

February 28, 2023

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held at HSC Building (1st Floor) 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC with the following in attendance were: Ms. Heidi Norwick, Chair, DSS Board Chair; Dr. Ernest Eason, DSS Board Member; Commissioner Craig S. Turner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candice Gobble, Director; Ms. Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. Wendy Roberts, Economic Services Program Manager; Ms. LaPorscha McCullough, Adult Services Program Manager; Mr. Robert Ring, HR Director; Mr. Jason Cole, IT Director; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, Attorney and Ms. Virginia Hunker, Fiscal Supervisor were present.

Guest: Timothy Britt

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

January 2023 items on the consent agenda approved. Dr. Ernest Eason made motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Craig Turner.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Candice Gobble

	JANUARY 2023	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$6,483,320.00	47%	\$7,804,380.00	55%
EXPENDITURES	\$11,388,362.00	44%	\$10,278,010.00	44%

Fraud: See report –

Unit	January 2023	January 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$743.00	\$6,082.32	\$27,111.34	\$53,973.58

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

No report.

Adult and Family Services Program Manager: LaPorscha McCullough

Ms. McCullough reported one of the largest Adult Group homes has decided to close here in Alamance County – Golden Years. The facility houses at least 40 – 60 individuals. We are currently working on placements for our Persons Under Guardianship that are housed at this facility.

Ms. McCullough reported at the State Meeting the discussion across the State of NC is the difficulty of finding placements for Adults. There is a housing crisis.

Child Support – (Statistical Report Information) – see report.

Unit	January 2023	January 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$863,596.41	\$790,234.12	\$6,039,853.09	\$5,992,020.31

Child Support –

No report.

Children Services Program Manager: Ms. Angela Cole/Ms. Rebecca Lambert

No report.

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

No report.

Operations – Ms. Candice Gobble, Assistant Director of Operations

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of January 31, 2023

Vacancies	48
New Hires	4
Interagency Transfers	2
Resignations	4

Child Care: Candice Gobble

No Report.

IT Report: Mr. Jason Cole

No report.

Director's Report – Candice J. Gobble, Director–

Director Gobble gave brief report from the Eastern Regional Meeting with NC Association of Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) regarding upcoming Child Welfare Screening tool that will be housed in NC FAST. It will be a Child Welfare information system. This tool is now being piloted in some counties.

Director Gobble also discussed we have 3 children currently awaiting placement and we are currently using the “Blue Cottage” during the day. Staff are working very hard to find placement to avoid staff working 12 hr. shifts. Director Gobble added NCACDSS is keeping a tally of all children currently housed at social services throughout the State. Director Gobble reported she spoke with Senator Amy Galey who wanted to know how she could help with the placement issues.

New Business:

DSS FY 2024 Proposed Budget Presentation – Director Candice Gobble

Director Candice Gobble presented the FY 2024 Proposed Budget. Director Gobble introduced Virginia Hunker, Fiscal Supervisor who assisted her on the budget proposal.

Summary of Services:

The overall objective of the Alamance County Department of Social Services are that of protective, preventive and rehabilitative services, as well as reinforcing and sustaining the normal pattern of living whenever possible.

The department promotes the general welfare and safeguarding of children, the elderly and disabled adults from abuse and neglect. Through our services, the department works to encourage self-sufficiency and promote personal responsibility.

Alamance County DSS is a Level II (Medium Size) agency with responsibilities for:

- Child & Adult Protective Services
- Child Support Administration
- Services to Adult and Families
- Eligibility for Public Assistance Programs to include Work First, Medicaid and Special Assistance, Food & Nutrition Services, Energy and Subsidized Child Care
- Community sheltering in the event of natural or man-made disasters

Mission:

ACDSS is a committed partner within our community in providing hope, encouragement and responsive services to our customers.

Vision:

To partner with individuals and families in achieving prosperity, permanence and safety.

Recruitment and Retention:

A statewide shortage of applicants leaves many counties competing for a small pool of applicants – this is one of DSS huge challenges. It is not a surprise that vacancies within units greatly impact service delivery and adds an increased liability to Alamance County. Staff in heavily impacted areas have little work/life balance, stressful work days and are at risk of burnout. The need for services does not stop due these agency vacancies. ACDSS is responsible for the delivery of 28 mandated programs.

As of 2/27/2023 – DSS currently has **56** vacancies. 19 of those applicants have been identified and are currently in the hiring process.

The current vacancies are as follows:

- 17 = Child Welfare
- 6 = Adult Services
- 27 = Economic Services
- 5 = Child Support
- 1 = Other (Assistant Director of Operations)

Director Gobble reported salary ranges from surrounding counties:

Position	Alamance	Chatham	Durham	Guilford	Orange	Randolph
IMC II	\$38,916.96	\$36,206.00	\$40,103.00	\$40,611.00	\$38,425.00	\$37,192.00
SW	\$51,155.41	\$53,493.00	\$60,183.00	\$56,426.00	\$57,000.00	\$52,397.22
IA&T						
SW III	\$49,167.47	\$48,519.00	\$52,588.00	\$52,735.00	\$49,196.00	\$46,901.00

- IMC II – Economic Services
- SW IA&T – Child Welfare
- SW III – Adult Services & Child Welfare

The larger counties have larger budgets and starting salaries are higher.

Economic Services -

- Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) applications have increased by 41% -

Year	Applications/Per Month
2022	981
2021	522

- FNS Households decreased slightly; however, have exceeded 2021 numbers in January 2023
- Approval of additional Medicaid programs contributed to the increase of beneficiaries; however, with Medicaid Expansion on the horizon, beneficiary numbers will increase drastically. The State estimates for Alamance County – 11,000 potential individuals that would be eligible under the expansion of Medicaid.

Protective Services –

- Children in custody have increased by 15%, the number of children in Foster Care remains consistent for 2023 – we currently have 104 in care – the number fluctuates from month to month.
- Increased need for Adult Protective Services – evaluation totals are up by 18%
- Persons Under Guardianship (PUG) numbers remain consistent – when a death occurs for one of our Persons Under Guardianship – we receive 5 to 10 more individuals that need fall under our care.

Budget Considerations -

Enhanced 75/25 Medicaid Administration Funding –

As part of the NC DHHS Annual Planning Document for NC FAST, questions were raised by the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding how NC DHHS is ensuring compliance with County DSS usage of the 75/25 enhanced Medicaid automated eligibility system claims process. Beginning in September 2022 service month, NC DHHS implemented changes to the claiming process for counties. This change resulted in a significant decrease in Medicaid funding for local DSS agencies. Hold harmless funding was approved for the FY 23 to mitigate the impact to counties. Additional funding has been identified to hold counties harmless for a second straight fiscal year (FY24).

Family First Preventative Services ACT (FFPSA) of 2018 -

At implementation, this act works to incentivize family-based placements by imposing a 4-day limit on reimbursement of group placements. Impacts are seen within foster children placed in group or congregate care after October 1, 2021 with two exceptions. NC Legislature approved \$6m in bridge funding for FY22 and \$12m in FY23 to cover the lost of IV-E revenue. As a result of bridge funding, the county share for group placements has remained the same as it was prior to implementation, roughly 17%. For FY24, the State is currently accessing the potential availability of additional bridge funding, but cannot confirm that it will be available. Should bridge funding not be available, counties will be responsible for a 50% share in group placements after 14 days.

Upcoming changes within FY 24 will enable counties to increase IV-E reimbursement for case management costs for candidates for foster care. New procedures for counties are being determined to allow the utilization of IV-E funds in additional areas of Child Welfare.

Medicaid Expansion -

Expansion of Medicaid benefits is contingent upon legislation enacted by the NC General Assembly. With approval, Medicaid Expansion does not require counties to match funding toward the non-federal share of services; however, it does have impacts to local DSS and DSS budgets. It is anticipated to increase calls and foot traffic within agencies, increase applications/re-determinations, as well as require training on new eligibility policies and NC FAST processes.

Currently DSS has 16 vacancies in Medicaid – 14 Family/Children’s Medicaid and 2 Adult Medicaid staff, including supervisor.

Budget Summary

Expenditures	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Inc-Dec
Salaries	\$9,287,253	\$9,920,712	\$10,655,302	\$11,986,068	12%
Benefits	\$4,080,242	\$4,014,496	\$4,345,434	\$4,354,707	0%
Non-Perm Salaries	\$151,253	\$180,000	\$263,080	\$650,000	147%
Operations	\$1,196,390	\$1,236,483	\$1,230,453	\$1,277,878	4%
Capital Outlay	\$22,000	\$49,214	\$50,000	\$35,000	-30%
Services/Programs	\$4,550,443	\$6,064,887	\$4,737,472	\$4,625,713	-2%
Total Expenditures	\$19,136,328	\$21,285,742	\$21,281,741	\$22,929,366	8%

The salaries figures are different from the County due to difference in County MUNIS report. The figures that have been uploaded have discrepancies such as Family Justice Center staff are still included. Effective July 1, 2022, FJC became their own County department.

For Services/Programs – the highlighted numbers above are incorrect due to designated funds are included and we typically do not budget those figures – only County funds.

Revenues	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Inc-Dec
Federal	\$10,503,094	\$11,218,667	\$10,574,876	\$9,805,491	-7%
State	\$1,044,016	\$930,419	\$615,480	\$615,635	0%
County	\$168,584	\$153,123	\$120,610	\$92,382	-23%
Total Revenues	\$11,715,694	\$12,302,209	\$11,310,766	\$10,513,958	-7%

The revenues are based on State estimates of what we will receive based on trends.

Budget Highlights -

Staffing –

- 2 IMC positions requested for Energy programs – these positions would provide stable staff members dedicated specifically to Energy Programs. If these positions are approved, we would only need 4 part-time staff to run the programs.
- There are three Energy programs – 7,767 applications completed and continues to increase daily.

- LIEAP (Low-Income Energy Assistance Program) – the program runs from December to March
- LIWAP (Low-Income Water Assistance Program)
- CIP (Crisis Intervention Program)
- 5% increase to Full-Time staff members to maintain competitiveness with surrounding counties
- \$2.00 increase to part-time hourly rates – the majority of the PT staff are currently making \$14.36/per hr., but we do have some who are making between \$10.00 to \$12.00 per hr.

Operations -

- Emergency Shelter funds increased to provide hotels in lieu of congregate sheltering for small community incidences.
- Daily Travel increased to accommodate more contractual staff mileage. This includes contract staff who are assisting Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) complete monthly visits, etc.,
- Agency supplies and vehicle lines increased to accommodate rising supply and fluctuating gas prices.
- Partnering with County Maintenance on signage updates and painting of HSC.

Capital Outlay –

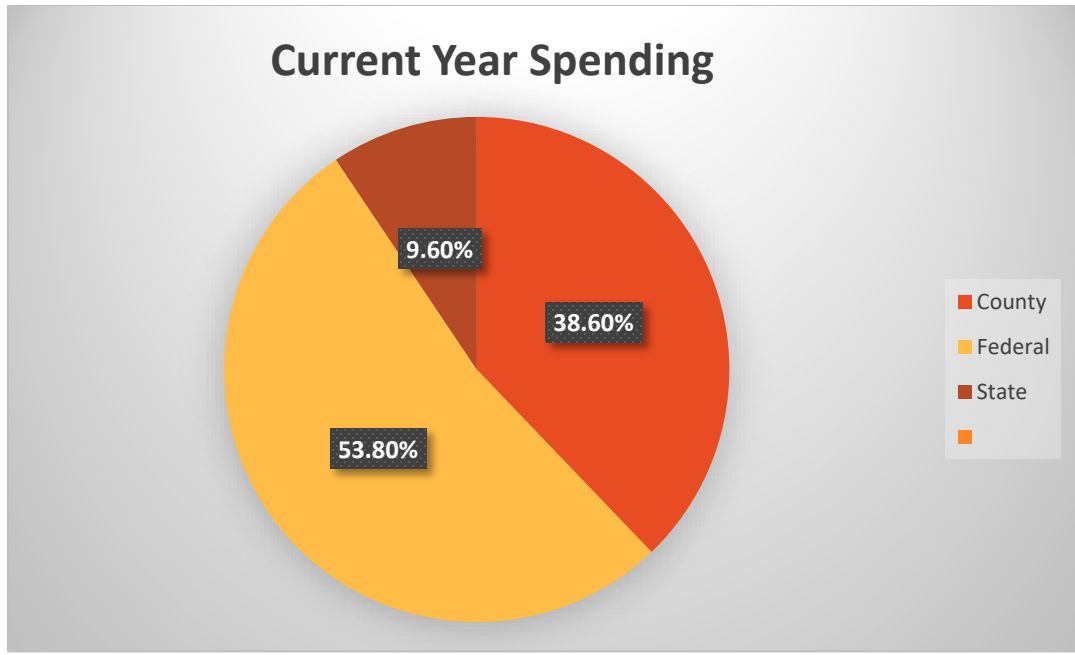
- One vehicle requested for update of DSS Fleet.

Services/Programs –

- Energy portal implemented – estimates provided full Energy allocations; however, allocations will be split between State portal and County issued payments.
- Room & Board payments for Foster Care – increase to IV-B line based on current year trends. Considerations also given to Family First Prevention Services act – estimated as 5 Foster Children are currently in congregate settings.
- Adult Services – increased need in supporting in-home aides and facility care during evaluation setting. Budgeted amounts increased by 43%. We will request \$150k.

Revenues –

- Budgeted totals built in combination of current year trends and state provided estimates
- No significant changes to federal and state allocations
- NC Health Choice fees no longer considered in revenues – the program will end 4/1/2023.

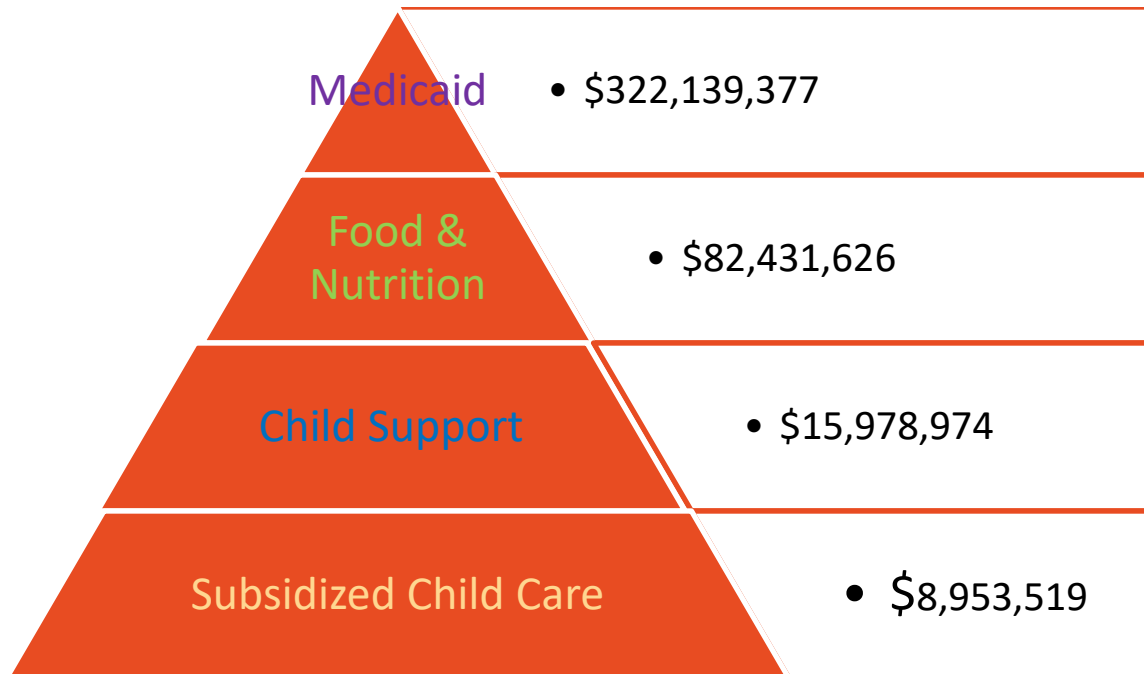


State reporting through November 2022 provides agency spending of \$9,546,277.11. The graph above shows the percentage of Federal, State and County funds that are used to support those expenses.

ACDSS – An Economic Powerhouse

Through out each fiscal year, ACDSS claims reimbursement for expenses related to agency staffing, operational costs and services delivery using both the State 1571 report, as well as other State reporting tools. This combination of federal and state reimbursement accounts for the majority of Social Services revenues, averaging around 84% of revenue totals. These revenues greatly decrease the impact DSS has on county funds used to support service delivery.

In addition to Federal and State reimbursement, ACDSS is responsible for the issuance of public assistance benefits and the establishment of child support orders. These benefits received give Alamance County citizens access to health care, child care, nutrition assistance and financial support. Through these services, benefits are funneled into the local community providing financial support to local medical practices, pharmacies, food vendors/grocers, local child care providers and the overall economy within Alamance County.



<https://info.ncdhhs.gov/audits/audits21/audit.htm>

Medicaid – These numbers are generated from Medicaid claims, Medicaid premiums, co-pays at MD offices

Food & Nutrition – These numbers are generated from Food & Nutrition benefits generated at grocery stores, etc., and generate huge numbers in sales tax revenue from those purchases. These numbers are high due to additional supplements were provided to consumers for the past three years.

Child Support – These numbers are generated from collections and funneled back to families to be able to pay rent, purchase school supplies, clothing and other necessities to provide for their children.

Subsidized Child Care – These numbers are funneled back into the local child care providers. 92% of families paying for child care are employed.

Director Gobble thanked DSS Board members and opened the floor for question/answer session.

Question/Answer Session:

Question: How current are the numbers from the other counties in regards to recruitment and retention?

They were gathered last week from the surrounding counties listed.

Question: Out of the 17 Child Welfare vacancies listed – how many are CPS? How many vacancies now in that unit?

There are 13 vacancies in Child Protective Services.

Question: What point are you now in the budget process?

We are in the beginning of the budget process. The process has changed with new County Manager – there is not a day long process. The process does not include meeting with County Commissioners.

Question: If Medicaid Expansion is approved, what will DSS do with the amount of vacancies?

We will continue to recruit. We are currently working with Prime Personnel on hiring temps to fill the void of some of the positions. Discussion held about non-merit based staffing vs merit based staffing.

We currently have 5 staff from Prime Personnel and will continue to interview permanent positions with hopes to hire and to include 5 more temporary staff every week.

Action: DSS Board Members voted on the Budget Proposal – the vote was 2-1 to approve Budget Proposal with no changes.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, March 28, 2023** at DSS – Professional Board Room located on the 1st Floor at 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date Approved: _____