

**DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**BOARD MINUTES**

*Special Scheduled Meeting*

**Minutes**

*Thursday, September 24, 2019*

*8:30 AM*

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a 'Special Scheduled Meeting' on September 24, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. in the Local Agency's Administrative Conference room located at 423 North Main Street in Kenansville N.C. Prior and Public Notice of the meeting was given in accordance with G.S. 143-318.12.

Board members present for today's meeting were Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman, Mr. Jesse Dowe, Ms. Angela Mainor, and Ms. Ila Davis. Also present for the meeting were Mrs. Susan Thigpen, Director; and Ms. Angela Miller, Administrative Assistant. The Invocation for today's meeting was given by Susan Thigpen.

No changes or amendments were made to the agenda and there were no public comments received during the Public Comment section of the agenda.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Ms. Angela Mainor and seconded by Ms. Ila Davis to accept the minutes from the August 29, 2019 Open Session with the date of September's meeting corrected and to approve the minutes from the Closed Session. The motion was approved by the Board.

**New Business**

**Budget Report** - Expenditures are on track at this time according to reports. The report will continue to show that the agency has overspent in the Social Security line item due to previously discussed issues with the budget as it was presented to the Commissioners but funds will be pulled from other areas as needed to pay these expenses. The agency recently spent \$5,000.00 to replace the CPU for the elevator and were recently told that a new door needs to be installed at the cost of approximately \$5,000.00 due to concerns that the one installed several years ago does not have a sensor to prevent the door from closing when a person is standing in the entrance. Diligent efforts will continue to ensure that all needed maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely manner to avoid unexpended funds at the end of the state fiscal year.

**Income Maintenance/Child Support** – Auditors completed the review of TANF and Medicaid cases last Friday. Ms. Susan Thigpen noted that there has been a significant increase in the amount of Medicaid audits both as part of the single county audits as well as other statewide audits and monitoring.

At this point the state is moving forward with Medicaid Transformation with a statewide roll out planned for February 2020. Letters will be going out to Medicaid recipients in Duplin County in October to provide them with their Enrollment Packets and open enrollment begins October 14<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Susan Thigpen and Ms. Monique Jones will be on a call with the state's Operational Support Team (OST) Representative later on this date to discuss the county's preparedness for roll out and to develop any plans that may be needed to address issues such as increased call volume.

**Personnel** – The agency continues to struggle with turnover as employees are accepting positions in other counties for higher salaries. There have been a total of five resignations in September and the agency has hired two new FNS workers, 1 Children's Medicaid worker, and 1 Adult Medicaid worker. The agency is also in the process of hiring two IMC IIs, the Child Welfare Supervisor, and the QA/Trainer for Child Welfare. There have recently been some delays in getting new hires approved through county HR due to



a recent vacancy and staff being in training on their new computer system every other week. There have been a couple of times recently where the delay from interviews to hiring were long enough that individuals had accepted employment elsewhere prior to us notifying them of a hiring decision. Continuous postings for an IMC II and Social Worker IVs have allowed the agency to fill positions quicker than we have in the past.

**Child Welfare** - In August, there were a total of 106 open Assessments, 25 open In Home Services cases, and 38 children in foster care. There were 61 new Assessments screened in for the month, compared to 38 during the month of July and the agency continues to see this significant increase in Assessments during the month of September. Six Assessments are currently overdue, one as a result of additional reports during the Assessment and five due to delays in getting a CME/CFE examination or reports.

Caseload sizes fluctuate significantly for Assessment workers with one having as many as 23 total cases for the month of August while newer social workers have fewer cases. Five of the eight Assessment workers (including two of the QA/Trainers) have caseloads above the guidelines of 10 cases per social worker during the month of August.

Staff turnover continues to create significant challenges for child welfare. While all workers have currently received the required Preservice Training, five of the six current Assessment social workers have been employed in child welfare for less than a year. Ms. Susan Thigpen and Ms. Christy Jones expressed concerns about the agency's ability to continue ensuring the safety of children in Duplin County with continued turnover and inexperienced workers. Although the agency does have three positions designated as QA/Trainers, these social workers have been put into rotation to handle Assessments and there is no reason to believe they will be able to return to training/quality assurance functions any earlier than 2020. Board members were unable to come up with any additional strategies to address turnover and caseload sizes.

#### **Director's Update**

Duplin County had minimal damage from Hurricane Dorian and was not declared a disaster; therefore, DSNAP and replacement benefits will not be occurring in this county. Shelters were opened but closed fairly quickly and no further response was needed from Social Services.

Duplin County Social Services is leading a Permanency Collaborative involving all counties in this judicial district and this group has been meeting every two months. Participants include Social Services directors, program administrators, supervisors; agency, GAL and parent attorneys; foster parents, GAL administrators, clerks of court, and representatives from the LMEs/MCOs. This group allows counties an opportunity to learn best practices that are happening in neighboring counties and provides an opportunity for participants to identify those concerns that can be impacted at a local level and to develop strategies to bring regional/statewide concerns to the NC Division of Social Services. Ms. Susan Thigpen uses these meetings as an opportunity to meet with the GAL Supervisor and GAL District Administrator regarding any strengths and continued needs for child welfare in this county.



Safe Haven, out of Pender County is now providing domestic violence services for Duplin County and are partnering with county agencies to address the needs of victims. Staff will be available within the county two days a week currently but will eventually be available five days a week.

Mike Wallace  
Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman

Susan Y. Shugren  
Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on November / 14 / 2019

