Eligibility Verifications
- Yearly Credit Checks
- Group Meetings with Community Leaders – we conduct monthly
- Skill Building Team Excursions

Question: What happens when student is Out of County at College for monthly visits?

We still conduct if student is out-of-county. DSS is available 24/7 for students.

What was the Impact of COVID on our young people?

Mental & Behavioral Health Impact –

- Many of our young people suffer with mental & behavioral health issues originating from their pre-removal environment. Conditions such as anxiety, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, ADHD, ODD and others were heightened and exhibited by several of our young people over the past 18 months.

Employment Impact –

- In the beginning days of the pandemic many of our young people suffered employment instability due to the closing of many business that were using their skill sets.

Housing Stability Impact –

- Housing Instability became an increasing issue as our young people struggled to balance lower income levels with rising costs.

Mr. Raynor added we did help our young people with their stimulus checks – the majority of them were not eligible for unemployment.

What was our Response? -

Behavioral Health –

- Made referrals for mental health assistance and ensured that our young people were compliant with medication and therapeutic requirements pertaining to their current status.

Assistance with Stimulus Checks –

- Assisted with ensuring that our young people were aware of the benefits and were able to file for their stimulus checks.

Resumes & Job Search –

- Hosted resume building workshops
- Held meetings on conducting job searches and how to apply for positions
- Referrals to employers and community partners who hire those with limited or no prior work history or have a criminal record
- Established communication and assisted with applications for NC Works and Job Corps

Housing Stability –

- Assisted with helping the young people navigate the issues of eviction, apartment location and moving out of state.

Concerns for those who have aged out of the program:

What does aged-out mean?

- The Extended Foster Care Program is designed and required to discharge young people on their 21st birthday.
- ACDSS had 5 young people age out during the pandemic, navigating huge challenges without support.

Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 Impact on 18-21 –

Expanded Foster Care 18 to 21 Program Services as a result of the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021, young adults 18 to 21 who exited foster care during the pandemic due to age must be provided the opportunity to re-enter the foster care program.

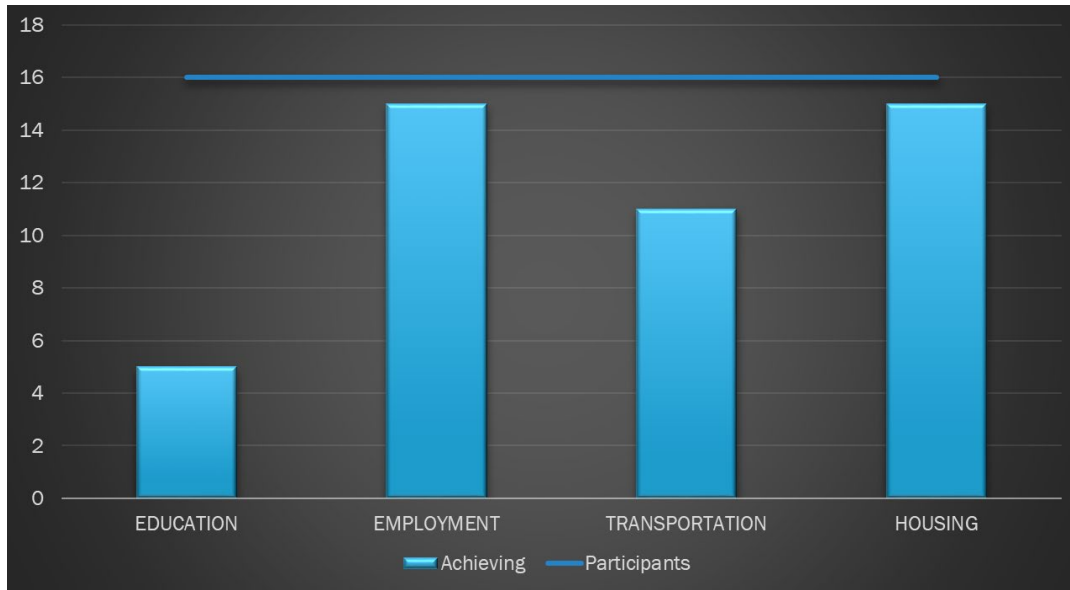
Agencies must NOT terminate or suspend a young adult from participating in Foster Care 18 to 21 due to age or failure to meet employment & educational criteria before October 1, 2021. Each young adult receives \$634.00 a month as a participant of this program.

County child welfare agencies must identify and provide notice to eligible young adults about their ability to re-enter the Foster Care 18 to 21 program, NC DSS will assist counties in identifying eligible young adults.

Alamance County Response to the CAA 2021

December 27, 2020	Consolidated Appropriations Act started
May 11, 2021	Support for Youth & Young Adults Transitioning from Foster Care
May 2021/June 2021	Identified applicable youth for re-entry – We have 5 eligible and 5 agreed
July 2021	Court Action Sanctioning re-entry and linkage to community partners

Where Are We Today?



- **Education** – We have 5 young adults who have completed the HS Equivalency or enrolled in College.
- **Employment** – We have 15 young adults employed.
- **Transportation** – We have 11 young adults who have their own transportation and pay their own insurance.
- **Housing** – We have 15 young adults out of the 16 on the program who have stable housing.

Question: Is this a permanent program?

Yes

Question: Does any of the young adults have issues with Substance Abuse?

We have seen young adults who have issues with SA – when those are apparent we do referrals for SA therapy and work with therapist and group settings.

Question: How do kids know about this program?

The Foster Care program 13-17 are in LINKS program – when the young adult turns 16 we begin to have those conversations and introduce the program.

Assistant Director Lynette Wellons added Alamance County DSS only had 5 discharges with a 100% return rate. This is a huge success.

Director Daye added this program is near and dear to her heart. These young adults don't a lot when they age out of the program and the 18-21 program provides them a safety net. They

understand how the program works and helps navigate them to adulthood. This program is total Federal money – no funds come from the County or State.

Ms. Baldwin gave kudos to Social Worker Raynor who works very hard for these young adults and provide a safety net. He has a great relationship with each of them.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, August 24, 2021** in-person at Family Justice Center located at 1950 Martin Street, Burlington NC. The meeting will be held in the large meeting room on the lower level.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date approved: _____