

Henderson County Board of Social Services  
February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 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 Stephen Gwaltney, Vice Chair Melinda Lowrance, Member via phone call Amy Holt, Member Jerrie McFalls, Member
Staff Leadership Present	Lorie Horne, Social Services Director Debra Dunn, Deputy Director Melissa Novack, Administrative Officer Kandi Bridges, Economic Services Administrator Candice Fowler, Administrative Assistant
Guest	Mary Kay Krokowski, League of Women Voters

B. Public Input

None

C. Adjustments to the Agenda

None

D. Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Holt moved to approve the January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026, Mrs. McFalls seconded, the January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026, meeting minutes were approved.

E. Reports

**Director's Monthly Report (Attachment I)**

Mr. Gwaltney asked Director Horne what she thought the caseload should be for adult services. Director Horne stated that the caseloads should probably be equivalent to child welfare, which would be equivalent to or less than ten cases per worker. Mr. Gwaltney asked if we would set the limit before making a commitment for funding. Director Horne discussed the NCACDSS Social Services Legislative priority proposals for the 2026 short session.

**Adult Services**

1. Provide adequate funding for Guardianship and Adult Protective Services. To fund appropriations for Adult Protective Services essential funds for DSS agencies to use on all level of services for individuals served by the County.
2. Mandating workload study for Guardianship and Adult Protective Services.
3. For DHHS to take over the role of investigations of Adult Care Facilities.

Mr. Gwaltney asked if anything has calmed down with the HR1 impact on the SNAP program. Director Horne stated that we are moving along, we have had some impacts thus far, but the 25% administrative financial impact is coming in October. We will need to incorporate the additional 25% administration funds for FNS in our budget as there is no indication at this time that the state will be contributing to that additional 25% cost to administer the program. Chair Simpson asked if

there is the potential of the agency going away from the SNAP program. Mrs. Bridges stated that there is always a possibility that the program could go away, but for now things are okay. Mrs. Bridges stated that they are implementing many things into NCFast to help reduce error rates.

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

Mrs. Bridges stated that the biggest problem is moving forward without correcting errors and moving onto new programs. Mrs. McFalls asked if we are keeping the work requirement for the expanded Medicaid re-certs. Mrs. Bridges stated that it will double the number of recertifications, the state is working on more automation to make that process easier. If the person has worked 80 hours within the month prior or minimum wage times 30, they would meet the requirements; there are also exemptions for clients with disabilities. The most difficult piece will be keeping up with volunteer hours; we are unsure how that will be documented. It will be extra work so the recertifications will be held longer than normal.

Ms. Dunn stated that nothing major has happened in the last month with child welfare and adult services. Mrs. McFalls asked why the CPS intake numbers have gone down. Ms. Dunn stated that we are doing better with moving cases along and timeliness overall as far as case decisions. Director Horne stated that PATH NC might have had an impact on the number. Ms. Dunn stated that the screening decisions have changed. We are screening out cases where a reporter might not be able to tie a negative impact to the child around substance use, substance use alone is no longer a reason to make a report. The report must be tied to an impact, abuse, neglect, no supervision, etc.

Mrs. Holt stated that CPS numbers have gone down, and the APS numbers have doubled and asked if the increase could be due to the past events—COVID, cost increases, and Hurricane Helene or just mental health in general. Director Horne stated that it could be a combination of all mentioned issues. The population in APS has changed, there are younger clients with multiple diagnoses, substance abuse and mental health issues. Ms. Dunn stated that the external factors have impacted the numbers.

Mrs. McFalls asked what the START program is, Director Horne stated that it is a sobriety treatment and recovery team. We are still working to get the program going in Henderson County. Ms. Dunn stated that we are now in cohort 2. The START program is an intense, highly focused program that has opportunities for great success for families in preventing children from entering care and increased reunification rates.

#### **January 2024- January 2025 Statistical Report (Attachment III)**

**None**

#### **H. Financial Report January 2026 (Attachment V)**

Mrs. Novack stated that overall, we are underspent at 56.3% spent. Mrs. Holt asked if there were a lot of people at the shelter. Director Horne stated that there were around 30 people, but once the power came back on many people went home. Mrs. McFalls asked if the county was expecting funding for the winter storm. Mrs. Novack stated yes, they are reporting the expenses to FEMA for reimbursement. The budget approval meeting will be March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

#### **I. Old Business DSS Staffing Update**

Director Horne stated that we are currently at 11 vacancies. We have three candidates with start dates, one internal transfer pending, and two wage requests pending.

J. Adjournment

Chair Simpson made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Gwaltney seconded the motion. Chair Simpson adjourned the meeting at **12:33 pm**.

			
Josh Simpson, Chair	Date	Lorie Horne, Secretary to the Board	Date

Attachments:

- I. Director's Report –February 2026
- II. Statistical Report – February 2026
- III. Program Administrators' Report –February 2026
- IV. Financial Report – February 2026