

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MINUTES
Regular Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, May 28, 2020
8:30 AM

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a regular scheduled meeting on May 28, 2020 conducted by phone as a result of COVID-19. 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, Ms. Angela Mainor, and Mr. Gary Ange. 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 added to the agenda and there were no public comments received during the Public Comments section of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Angela Mainor and seconded by Mr. Gary Ange and minutes were approved for the April 23, 2020 meeting.

Old Business

The equipment purchased to address computer security issues was installed on April 21-22, 2020 and all computers are now up. The agency's IT staff will be continuing to push out drivers for printers and installing additional programs in the next few weeks. NEMT is now completely back up on the county system and are working diligently to get trips entered into the system for reimbursement. Child support will take a little more time since they must be placed back behind the state firewall so it will be a few more days before they are able to begin working on their own computers. County and agency IT will be providing information to employees regularly to minimize the possibility of ransom ware attacks in the future.

New Business

Budget Report – Expenditures continue to remain on track on this time. Fiscal staff have now been able to file all expenditures for reimbursement except worker's compensation for April. This data is not currently available from the county office. The Administrative Officer has to manually calculate salaries for each employee on a monthly basis since the county switched to the Executime system, which is requiring much more time each month to complete and submit the DSS-1571 for federal and state reimbursement. The county has not been able to provide any indication when they may be able to create a more time-efficient system. Board members were provided with a copy of the budget proposal and only a few line items reflect significant cuts: \$20,000.00 in Program Enhancements and \$100,000.00 in Special Assistance. The agency does have concerns that circumstances could arise that would result in budget shortfalls in these line items for 2020-2021 and will be monitoring them closely throughout the year.



Income Maintenance and Child Support – Child Support is expected to resume court in June. It will take several months for the unit to catch up on cases that have been and will continue to be postponed due to court delays and delivery of service. The lack of ongoing court hearings will impact all areas of the county's benchmarks for child support. The agency will be resuming DNA testing utilizing a small entryway on the bottom floor. Clients will be called when it is their turn and they will be able to enter the room directly from the parking lot and everything will be sanitized between each test.

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) are beginning to see an increase in workload as a result of P—EBT. All families with children enrolled in Duplin County public schools will receive benefits in the amount \$371.00 with an initial installment of \$194.00 followed by \$177.00 as a second installment. As a result of issues with the data compiled by the NC Department of Health and Human Services from school records, many of the letters were sent to the wrong addresses or individuals. The state is attempting to correct this error so cards will be issued to the caretaker and address on file but the agency is currently handling a significant increase in calls about this. FNS will be required to research and make diligent efforts to locate individuals for all undeliverable mail related to P-EBT. The number of applications for regular FNS benefits has levelled out but remains much higher than it was prior to COVID-19.

Personnel – There are currently nine vacancies in the agency and hiring has been delayed due to malware issues and the current hiring freeze. The county manager is approving positions to be filled on a case by case basis at this time and has approved filling all vacancies except a PIA IV position at the front desk to date. Child Welfare has conducted interviews utilizing the Go To Meeting format and were able to select a few potential hires for the Social Worker IV positions.

Child and Adult Services – There were 17 screen ins and 15 screen outs in Child Welfare for the month of April. There were 89 Assessments and 48 In Home Services cases open; along with a total of 66 Adult Services cases. Both CPS and APS staff are working from home four days out of each week and are rotating one day in the office. This has been working well so far. Most visits are still being done virtually as allowed by state and federal guidelines. A decrease in the number of reports is providing social workers with an opportunity to complete all documentation in order to avoid the development of a backlog and In Home Services workers are being encouraged to work diligently on open In Home Services cases in order to address safety and well-being needs and reduce risks so those cases can be closed in a timely manner.

Director's Update

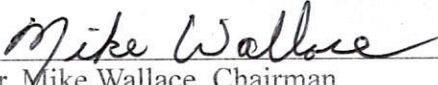
The agency continues to function as we have previously with supervisors staging in the lobby and clients being met outside to assess needs. According to the county manager, it will be at least the end of Phase 2 before Duplin County returns to "normal operations" since our number of positive COVID-19 cases continues to rise at an alarming rate. Workers are currently conducting daily self-assessments and turning the form into their supervisors on any days that they are in the office. Temperature checks are implemented on an as needed basis. Gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, Lysol, and wipes have been provided to each supervisor and are accessible to each employee. All social workers have been given a supply of gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, and disposable bags for PPE after use. Workers are also advised to contact the Health Department immediately and stay home if they are experiencing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Mr. Gary Ange expressed appreciation to staff for all the efforts that are being made right now in these unprecedented times.

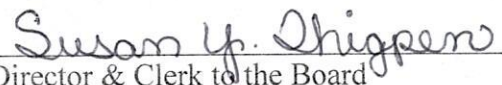


The state recently sent out information verifying that they would not be entering into Memorandums of Understanding with counties in light of COVID-19 until January 1, 2021. They will continue to provide counties with data regarding performance measures at this time. The state has also confirmed that no Corrective Action Plans will be required for performance measures not meeting the benchmark for 2019-2020. Counties are still encouraged to work on improving practice and the state will be working with counties on identified needs through the development of continuous quality improvement (CQI) plans. Data received for the first three quarters of 2020-2021 indicates that there has been no area for which a corrective action plan would have been required. Agency administration are reviewing reports each month that provide case specific information regarding benchmarks and are following up with workers and supervisors as appropriate to identify needs and address performance issues.

Duplin County has started discussing the special considerations for sheltering for a hurricane during COVID-19. Guidance has been provided by the American Red Cross regarding the additional precautions that will be necessary. Shelter capacity will be significantly reduced due to social distancing and separate accommodations will be needed within each shelter for individuals who are symptomatic or have tested positive. Ms. Susan Thigpen will be touring the schools in the next few weeks with Emergency Management and the Health Department to identify how these requirements will be met.

Motion was made by Mr. Gary Ange, seconded by Ms. Angela Mainor and passed to adjourn the meeting until our next regular scheduled meeting to be held virtually on June 25, 2020 at 8:30.


Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman


Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on: June 25, 2020

