

Henderson County Board of Social Services

April 15th, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

A. Call to Order

The Henderson County Board of Social Services meeting was called to order by Chair Simpson at **12:00 pm.**

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Board Members Present | Josh Simpson, Chair Melinda Lowrance, Member Stephen Gwaltney, Member Rebecca McCall, Member Amy Holt, Member |
| Staff Leadership Present | Lorie Horne, Social Services Director Debra Dunn, Deputy Director Melissa Novack, Finance Officer Candice Fowler, Administrative Assistant |
| Guest | None |

B. Public Input

None

C. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

D. Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Lowrance moved to approve March 24th, 2025, meeting minutes, Mr. Gwaltney seconded the motion. The March 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

E. Reports

Director's Monthly Report (Attachment I)

Questions Only

Mr. Gwaltney asked about house bill 274. Director Horne stated that 5 million was given to Crossnore.

Mrs. Lowrance asked about a FEMA extension. Director Horne stated that she is not aware of anymore extensions.

Mr. Gwaltney asked about the bills of action that affect child welfare. Director Horne stated that HB237 would make several changes to the state's child welfare laws. These changes include a requirement to place juveniles in a safe, permanent home within one year from the initial removal order if reunification is not in the child's best interest. It also expands the definitions of abuse and neglect to account for exposure to illicit drugs or alcohol in utero resulting in inadequate care in an unsafe home. Termination of parental rights would be triggered at 9 months instead of 12 if parents willfully let the child reside in an out-of-home placement with no progress toward reunification.

April Employees of the Month (Attachment II)

Questions only

None

March 2024- March 2025 Statistical Report (Attachment III)

Questions only

April Program Administrator's Report (Attachment IV)

Questions only

Mrs. Lowrance mentioned some people are reluctant to apply for the LEIAP funding. Director Horne stated that we encourage people to apply for assistance if they need it regardless of the situation.

Chair Simpson asked about the MDT team being responsible for approving APS matters. Director Horne stated that the team has been in the works for quite a while, but it is now up and running. Mrs. Dunn stated that she and the team are working to keep the momentum going.

Mrs. Holt asked why there was a decline in medical transport numbers. Director Horne stated that the numbers went down when tailored plans came out and explained that VAYA took over many of the cases the agency handled.

Financial Report March 2025 (Attachment V)

Mrs. Novack stated that we will find out in June if our budget has been approved. The county budget office asked us to look at the contracted services line and asked us to consider an increase in that number for interpreting services and the Sheriff's department's services, which we agreed to. The IT department advised that the agency needs additional upgrades to the camera system and the access control system. The total cost was \$179,000. Mrs. Novack stated that the agency has reviewed the list of proposed changes from the county budget office and has accepted all changes except for 2 items. The agency asked to compromise at \$620,000 instead of \$550,000 for contracted services—cost allocation and \$65,000 instead of \$55,000 for travel and staff development.

The budget will be approved by the county commissioners in June.

G. Old Business

DSS Staffing Update

Director Horne stated that there are currently 10 vacancies with 3 external prospective candidates starting in May.

H. New Business

April Child Abuse Awareness Month

Mrs. Dunn shared information about Child Abuse Awareness, it was officially instated in 1983. The agency held an event last Wednesday for abuse prevention month. A few staff members shared their reason for showing up to do the difficult work that they do.

"Families are counting on us to help implement plans and make changes."

"Children are happy to see their social workers."

"Many former clients are thriving and doing well in life."

"Knowing that children need their families."

"As a social worker you can be a consistent person in a child's life."

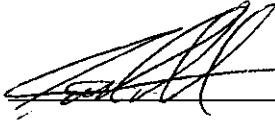
"Building relationships with teens, watching them learn, grow, and graduate has had a profound impact on my life."

"Help the system and watching a family come back to life when they found success. Watching resilience of families."

Mrs. Dunn shared that Child Abuse Prevention awareness wouldn't be possible without advocacy, community partners, and many staff within the agency.

I. Adjournment


Chair Simpson adjourned the meeting at **12:57 pm**.



Josh Simpson, Chair

5/20/25

Date

 5-23-25

Lorie Horne, Secretary to the Board Date