

September 26, 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, DSS Board Chair; Commissioner Craig S. Turner, DSS Board Member; Dr. Ernest Eason, DSS Board Member; Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Member; Mr. Timothy Britt, DSS Board Member; Dr. Darrell Warner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Division Director; Ms. Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager; Ms. Virginia Hunker, Business Officer; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney; Ms. Brittany Duncan, Program Integrity Supervisor; and Mr. Ethan Raynor, Program Integrity Staff SW were present.

Heidi Norwick, DSS Chair opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda: Heidi Norwick, DSS Board Chair

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

Oath of Office:

Ms. Carmen Morrow, Clerk to DSS Board administered Oath of Office to Dr. Darrell “Bud” Warner. Dr. Darrell Warner term will expire June 2026.

Vice-Chair Nominations:

Chairman Heidi Norwick nominated Timothy Britt as Vice-Chair of DSS Board. Chair Heidi Norwick made motion and seconded by Tyronna Hooker.

Action: Unanimous vote approved Mr. Timothy Britt as Vice-Chair.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Ms. Virginia Hunker

	AUGUST 2023	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$1,415,839.00	13%	\$1,151,076.00	10%
EXPENDITURES	\$3,112,723.00	14%	\$3,007,544.00	14%

Ms. Hunker reported two amended funding codes will be presented at November County Commissioners meeting in regards to additional SNAP (FNS) Funding and additional APS Essential Funds.

Director Gobble will present September Revenues and Expenditures in October Board Meeting.

Question: How much additional money will DSS receive with Medicaid Expansion?

Answer: We are not sure at this point what the final distribution of funds we could potentially receive by December 1st launch date.

Fraud: See report –

Unit	August 2023	August 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$20,376.45	\$6,363.34	\$42,307.45	\$6,364.00

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

Angela Cole, Child Welfare Program Manager reported for Assistant Director Wellons due to training:

Adult and Family Services -

Adult Services recently completed three-year State audit. All areas of Adult Services successfully passed the audit with no findings.

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

Unit	August 2023	August 2022	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$871,471.11	\$891,946.71	\$1,731,286.03	\$1,752,738.31

Child Support Unit completed the following events for Child Support Awareness Month:

- Handed out 168 backpacks for back-to-school event
- Child Support Proclamation presented at County Commissioners meeting
- Three educational sessions for the community at local libraries

Child Welfare –

Ms. Angela Cole reported the following:

- There are new policies on the horizon for Intake and Assessments around discipline, substance abuse affected infants and drinking & driving
- Hiring continues – there are four staff who are waiting to transfer to other areas within DSS
- Completed one educational session with ABSS nurses and scheduled to provide another educational session with Elon University for students in regards to abuse and neglect.

- We are preparing for Foster Care Christmas event – the event will be held at St. Marks and there are three additional local churches who work together to provide gifts for the children in care.
- We met our adoption baseline of 16 for FY 2022-2023 by completing 17 – we continue to work on the baseline for FY 2023-2024.
- October is audit season – we just completed IV-E internal audit (findings have been corrected) there were mostly keying errors, no paybacks and will adjust get reimbursed. We have meetings scheduled with our internal fiscal department to catch all errors going forward.

Economic Support: Ms. Danae Pickard

Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Division Director reported on the following:

Hiring –

- Interviewing staff to Medicaid Expansion – Temp-to-Part Time employees. The goal is to interview 12 with hopes we will be able to hire 6.
- Working with Guilford Co. DSS regarding training – we currently have no Family & Children’s Medicaid Trainer
- We will have two supervisor vacancies (October and November)
- We continue to maintain large caseloads despite our vacancies

Program Updates -

Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) –

- EBT Card Skimming has led to increase of stolen benefits. NC has finally received approval from USDA to reimburse some of stolen benefits. We used ARPA FNS funds to give small gift cards for Emergency Situations before the USDA approval. There are strict limits placed on the amount that can be replaced
- Fiscal Act – (This is the federal budget bill to avoid default on the debt ceiling)
 - Work requirements are increasing and some are being eliminated for some groups
 - The changes expected are to result in a net national increase in people eligible for SNAP benefits

Medicaid Expansion–

- The “Go Live” date is set for December 1, 2023
- DSS Director will meet with County Manager in regards to presentation at County Commissioners Meeting in November
- We are currently waiting on furniture to create space for Medicaid Expansion new staff

- We continue to watch for the increase in automation in NCFAST as it relates to expansion caseloads – the selection of cases that will be automated will be a small percentage of an actual caseload
- We received additional guidance from our Local Business Liaison at Division regarding the CCU/Medicaid Expansion and GAP Funding received.
 - GAP funding could not be used for expansion implementation
 - CCU/Medicaid Expansion funds can only be used for new (not originally budgeted staff) and technology infrastructure
- Medicaid Expansion presentation scheduled to be presented at Community Council – October 3rd

County Government Academy -

- Jamie Hatfield, Economic Services Program Manager and LaPorscha McCullough, Adult Services Program Manager will be presenting to County Government Academy with combination of DSS, FJC and Health/Environment.

Performance Management Goal–

Specific Goal: DSS will continue to educate and strengthen relationships with community partners, conducting no less than one activity per quarter.

- **Child Welfare:**
 - CPS completed training with ABSS Nurses
 - Foster licensing visited Crosslink Church to educate on need for Foster parents
- **Child Support:**
 - Child Support One on One (Two sessions at Graham Public Library)
 - Annual Community Day
 - Non-Custodial Parents Matter Too (Two sessions at Graham Public Library)
 - NC Child Support Staff Conference
- **Economic Services:**
 - National Night Out (Graham Housing Authority)
 - Alamance Partnership for Children (Incredible Years Presentation)
 - Exchange Club Family Center of the Piedmont (Child Care Assistance Presentation)

Operations – Director Candice J. Gobble

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of August 31, 2023

Vacancies	36
New Hires	8
Interagency Transfers	3
Resignations	4

Ms. Danae Pickard reported as of September 26, 2023 – please see vacancy report:

Total = 37 Vacancies

- Economic Services – 17 vacancies
- Child Welfare – 11 vacancies
- Legal/Admin – 2 vacancies
- Child Support – 3 vacancies
- Adult Services – 4 vacancies

Question: How will the Government Shutdown affect DSS?

- *During the last Government Shutdown – there were services affected such as WIC, Head Start and Food & Nutrition Services. We have not been informed so far of any services that could be affected so far.*

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

Ms. Danae Pickard reported the following for Director Gobble who is absent due to training:

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New Business:

Program Integrity – Brittany Duncan

Ms. Brittany Duncan, Program Integrity Supervisor presented the following:

Types of Claims:

- Administrative Error (AE) – agency action or inaction. This includes state agency errors.
- Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) – the household’s misunderstanding or unintentional error.
- Intentional Program Violation (IPV) – the household has:
 - Intentionally failed to report, or,
 - Misrepresented the household’s situation, or
 - Intentionally misused benefits

Agency Errors:

Agency Error claims are federal debts and must be collected. The issue is not who made the mistake, but rather who used the benefits (*clients are responsible to repay agency mistakes*).

Inadvertent Errors:

Inadvertent household errors occur when the client makes a mistake in reporting (*the client is responsible to repay these over issuances*).

Intentional Program Violations:

The burden of proof lies on the county to prove with “clear and convincing evidence” that the client “intentionally, knowingly and with deceitful intent” provided false information to obtain benefits, or misused/trafficked the EBT benefits.

EBT Misuse:

Use of an EBT card to pay on previous purchases (For ex: client gets merchandise from store, store keeps a tab).

Allowing a non-FNS unit member to use an EBT card to buy groceries for themselves – use of EBT benefits to purchase food that will not be consumed by the authorized intended FNS unit.

Evidence of EBT Misuse:

1. Surveillance Video
2. Clients Admission

Trafficking:

Trafficking is defined as buying or selling EBT cards or using FNS benefits for cash or any items other than eligible food (paper products, utensils, anything you can't eat) or the attempt to buy or sell FNS benefits online and in public (FNS Service Manual 805.05 C.6)

Attempt to Sell/Trade:

Individuals who attempt to sell their FNS benefits/cards for cash or items not allowed by USDA regulations are guilty of an Intentional Program Violation. (Social Media, Text, Phone Recording)

Fraudulent Activity by the Merchant:

- No scanners (Manually key grocery amount)
- Buy Card (Owner takes the EBT card and shops for store)

Store Investigations:

Participating stores can be disqualified by the USDA in the same manner that a recipient can from the FNS program. It is the county's responsibility to investigate the clients who had questionable transactions such as:

- High Dollar
- Even Dollar
- Rapid

Ms. Duncan reported on questionable/unusual EBT fees and examples.

Evidence from USDA:

1. Charge Letter – investigating a retailer (\$20k and up)
2. Photos from the interior and exterior of the store
3. Store Survey Form
4. Store Inventory
5. Store Sketch
6. List of Questionable Transactions

Evidence Alamance County:

- Distance from residence to store
- EBT Transaction History
 - Other retailers
 - Percentage spent
 - Number of EBT cards ordered
- Interviews

Penalties (Administrative):

- Restitution (Benefit reduction, Voluntary repayment agreement, EBT debit, TOP/DOR, NC Education Lottery and Wage Garnishment)
- Disqualification from Program
 - 1st Offense – 12 months
 - 2nd Offense – 24 months
 - 3rd Offense - Permanent

Penalties (Criminal):

- Restitution ((Benefit reduction, Voluntary repayment agreement, EBT debit, TOP/DOR, NC Education Lottery and Wage Garnishment)
- Disqualification from Program
 - Permanent Disqualification – Court conviction of trafficking (including drugs) involving \$500.00 or more
- General Statutes of North Carolina
 - Class 1 Misdemeanor - \$400 or less
 - Class 1 Felony – more than \$400

Question: How do you collect from those who are found guilty of fraud?

- *Benefit reduction and voluntary repayment agreements all other restitution programs*

Question: Is there a particular person you deal with a DA's office?

- *No – we send directly to DA's office. We are in the process of scheduling Lunch/Learn with the DA's office to strengthen the partnership.*

Question: What amount of benefits does a household receive?

- *All benefits are determined by income limits of the household size/income levels*

Question: Does automation give flags for those who are found guilty of fraud?

- *Yes – EBT Edge will allow DSS to see if clients have requested more than one or more cards and other information as well that will trigger a red flag.*

Question: If you feel that you have not committed any fraud issues – is there an appeal process?

- *Yes – clients have 30 days to request local appeal. DSS has hearing officers on staff. Clients can also appeal at the State Level (15 days)*

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, October 24, 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 at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date Approved: _____