

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MINUTES
Regular Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, August 26, 2021
8:30 AM

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a regular scheduled meeting on August 26, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. in the Social Services Community Room located at 423 North Main St. 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. Jesse Dowe – chair, Ms. Angela Mainor, Ms. Ila Davis, Ms. Marzella Morrissey, and Mr. Ken Jones. Ms. Susan Thigpen, DSS Director, was also present for the meeting. The invocation for today's meeting was given by Ms. Susan Thigpen. No changes or amendments were made to the agenda and there were no public comments received.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Angela Mainor and seconded by Ms. Marzella Morrissey and minutes were approved for the July 22nd meeting.

New Business

Budget and Expenditures Report – The agency is currently preparing documents for the Single County Audit and this is being handled by the two Accounting Technicians during the absence of our Administrative Officer. The agency windows are currently being installed and should be finished over the next three to four weeks. The agency has prepared a contract with FNK for nightly cleaning and sanitizing of the building and common areas and are waiting for the county Finance Officer to sign the contract. They will be able to begin this as soon as the contract is executed. This will include spraying shared areas such as the lobby, community room, and hallways, and will also be wiping down all shared areas such as stairwells, elevator, and bathrooms. Supplies such as wipes and Lysol were purchased last year with COVID dollars and remain available to employees as needed and are maintained in all shared areas and supervisors' offices.

Income Maintenance and Child Support Report – Duplin County Social Services met or exceeded the benchmarks in all areas for the month of July after adjustments were made for regulatory delays in Food and Nutrition Services. The director and program administrator continue to monitor performance in all areas to ensure that previous issues do not resurface. The program administrator is continuing to meet regularly with child support in the absence of a supervisor, meeting most recently yesterday. They are continuing to explore ways to provide more cross training in all functions of child support and to better utilize support staff while there is also a vacancy for a worker.

Personnel – The management team and managers have worked diligently this month to fill vacancies. This continues to be a struggle as the agency has lost two potential hires for various reasons. There were three resignations this month.

Social Work Programs – There are currently two social workers out on FMLA, which has created a bigger challenge for existing staff. One of these in particular, in addition to a social worker who resigned suddenly, left without all documentation completed so many of these cases have required duplicative work, resulting in 9 overdue cases in July. At this time, all three supervisors are carrying cases, as well as the program manager, in addition to performing their regular duties. Following a recent issue, Director Susan Thigpen met with the agency's paralegal and the agency attorney to modify the process for filing petitions and nonsecure custody orders whenever judges are not available. This process will continue to be monitored and tweaked as needed to ensure that petitions and Nonsecure custody orders are obtained in an accurate and efficient manner.

Director's Update

Child Support Incentive Funds were discussed with Board members due to some confusion by workers and the supervisor regarding how funds could be used. The purpose of these funds is to reward child support programs for good performance results in the five different services areas that are closely related to children obtaining child support payments from their noncustodial parents, while holding the programs accountable for poor performance. Counties are given quarterly advances and depending on the audited performance, the settlement award for any year could be a positive or negative award. The agency maintains some funds in the event there is a negative award. Duplin County Social Services currently utilizes these funds for Indirect Costs and services from the Duplin County Sheriff's Department to support child support. Currently the county is spending more each month that is being received in order to spend down some additional funds (\$51,150.00) that were received as the most recent settlement award. The Program Administrator and Supervisor recently met with the Child Support Unit to provide training on the guidelines for Child Support Incentive Funds. They were also encouraged to share any ideas they may have to expend funds through programs such as public awareness projects and parent locator services, understanding that approval from the state and our Federal partners is required.

Board members reviewed and approved the Energy Program Outreach Plan. Ms. Marzella Morrissey did ask about the possibility of publicizing through various news outlets since she has seen advertisements for other counties. Director Susan Thigpen noted that Duplin County typically has a good response from the community for energy assistance but will continue to explore ways to reach residents that may not be familiar with available services. Automatic payments will be made again to all households including a person aged 60 or older or a person who receives disability benefits who were eligible for LIEAP benefits in 2020. Individuals who do not automatically qualify for benefits will have the option of applying through ePass in addition to in person in 2021.

Duplin County Social Services began mandating masks a few weeks prior to the county mandate due to a rising number of positive cases in the county. Social workers are being encouraged to

minimize close contact with clients in residences and to conduct visits outside whenever possible. The agency is also emphasizing the importance of staying home if employees have any symptoms consistent with COVID. Personal protective equipment such as gloves, hand sanitizer, and masks are available to workers both in the agency and in the field and Plexiglas barriers are available to employees meeting with clients in their offices.

Closed Session

Mr. Ken Jones made a motion to go into Closed Session to discuss a personnel matter as allowed Under G.S. 143-318.11. Motion was seconded by Ms. Marzella Morrissey and motion carried. No action was taken and the Board returned to open session.

Ms. Angela Mainor made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Ms. Marzella Morrissey and motion carried to adjourn the meeting until the next regular scheduled meeting on September 23, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. The next meeting will be held at Social Services in the Community Room, allowing for adequate social distancing.


Mr. Jesse Dowe, Chairman


Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on: September 23 2021