

**Lee County Department of Social Services  
Board Meeting  
December 18th, 2018**

The Board of Social Services for Lee County Department of Social Services convened at 12:00 P.M., in the Board of Commissioner's Room at the Lee County Government Center, 106 Hillcrest Drive, Sanford, North Carolina. Board members present were Margaret Johnson, Paul Utley, William Pickard, Amy Dalrymple and Ophelia Livingston.

Vice Chair Pickard called the meeting to order.

Vice Chair Pickard asked if any adjustment or changes to the December Agenda. Motion was made to accept by Dr. Livingston and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Utley.

AYE: Pickard, Livingston, Utley (Ms. Johnson and Ms. Dalrymple were not present for the vote.

NAY: None

Vice Chair Pickard asked if any changes or corrections to the November minutes. Motion was made to accept by Mr. Utley and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dr. Livingston.

AYE: Pickard, Livingston, Utley (Ms. Johnson and Ms. Dalrymple were not present for the vote.

NAY: None

**Public Comment**-No one signed up to speak during the Public Comments section of the meeting.

**INTERNAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE POLICY**-Ms. Noel referred the board to their package to a document titled, Department of Social Services Internal Grievance Procedure. Ms. Noel then gave the board some background on why this policy

was put together into one document. Employees that work for DSS are under the Office of State Human Resources and are protected by the State Personnel Act. All of the language in the policy that governs what is documented in General Statutes. The policy on line is actually for state personnel. Ms. Noel asked the board for a motion to approve this policy and if approved she would like to give this to all new employees so they would be aware of the procedures. She informed the board that she had provided the policy to the County Attorney Whitney Parrish and the DSS Attorney Brian Godfrey for review. Ms. Noel also told the board that this document would be used to inform individuals starting and individuals that we do go through disciplinary action with what their rights are as it relates to the action that is taken against them.

Dr. Livingston asked if there is currently a grievance policy. Ms. Noel explained that the county does have a grievance policy but we have to adhere to what is in statute, and not everything the state does is subjected to local government employees. Ms. Noel informed the board that DSS staff must adhere to county policy, but what is in general statute overrides county policy. This document summarizes what is in statute and puts it all together in order to make it easy to read.

Chairperson Johnson asked for more time to read over the document and Dr. Livingston asked for it to be brought back before the board next month. A motion was made by Dr. Livingston to table until next board meeting, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Ayes: Johnson, Livingston, Pickard, and Utey. (A. Dalrymple was not present)  
Nay: None

**SINGLE COUNTY AUDIT RESULTS-** Ms. Noel told the board that Ms. Minter presented to the commissioner's at last month's meeting the single county audit results. Ms. Noel told the board that in a single county audit they choose two months to audit. This audit the months were August 2017 and April 2018. They

sent a list of 37 items that would need to be gathered prior to their arrival. The auditors look at; the 1571 reimbursement, invoices for selected months, assessment of payroll to ensure that payroll was paid correctly and Medicaid cases to ensure eligibility is determined correctly. The auditors were very complimentary on the county itself, the setup, the structure and the organization of the county. DSS had one finding which was not a monetary finding. After review of the Medicaid files, they found one case which they determined benefits the recertification had not been completed in a timely manner. This was an SSI exparte that was listed for review effective January 2018. The county had until April 2018 to complete the review. The review had not been completed when the case was pulled for review; however, the month selected for review was April 2018. Policy provides the county 4 months to complete all SSI exparte reviews. As the case was pulled for April 2018, no monetary finding was noted. Ms. Henderson, Staff Development Supervisor spoke on the procedures that they had implemented to prevent this from happening in the future.

**CHILD FATALITY RESULTS-** Takeisha McMiller, SW Supervisor III/ CPS

Investigations. Ms. McMiller spoke about the Child Fatality Report that was conducted in Lee County recently. She explained to the board the process of a child death as a result of neglect or abuse and the steps that are required by the Child Welfare Agency in the counties. Ms. McMiller said that they are required to send a report to the state Child Fatality Task Force notifying them of the death and upon that notification they make an assessment if a review is required given the circumstances. If determined that the child had dealings with the county CW agency within the last 12 months prior to the child's death, an in depth review is required. She said that during the in-depth review the task force interviewed CPS workers, Law Enforcement, and any agency that the family was connected with services. McMiller told the board that the reviewer is trying to get an idea of what was going on and identify factors that could have contributed to the fatality of the child. The goal of the review is to develop recommendations for improvements within the county systems. The child fatality review was done in October and consisted of a medical professional, a prevention specialist, a

community partner, law enforcement, DSS representative, and the reviewer from the state. From the review and the circumstances surrounding the death, factors were identified and there were findings and recommendations. Ms. McMiller went over the findings with the board. One finding was related to background checks and that local DSS agencies are limited to NC criminal background and CPS service history checks. She also told the board that Child Welfare Agencies currently cannot do any background checks out of state. She said that the Task Force made a recommendation to advocate's state wide that DSS agencies statewide should have the ability to have national access for background checks. The second finding are when children are removed from families there are a lot of support systems that the agency provides to the family to get the child reunified. Once the case is closed, often times those support systems are removed. When a child is reunified, an evaluation of the type of support systems that will be there once CPS is out of the picture should be done to make sure that sufficient support is available in order to keep the child safe and protected in the home and support the family. Another recommendation was to consider making or identifying before a case is closed an informal support system. This would ensure that the family has a system supporting them and holding them accountable.

Ms. McMiller also said that they talked about a gate keeper that could compile the information and share with the providers. Another finding was the lack of information shared could jeopardize the child's safety. Ms. McMiller said the finding here was that it was imperative that all systems that belonged within the family system share critical information. The recommendation was that all Lee County community agencies get together to conduct an open forum to discuss how to strengthen the expectations of information sharing. This would strengthen the services in Lee County and give community partners involved with the family a better understanding and knowledge of wrap around services for the family. Ms. McMiller told the board that the team developed these recommendations as a guide for the local system and with a goal of preventing another Lee County Child death.

Maggie Johnson, Foster Care Social Work Supervisor, added that when a Permanency Planning Action Team meeting is held with families that they are working with, they are trying to include the service providers to attend these meetings as Care Coordination for Children. Ms. Noel told the board prior to this happening, there were discussions with community partners and teams of key players had been developed. These teams were based on the scope at the time and centered on the changes surrounding substance affected infant policy. These conversations concerning involving key stakeholders and providing education on services provided in the community have been taking place for several months now. She also told the board that everyone that is needed is not at the table. She said one successful presentation at the hospital, was centered on substance affected infants and another presentation by her and Takishia was given to the School Resource Officers. These are some examples of how DSS is engaging community partners in order to build a better relationship.

**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PLAN**-Maggie Johnson, SW Foster Care Supervisor, reviewed the plan with the board. In August 2018 nine Foster Care cases were reviewed. This plan has been added to since 2016. The process began with Intake and in August Foster Care was completed. The next process will be adoptions.

Ms. Johnson stated that some findings were already in existence. Ms. Johnson said they came up with other goals for them to work through. She told the board that the foster care unit has been making improvements as the other units were being reviewed. She also told them that the goals and activities have been adjusted to meet all of the Child Welfare Unit.

Ms. Noel told the board this is a working document that all counties have due to the state failing all 14 of 14 measures on the CFSR. She also told them that as far as she knew that Foster Care had never gone through this type of audit until August. Since the audit, they unit has a better understanding of what they are looking for and the expectations. The CPR, state representative for Child Welfare, is very supportive of Lee County. She lets Child Welfare know this is where they

are at and then makes recommendations of what changes need to be made. The Child Welfare Unit has already gone through the Intake, Assessments, In Home Services and now Foster Care. The next review in January 2019 should see significant improvements based on having an idea of the expectations. Ms. Noel also told the board how the records are reviewed by the workers. The review does have a lead monitor and the CPR who review records as well. Ms. Johnson also reviewed records but a large number is reviewed by the staff. This information gives a good idea of where we are at but this does not represent a 100% of what we do. This process review is set as a peer review. If you have an individual that is not as familiar with the process, the documentation could have been in the record but not easily found. Ms. Johnson added that when writing up the activities staff are seeing the process from beginning to end. This document will be used as a working document for years to come.

**NC FAST P9 IMPLEMENTATION**-Sabrina Coleman, Fiscal Supervisor, presented to the board the role out of P9 which is the Program Integrity part of NC FAST. Program Integrity investigates all welfare fraud for the agency from the economic benefits side. They investigate accusations of fraud, abuse of welfare benefits and establish claims if they can substantiate the findings. This program is going into NC FAST on January 2, 2019. She told the board that this should be a smooth transition.

**PERFORMANCE SCORE CARD**-Ms. Noel reviewed the monthly scorecard with the board. Ms. Noel said she thought about what Dr. Livingston mentioned in last month's meeting. Ms. Noel said she developed some parameters of what the baseline would be. Ms. Noel directed them to the rating key. Ms. Noel then moved to the Foster Care face to face visits. She told the board that Ms. Johnson, Foster Care Supervisor, is currently working with the state representative. The finding was that a lot of visits were done, but the foster care worker's did not realize the importance of getting documentation to the clerical staff for keying. She said that the foster care workers are aware now and the state has allowed

the ones that there is proof of to be keyed, but the cases closed out are unable to be keyed. Ms. Noel said that the question has been asked to the state if they would key the visits that the county cannot key. She also said that technically the visitation rate once all information has been pulled is at a 96% compliance rate. She said this tells you what the significance is in missing steps in a process.

Ms. Noel then moved to Child Support. She told the board that the information has been caught up through the end of November and that she has a meeting with the Child Support Representative in January to discuss in detail what the measures will exactly entail as they relate to HB 630 performance measures. Ms. Noel has questions for her and one of those is the state baseline if the measurements are far less than our county baseline is, how that will be addressed and vice-versa.

Ms. Noel ended with a conversation and some questions that she had with the Deputy Director of DHHS at a recent Executive Board Meeting. From her understanding there will be flexibility in the Special Assistance measure to account for applications that go beyond time frames due to pending SSI determination. Ms. Noel informed the board that policy requires you to pending these applications awaiting SSI determination. The other measure related to Work First participation rates and individuals that are disabled impacting the county's ability to meet participation. With this measure, there will not be flexibility as this is what the federal government expects from the state. For small counties like Lee County, we may have to accept that we will remain in corrective action due to our small caseloads with high levels of disability participants.

With no further business to come before the board, Chairperson Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting. Upon a vote, the results were as follows:

Aye: Utley, Johnson, Livingston, Dalrymple and Pickard

Nay: None

Chairperson Johnson ruled the motion had been adopted unanimously and the meeting adjourned.

Margaret Johnson

Margaret Johnson

Chairperson

Melissa Lett

Melissa Lett

Secretary to the Board