

**New Hanover County
Board of Social Services
Meeting Minutes
Multi Purpose Room A
9:00a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

The New Hanover County Board of Social Services met in open session on Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at 9:00 in Multi Purpose Room A of the New Hanover County Department of Social Services.

ATTENDING: John Craig, Chairman; Bill Caster, Vice-Chairman; Minerva Glidden, Patrick Riley and Evelyn Bryant

ALSO ATTENDING: LaVaughn Nesmith, Secretary to the Board; Stephanie Monteath, Administrative Support Specialist

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Mr. Caster moved for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Glidden and passed unanimously.

Mr. Caster led the invocation. Ms. Bryant led the pledge of allegiance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Glidden moved for approval of the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously.

INFORMATION AGENDA

Personnel

Stephanie Monteath noted there were no new hires or promotions in April. Six employees left due to the Early Retirement Incentive Package.

Service Awards

Tiffany Bickel, Joan Briggs, Beth Jones, Stephanie Monteath and Holly Yeager were recognized for 5 years of service to New Hanover County. Pam Nelson and Cindy Reed were recognized for 15 years of service to New Hanover County. Celeste Chadwick and Sheila Merritt were recognized for 20 years of service to New Hanover County. Jerry Brim was recognized for 25 years of service to New Hanover County.

SSDI

Mr. Caster noted there are so many more people coming in to receive service than there were in 2008. Mr. Caster also asked for clarification about Foster Care numbers.

County Budget Expenditures

Mr. Caster asked for an explanation of TANF/DV funds. TANF stands for temporary assistance for needy families. Celeste Chadwick works closely with the Domestic Violence shelter to make sure funds are not being overspent or duplicated. Mr. Craig asked what the Crisis Intervention Funds were used for. Mr. Lane and Ms. McNamee explained that money is used solely for energy needs, heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. Mr. Riley asked for clarification about the WFFA (Work First Family Assistance) amount. Ms. McNamee explained that money was being held in case DSS goes over a line item amount, such as Foster Care.

Director's Executive Report

Mr. Nesmith invited the board to the Fatherhood Conference May 30, 2009 at the First Baptist Activity Center and the Foster Care Picnic May 16, 2009. Mr. Craig asked about the Child Support incentive money. Mr. Nesmith explained that what was once considered to be supplanting is now called incentive money and will be available to use until 2010.

STRATEGIC ACTION AGENDA

Multiple Response System Update

Wanda Marino introduced Gail Walker and Jacqueline Jones and gave a brief history into the conception of the Multiple Response System. Originally, there was just one track to investigating child abuse which was forensic. This track often led to children being removed from their home as family schedules and needs were not taken into consideration. Forensic tracks are still in place for serious protective service cases, such as sex abuse, and DSS works closely with law enforcement in those cases.

Multiple Response System, (MRS) may be used for cases of neglect. Eighty eight percent of all child protective service reports are neglect cases. MRS takes a "family centered" approach. When an allegation of abuse is made, DSS has 24 hours to make contact with all children in the family and conduct a safety assessment. Ms. Jones reviewed Senate Bill 1005-2001 Appropriation Act of North Carolina General Assembly. This bill prevents DSS from walking into a home to assess and/or investigate unless the following are in place: reasonable belief that a juvenile is in imminent danger of death or serious physical injury, permission of the parent or person responsible for the juvenile's care, the accompaniment of law enforcement officer who has legal authority to enter the residence, or an order from a court of competent jurisdiction. Social Workers are required to receive training on family centered practices and state and federal law regarding the basic rights of individuals including the right to privacy, freedom from duress and coercion to induce cooperation and the right to parent.

Ms. Walker reviewed the seven strategies of MRS: redesign of in-home services; strength based, structured intake process; coordination between law enforcement agencies and child protective services for the investigative approach; choice of two approaches to reports of child abuse, neglect, or dependency; implementation of Shared-Parenting meetings in placement cases; implementation of Child and Family Team Meetings

(conducted by the ADR Center –mediation center) during the provision of in-home services; collaboration between Work First Family Assistance and Child Welfare. MRS attempts to keep families in tact by looking for a family's strengths and finding supports in the community (family members, church members etc.), this has drastically reduced the number of children placed in Foster Care. Mr. Nesmith reiterated that every family has strengths. Ms. Glidden asked if Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is used in this process noting that really the child should be at the center of the process. Ms. Talbutt explained that GAL is not used unless a petition is filed in court. Ms. Walker noted that GAL participates in Child and Family Team meetings. All agreed the Child and Family Team Meetings are a very positive process.

Next Meeting Objectives

Child Support Contract Update
Fatherhood Expo Update
Family Find Presentation
Emergency Action Plan for DSS

Board Self Evaluation

The Board completed self evaluations.

Additional Items

Mr. Nesmith noted that all additional staff requested in the budget were denied. The lobby renovations are currently still included in the agency budget. Board adjourned at 10:04 a.m.