

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

The New Hanover County Board of Social Services met in open session on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 at 9:00 in Multipurpose Room A of the New Hanover County Department of Social Services.

ATTENDING: John E. Craig, Chairman; Bill Caster, Vice Chairman; Minerva Glidden; Patrick Riley

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

Mr. Craig called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m.

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Caster moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Glidden and passed unanimously.

INFORMATION AGENDA

New Hires

Stephanie Monteath introduced Linda Atkinson and Mary Tucker as new Temporary Economic Services Caseworkers. Nicole Maund and Melissa Sorrell were introduced as Food and Nutrition Caseworkers. Anabela Diaz was introduced as an Administrative Support Assistant. Brad Braithwaite was introduced as a Fiscal Support Technician in the Business Office.

Service Awards

Regina Anderson and Elizabeth Schmidt were recognized for ten years of service to New Hanover County. Cheryl Mote was recognized for fifteen years of service to New Hanover County.

SSDI

Mr. Caster commented on the high number of families on the Day Care Subsidy waiting list. Ms. Glidden noted no additional families were added to the list.

County Budget Expenditures

There were no comments on the budget expenditures.

Director's Report

Mr. Caster asked who was going to fund the Family Drug Court program. Ms. Talbutt responded the AOC would fund the program. Mr. Nesmith explained that the County will fund 50% of the cost of two Case Managers. Ms. Marino and Ms. Talbutt further explained DSS plans to re-distribute case loads to use Social Work staff already employed. Ms. Glidden stated the agency could show the costs as revenue neutral. Ms. Marino noted conversations about this program are still in the beginning stages.

Ms. Glidden commented on Cape Fear Health Net's language gap. She noted the Health Net is not a really a net if there is not a Spanish speaking caseworker available for the Spanish speaking population which often floods the hospitals.

STRATEGIC ACTION AGENDA

Foster Care Rate and Payment Legislative Changes

Ms. Marino gave a definition of Foster Care. Foster care board rates were increased by the State effective with December payments. Mr. Nesmith noted the Director's Association did not agree with differing rates for different organizations. Beth Schrader explained the huge cost the County will now incur. The County will have to front 100% of the cost and be reimbursed 50% of that money by the State. The State used to absorb 100% of administrative costs for children in foster care. The board rate refers to the cost of a child's room and board in a foster home. The rate is based on a child's age. Facility rates refer to the costs incurred when a child lives in a group home or therapeutic leveled facility. Ms. Schrader explained the County will now be a very close partner to the State. She noted the County will have to budget to front the cash flow, approximately three million dollars. Ms. Schrader noted these changes provide an opportunity for the County to make systemic changes in everything from prevention to recruitment of foster families. Mr. Nesmith and Beth Schrader explained the "Hold Harmless" rule. If the Hold Harmless begins January 2009, the County will not be responsible for approximately one hundred and thirteen thousand dollars in our favor. Mr. Nesmith discussed New Hanover County foster children are mostly coming from middle class families and are not eligible for welfare. As a result foster care costs are higher. Ms. Marino noted with the current state of the economy, more families are in crisis and DSS is taking custody of more children. Mr. Nesmith discussed the possibility of DSS creating their own therapeutic foster care homes. Mr. Caster asked what the difference is between DSS foster care homes and private foster care homes. Ms. Marino explained that DSS administrative costs associated with recruitment and retention of DSS foster care homes falls on staff already in place within DSS. With private foster care homes, DSS has to pay their administrative costs as well as their board rates. Even with County supplements, DSS foster care homes are the least costly means of care. Mr. Nesmith reviewed reimbursement percentages. Mr. Craig noted DSS did not budget for this new reimbursement rate. Beth Schrader summarized the discussion. Ms. Marino handed out a letter to the Board members from Lisa Roberts, president of the foster care association. Ms. Glidden moved to continue the County supplement to foster families. The motion was seconded by Mr. Caster and passed unanimously. Chris Coudriet asked that the Board review different strategies for the future such as developing prevention strategies (such as Family Drug Court and intensive family preservation programs), to decrease the number of children in foster care, developing in-house county therapeutic options and expansion of DSS foster home recruitment efforts. Ms. Marino also discussed how the

Family Find pilot project may help to keep a child with a family member instead of sending them into foster care.

Child Welfare Services Biennial Review Compliance Plan

Ms. Kari Sanders reviewed the compliance plan developed to respond to the Child Welfare Services Biennial Review. Mr. Caster asked if the State's requests were reasonable. Ms. Sanders and Ms. Marino said they look at the plan as a positive opportunity for improvement.

Next Meeting Objectives

Childcare Subsidy Update

Board Self Evaluation

The Board completed self evaluations.

Additional Item

The Board went into closed session at 10:22 a.m. as provided in G.S. 154A-98 to consider information that is confidential pursuant to G.S. 108A-80 and or G.S. 154A-98. The Board returned to open session at 10:26 a.m.

Appeals Process

A draft appeal policy was handed out to the Board removing the Board from the appeals process. Mr. Caster felt including the Board in the appeals process could lead an employee to believe the Board had the power to change the Director's decision, which it does not. Ms. Glidden felt it demoralized the Director when a Board overrides a decision. Ms. Glidden asked that the appeal process be included in the Board manual. The Board acknowledged the change to the appeal process, taking the Board out of the appeal process effective October 7, 2008 at 10:35 a.m.

The board by consensus adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LaVaughn Nesmith,
Secretary to the Board

John E. Craig,
Chairman

Date approved: _____

LN: scm

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