

**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2018**

Board Members Present

Mr. Andy Morris; Mr. Lance Barrett; Mr. Steve Jarvis

Others in Attendance

Mr. Dale Moorefield; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mrs. Elizabeth Huff; Mrs. Susan Craig; Mrs. Caroline Hedrick; Ms. Sherri Woodyard; Ms. Danielle DeAngelis

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:17 p.m. by vice-chair, Mr. Andy Morris. Mr. Morris offered an invocation.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Lance Barrett made a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Steve Jarvis seconded the motion. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Lance Barrett made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2017 meeting. Mr. Steve Jarvis seconded this motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Address

There was no public address.

Management Report

Mrs. Caroline Hedrick reviewed the expenditure report for year to date expenses as of December 31, 2017. Midway through the fiscal year our spending is below budget overall. Forty-eight percent of the operating budget has been used and 33 percent of the overall DSS budget has been used. Overtime expenses continue to be incurred in the Foster Care/Adoptions, Child Protective Services, and Adult Services areas due to increased caseloads; however, the Agency is projected to underspend in the salaries and benefits line items due to vacant positions. Year-to-date, overtime expenditures are actually less than last fiscal year for the same time frame. Discussion was held regarding overtime. Other areas of projected overspending were reviewed and notes are listed at the bottom of the expenditure

report. Mr. Jarvis asked that a column be added to the expenditure report to show prior year spending percentages. The Agency is currently beginning to work on the 2018-2019 budget and additional position requests will be made to help combat overtime overspending due to increased caseloads and additional requirements from the State.

Mr. Dale Moorefield reviewed the vacancy report. There are currently 10 vacancies. The Agency is actively recruiting for 8 of the vacancies and 2 positions are on hold. At the last Board of County Commissioner's meeting, one of the on hold positions was approved to be reclassified from an Office Support III to Community Services Support Tech to assist with visits for children in Agency custody and families involved. As a rule, positions are kept vacant for 30 days before posted; however, due to demands, Mr. Moorefield has routinely requested for waivers to this wait period, as we need to have personnel in our positions to provide the services we are mandated to provide. There will be a Social Work Supervisor III vacancy at the end of the month as Margaret Heher retires.

Mrs. Elizabeth Huff reported that Income Maintenance demands remain steady. Mrs. Huff presented a comparison of services to last fiscal year for the same time period and we are trending to receive more Medicaid applications than last year. There is a slight increase in Medicaid cases; however, a slight decrease in special assistance cases. Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) are trending to decrease compared to last year, which is most likely a ripple effect of tighter rules for ABAWD's (able-bodied adults without dependents) which allows benefits for only three months and requires 80 hours a month in work activities to continue FNS eligibility. Fraud collections are less than last year, but the next few months should provide larger recoupments due to tax intercepts.

No major changes were reported for Work First. Applications are steady. The slight decrease in November and December is contributed to the holidays. Employment cases continue to decline. At one time, there were 40 mandatory employment cases, but this has dropped to 21. These are most likely clients that are the hardest to place in jobs due to criminal records and poor work histories being significant barriers to employment. Work First Families receive Pay after Performance, so if they do not comply with their Mutual Responsibility Agreement Requirements, they do not receive a check. Approximately 70% Work First employment client receive payments.

Mrs. Huff reports that childcare expenditures continue to be high and the Agency's spending coefficient is currently at 109%. Due to the overspending, a waiting list was implemented January 1, 2018 and there are currently 70 children on the list. The Agency is hopeful that the waiting list will help to bring spending back to 100% by fiscal year end. Director Moorefield is hopeful the State may provide some reallocations from underspending counties to overspending Counties with waiting lists; the State does not want us to terminate childcare for already receiving families and may make up the difference at year's end. Several causes for overspending are the high demand for services, market rate increases for childcare providers and the effects of NCFAS in Childcare Subsidy. NCFAS has quickened the payment to Childcare Providers and they are pleased with that. Statewide some providers are being overpaid due to glitches and provider errors and their future payments will be adjusted to make up for overpayments. In addition, new Childcare Subsidy policies put in place by the state to allow NCFAS to more successfully manage Childcare Subsidy have made it less possible to bring spending down as the new rules allow those without need for Childcare Services to continue receiving it for longer periods of time. A further effect of this is increased waiting lists and has hampered the Agency's ability to serve those with true current needs for childcare subsidy and this is unfortunate, as we would like to be better stewards of money.

Emergency assistance has not changed much in regards to CIP and General Assistance. LIEAP expenditures reflected on the report are a month behind due to reporting December's expenditures. Last year at this time, the Agency had seen 1,418 people compared to 1,134 as of January 22, 2018; a decline of 284. Spending last year for the same time was \$322,400 compared to \$282,600 this year. The average LIEAP payment is currently \$263 per household. Payment is determined by household income and heat source. Mr. Jarvis inquired whether the Agency is at risk of losing funds. Mr. Moorefield explained that the State allows us to reallocate to other counties if we see we will not spend all funds. Mrs. Huff also added that LIEAP is not a use or lose program. The community is notified of the LIEAP program via newsletters, media, word of mouth, resource centers, etc. Mrs. Huff expressed that the decrease in applications could be tied to less FNS applications.

Mr. Scott Craver reported that child support collections are at 48.03% of their state goal so far. Over the next few months, we expect to see an increase in these collections due to tax intercepts of non-compliant non-custodial parents income tax refunds.

Ms. Katrina McMasters shared that CPS had a good month as the number of reports for December decreased, which is common in December. Successes included closing cases and the area is on a trajectory to decrease the backlog and increase timeliness in seeing families. Eighty-one neglect reports were accepted with 11 cases accepted as investigations and more cases were closed this month than were opened. We currently show 178 open assessments and 71 open in-home cases. Ms. McMasters stated that the Agency recognizes that the State is asking more of CPS staff with implementing new policies, which is good for child safety, but this increases the number of workers and supervisors needed to ensure the needs are met. A correction to total children coming into custody was noted with 6 children coming into custody instead of 5. Mr. Barrett questioned where things stand regarding the former stance of parent rights vs. child protection. Ms. McMasters responded that a mandate was supposed to be implemented, but the court sanction portion has not been implemented yet. Mr. Craver shared that a common theme from CPR representative Peter West is not to close a case just to close within 45 days, but to keep the case open, work it, and document that more days are needed.

Mrs. Susan Craig provided an update regarding Foster Care. Six children (3 families) entered care with 9 leaving DSS custody. Five were adopted, 3 went back to their parents, and 1 aged out of care. She shared that new mandates will require stricter guidelines and monthly visits to parents and foster families, which will result in more requirements of the workers. Links services are currently being provided to 22 older children/teens and these services help to make children more self-sufficient into adulthood.

Adult Services reports received and accepted increased in December. Two wards passed away, Six facility complaints were received which requires the Agency to investigate. Mr. Moorefield shared that the agency may be receiving guardianship of four new wards as he signed additional guardianship paperwork this day. The trend of younger adult wards coming into Agency guardianship continues and these folks come with significant mental health issues.

Mr. Moorefield introduced the new DSS attorney, Mrs. Danielle DeAngelis. She has been in Davidson County for 12 years and will be primarily completing Terminations of Parental Rights and Adult Services legal work.

New Business

Child Care Subsidy Local Policy

Mr. Moorefield shared that a new local policy has been drafted and approved by the Department of Child Development and Early Education, which now requires DSS Board approval. Local policies have not been revised since 2012 and must be changed due to changes with NC Fast and childcare subsidy policies. Mrs. Huff shared that two things must be done, but local counties determine how they do it. First, Agencies must serve vulnerable populations and set-aside a minimum of 4% to serve children suffering homelessness or having an IEP (special needs). The second requirement is prioritization of a waiting list. The proposed local policy included in the Board packet outlines prioritization of the waiting list and a second document outlines the childcare waiting list procedures. Mr. Barrett made a motion to accept the local policies as presented and Mr. Jarvis seconded the motion. The policies were approved unanimously.

Child Protective Services Follow Up

During the November meeting, a closed session discussion was held regarding a CPS case the Agency was involved in which was not handled as well as it should have been. The State completed a review and because of the review, a response letter was received from the State prior to the Christmas break. Mr. Moorefield shared a line from the third paragraph of the letter that stated that the "review revealed violation of law as identified". He expressed that this is harsh, but facts are that we did not do what we should have. A corrective action plan is in progress and Mr. Moorefield stated that the Agency is moving forward with the backlog of cases referenced in the letter. The State is dealing with bad publicity, less than effective oversight and they are now trying to provide it. The letter does comment about Davidson County's commitment to be cooperative and make things right.

As a part of the corrective action and Agency's review, a Case Tracking Summary for Child Protection Services was created. Mr. Craver provided the information as a handout and reviewed the information with the Board. The report provides a summary of investigations/assessments and a summary of in-home case activity. Three of the four violations are addressed on this document. Mr. Craver shared that a Program Development Plan (PDP) is being completed by counties, which is different for all counties in North Carolina. The first violation is regarding supervision not being documented well. The requirement is for family supervisory visits to be completed every two weeks. Mr. Morris questioned how some visits are completed when parents are not home and Mr. Craver responded that the Agency must make a diligent effort and maintain documentation of those efforts. Ms. McMasters expressed that she does not feel the Agency was not making visits, but was doing a poor job of documentation. Mr. Jarvis recommended that random reviews be completed instead of at set times and asked that randomly pulled data be looked at. Mr. Craver stated that the fourth violation is regarding seeing families more timely with cases opened and closed within a 45-day timeframe. In-home has 6 months to close a case and this average is good. All workers and supervisors are aware of the tracking and all see the same summary information. Individual statistics are available as well.

The fourth violation (#3 on the letter) is regarding a requirement for a safety assessment at the time of initiation. Our CPR, Mr. Peter West, argued that this violation not be included on the report due the case being a spin-off case, or companion case. Ms. McMasters explained that it is a companion case due to the father relocating to another home where other children were present and he could be considered as a perpetrator to other children, thus requiring a new

report. The supervisor made an entry in One Case based on the worker's report, but this was interpreted as the worker not taking all the steps, which created the violation. It has since been emphasized to supervisors that the process structure must be followed as the State looks at the date the worker initiated the case and in this case, it appears that the supervisor initiated the case instead.

The Agency is in the process of updating and revising the PDP. The corrective action plan is due by and will be submitted to the state by January 31, 2018. Ms. McMasters shared corrective actions that are being implemented to address the findings.

- The first finding is being addressed by implementing a more concrete number for supervision, which has been defined as every other week. This has been included as an overall measure on employee performance evaluations as well. The program administrator will meet with supervisors weekly to review cases, identify gaps, and determine whether CPS should still be involved in the case.
- The second finding regarding insufficient contact with children in order to assess safety is being addressed by the program administrator completing random audits of 20% of open cases per supervisor and Mr. West will audit 20% of cases open past 45 days. Social workers will complete assessments and monthly contacts as outlined in the updated manual.
- While not an evident issue for the Agency, the third finding regarding the safety assessment not being completed at initiation will be addressed by actions steps that include the referral being made at the time of the new report through intake. Intake will assign based on timeframes outlined in the services manual.
- The Agency had been working on the finding regarding the backlog of cases prior to this report and backlogged cases are steadily declining. For 2016-2017, backlogged cases were at 361% and down to 218% as of December 31, 2017. The average for the year is still at 243%. The goal is to be below 175% and the State is allowing 6 months to achieve this goal. Ms. McMasters expressed that she is optimistic about achieving this goal.
- Targeted training, including documentation training, will be provided to staff as a part of the corrective action plan. The Board members gave recommendations for researching options for talk to text for the Microsoft Surface Pro tablets and seeking IT support to develop a documentation template that would help workers to document required information, progress toward goals, and to provide consistency.
- The report also addresses that the CCPT be involved and this is included as a step in the corrective action plan. It is required that the case be reviewed by the CCPT/CFPT committee within 90 days of the letter and this review will take place at the next CCPT meeting in February and this will provide community collaboration. In reviewing the case, there were several community agencies involved; however, no concerns had been expressed.
- Goal is for CCPT to bring more community awareness and education regarding reporting child maltreatment.
- Four trainings will need to be completed within the next 60 days (by February 20th) for management, supervisors, and workers.

Mr. Craver also shared that CPR, Mr. West will work with the Agency to help analyze the lean process for child welfare. He is also visiting monthly for reviews. The Agency plans to restructure all CPS units to include 4 investigators/assessors and 2 in-home staff in hopes that this will help with processes. Mr. Craver added that a budget request is anticipated for more social workers and a supervisor to create another unit to help work caseloads and meet the increasing demands of new policies. An additional on-call worker may be requested. Lastly,

he shared that timely communication with staff and staff inclusion in developing new processes and decisions is needed. Mr. Jarvis commended the Agency for the work being completed to address the issues and expressed that Davidson County will come out better in the end.

Date of Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at 4:15 p.m., first floor of Social Services in Lexington, Conference Room D.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:43 pm. Mr. Jarvis motioned and Mr. Barrett seconded the motion to adjourn.

Minutes submitted by Dale Moorefield.