

**LEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MEETING
February 20, 2018**

The Board of Social Services for the Lee County Department of Social Services convened at 12:00 PM, in the Board of Commissioner's Room at the Lee County Government Center, 106 Hillcrest Drive, Sanford, North Carolina. Board members present were: David Riddle, Gail Dickens, Margaret Johnson and William Pickard. Not in attendance was Commissioner Amy Dalrymple. Also, present was Ex-Officio member Angelina Noel.

Chairperson Riddle called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with the serenity prayer.

The Board considered changes to the February agenda. Chairperson Riddle recommended agenda item XI be changed to closed session to discuss a personnel matter and changing adjournment to item XII on the agenda. Motion was made by Member Dickens to accept and motion was seconded by Member Johnson.

Aye: Gail Dickens, David Riddle, Margaret Johnson and William Pickard

Nay: None

Chairperson Riddle ruled the motion had been adopted unanimously.

The Board considered changes to the January minutes. No changes were made. Motion was made by Member Dickens to accept and motion was seconded by Member Johnson.

Aye: Gail Dickens, David Riddle, Margaret Johnson and William Pickard

Nay: None

Chairperson Riddle ruled the motion had been adopted unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT - No one signed up to speak during the Public Comments section of the meeting.

THRIVE INITIATIVE – DSS Interim Director, Angelina Noel, presented to the board the information pertaining to the Thrive Initiative. Ms. Noel provided a copy of the Thrive Initiative booklet to the board for reference and review and informed the board of the session that herself and Commissioner Dalrymple attended concerning the initiative. The session consisted of a high level overview of how child welfare services are operated in the state of NC. The initiative is focused on ways to improve the delivery of services for child welfare and is being driven by the recent legislation centered around these improvements. The information in the handouts provided to the board describe the process for Child Protective Services (CPS) from the initial report through the closure of the case and all of the actions in between including court processes. Also included was a map that outlines the statutes that correspond with each process and shows how certain laws may prohibit CPS involvement. CPS staff are limited in their involvement as prohibited by law in certain matters. Ms. Noel described how this initiative is related to House Bill 630 which was sponsored by Senator Barringer. House Bill 630 has many aspects to include regionalization, contractual agreements between state and county agencies outlining performance measures and responsibilities of each party, etc. Also included in House Bill 630 is a cost

analysis study that will be conducted to evaluate the potential cost and benefit of changing from a state supervised/county administered model to a state supervised/state administered model. All of these items are still being developed and have not yet been implemented, but the state is required to report their plan for implementation to the legislature this year. Ms. Noel reviewed a data sheet that shows Lee County's performance in comparison with state standards. Lee County fares well in this comparison especially with regard to permanency, average days in care, etc. A large amount of changes are occurring on the state level and are being passed down to the counties for implementation soon, but at this time many of the details are still unknown. Ms. Noel will keep the board informed as information is made available.

ANNUAL CW STAFFING SURVEY – Tammy Yarborough, Children Services Supervisor, presented the Child Welfare staffing survey. The survey is completed annually and is a compilation of data reported by counties on a quarterly basis concerning the number of active cases, number of courtesy cases and the number of closed cases handled within the county. Ms. Yarborough explained that the data displayed is not indicative in many ways of the actual workload completed in the counties and that some of the measures are inconsistent between the different service areas being measured in child welfare. The number of open cases is measured by the number that remain open on the last day of the month. Any cases that were closed prior to that day, but work was completed on, will not be represented in this figure. The inconsistencies in the measures across the different service areas is of great concern and has been identified as an issue in the last federal review (CFSR). For example, if a case is open that includes eight children it would count as one case while receiving in-home services, so it will be a low representation of the work necessary to be completed on this case during that time, however, if that same case results in the children being taken into custody and transferred to foster care, the standard is measured by number of children and would be represented as such. For in-home services, the caseload standard measured is measured by number of cases regardless of the number of children in the family (state recommends no more than 8 – 10 cases per Social Worker), while foster care caseload standards are measured by the number of children (state recommends no more than 15 children per Social Worker). Cases with a higher number of children result in a larger amount of work to provide proper services and ensure the safety of all of the children involved. Inconsistent measures is of concern when looking at providing appropriate services in a timely, thorough and safety conscious manner. This has been an issue for many years and there is hope that something will be done to ensure appropriate and consistent measures are put in place.

Ms. Yarborough identified additional issues in the reporting concerning staffing that do not necessarily capture the true staffing needs for the agency. For example, Intake is showing that our county is in need of additional staffing, but the report does not take in to consideration that a staff member was on FMLA during the timeframe being measured and has since returned therefore showing a staffing need where there is no need. However, Assessments and In-Home are fully staffed currently and show as not needing additional staff, but this is due to the fact that measures are not taking into account the number of children involved in the cases and looking solely at the number of cases as stated previously.

Angelina Noel informed the board of the caseload study that is being conducted by the state as part of House Bill 630 and the intention of the state to provide caseload standards for all programs so that there is consistency in the interpretation of appropriate caseload sizes across the state. Ms. Noel proceeded to review the chart provided in the board packets referencing the caseload sizes in child welfare. The board was informed that a new Social Worker position will be requested in the upcoming budget as a result of this caseload growth and evident staffing need so that the county can be in compliance with the state recommended standards.

Ms. Noel introduced Takishia McMiller, Children Services Supervisor, and Ms. McMiller added that caseload sizes have impacted many major areas especially those under heavy scrutiny at this time such as child fatalities. Many changes that are coming soon to Children Services include NC FAST implementation which will add additional administrative work to the already overworked staff and state policy revisions that will be mandating an increase in the frequency of contacts required resulting in an additional burden in meeting mandated time standards while still providing appropriate services to the children and families that they serve. Social Worker burnout is being seen and the number of courtesy cases being received from other counties has doubled from 2016 to 2017. The entire foster care unit has had turnover and the staff is new. There are many challenges to work through as the changes are handed down to the counties for implementation.

PILOT FOR NC CORELS PROJECT – Sabrina Franklin, Accounting Specialist, presented information concerning the NC CoReLS pilot. NC CoReLS is the system utilized by fiscal staff to report monthly service expenses to the state and claim reimbursement. The pilot began back in July and approximately 20 counties from across the state were asked to participate including Lee County. The purpose of the pilot was to navigate away from the error prone older legacy keying system and develop a more functional and easier to use web based program. A lot of extra time and work had to be put in by the Accounting Technician, Wanda Borge, who is responsible for completing the keying in NC CoReLS each month. Ms. Borge participated in long conference calls, attended off-site meetings/trainings and was required to key the monthly data in both the live legacy system and the testing environment. The pilots provided feedback concerning any technical issues encountered while completing this process and any issues with items such as reports to the state staff conducting the pilot. The state staff were very responsive to county feedback and quickly developed a successful system. Lee County was asked to be one of the first 10 pilot counties to utilize the new web based keying system in the month of February while claiming January services. The first month keying was a success and was found to be much easier than the legacy system used previously. No errors were encountered. Ms. Borge was very complimentary of her experience in the pilot project.

WORK REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAID – Ms. Noel discussed the proposed changes to the Medicaid program concerning work requirements. The proposal has been to implement a policy change following the model of the current Food and Nutrition Services Work Requirements policy that limits participation to individuals that are able to work and do not meet an exemption. In order to maintain eligibility and receive Medicaid services, non-exempt individuals would be required to complete work activities. This is a very new proposal and there is not a lot of information available, but Ms. Noel will keep the board informed as more information is made available. Ms. Noel also mentioned that two items she is watching currently are proposed legislation concerning elimination of LIHEAP and integrating food boxes into the FNS program by reducing the amount of FNS benefits issued to households and instead issuing food boxes to those that are eligible for higher allotments to help supplement them in lieu of issuing out large monetary benefit amounts.

PERFORMANCE SCORE CARD – Ms. Noel reviewed two documents that were included in the board packets. The scorecard shows where counties and the state currently are with regards to performance in the different program areas and what the required performance mandates are for those areas. The second document is a draft completed by the state that outlines the measures that are being proposed for each program and will be part of the contractual agreements with the counties. This is a working document and has not yet been finalized. Ms. Noel will keep the board informed as changes are made. One issue that has been discussed is that several of the measures outlined do not have reports that

measure the item indicated resulting in an inability to track performance in that area as defined. Based on the performance areas identified in the draft, Ms. Noel informed the board that there are some areas that she would like to see us improve which include: case closure rate less than 45 days, decrease in the maltreatment rate and decrease in placement moves per 1000 days. The case closure timeframe will likely improve with the addition of staff which will be requested in the upcoming budget. Ms. Noel and the Children Services Supervisors are currently brainstorming ways to improve the other two measures, but many factors that result in those deficiencies are out of their control due to the nature of the circumstances involved in certain cases. The Child Support and Economic Services sections of the draft are measures we currently maintain and/or exceed and therefore are not of any major concern at this time.

NEW EMPLOYEE INTRODUCTIONS – The new DSS attorney has been hired and will be starting on Tuesday, February 27th. The attorney's name is Brian Godfrey and he has experience in working as a DSS attorney in Moore County.

Member Dickens made a motion to go into closed session to discuss a personnel matter per NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6). Motion was seconded by Member Pickard.

Aye: Gail Dickens, David Riddle, Margaret Johnson and William Pickard
Nay: None

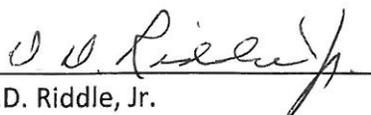
Chairperson Riddle moved that the motion had been adopted unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

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

Aye: Gail Dickens, David Riddle, Margaret Johnson and William Pickard.
Nay: None

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


D.D. Riddle, Jr.
Chairman


Sabrina Franklin
Secretary