

DUPLIN COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MINUTES
Regular Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2020
8:30 AM

The Duplin County Board of Social Services met in a special scheduled meeting on November 19, 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 Ms. Ila Davis, Ms. Angela Mainor, and Mr. Jesse Dowe. 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.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Angela Mainor and seconded by Ms. Ila Davis and minutes were approved for the October 22, 2020 meeting.

New Business

Budget Report –Budget amendments were necessary for two line items in the budget for 2020-2021. The invoice for the last quarter of FY 2019-2020 was paid from this year's line item for Work Number, a program utilized to verify information for economic benefits. In addition, the invoice was for a greater amount than normally expected due to increased usage in response to a higher number of applications for Medicaid and FNS benefits. Insurance and Bonds was also higher than expected due to increased premiums that were not known at the time of budgeting. The agency was able to move funds for the remainder of the year.

Income Maintenance and Child Support – The waiting list for subsidized childcare is currently at 13. Due to additional spending early in the fiscal year to include waiving parents' fees and monthly payments regardless of attendance, it is likely that we will not be able to remove children from the waiting list in 2020-2021. The agency is required to continue providing daycare services for Child Welfare and foster care as needed. The agency has completed the Medicaid audit as part of the yearly single county audit for 2019-2020. Five eligibility errors and 25 technical errors were identified. Cases identified as technical errors do not involve paybacks and are related to data entry issues that did not impact eligibility. Three of the five eligibility errors were related to child support sanctions that were not verified and would have prevented parents from receiving benefits. Supervisors have already done internal training with staff on this issue and management will continue to place emphasis on ongoing second party reviews. The auditing firm did point out that cases in general showed significant improvement in data entry, organization, and determinations.

Personnel – There have been two resignations in November. One social worker indicated that the job was too overwhelming for her and quit without working a notice and one Income Maintenance worker that was pregnant decided to quit. There are seven new hires that have or

will be starting work in November. There are currently 10 vacancies: four social workers, one IMC II, a Child Support Supervisor that has been selected but has not been hired to date, and CSI and PIA IV positions for which interviews occurred earlier this week. The agency has not received any applications from qualified applicants for the Program Integrity or Interpreter positions. The decision was made recently to move the two IT positions from Social Services to County IT. They will continue to be based out of this agency but this will allow for smoother processes with IT as the county continues to move toward increased levels of security.

Child and Adult Services – Child Welfare is beginning to receive more reports from the school. Caseload sizes for Assessment workers continue to be above state guidelines of 10:1 but the agency is utilizing a part-time employee to assist with collateral contacts and courtesy visits to provide some assistance to these Assessment workers. In Home Service caseloads are within caseload guidelines while Permanency Planning continues to remain well below guidelines. The agency will be providing five Thanksgiving meals for families this year and hope to also be able to provide assistance for several individuals and families during Christmas. Adult Services is currently involved in some serious reports but is fully staffed. Risks to residents in facilities is currently of greater concern due to the limited outside contact that is possible as a result of COVID.

Director's Update

Supervisors and the management team will be participating in an Energize and Engage Employees training through UNC on Friday. Following the training, this team will continue to explore ways to increase opportunities for involvement and engaging employees at all levels and to build a greater spirit of teamwork throughout the agency. The NC Office of State Human Resources is providing a new training opportunity in December on Fostering a Culture of Belonging: Building Successful Teams. All supervisors and management will be required to participate in this session or one offered in the spring. This training underscores how diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace require belonging and how to be successful in improving engagement, relations, job performance, health, wellness, and turnover. This training is expected to better address the issues of inequality and favoritism that were identified in the Engagement Survey as opposed to simply offering Diversity Training. Director, Ms. Susan Thigpen, will continue to look for training opportunities to develop stronger leaders within the agency. The management team continues to closely monitor internal promotions and disciplinary actions to ensure that these are handled objectively and consistently.

Duplin County Social Services will be piloting Rylan's Law Dashboard that is being developed to provide a mechanism to better track data specific to child welfare as well as economic services. While there are a number of data sources available, the Dashboard should provide a clearer understanding of county performance and needs and targets the measures specific to the yearly MOU.

The NC Division of Health and Human Services has recently provided changes to the Child Medical Evaluation (CME) system. These changes will result in a significant increase in the number of reports requiring CMEs with no option for an override. This is concerning to the agency since providers already struggle with scheduling evaluations and getting reports issued

within the 45 days allowed for investigations. Duplin County expects that the timeliness rate for completing assessments will decline as a result of these changes. The agency continues to partner with the DA's Office regarding the possibility of opening a CAC in this area.

COVID Cares Act Funds designated for Child Welfare and Adult Services are being utilized at this time to purchase a variety of items designated as allowable expenses by the state to include equipment to support remote work and support remote learning for children in agency custody. The agency will also be establishing care packages for vulnerable adults involved in APS that will include shelf stable food and personal protective equipment. Duplin County is expected to utilize all available funds. The agency is also purchasing a fogger to use in larger spaces as requested by Ms. Angela Mainor at the last Board meeting. The agency is also purchasing air purifiers for rooms and vehicles as well. Ms. Angela Mainor inquired about the number of clients allowed in the building at this time in light of the governor's order regarding the number of people allowed inside. The agency has not allowed more than 10 people in the building at any time, either waiting in the lobby or in the offices that are currently being used for meetings with clients.

Mr. Jesse Dowe will be following up regarding the Duplin County Commissioner's appointment of the Board seat vacated by Mr. Gary Ange and has someone who has expressed interest in serving at this time. Mr. Jesse Dowe also asked Ms. Susan Thigpen to follow up with the Social Services Commission regarding their intentions with Mr. Mike Wallace's position since it has been extended by the Commission since June as a result of COVID.

A motion was made by Mr. Jesse Dowe and seconded by Ms. Angela Mainor and passed to adjourn our meeting until the next special scheduled meeting tentatively scheduled for December 17, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. pending confirmation of availability on that date from Board Chair, Mr. Mike Wallace. Proper notice to the public will be provided of this meeting.


Mr. Mike Wallace, Chairman


Director & Clerk to the Board

The foregoing minutes were adopted on: December 17, 2020