

**New Hanover County  
Board of Social Services  
Meeting Minutes  
Multi-Purpose Room A  
September 17, 2013  
10:00a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

The New Hanover County Board of Social Services met in open session on Tuesday, September 17, 2013 at 10:00 in Multi Purpose Room A of the New Hanover County Department of Social Services.

**ATTENDING:** Evelyn Bryant, Chairperson; Diana Woolley, Vice Chairperson, Patrick Riley, Jonathan Barfield Jr. and Frankie Roberts

**ALSO ATTENDING:** LaVaughn Nesmith, Secretary to the Board; Stephanie Monteath, Assistant to the Director

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Bryant asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Woolley moved for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Riley and passed unanimously.

Mr. Roberts led the invocation. Mr. Riley led the pledge of allegiance.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Bryant asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Woolley moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Riley and passed unanimously.

#### **INFORMATION AGENDA**

The Board recognized new staff and service award recipients.

Ms. Woolley asked for clarification about the increase in Emergency Assistance numbers. Ms. Marino explained that Crisis Intervention Prevention funds are once again available to spend. Ms. Woolley asked about the number of children taken into custody. Ms. Marino noted there are larger families having reports. Ms. Woolley noted the adult guardianship number has once again risen. Ms. Marino explained DSS is the only potential out of family mandated guardian but no additional funds are available to deal with that.

Karen Graham provided clarification on the monthly budget expenditures. Avril Pinder noted the Duke Progress Energy merger funds will earn interest that can be used for utility assistance.

Director Nesmith and Ms. Woolley discussed the Community Service block grant that DSS decided not to pursue for myriad reasons.

Ms. Bryant asked about the 30 days or more unresolved NC FAST cases. Mr. Nesmith shared DSS will be working with the State to discover a work-around so that benefits can be issued. Ms. McNamee added the State realizes that delaying benefits for months is a major problem and is working on a resolution. Commissioner Barfield asked if the agency has been assigned a State Information Technology person yet. Ms. McNamee responded that an "Over the Shoulder Support" person had been on-site at the department but is no longer assigned to NHC DSS. The agency has identified internal staff to be trained by the State as "Over the Shoulder Support" as well. Commissioner Barfield noted he is getting calls from citizens that need to eat and shared he is reaching out to the State to try to get a system that works for its citizens.

No action was taken by the Board.

## **STRATEGIC ACTION AGENDA**

### **Emergency Assistance Walk-In Requests**

Wanda Marino handed out the FY 2013-2014 Emergency Financial Requests DSS Report covering the period of July 1, 2013 through September 6, 2013.

Gwen Stahl shared during the above noted period, 1,653 clients have asked for emergency financial assistance which breaks down to 34 people per day. Ms. Stahl reviewed demographics and types of requests: 904 requests for electricity, 205 requests for rent, 134 requests for water, 74 requests for multiple utilities, 57 requests for transportation, 43 requests for prescription medicine, 32 requests for housing, 12 requests for natural gas, 6 requests for food, 146 requests for referrals to the Work First program, 13 requests for Good Friends funds and 27 requests for miscellaneous items such as eye glasses, furniture or clothing. The agency was able to assist 671 people with some type of assistance, 372 people were referred to other agencies or resources and 610 people were unable to be assisted as there is just not funding without General Assistance funds.

Ms. Woolley asked what makes a person ineligible for assistance. Ms. Stahl explained that emergency assistance is given if the situation could be considered a life threatening circumstance and the person meets the 200% poverty level. Assistance isn't given to people who just can't pay their bills or who exceed the income level.

### **Leading By Results (LBR) Update**

Patricia Robinson gave a brief overview of Leading By Results which addresses the County's core standards.

DSS is meeting 43% of its targets, meeting 14% of its benchmarks, made progress toward 11% of its benchmarks and is experiencing challenges with 32% of its indicators.

Mike Arkinson of County IT explained the new automated scorecard being implemented to track results for LBR. The scorecard allows people to hover over

areas of interest in each indicator so people can see more clearly the data and areas of concern. The process has been really well received by DSS staff.

Ms. Woolley asked about privacy measures. Mr. Arkinson explained there are different levels of access to the information on the score card and information is locked down. The current automated scorecard can only be accessed through our internal site, the intranet.

### **Next Meeting Objectives**

Adoption Awareness Proclamation

### **Board Comments**

Commissioner Barfield asked if anyone attends the Methodist Home for Children's event from DSS. Ms. Marino has attended in the past but did not go this year. Ms. Woolley asked for an update on NC FAST. Mr. Nesmith asked Leslie Chaney if they have heard from the State about an IT update. Ms. Chaney noted County IT has not received an update from the State in a while. Commissioner Barfield noted the State IT person shared they are in a staffing shortage and asked for resumes for potential employees. Director Nesmith noted the Merit plan was approved and notification will be going out over the next few weeks. Ms. Bryant asked how many best practice awards NHCDSS will be up for at the Social Services Institute. Director Nesmith will keep her apprised when he finds out.

### **Additional Items**

As there was no additional information as provided in G.S. 143-318.11 to consider information that is confidential pursuant to G.S. 108A-80 and/or G.S. 154A-98, the Board by consensus adjourned at 11:00AM.

Respectfully submitted,



La Vaughn Nesmith,  
Secretary to the Board



Evelyn Bryant,  
Chairperson