

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA )  
 )  
COUNTY OF STOKES )  
 )

**DEPT. OF SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD  
STOKES COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
DANBURY, NORTH CAROLINA  
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2018**

The Department of Social Services Board of the County of Stokes, State of North Carolina, met for a meeting at the Dept. of Social Services Conference Room located in Danbury, North Carolina on Monday, September 17, 2018 at 1:00 pm with the following members present:

Chairman Ronnie Mendenhall  
Vice Chairman Jimmy Walker  
Board Member James D. Booth  
Board Member Ronda Jones  
Board Member Ernest Lankford

County Personnel in Attendance:  
County Manager Jake M. Oakley  
Clerk to the Board Shannon Shaver  
DSS Director Stacey Elmes  
IM Administrator Cindy Joyce  
Attorney Jennifer Michaud

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

## **INVOCATION**

Commissioner Jones delivered the invocation.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Mendenhall invited those in attendance to join the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Mendenhall entertained a motion to approve or amend the September 17th Agenda.

Commissioner Jones moved to approve the September 17<sup>th</sup> Agenda as presented.

Commissioner Booth seconded the motion.

Chairman Mendenhall opened the floor for discussion.

With no further discussion the September 17<sup>th</sup> Agenda was approved unanimously.

Chairman Mendenhall turned the floor over to DSS Director Stacey Elmes.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes presented the following information to the DSS Board.

### **Stokes DSS Involvement with Cardinal Innovations**

#### **August 2018**

August 8, 2018:	Permanency Planning hearings held at DSS. Cardinal staff and foster care staff in attendance.
August 10, 2018:	Stokes Homeless Outreach meeting held at Stokes Partnership for Children. DSS staff and Cardinal staff participate.
August 13, 2018:	County Manager and DSS Director met with Ronda Outlaw to discuss issues, upcoming events, MOE, etc.
August 16, 2018:	Community Partners Meeting. Meeting facilitated by Cardinal staff. DSS staff in attendance.
August 21, 2018:	Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee Meeting. DSS staff and Cardinal staff are committee members.
August 21, 2018:	Community Collaborative Meeting. DSS staff and Cardinal staff are committee members.

## Stokes County DSS Dashboard

	July	August	September	Total
<b>ADULT SOCIAL WORK SERVICES</b>				
Guardianship Cases	26	28		
New APS Reports Received	25	15		40
APS Reports Accepted	11	11		22
Investigations Initiated Timely [Goal 95%]	100%	100%		
Outreach Visits	10	2		12
In Home Aide Programs/Family Caregiver	26	36		
Community Alternatives Program (CAP/DA)	74	74		
Representative Payee	13	13		
SA - In-Home	62	64		
Placement	1	0		
Adult Care Homes Monitored	3	4		
Total Requests for CIP	32	38		70
CIP Expenditures	\$3,143	\$6,816		\$ 9,959
Total Requests for LIEAP	0	0		0
LIEAP Expenditures	\$0	\$0		\$ -
Unclaimed Bodies	0	0		0
Staff Hours Spent at Shelters	0	0		0
<b>CHILD CARE SUBSIDY</b>				
Children Receiving Services <input type="checkbox"/>	210	200		
Expenditures	\$80,784	unavailable		\$80,784
Waiting List	243	202		
<b>CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES</b>				
CPS Reports Received	50	67		117
CPS Reports Accepted	34	31		65
Children Opened	64	57		121
Open Reports	52	48		
Open Case Management	18	20		
Courtesy Requests	7	13		20
Substance Affected Infants Reported to DSS	1	1		2
Substance Affected Infants Accepted for Inv.	1	1		2
Reports Initiated Timely [Goal 95%]	100%	100%		
Reports Completed Timely [Goal 75%]	80%	64%		
Children Remaining at Home [Goal 95%]	88%	95%		
<b>CHILD SUPPORT</b>				
Number of Children Served	1,304	1,335		
Total Collections	\$201,728	\$202,085		\$403,813
Paternities Established	8	11		19
New Court Orders	11	10		21
<b>FISHING LICENSE WAIVERS</b>				
Fishing License Waivers	6	4		10
<b>FOOD &amp; NUTRITION SERVICES</b>				
Total Households	2,616	2,614		
Total Individuals	5,536	5525		
Report Card (App. Timeliness) [Goal: 95%]	99%	98%		
Report Card (Recert. Timeliness) [Goal: 95%]	99%	unavailable		
Benefits Distributed	\$ 577,455	\$ 569,737		\$ 1,147,192

	July	August	September	Total
<b>FOSTER CARE</b>				
Children Entering Care	8	3		11
Total Children in Care	92	100		
Children Discharged	0	3		3
Children in Care Over 1 Year	32	33		
% Receiving a Monthly Visit [Goal 100%]	100%	100%		
% Visited in the Home [Goal > 90%]	77%	92%		
Foster Care 18-21	8	9		
Monitoring of Children No Longer in Custody	7	4		
Licensed Foster Homes	19	17		
Sanctioned Homes	13	11		24
# of Individuals/Families Receiving Training	34/21	25/22		
Recruitment Events Held	0	1		1
Foster Care Costs (county/state/fed)	\$54,044	\$64,788		\$118,832
Children Open for LINKS	69	64		
Adoptions Completed	2	1		3
Adoption Assistance Cases	152	152		
Adoption Assistance Costs (fed & state)	\$11,231	\$5,100		\$16,331
<b>MEDICAID [ADULT, FAMILY &amp; CHILDREN'S]</b>				
# of Cases	8,121	7,228		
Report Card (Timeliness) [Goal: 85%]	99%	100%		
Public Assistance Hearings (All Areas)	4	0		
<b>MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION</b>				
Clients Served	374	364		
Trips Provided	1,804	2,306		4,110
Monthly Cost	\$75,195.30	\$84,875		\$ 160,070.56
<b>PROGRAM INTEGRITY</b>				
New Claims Established	\$ 2,140	\$ -		\$ 2,140
Total Collections	\$3,622	\$3,068		\$6,690
Retained in County	\$523	\$407		\$930
<b>SPECIAL ASSISTANCE</b>				
# of Special Assistance Cases	152	128		
Benefits Distributed	\$65,244	\$53,311		\$118,555
<b>SAMH LIAISON</b>				
Number of Referrals during the Month	2	5		7
Open Cases at end of Month	39	36		
<b>VACANCIES</b>				
Social Work	1	1		2
Clerical/Income Maintenance/Child Support	0	1		1
<b>WORK FIRST</b>				
Total Work First Cases	56	49		
Number of Child Only Cases	53	48		
Employment Cases	3	1		
Referrals for Drug Testing	0	0		
Applicants Testing Positive	0	0		
Benefits Distributed	\$11,970	\$10,189		\$ 22,159
<b>OTHER</b>				
Walk-In Traffic	875	986		1,861



DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- The Medicaid and Work First numbers stand out to me.
- I believe those may be wrong.
- I have trouble trusting what comes out of NC Fast.
- Those numbers seem very low.

Board Member Lankford commented:

- Are you continuing to have trouble with NC Fast?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- I tend to doubt that the data is correct.
- The Medicaid, Special Assistance, and Work First numbers are just too low.
- There would be no way that many people came off the program in one month.

Board Member Booth commented:

- At one time the relationship with Cardinal was not good.
- I believe that has improved.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- It has improved greatly.
- Ronda Outlaw with Cardinal is always helpful.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- What I am hearing is that you are able to get the help you need when you reach out to Cardinal.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- They absolutely help us in any way they can.

### **Audits and Technical Assistance**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- Child Welfare Program Evaluation is complete.
- We have our Foster Care improvement plan.
- I believe most of the issues are directly related to turnover, supervision support, and clerical support.
- We are working on improving and doing what we can to correct these issues.
- We have one vacancy currently in foster care and are working to fill this position as quickly as possible.
- Almost all 100 counties have an improvement plan.
- This particular review was strictly foster care for our county.

Board Member Booth commented:

- When will they be back to review?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- They are here quarterly.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- Do you have certain checkpoints that you would like to see your numbers at as well as what the state is requiring?
- Seems you have a challenge maintaining a full staff.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- I have high expectations.
- Based on our numbers and staff we have it is hard to meet some of those numbers.
- This is hard work.
- All of our foster care workers have a lot of overtime and feel like they can never take it off.
- This is work you can't help but take home with you.

### **Program Quality Review's**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- Our Food Stamp quality review from the month of April was good.
- There were no issues with that.
- The other program review was for our Child Support unit in July.
- Our Child Support unit does a good job.
- Like many other portions of DSS they get stuck dealing with the court system.
- This makes their job a little harder and the goals they have to meet tougher.

Board Member Booth commented:

- I am hearing that nationwide, food stamp numbers are down.
- Are we seeing that in Stokes County?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- We are staying pretty level.
- I have not seen any drastic drops in numbers.

### **M.O.U. Performance Measures**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- We received a letter along with a packet of information.
- The goal is to promote the consistency of child welfare programs across North Carolina.
- We were expecting our July and August numbers rather than the 3 years' worth of data that they sent.
- I have had our Supervisors look over this data and we are pretty sure that it is accurate.
- It is not really what we need to help us move forward.
- It is nice to see the numbers.

- I am hopeful that I will get July, August, and maybe September by the first of October.
- This will help us move forward with the performance measures.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- Is this something that you see continuing?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- If history has anything to do with it, usually these things come about and they fall away.
- Right now they are really on this to push us.
- So for now this is what we have to do.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- Is there any reason why this is being so heavily pushed that you can think of?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- I know there is a lot of frustration between state staff and county DSS Directors.
- I have no way to know how long this will last.
- We have been told that Raleigh can come in and take over at any time.

Board Member Jones commented:

- I have spoken with Sarah Stevens and watched several presentations from DHHS and they have admittedly said how hard the state is pushing and that the state needs to be in some type of compliance themselves.
- The state has a lot of shortcomings.
- We have to push the state.
- They have put the cart before the horse again.
- These concepts are not totally bad concepts.
- It is just another unfunded mandate in a lot of ways.
- Reinventing the wheel is nothing but chaos for everyone.
- The collateral damage unfortunately is the children.
- We really need to be pressing down on the state.
- Regionalization seems like a good idea if they follow through with it and take accountability.
- I would like to see it happen as long as it goes as planned.

### **Social Services and Child Welfare Preliminary Reform Plan**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- The recommendations they are making for Social Services and Child Welfare are good.
- It could really impact services in North Carolina.
- Most every recommendation requires money and I am not sure we will have the money.
- Even the regionalization is going to require money.
- The state did the same thing years ago and it just fell apart because there was no money.
- I feel like this will happen again.

Board Member Lankford commented:

- I see that Child Support, Child Welfare, and Adult Services are all part of the performance evaluation as well now.
- Will you be held accountable for those program errors?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- I do not believe we will be held accountable this year.
- We will be given the improvement plan on how to do better.
- Next fiscal year is when they will start looking at the growth issues.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- Chairman Mendenhall and I were at a meeting a few months back with Senator Berger.
- I spoke with Senator Berger and asked him to be more conscious of decisions made at the state level that greatly impact us at the county level.
- We all make mistakes and this new mandate can cause great financial cost to the counties.
- He stated he was not aware of that.
- He was glad we brought it to his attention, and invited us to send him a letter about this.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- In July is when you asked me to send him a letter.
- At the August meeting you asked me about it and I had not heard back so I sent a second letter.
- About two days after they received it, I got a call from his Chief of Staff.
- He stated he did not know what happened to the first letter and apologized.
- He put me in touch with Senator Berger's Chief of Health and Human Services.
- She called me and we spoke for an hour.
- She sent me a hand written note.
- She was very receptive, and just like with Senator Berger stated she didn't realize some of these things were even going on.
- That was surprising to me at the level of government that they are in.

Board Member Lankford responded:

- Every level of government is divided into committees.
- They have lobbyists; as a matter of fact we have over 800 lobbyists in North Carolina.
- They listen to these committees and either take it to the next level or it just doesn't go any farther.
- This is bad government, but this is how it has been for years.

Vice Chairman Walker continued:

- When we bring this to the top people, then I think they own it.
- Once they are aware of the problem they need to do something about it.
- We need to keep the pressure on them.
- They need to know that we are tired of being dumped on.



Board Member Jones commented:

- I am wondering where we rank with some of the comments I was reading on severe salary inequities, leading to high turnover, and less productivity.
- I am wondering if they are going to try and mandate the counties in some way on this.
- That would hit our budget in an involuntary way, instead of us trying to close the pay gaps over time ourselves.
- We know we have a problem with this, this is a hard job already, and to know you aren't getting paid as much as other counties makes it even harder.
- Everything I looked at in this report involves more money.
- We know this will mean a tax increase just to meet all these could be requirements.

### **NC Fast Update**

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- We continue to have issues with Child Care in NC Fast.
- We are still experiencing overpayments, and the system paying providers outside of our county using smart start money.
- We have to correct this.
- We are currently a pilot county for program integrity and that is going well.
- Child Welfare is getting ready to come on board with NC Fast in November.
- I am worried about that.
- The pilot counties using this have not gone well.
- The program is not supposed to move forward until the pilot counties give it the thumbs up.
- The state is now planning to move forward either way.

Board Member Booth commented:

- NC Fast continues to read it incorrectly and we could have to pay money back that has been over paid.
- It is not good that they are not listening to the pilot counties on the Child Welfare moving into NC Fast.

Board Member Jones commented:

- Should we as a Board of Commissioners or DSS Board write a letter to discourage this?

Chairman Mendenhall responded:

- We certainly can talk about that as we give everyone a chance to make final comments.

Board Member Lankford commented:

- I would like to be sure we are doing everything we can to prevent fraud in the Social Services programs.
- Citizens should report anything they believe to be fraud.
- We need more community involvement in Social Services.
- Maybe we could offer some classes or information for those wanting to report fraud.

Board Member Booth commented:

- We could add something to our website regarding reporting fraud.
- I suggest you and our Clerk get together and draft a letter to send in on behalf of this Board regarding the pilot program that is getting ready to go into NC Fast with Child Welfare.
- If it is not ready they do not need to do it.
- We need to send this letter to everyone, not just Senator Berger.
- Send the letter to him, the lady you have been speaking with, and anyone else that could be helpful.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- If we are going to write a letter maybe we should also include past examples of how NC Fast has not worked correctly.
- Earlier in this meeting you mentioned the numbers not being correct in the report.
- This is just another example to include.
- Need to be persistent with Senator Berger.
- I would also add Kyle Hall to the list to send a letter to.
- You have a hard job.
- I want you to feel like you have all the support you need to run this department.
- Do you feel there is anything else you need to help you run your department?
- Also I am not hearing as much on the opioid crisis.
- Has that gotten any better in your opinion?

DSS Director Stacey Elmes responded:

- Not really.
- We do the best we can with what we have to work with.
- We deal with things on a day to day basis.
- Regarding the opioid crisis, it is still just as much of a problem.
- Our Substance Abuse Liaison continues to try and help those in our county.

Board Member Jones:

- I feel your frustration.
- With the opioid crisis, I guess we haven't mentioned it as much lately because we are at a point where we have done what we can on most levels.
- I saw a special about Vancouver, where they are literally providing places for people to use these drugs, as well as providing needles.
- I am not sure if this is saving lives or enabling.
- This is such a journey.
- I am not sure what else we can do.
- At the end of the day it falls to the person that is addicted to decide to seek help and see it through.
- With this letter, we need to send it to anyone and everyone.
- We need to ask them to collaborate and come up with a plan.
- This letter needs to come from not just you.
- We need to have our names on that.

- They don't need to think that you are a one woman show.
- They need to know we are serious about this.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- I have been on the Board two years in December.
- We have certainly tried our best to support DSS.
- I know that you all do your very best to replace people as they leave, while continuing to provide services.
- I worry we are not getting the support from the state that we should get.
- Certainly any letter that is put together we want to put our signatures on.
- We want them to know that we are 100 percent behind you.

County Manager Oakley commented:

- My advice regarding the letter is that it be reviewed by the County Attorney possibly to be sure we are covering everything.
- I would also appreciate any feedback on the meeting today, being that it is our first meeting as the DSS Board.

Board Member Booth commented:

- Regarding the opioid crisis, I just want to say that I think we have done all we possibly can.
- This is not a problem that happened overnight.
- We have dealt with this the best way we can.
- I think this meeting is good, but we may not need this every month.
- It could get repetitive.
- We can get it started like this and then go to quarterly.

Vice Chairman Walker commented:

- I find this type of meeting to be very helpful.
- Stacey has always been very informative at our Commissioners meetings.
- It has been nice to have all this time to really communicate and hear things going on with DSS.
- I really appreciate your transparency.
- This has been time well spent.

Board Member Jones commented:

- We have been a consolidated Board for a while now.
- We can hopefully get this letter out and have some news on that.
- This certainly gives us a forum to speak.
- We could treat these like a planning board meeting and have them as needed.
- We could advertise them and cancel in time if the meeting is not needed.
- I know that Stacey is busy and if a meeting is not needed there is no reason to have one.

Commissioner Lankford commented:

- This is very important to me.
- I have gotten more out of this meeting today than I do when Stacey comes to our Commissioners meetings.
- I like having the ability to go back and forth and discuss during the meeting.
- I have been in favor of this kind of meeting for a while now, and would be fine with eventually going to quarterly meetings.

Chairman Mendenhall commented:

- I will echo that.
- I am good with monthly and then going quarterly once we feel like that is ok.
- Thank you for all you do Stacey.
- You have a very tough job.

County Manager Oakley commented:

- I need to know if the Board can approve any DSS items during this meeting, or would she still need to bring those to a Commissioners Meeting.

Chairman Mendenhall responded:

- We should ask our County Attorney this question.

DSS Director Stacey Elmes commented:

- I appreciate you making the time for this kind of meeting.
- I will do whatever you prefer on meeting.
- If we continue monthly, there may be times that there are only a few pieces of paper in your agenda.

Board Member Lankford responded:

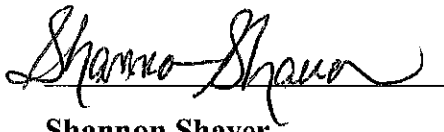
- That is fine and better than you having to come and sit through hours of meetings.
- You are busy and this works much better.

### **Adjournment**

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

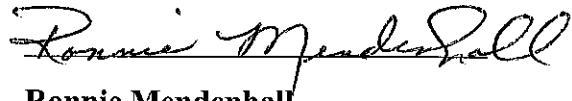
Commissioner Lankford moved to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Booth seconded and the motion carried unanimously.



**Shannon Shaver**

**Clerk to the Board**



**Ronnie Mendenhall**

**Chairman**