

## Henderson County Board of Social Services

### January 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

#### A. Call to Order

The Henderson County Board of Social Services meeting was called to order by Chair Josh Simpson at 12:01 pm.

Board Members Present	Josh Simpson, Member Melinda Lowrance, Member Judy Smith, Member Rebecca McCall, Member Stephen Gwaltney, Member
Staff Leadership Present	Jerrie McFalls, Secretary to the Board/Director via phone Lorie Horne, Social Work Program Administrator Joseph Maxey Jr., Administrative Officer Debby Freeman, Economic Services Program Administrator Deborah Johnson, Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk
Guest	None

#### B. Public Input

None

#### C. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

#### D. Approval of Minutes

Chair Simpson asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the December 20th, 2022, regular meeting, there were none. Mrs. Lowrance moved to approve the minutes as written, Mrs. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Chair Simpson asked if there were any changes to the Closed board minutes from December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and there were none. Mrs. Smith moved to approve the minutes as written, Mrs. McCall seconded the motion and the motion passed.

#### E. Board Education

none

#### F. Reports

Director's Monthly Report (Attachment I)

Mrs. Lowrance inquired about National Human Traffic prevention month during the month of January, as it was mentioned in the Director's report. Mrs. Lowrance asked if Henderson County was doing anything related to trafficking in the county. Director McFalls reached out to Chris Ellis, a local detective that works in trafficking in our county but has not heard back.

Trafficking is currently an issue in Henderson County. We don't have statistics as far as a percentage, but we will check internal data bases. We will also reach out to the sheriff's department to inquire about the number of incidents in our county so residents can be aware and know what signs to be alert to.

Director McFalls stated that when we get connected with a contact person for the trafficking, we plan to have training for our social workers to know what signs they should look for.

Mrs. McCall stated that two years ago, the county commissioners voted and approved funding to set up sting situations to capture internet traffickers that try to lure children. Several arrests have been made and it has been successful.

With the expansion of Medicaid, Chair Simpson asked if the Leadership may be changing. Director McFalls stated that Medicaid is expected to expand, and Leadership seems to remain in place. Dave Richard, the Deputy Secretary of NC Medicaid, met with the general assembly and believes that Medicaid expansion will pass.

### **January Employees of the Month (Attachment II)**

Questions only - none

### **December 2021 – December 2022 Statistical Report (Attachment III)**

Questions only - none

### **January Program Administrator's Report (Attachment IV)**

Program Manager Debby Freeman stated that February will be the last month for Food Stamp supplements. Families will drop back to what they are actually qualified for and entitled to. We feel that this will cause a hardship to a lot of our families that have been receiving supplements for a couple of years. If families previously had a low food stamp allotment, with the supplement, they received a significant amount more. Now these families will have to try to adjust to the new food stamp allotment they will be receiving in addition to the rise in food prices. DSS did a soundbite on WHKP letting families of Henderson County know that their food stamps will go back to the eligibility amount. We have posted signs in our lobby and posted the information on the DHHS website. Every recipient is receiving a letter stating that the supplement is ending. DHHS is also going to do press releases to inform families. We have reached out to the IAM food pantry that we anticipate the number of people that will need additional food will possibly increase greatly.

The PHE (Public Health Emergency) ends April 11<sup>th</sup>. The programs are being separated from the Public Health Emergency. As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, we will begin recertifications for Medicaid. We will have thirteen months to complete the recertifications. The recertifications will include the current twenty-five thousand that are currently on Medicaid and eventually the six thousand additional we anticipate with Medicaid expansion.

NC Fast is currently implementing straight through processing and it is being developed to be able to process applications quickly. If straight through processing is successful, then our workers would not have to manually do that work.

### **Financial Report December 2022 (Attachment V)**

Joe stated we are in excellent shape as the first half of the year has ended moving into the second half. Our supply line is in good shape so we will begin to replace some equipment. We currently do not have enough laptops for everyone to receive one. We need additional laptops to complete our replacement program of computers that are out of warranty and no longer supported.

## G. Old Business

### **DSS staffing update**

Director McFalls stated DSS currently has 14 vacancies. Six of the vacancies are in Social Work. Six vacancies are in Economic Services, one processing assistant 3, and one child support worker. We had two new income maintenance workers start this week. We are in process with most of the positions with workers scheduled to begin in some positions and interviews being conducted for other positions. We have had several internal moves so that doesn't decrease our number of openings immediately, but we are working to get all positions filled.

We have lost two Social Workers in the last month to VAYA. VAYA is recruiting for social workers with any mental health background. VAYA contracts with other agencies to provide the frontline treatment. VAYA is hoping to get the Foster Children's specialty plan. They want to be the agency that serves the states foster children. VAYA currently serves thirty-one counties in North Carolina.

### **Four Year Budget Plan**

Director McFalls asked the board to give feedback on the presentation that is being presented to the County Commissioners.

We are proposing two different plans. One plan is if Medicaid expansion is approved, and one plan is without Medicaid expansion. If Medicaid expansion does not get passed, not as many positions would be needed.

The following is what we took into consideration when compiling the four-year budget:

- ❖ Medicaid Expansion has been contemplated in N.C. for 12 years.
- ❖ There is political optimism that expansion will occur.
- ❖ N.C. will gain an additional \$3 billion dollars through the Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program (HASP) if the government approves its plan by June 1, 2023.
- ❖ Medicaid Audits are constant and conducted by several different entities.
- ❖ A Quality Control Audit Specialist is critical in managing Medicaid Audits.
- ❖ Adult Protective Service Reports have increased 100% since FY 19/20.
- ❖ In-home aid services are needed to help elderly remain in their home.
- ❖ Placements for foster children with behavioral health needs have become increasingly difficult. Lack of placement causes children to sleep at local DSS offices.

- ❖ Continuous Quality Improvement enhances our ability to retain employees, and to properly train and support staff who are frequently subjected to secondary trauma.

In the presentation, we do talk a lot about Medicaid audits. We just finished a 10-month audit. DSS has a tremendous amount of different audits each year. We have the REDA audit, county single audit, the State auditor does an individual audit. Twenty cases each month must be uploaded to the auditors just for the REDA audit alone.

We are asking for a Quality Control Specialist to handle the audits. We currently have nine different audits. This position would be responsible for uploading and submitting to the auditors. This position would be responsible for audits training, onboarding, report management, program improvement, help identify errors and how to prevent future errors. The person needs to be very knowledgeable of all the different Medicaid programs.

We think it would likely be someone on staff due to the knowledge necessary to understand and manage all the audit requests for different programs. This position will take the burden off the supervisors and program managers. This position should be reimbursed at fifty to seventy-five percent by the federal government.

75.2 million dollars were paid to Henderson County providers for FY 2022. Twenty five percent of our population is eligible for Medicaid, but Medicaid Expansion will increase that number. Our county is anticipating six-thousand additional clients with a twenty-five percent increase in caseload.

If Medicaid expansion passes, additional case workers will be needed to compensate for the additional workload. Employees will need a minimum of six months training. The number of employees needed is contingent upon the efficiency of the straight through processing.

In Adult Protective Services, our APS reports have increased one hundred percent since fiscal year 19/20. We have had one hundred ninety-five reports in the first six months of this fiscal year. We only had one hundred ninety-five the entire year in 19/20. We are seeing that the cases are more severe than in previous years. There are different agencies in the county that are contracted to help in home adults, but those agencies are having staffing issues and are not able to see the elderly as often as needed. We are asking for an in-home aide to help more adults in their homes. Contracted agencies will often not take our most difficult cases so we are asking for another in home aide so we can serve more of our clients. In home services help keep adults in their homes longer.

Currently our in-home aide has 15 clients so that would increase our ability to help. We have a current wait list of 55 clients. Mr. Gwaltney suggested an additional position because our wait list is 55 clients, two positions would be more advantageous.

An Adult Services Supervisor is needed to create a more reasonable supervisor-to-staff ratio and to manage the 10 distinct services we are mandated to provide. Currently we have two Adult Services Supervisors, each responsible for nine employees providing multiple services through multiple programs. An additional supervisor would make the supervisor to worker ratio more equitable and manageable.

In Foster Care, placements for foster children with behavioral health needs have become increasingly difficult. Lack of placement causes children to sleep at DSS. An additional social worker is needed to locate appropriate placements for foster children. There is a need to locate and secure higher levels of care due to abuse, neglect, trauma, and mental illness for children involved in child protective services and foster care. This work requires extensive communication and coordination with VAYA, mental health and health professionals, and placement providers statewide as well as other neighboring states (SC and VA).

We sometimes pay time and a half for twenty-four-hour care to our social workers for children who don't have placement. We work with other agencies to try to find placement, but it can be very difficult. This has been a problem for years. Directors are pushing DHHS to provide more services to foster children. Children who don't have placement stay overnight at the agency. We have a blow-up mattress, clothing, shower, and personal hygiene supplies. We don't have a room specifically for overnight stays, but we use visitation rooms so cameras are in those rooms. We have two workers with the child/children.

Children with mental health issues are often sent out of county and could be sent out of state.

The next position we are asking for is a CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement). We have two of these positions now. They review records, properly train and support new staff and work with our secondary trauma with county wellness to set up debriefings and diffusing's when we have a death or serious injury of a child. When we have situations that are very traumatic to social workers, we use them and a team that supports them, to try to give support to our staff. One of our employees that recently left to take another job, stated how much she appreciated the mental health support and the continuous quality improvement she received from the staff.

The CQI would also be the point of contact for Federal, State, and independent audits across all Social Work Programs.


We have additional space we could set up cubicles for offices to add positions. We have several positions that could move to work from home. Our Work from Home policy has been approved by the County Commissioners, but we are waiting on what we need from IT for Work from Home to be possible.

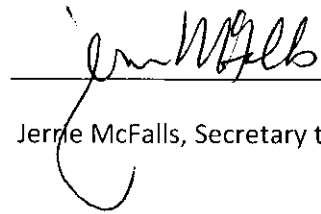
#### H. New Business

**No new business**

#### I. Adjournment

Mr. Simpson asked if there were any additional items for discussion. There were none presented. Chair Simpson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mrs. Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed. Mr. Simpson adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

  
Josh Simpson, Chair  
2/21/23  
Date

  
Jerrie McFalls, Secretary to the Board  
2/21/2023  
Date

Attachments:

- I. Director's Report – January 2023
- II. January Employees of the Month
- III. December 2021 – December 2022 Statistical Report
- IV. Program Administrators' Report – January 2023
- V. Financial Report – December 2023
- VI. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Personnel Report
- VII. 2023 Board Meeting Schedule