

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA )  
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COUNTY OF STOKES )  
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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS  
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA  
FEBRUARY 23, 2016

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a Special Session (Social Services) at the Social Services Building – Lower Level Conference Room located in Danbury, North Carolina on Tuesday, February 23, 2016 at 1:30 pm with the following members present:

Chairman J. Leon Inman  
Vice Chairman James D. Booth  
Commissioner Jimmy Walker  
Commissioner Ernest Lankford  
Commissioner Ronda Jones

County Personnel in Attendance:  
County Manager Richard D. Morris  
Clerk to the Board Darlene Bullins  
Finance Director Julia Edwards  
DSS Director Stacey Elmes  
Social Work Supervisor II Kimberly Childress  
Social Work Supervisor III Marsha Marshall  
Social Work Supervisor III Lori Priddy  
Child Support Supervisor I Lynn Whitaker  
Income Maintenance Supervisor II Cindy Amos  
Income Maintenance Supervisor II Sharon Bullins  
Administrative Officer I Patty St. Hilaire

Chairman Leon Inman called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance.

#### **INVOCATION**

Chairman Inman invited those who wished to join in the invocation to please do so.

Chairman Inman delivered the invocation.

## **GENERAL GOVERNMENT-GOVERNING BODY-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Inman invited everyone in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **GENERAL GOVERNMENT – GOVERNING BODY – APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Inman entertained a motion to approve or amend the February 23, 2016 Agenda.

Vice Chairman Booth moved to approve the February 23<sup>rd</sup> Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Jones seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Inman turned the meeting over to Department of Social Services (DSS) Director Stacey Elmes.

### **Introduction**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes noted the following:

- Would like to thank the Board of Commissioners for taking the time to give the department an opportunity to talk about the good work this department provides to the residents of Stokes County
- Have a lot to tell you in a very short period of time
- Have provided you a lot of information but it only skims the surface of what we do and how we do it
- When I first took this job, I invited Manager Morris to come over and spend some time with a Child Protective Services Social Worker; believe that was an eye opening experience for him
- Would strongly encourage any member to come and ride with a social worker, visit a foster child or see what happens in Income Maintenance
- Believe it would provide the Board members a chance to see how this department serves the public - serving the public is the department's number one priority
- Have included in the Agenda a lot of information including a Glossary of Terms/Programs and Terms frequently used in Child Welfare along with Committees/Boards/Councils that must have DSS representation
- Supervisors from specific programs will be speaking about 5 to 10 minutes
- They will speak about:
  - Highlights of their program area
  - The challenges they face
  - What about their program keeps them up at night
- Hope this presentation will help you understand what we do and how we do it
- There will be a small amount of time after each presentation for questions

- Have also included case examples for your reading

County Manager Morris commented:

- Would reinforce what Director Elmes stated about knowing what happens in this department
- If you would like to really know what goes on in this department and really get some depth and understanding of the programs, riding with a worker or observing a worker is a great way to really understand what happens in this department
- It is truly an eye opening experience
- This department does a lot of very complex and wide variety of functions, one just as important as the other
- There is financial liability and personal liability associated with the work being done in this department
- There is a tremendous amount of paperwork that is required
- Feel Director Elmes has provided the Board with a lot of good reference material in the Agenda packet

### Adult Services

Social Work Supervisor II Kimberly Childress provided the following information regarding

Adult Services:

- DSS Adult Services assists anyone 18 years of age and up
- Want to highlight four programs in Adult Services:
  - **Adult Protective Services (APS)**
    - Disabled adults are vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation
    - Screening Process:
      - Adult has to be without a willing, able, and responsible person to help them
      - The disabled adult has to be unable to help themselves
      - Must be alleged to be in need of Protective Services
      - Look at six (6) domains
        - Physical health
        - Mental health
        - Social support
        - Activities of daily living
        - Finances
        - Physical environment in which they live
      - There must be a decision made within 30 to 45 days depending on the allegations
      - From that decision – two different routes or tracks can be taken:

- If a case is substantiated there has to be enough to support the person was disabled, allegations were proven to be true and that services are needed
- The Social Worker must determine if the customer has capacity (understand what is going on and the consequences if they don't make a change as to what they are doing)
- If they have capacity, they can refuse services
- If they don't have capacity, the worker must file court petitions to obtain legal permission to provide the services needed
- If it is unsubstantiated, available resources are offered
- All findings are sent to the District Attorney for them to determine whether criminal charges are needed
- **Guardianship**
  - Guardianship is for adults who have been adjudicated incompetent by the court; DSS Directors often serve as guardian
  - Legal determination has declared the adult is incompetent which means the adult is considered incapable of making important decisions concerning his/her personal welfare and/or financial resources
  - The nature and scope of a guardian's responsibility are determined by the court, based on applicable provisions of the law and the circumstances of the individual case
  - Decisions could be where the adult will live, including the geographical area and type of living arrangement; how the adult's income will be spent; and whether the adult will have recommended medical treatment or surgery
  - Try to be least restrictive
  - Try to include in the service plan to restore if appropriate
  - Try to work with family and friends when possible
- **Adult Placement**
  - Adult placement services help aging or disabled adults find appropriate living and healthcare arrangements when their health, safety, and well-being can no longer be maintained at home
  - Placement arrangements are made in adult care homes, nursing homes, other suitable homes, residential health care settings or institutions
  - Adults and their families receive help to complete medical evaluations and financial applications, and locate and move to the new settings
- **Monitoring of all Six (6) Adult Care Homes in Stokes County**
  - Looking for compliance in areas such as medication, activities, residents' rights, staffing, and personal care supervision
  - Homes are monitored quarterly and do an annual review
  - Investigate any complaint received on any Adult Care Home

- **Other Programs:**

- Adult Day Care Services – offers a protective setting, supportive services, and opportunities for socialization, stimulation and enrichment
  - Currently have no clients utilizing this service – most likely because there is not an adult day care in Stokes County
- Adult Foster Care Services – involves recruiting, developing, and evaluating adult care homes to determine if they meet the needs of residents and to help them improve upon their service
- Community Alternatives Program for Children (CAP/C) – is a special Medicaid community care program designed to serve a limited number of medically high risk children who would be institutionalized in a nursing facility or hospital without Medicaid payment for home care
- Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA) - is a special Medicaid community care program that makes care at home a real possibility for many people who face nursing home placement
- Crisis Intervention and Services Intake - a wide variety of services are identified and accessed for customers experiencing financial or other crises at services intake
- Low Income Energy Assistance Program - a federal program that normally provides a one-time payment to vendors on behalf of eligible households to assist with heating expenses
- Family Caregiver Support - for anyone who is a caregiver of an older or disabled adult who is 60 year old or older
- Individual and Family Adjustment Services – services are offered in an attempt to restructure or solidify an individual’s environment
- In Home Aide Services (HCCBG/SSBG/State In Home) – services available to customers who require help with personal care, cooking, housekeeping, or essential errands and shopping due to illness, advanced age or other special conditions
- Medical Administrative Claiming (formerly called At Rise Case Management) assists adults and children who are at risk or show evidence of abuse, neglect, exploitation in gaining access to needed medical, social, educational, and other services
- Representative Payee - provide payee services to individuals in jeopardy of being deprived of basic services
- Services for the Blind – helps visually impaired individuals integrate smoothly into their environment and community
- Special Assistance in Home - assists older or disabled adults who need adult home care (assisted living) but want to remain living at home by helping with living expenses such as food, shelter, clothing, and other daily necessities

### **Challenges in Adult Services**

- Prosecuting the perpetrators
- Placement, in general, especially if they do not have Medicaid
- Working efficiently with our MCO and LME regarding what is most appropriate for mental health services and what is in the best interest of our customers

- Limited funding for services; Stokes receives no funding for Adult Protective Services and Guardianship Programs
- Limited funding for housing – no funding in our County for individuals who do not have children and have an eviction or need a rent deposit
- Limited support and guidance from our State Adult Program Representatives

**Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Our wards - we become their only family and worry if we have done everything we need to do for them
- The Adult Protective Cases – those who have been mistreated and you don't help and just have to walk away from them
- The adults who have never asked for assistance and now need assistance and don't qualify
- Those that you have to remove from their homes who do not want to leave and are doing the best they can to stay at home
- Meeting all the needs of the adults in our County with the limited resources
- Want to encourage the Board to read the case examples that have been included in your Agenda today – they are some of the most severe cases that workers have been involved with and remember that each case is a Stokes County resident
- Appreciate the Board coming to DSS to listen

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Two groups that I try to always remember their needs – the young and elderly and include those who are unable to fully take care themselves
- Learned a lot from the training received as a DSS Board member
- Would like to know how we are doing for our folks compared to other areas?
- It is good to know that our workers have their hearts in the right place and always want to do things that matter for the people they serve

Supervisor Childress responded:

- Can speak to the areas monitored by the State
  - Always in compliance
  - Always exceed expectations
  - Adult Services does a great job with the limited resources that we have in Stokes County
  - We are right there with everyone else
  - May be a small county, but our workers work hard to provide the needed services

Vice Chairman Booth commented:

- Do the six homes being monitored in Stokes County know when you are coming?

Supervisor Childress responded:

- They do not know when we are coming

- Have wards placed at some of the homes in the County
- We are in and out of the facilities all the time
- We take care of what is needed
- Have a good working relationship with our facilities

Commissioner Jones noted that she is a big supporter of DSS and was affiliated with DSS long before becoming a commissioner.

Commissioner Lankford confirmed with Supervisor Childress that an Adult and Family Service Plan (goals) is set for each customer.

Supervisor Childress commented:

- Agency has monthly contact and quarterly visits or as much as needed with our customers
- No service plan looks the same, it is very individualized

Chairman Inman commented:

- Hear and read a lot about child abuse, but don't hear and read about elderly abuse as much

Commissioner Lankford noted that he learned a lot about DSS programs while serving as the Veteran Services Officer for the County.

### **Child Protective Services**

Social Work Supervisor IIII Marsha Marshall provided the following information regarding Child Protective Services:

- **Child Protective Services (CPS)**
  - Protect children by providing services for families
  - This includes specialized services for abused, neglected, and/or dependent children, and those who are at imminent risk of harm due to the actions of, or lack of protection by, the child's parent or caregiver
  - Priority is to maintain children safely in their own homes
  - Discussed the nine (9) page CPS Intake Report included in the Agenda packet
    - Intake worker must complete this form on each report
    - Intake worker covers 8:30 am to 5:00 pm during the week
    - Intake worker covers CPS and APS after hours from 5:00 pm to 8:30 am and weekends
    - Reachable 24/7

- Form is very detailed – physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, abandonment, drug exposed infant, supervision, injurious environment, improper discipline, and improper care
- Main areas that CPS deals with currently are substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence
- Probably would say that substance abuse would be the main one
- When a report comes in, the supervisor, social worker and sometimes the entire unit will discuss the report
- It will be determined whether the report meets the definition of neglect, abuse, or dependency
- If it does, it is immediately assigned to a worker and either placed on an investigative track or family assessment track
- Investigative track cases (typically physical and sexual abuse, severe neglect cases) are to be completed within 30 days
- Family assessment track cases (typically substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, (unless a weapon is included in the domestic violence case which is assigned to the investigative track) are to be completed within 45 days
- We are not allowed to contact the family when it is an investigation case, we just show up
- If it is a family assessment case, we can schedule an appointment to visit the home
- If a child has a lasting mark that is reported, must respond within 24 hours
- Most reports fall into the 72 hour category
- We have an immediate respond if the child is scared to go home or in danger
- Other immediate respond is sex abuse if the perpetrator has access to the child
- Discussed the eight (8) page Safety Assessment Report included in the Agenda packet
  - This is done to determine the child’s safety
  - The child could be placed with a safety resource if needed – for example there was substance abuse in the home
  - These are meant to be short term
  - Typically use safety resources for 30 to 60 days
  - If it goes beyond that, typically looking at going before a judge and asking for custody and placing the child in the foster care system
  - Safety assessments are just a piece of paper – there is no protection
- Reporting Sources
  - Typically the schools, law enforcement, mental health, family, friends, and the community



- Coordinate with law enforcement, juvenile services, adult services and all different types of agencies to ensure the child is safe
  - It is a group effort
  - Have a staff that jumps in and does what is needed
- Discussed the twelve (12) page 5010 Report which is included in the Agenda packet:
  - This is where documentation is done on a daily basis
  - Should be within seven days current
  - Very detailed report
  - Risk assessment has to be done on every case
  - Must determine if there is low, moderate, or high risk
  - If allegations are true, the case is assigned to a case manager
  - In that incident, the family must be seen within seven days to transition from investigation to in-home services
  - Within 30 days, a family case plan has to be developed with the goal to make this family successful
  - If it is determined high risk, a facilitator has to be brought in to a family meeting (DSS has three facilitators trained on staff)
- If allegations are not unsubstantiated, there might be services that can be offered to help the family
- Work with other counties on cases
- Case managers typically stay involved with a family three (3) to six (6) months
- At the end of six (6) months and things are not going well, may petition the court to see what might be the next step to assist the family
- Social workers spend a great deal of time when cases go to court – preparing documentation, getting information to attorneys – this takes time from their busy day
- Examples of what our current caseloads look like:
  - One case management worker has 41 face to face contacts on a weekly basis traveling seventeen (17) locations between Belews Creek, Pine Hall, Westfield, and King; four (4) cases in court; one (1) noncompliance petition and three (3) custodies
  - Another case management worker has thirty-five (35) face to face contacts made every other week and sixteen (16) weekly contacts traveling twenty-two (22) locations every other week between Mount Airy, Dobson, Pilot Mountain, Westfield, Mocksville, Sandy Ridge, Walnut Cove and King
- Department is responsible for seeing or making an effort to see absent parents whether that parent has any contact whatsoever with the child
  - Must track that absent parents to see if they have any concerns and are required to work with them if it goes to case management
  - Must work with them even if the parent is incarcerated in prison
- Lot of requirements that must be done

### **Challenges in Child Protective Services**

- Keeping documentation current
- Obtaining information from other agencies
- Traveling out of county
- Caseloads

### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Safety assessments are just a piece of paper – gives no guarantee that the child will be protected
- Not knowing if kids are being mistreated
- Not being provided the information that is needed to help the children
- My workers' mental health (difficult things that they face day in and day out)

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments.

Commissioner Lankford questioned where most of the reports come from regarding child abuse?

Supervisor Marshall responded:

- Probably schools
- Law enforcement provides DSS with a report every time a child is involved; they call in severe cases

Commissioner Lankford confirmed with Supervisor Marshall that most cases involving teenagers are juvenile cases; parents not being able to handle the kids – more of a discipline situation than a neglect situation.

Supervisor Marshall spoke briefly about the case plan (5235) which was included in the Agenda packet.

Vice Chairman Booth noted that the things that keep Supervisor Marshall awake would definitely keep him awake also.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Concerned about the information about the caseloads of two of the workers mentioned by Supervisor Marshall
- Questioned how Supervisor Marshall felt about her staffing? Adequately staffed?

Supervisor Marshall responded:

- Feel her department is adequately staffed at the moment
- Case management is what is struggling right now

- Have three case managers with one being new
- Caseloads should be a maximum of ten (10)
- If you have ten (10) cases, there is no way you can work 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
- Would like to see the state decrease the number of cases per worker
- Have not had a big issue regarding turnover
- Feel one thing that helps is the incentive pay being provided by the County
- Can't compete with surrounding counties

Commissioner Walker confirmed with Supervisor Marshall that the department no longer has an officer in house, but one is assigned by the Sheriff to DSS.

DSS Director Elmes responded:

- Officer who was in the office retired; the new officer was being trained and then was going to be placed in the DSS building
- The space became occupied by the county attorney
- It was agreed to leave the officer in the Sheriff's Department and it is working very well

Commissioner Jones confirmed with Supervisor Marshall that the 5010 is completed at the end of the investigation due to time restraints.

Commissioner Jones questioned if there were any mechanisms in place for the workers' mental health?

Supervisor Marshall responded:

- My team works really well and are always there for each other
- Staff meets once a month outside the facility
- Do things together outside the office

DSS Director Elmes noted presentations are provided to workers such as a recent "Social Worker Burnout".

Chairman Inman commented:

- Glad to see presentations are being provided when possible for the workers' mental health
- Can empathize from being a former operator of a Day Care with the things mentioned by Supervisor Marshall that keep her up at night

## **Foster Care and Adoption Services**

Social Work Supervisor III Lori Priddy provided the following information regarding Foster Care and Adoption Services.

### **Foster Care and Adoption Services**

- Supervisor Priddy started off with an exercise
  - Asked members to write down three of the most important relationships/values in their life.
  - Then asked members to take away one
  - Then asked members to take away a second one
  - Then asked members to take away the last one
  - This is what a foster child experiences when they come into foster care
  - Everything what they value has been taken away
  - They are placed with new people who are now making their decisions
- Foster Care provides a temporary living arrangement for abused, neglected, and dependent children who need a safe place to live when their parents or another relative cannot take care of them (from infants to 18 years old)
- Adoption is the method provided by law to establish the legal relationship of parent and children between persons who are not so related by birth
- CARS (contractual agreement residential services) – voluntary agreement that allows youth to remain in foster care beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday if they remain in a licensed placement and attend school full time
- Understand if legislature is adopted, foster care will serve infants to 21 years old
- When DSS believes a child is not safe and a judge agrees, DSS takes custody of that child and finds a foster home for him/her
- DSS works to return children to their own homes as quickly as possible
- Social Workers must see the foster child and the parents monthly to make sure there are resources to make sure the child's needs are being met
- Provide resources for parents to obtain the goals to get their children back in their home
- Collateral contacts with others to make sure the needs of the child are being met
- Report to the judge if the goals are being met
- Follow all court orders
- Monitor foster children from other counties who are placed in our county
- Develop another plan of action if the child is returned to the home
- Children are ordered to see their parents weekly – most of the time a minimum of two hours; infants are usually twice a week

### **Challenges in Foster Care**

- Resources – not enough
- A lot of times when the child is removed from the home, the family loses services (Medicaid, Food Stamps)
  - This causes an issue with parents trying to reach their goals to be able to get their children back at home

- Transportation
- Parents getting services such as substance abuse treatment – some have to go outside of the county to meet their goals and can't afford it
- Placement of children
- Over 50% of the foster children are placed outside the county which makes it more difficult for the worker to visit the child – can spend the whole day visiting one child
- Keeping staff – we are considered a training ground
- Once they get six months of training that the County pays for – they are gone for more money
- When there are vacancies or when there is a new person hired, remaining staff has to pick up the overload until that person is hired and trained
- Children have to get used to a new worker – another loss for these children
- Foster parents are also complaining about the number of new workers they are seeing
- The amount of narrative and getting it done

### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Decisions that we are making involving a child's life and hoping you are making the right decision
- When a child runs away – wondering where they are and if they are safe
- Workers and heavy caseloads
- Stress on workers with so many mandates and paperwork
- Possibility of missing court orders – have 74 children in foster care

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments

Commissioner Jones commented:

- Feel the frustration
- Wish we could get the salaries where it is more equitable to keep workers
- Need to keep workers for those children – they need an environment where social workers are not constantly changing

Commissioner Walker commented:

- This thing about compensation is an interesting set of dynamics
- Talking to someone in Forsyth who has a spouse at DSS and they are having the same problem retaining workers because Guilford County is paying \$10,000 more than Forsyth County
- Obviously, someone can go to another county close by and make more money
- What are some of the reasons you feel keeps someone here at Stokes?

Supervisor Priddy responded:

- I can only answer for me – I am a resident of Stokes County and want to help my county
- One worker that left stated she missed the family atmosphere
- Have been the supervisor since September and still do not have a full staff
- Hope to have the last position filled later this month

- I have been supervising and carrying 18 kids myself

Supervisor Marshall responded:

- My unit is a little different, I have two that live in Forsyth County and one in Virginia
- Feel the incentive pay is very important and does help to retain workers
- Also feel the environment is different in my unit, the closeness and support of workers

Commissioner Walker continued:

- Foster Care Homes seems to be an ongoing challenge

Supervisor Priddy responded:

- Lot of the older foster homes have adopted children and no longer have the space or do not care to foster kids any longer
- Have had some foster homes stop because of the agency's turnover of Social Workers
- State guidelines are stricter
- Foster Homes receive the following for fostering children:
  - \$475 for children ages 0-5
  - \$581 for children ages 6-12
  - \$634 or children ages 13 and over

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Expressed concerns about transportation
- Would like to see a task force formed to see what can be done

Vice Chairman Booth commented:

- Glad to hear the family atmosphere keeps workers here
- Confirmed with Supervisor Priddy that staff is doing the best they can do when it comes to court orders

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- Very familiar with this department
- Wish there was more people who wanted to adopt children

Vice Chairman Booth commented:

- Questioned how many did Foster Parents came out of the last class?

Supervisor Priddy responded:

- All information from the last class has been turned into the state
- Received 3 this past week that were approved
- Waiting on the state for the remaining approvals

Chairman Inman commented:

- Foster Homes are a statewide issue

- Confirmed with DSS Director Elmes that she felt that the legislature is probably going to approve foster care to age 21

## **Economic Services**

Child Support Supervisor I Lynn Whitaker provided the following information regarding Child Support and Program Integrity:

### **Child Support and Program Integrity (Fraud)**

- Families who receive WorkFirst and Medicaid are automatically referred to Child Support
- If a custodial parent does not receive public assistance, they may apply for services by completing an application and paying an application fee based on their income
- Services provided by Child Support Enforcement:
  - Location of the absent parent
  - Establishment of paternity
    - Child Support Agents will attempt to get the paternity and court order established voluntarily, but if the absent parent will not cooperate then court action is initiated
  - Establishment of a court order (support, medical and payment on arrears) if the parent will not voluntarily sign an agreement)
  - Enforcement of court orders
  - Collection and distribution of support
  - Modification of existing orders – can be reviewed after three years upon request of either party
- Child Support does not control visitation or custody issues
- Child Support must work with:
  - Parents who are not working – unemployed
  - Parents who are not paying
  - Parents living out of state

### **Challenges in Child Support Enforcement**

- Proving self-employment wages

### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- If the right decision was made dealing with a difficult case

### **Program Integrity/Fraud**

- Fraud Program is committed to the elimination of fraud and abuse of public assistance programs and to ensuring the quality and accuracy of the public assistance program
- DSS Fraud investigator is responsible for investigation, prosecution, and recovery of overpayments
- Referrals are received from our agencies, other agencies in the state, calls from concerned citizens, and the Sheriff's Department

- Must investigate the allegation
- Must identify if the overpayments were caused by error, abuse, or fraud
- Received a recent judgment in court (\$10,000 Medicaid Case)
- One Medicaid transportation court case pending (\$3,000)
- Working currently on one that is over \$8,000 Medicaid fraud and \$700 Food Stamps fraud
- Work closely with the Sheriff's Department

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Confirmed with Supervisor Whitaker that the agency has one Fraud Investigator and that is currently sufficient

Chairman Inman confirmed that the Fraud Investigator works closely with the Sheriff's Department and the Magistrate's Office.

### **Medicaid and Food/Nutrition**

Income Maintenance Supervisor II Cindy Amos and Income Maintenance Supervisor II

Sharon Bullins provided the following information regarding the following programs:

Income Maintenance Supervisor Cindy Amos commented:

### **Challenges in Medicaid and Food/Nutrition Services**

- So much to do, not enough hours in the day to get it all done, phone ringing with customers waiting to be seen
- Workers having to focus on more than one thing at the time
- Information not being returned to the workers
- Deadlines to get applications processed
- NCFASST – very slow – problems that can't fixed by the State
- People coming in expecting help and can't get it that day – application must be processed
- Want to be able to help everyone, but sometimes that is not possible

### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Those citizens that can't be helped
- Did we provide them with all the services that they needed

Supervisor Amos continued:

- Huge responsibility to take a family and try to get them the assistance that they need
- Take pride in helping people in the County

Income Maintenance Supervisor Sharon Bullins spoke briefly about the following Medicaid



Programs offered by DSS:

- Adult Medicaid – a needs based health insurance program for seniors over the age of 65 and disabled adults of any age
- MAA (Medicaid for older Citizens) – provides health care coverage for those 65 and older who meet income requirements
- MAB (Medicaid for the Blind or Visually Impaired) – health care coverage for blind or visually impaired people of any age who are blind according to the definition given by the Social Security Administration and meet income requirements
- MAD (Medicaid for Disabled Citizens) – health care coverage for people of any age who are unable to work due to a disability that is expected to last at least 12 months and meet the income requirements
- SA (Special Assistance Medicaid) – a program which provides financial assistance to people 18 years old and over who are in a home for the aged and disabled, family care home, group home for developmentally disabled adults or an area operated by mental health home
- Family and Children’s Health Services
  - Medicaid and Health Choice Programs - Designed to assist families and children with the cost of health care (Health Choice is North Carolina’s free or low-cost health insurance plan for children 6-18 whose families cannot pay for private insurance and who do not qualify for Medicaid)
  - Automatic Newborn Coverage – medical needs of an infant – from the time of birth until the child turns one year old
  - Medicaid for Families with Dependent Children (MAF) – for medical needs of certain low-income families
  - Medicaid for Foster Children and Children in Adoptive Homes – medical needs of children who are in foster care or adoptive homes
  - Medicaid for Infants and Children (MIC) – for infants and children for medical needs within a certain age range and who meet income criteria
  - Medicaid for Pregnant Women (MPW) – helps with the cost of prenatal and postpartum care up to 60 days following termination of pregnancy, either due to delivery or miscarriage
- Medicaid Transportation – assists residents needing transportation to and from medical providers
- Refugee Assistance – involves refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance for eight months after arrival in the country
- Work First Family Assistance – simulates employment and is a work-for-benefits program designed to offer supportive services to assist families with obtaining and maintaining employment
- Food and Nutrition Services- provides monthly benefits allowing low-income households to buy food

Supervisor Bullins commented:

- Health Care Reform has changed how a family is evaluated for medical coverage
- Unit also evaluates for long term care
- Have a great unit who really care about getting services to the people

### **Challenges in Medicaid and Food/Nutrition Services**

- As a supervisor, training new employees and still being there for the senior workers
- Senior workers are given extra work while new employees are being trained – more stress
- The audits that the unit has - have to look at deadlines, accuracy, and completeness of the application
- Constant policy changes – new things for workers to learn while keeping their caseloads going along with new applications
- NCFAST System – must link with NC Tracks, more complicated than the old system, very slow, continuous problems, other agencies using NC Tracks that are having problems, stressful for workers
- Food/Nutrition – threats by federal government due to timeliness of applications, more stress for workers, workers have thirty (30) days to process the application, workers having to get information such as wages that the customer does not return to meet the application deadline
- Able Body Adults Without Dependents – new program coming that workers are having to learn, lot of restrictions and requirements in the program, similar to WorkFirst Program –trying to get that customer back to work so he will not lose his Food Stamps

### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Worry about workers – stressful job
- Want workers to feel good about their job
- Want to look for ways to make things better for the workers and ways of providing services faster to the customers

Supervisor Bullins continued:

- DSS is fortunate to have a great group of people in all the units who truly care about the people of Stokes County
- One thing that most people do not know about – the agency often holds fundraisers when there is an urgent need such as in Adult Services, Foster Care, etc.

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments.

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Very challenging when someone who needs the services can't qualify for one reason or the other
- Hearing a lot of issues with NCFAST that actually has slowed things down

Supervisor Bullins commented:

- Very frustrating using NCFAST
- There are tickets at the Helpdesk dated back to August 2015 that have never been resolved
- System sometimes causes problems for someone who truly needs Medicaid

- NCFAST has improved but slowly

Commissioner Walker continued:

- Have not received any complaints regarding DSS in the past year
- Commend the entire department on the outstanding job serving the citizens of Stokes County
- Questioned, collectively how many individuals has DSS served within the past year?

DSS Director Elmes responded:

- Approximately 15,000 to 20,000 a year

Commissioner Jones commented:

- Very frustrated with the NCFAST System – the money and time spent on the system
- How has the Affordable Health Care impacted your department?

Supervisor Amos responded:

- More applications – individuals must have insurance
- Most don't qualify and have to be referred to Federal Market Place

Supervisor Bullins responded:

- More responsibility on the Food and Nutrition Program – getting information to complete the application by the deadline – federal mandate (95% timeliness)
- Working toward one-day processing

Vice Chairman Booth commented:

- Very concerned about the NCFAST System causing issues for the workers
- Confirmed with Director Elmes that even with the economy getting better, the applications haven't slowed down

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- Have heard that there is over 50 million people on Food Stamps
- Confirmed with Supervisor Bullins that there are a lot of families receiving Food and Nutrition Services in Stokes County
- Confirmed with Supervisor Bullins that fraud is often found due to things such as income not being reported

### **Administrative Unit/Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget Update**

Administrative Officer I Patty St. Hilaire provided the following information regarding

Administrative Unit and Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget Update:

Few of the duties provided by the Administrative Unit for the public and case workers:

- Voter registration
- Work permits
- Mail processing

- Phone calls
- File room/Imaging
- Billing for CAP Programs
- Special Liability Accounting
- Cash reports
- Greeting those that come into the building
- Tax Deed Searches
- Keying of forms
- Assigning ID Numbers
- Security officers for the agency
- Criminal record checks
- Payroll
- Personnel file maintenance
- 1571 – prepare and submit
- Budget – prepare and submit
- Accounts Payable
- Contract management
- Daysheet and Lasefishe Administrator
- NCFAST Administrator
- Payments to Foster Parents and Facilities
- Payments to Day Care Providers
- Typing Narrative
- Etc. Etc. Etc.

Administrative Officer St. Hilaire continued:

- They are the first person the customer sees when they come into the office
- Applications are also received by mail that are entered into NCFAST by the Administrative staff
- 1571 is a very crucial report that pulls down revenue from the State and Federal Government

#### **Challenges in Administrative Unit**

- Maintaining the work during the absence of staff
- Administrative staff is sometimes a stepping stone to Income Maintenance position
- There is a lot of cross training within the unit – the work must be done

#### **Things that Keep You Up at Night**

- Wondering if everything was done that was needed
- The budget (summary of the budget through January 2016 provided in the Agenda packet)
- Also worry about the workers

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments

Commissioner Walker commented:

- Department constantly has to look at revenues
- Confirmed with Administrative Officer St. Hilaire that imaging is in good shape in most departments and most imaging is now done in house

Commissioner Jones commented:

- Overwhelmed with all the work done in this department and appreciate very much all the work done by the workers

### **Recent Audits/Turnover Rates/Needs Going Forward**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes provided the following information regarding Recent

Audits/Turnover Rates/Needs Going Forward:

- Food and Nutrition Audit – Program Improvement Plan completed
- Child Welfare Review – CPS was done in November and coming back in May (Review went very well) Program Improvement Plan completed
- Family Caregiver Support Program Review – only one recommendation made
- All audits were included in the Agenda packet
- Turnover Rates:
  - 2015 = 18%
  - 2014 = 23%
  - 2013 = 9%
  - 2012 = 13%
  - 2011 = 14%
- Direct Costs of Turnover include:
  - Processing departing employees' paperwork
  - Payout for any unused vacation and compensatory time
  - Recruitment activities, including costs of advertising, job fairs, etc.
  - Interviews, reference checks and other background checks
  - Training, including both formal classroom training and on-the-job training provided by supervisors, co-workers and mentors
- Indirect Costs of Turnover include:
  - The productivity differential between the departing employee and the replacement
  - Errors due to inexperience
  - Lowered morale and productivity of other employees
  - The financial consequences of slower services resulting in longer placements in out-of-home care
  - The emotional consequences for children and families due to lack of continuity and delays
- Needs moving forward:
  - The ability to start those who are hired as Social Worker Trainee or Social Worker I at a higher rate of pay, currently, those workers are making the same salary as an Income Maintenance Caseworker

- Incentive pay for Social Workers in Foster Care. Currently our policy speaks to incentive being paid to Child Protective Social Workers. Presently, a CPS worker who has been here for 6 months to one year receives \$75 each pay period; one to two years receives \$100 each pay period; and two years or more receives \$200 each pay period. This has helped keep our Child Protective Services Unit intact
- Positions
  - Social Worker Supervisor III – Needed to keep in line with the state recommendation that there be one supervisor per five Social Workers in Child Welfare. This will also help reduce liability and increase accountability
  - Human Services Evaluator – Needed for all Social Work Programs(adult and child welfare) to provide quality assurance for programs and to ensure all mandatory training is provided
  - Community Social Services Assistant – Needed to help with visitation and supervision of foster children. Current worker is overloaded and is not able to get it all done requiring foster care social workers to provide supervision for visits and provide transportation rather than doing their social work jobs. Current worker works many hours of overtime each week
  - Social Worker III – Needed to provide Adult Protective Services as numbers and workload indicate over the last several years that this is a need that isn't going away
  - Social Worker II -Would like to discontinue the four contract positions in Adult Services and ask for two permanent Social Workers. These contract workers provide Special Assistance in Home Social Work as well as Intake Services
  - Included a chart of current staff and a chart including new positions needed

Supervisor Marshall commented:

- Would like to point out that the agency rarely ever gets a pool of qualified applicants to choose from; most start as trainees
- Expressed concerns about the starting pay for Social Workers
- May lose a worker due to the low pay of being a Social Worker Trainee

Chairman Inman opened the floor for questions/comments

Commissioner Walker questioned if the starting pay is a state or county issue?

DSS Director Elmes responded:

- Qualifications determine where an employee is placed such as a trainee or social worker I
- Would like to see if there is something that could be done with the starting pay for a social worker

Finance Director Edwards noted that the State requires that a trainee be paid less than the

Starting pay of the grade.

Commissioner Walker continued:

- Questioned DSS Director Elmes on her thoughts after all the information that has been given by the workers?

DSS Director Elmes responded:

- I am beaming with pride that I am fortunate to be working with such great group of people
- I have a lot of sleepless nights knowing what this department is responsible for, but knowing I have this group of supervisors and workers makes my life better
- Very thankful for the entire staff

Vice Chairman Booth questioned DSS Director Elmes if there were any differences noted

Since the elimination of the DSS Board and creation of the new Human Services Advisory Board?

DSS Director Elmes responded:

- Things are going fine
- Biggest difference is the monthly meetings where DSS things were discussed for about two hours; now I come to you for about ten minutes once a month

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- Would be willing to meet quarterly instead of being on the regular Agenda
- Would like to thank DSS Director Elmes for the book of information
- Gained a lot of information

Chairman Inman commented:

- Would be willing to meet every other month with DSS and Health Department
- Very thankful for the staff at DSS
- There are a lot of people in Stokes County suffering and struggling and across the Nation
- Appreciate the information provided by the staff today

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Inman entertained a Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Jones moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lankford seconded And the motion carried unanimously.

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**Darlene M. Bullins**  
**Clerk to the Board**

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**J. Leon Inman**  
**Chairman**