

Monthly Director's Report to

Board of Social Services



April 2020

Submitted by:
Jerrie McFalls, Director

We have spent much time during the past six weeks planning our agency response to COVID-19. We have embraced the daily changes in policy, procedure, mandates and recommendations. We have prioritized the safety of staff and clients above all else. While our doors remain open to the public, we are limiting contact between staff and clients/visitors. Economic Benefit staff are primarily conducting interviews by phone and applications are being submitted electronically or by completing hand-written applications that are put in our outside drop box. Staff follow-up with a telephone call to complete the application. Visitors to the building remain outside of the secure area unless it is necessary for them to enter. Front desk staff are speaking from behind the glass windows. Paper applications are available for all programs. Social Work staff are only having face to face contact when mandated. Additionally,

- Economic Benefit Staff: High risk staff have been assigned computers so they can work from home. Other staff are rotating on an A/B schedule so that about half of the remaining staff are in the building at a time. Staff without agency assigned computers working from home complete telephone interviews and perform other tasks for application completion.
- Social Work Staff: Staff involved in child welfare are considered emergency responders. The child protective services assessors and in-home staff use an app on their I-pad to work their cases in NC Fast. Other child welfare staff use their I-pads to complete dictation and forms necessary for their cases. About half of the social work staff are working from their homes at any given time. Social Workers are using electronic means to talk/see children and families and parents can have virtual visits with their children. Some child welfare and adult services contacts are required so that the safety of the vulnerable can be determined. We are taking precautions in these situations to minimize the risks to all involved. Court appearances are limited to emergency hearings.
- Staff whose duties cannot be performed from home are reporting to the office daily. We are practicing social distancing in the office and in contacts outside of the office.
- Our work is changing. Food & Nutrition and Medicaid applications have increased. This was expected due to the increase in unemployment. Changes have been made to the requirements when a case is due for recertification. With applications, we can now take client statements instead of verifying information they provide in many circumstances.
- Both Child Protective Services reports and Adult Protective Services reports decreased in March and thus far in April.
- Food and Nutrition benefits (Food Stamps) have been increased so that each case receives the maximum amount for their household size no matter the amount of their income. In Henderson County, 3112 cases with 6296 participants have received an additional \$583,681 in supplemental benefits.

I want to thank each of you for your support during this stressful time for our staff and clients. We will continue to work through issues as they arise and consciously make decisions that serve the best interest of those who are depending on us.

Employees of the Month: The April Employees of the Month list is attached.