

February 25, 2025

The Alamance County Social Services Board met for its regular monthly meeting on this date. The meeting was held at HSC Building (1st Floor) 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC with the following in attendance were: Dr. Darrell “Bud” Warner, DSS Board Member; Commissioner Ed Priola, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candice J. Gobble, DSS Director; Ms. Virginia Hunker, DSS Business Officer; Mr. Robert Ring, DSS HR Director; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney and Ms. Heidi York, County Manager were present.

Director Candice Gobble, DSS Director opened the meeting due to no board quorum.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda:

Consent Agenda tabled due to no quorum.

Action: All items will be moved to March 25, 2025 Board Meeting.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Virginia Hunker

	JANUARY 2025	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$6,601,589.00	64%	\$7,129,284.00	47%
EXPENDITURES	\$12,343,306.00	48%	\$12,020,477.00	44%

Ms. Hunker reported revenues always run a month behind. Ms. Hunker asked board members what would be helpful in presenting revenues and expenditures? Board members reported a “cheat sheet” would be helpful and also acronym one page document.

Action: A one-page cheat sheet will be created for DSS Board Members.

Fraud: See report –

Unit	January 2025	January 2024	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$21,436.54	\$19,355.87	\$214,762.49	\$138,895.06

Services – Ms. Lynette Wellons/Assistant Director of Services -

- No report.

Child Support – (Statistical Report Information) – see report.

Unit	January 2025	January 2024	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$897,705.62	\$871,145.245	\$6,338,716.28	\$6,162,352.29

Economic Support: Ms. Danae Pickard

- No report.

Operations – Director Candice J. Gobble

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of January 31, 2025

Vacancies	27
New Hires	2
Interagency Transfers	0
Resignations	2

Mr. Ring reported the following and going forward this information will be shared monthly.

January 24, 2025

# Applications Received	170
# Rejected Applications	82
# Forwarded to Hiring Manager	88
# Applicants Interviewed	28
# Applicants Hired	2

January 2024

# Applicants Hired	7
# Still Employed	4

Question: Has there been any kind of bonus requirement for employees to recruit?

Yes – we did try with the sign-on bonus for the entire county. There were two recruitment bonuses who received within DSS.

Director's Report – Candice J. Gobble, Director–

- See new business.

New Business: Highlights of 2024

Director Gobble reported Alamance County Department of Social Services highlights of 2024.

They are as follows:

Medicaid Expansion:

Medicaid Expansion went live January 2024 due to implementation begin in December 2023. We anticipated 11k applicants for Alamance County. There are a team of seven staff who complete these applications along with supervisors and trainers.

Expansion Data:

Date	Number of Applications Received
December 2023	1,212
January 2024	1,018
*February 2024	*867
*March 2024	*877

**These numbers are normal applications per month. We normally receive around 650 applications per month.*

Director Gobble reported to date we have 57,793 recipients who receive Medicaid. This was an increase of 8,356 recipients from December 2023. 32% of Alamance County population receives Medicaid which was a 4% increase in 2024.

Energy Programs:

Director Gobble reported the Energy Programs outgrew the PT staff that we originally allocated for these programs. From July 2024 to February 6, 2025 – there have been 6,995 applications received. The majority of Energy applications are received and processed during (July – August) and (December – January). These limited time programs were expanded to Economic Services teams who normally process Medicaid and Food & Nutrition (FNS) applications to meet the need of the hundreds of applications that are completed daily. With the expansion of staff assisting with the energy applications, we were able to stay within MOU compliance and timeliness standards.

E-Courts:

E-Courts launched in Alamance County in April 2024. The E-Courts system offers secure online access for attorneys and self-represented litigants to submit court documents via online to the clerk's office. All counties who are using E-Courts are able to pay filing fees and receive filing status updates via email. Alamance County was in the first phase of the new system. With the help of Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney, who started the preparation ahead of the launch with mock court hearings to prepare staff on the process prior to go-live date. Attorney Hamlett also met with the Clerk's Office on procedures and protocols to help streamline the process for DSS staff. Alamance County DSS staff were able to successfully learn and implement E-Courts with little to no impact to the community. This system is through the AOC.

Question: What is AOC?

AOC – Administrative of Courts System.

Child Welfare Pre-Service Training Program:

In North Carolina, the **Child Welfare Pre-Service Training (PST)** has been redesigned and has implemented statewide in February 2024. The training is now seven-weeks. The program added on three additional weeks as a part of the State's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan.

Question: What's Pre-Service?

It's a certification program that trains competency-based curriculum to provide new social workers with an overview of the child welfare system in NC. This program must be completed before social workers can receive case load. This only applies to Child Welfare Social Workers. This redesign has increased costs to counties. Alamance County DSS was fortunate to host one of the statewide trainings here in Alamance County and were allowed three spaces for our DSS staff.

The pre-service training is not held monthly, due to training space and qualified trainers. All 100 county DSS Social Work staff are competing for slots.

Question: Did the State increase the trainings?

DHHS did try to roll out Train-the-Trainer for Pre-Service to offer more trainings, but it was not successful.

KIOSK Reception Project:

We activated two reception KIOSKs in main lobby of HSC building. These KIOSK are designed to assist the customer in selecting the services they are seeking and reception staff are able to assist in a timely manner. The KIOSK will also give DSS the ability to track all traffic by using the check-in feature. We are now in discussions with Alamance County Health Department to be added to the new KIOSK system to assist all customers who enter HSC building.

Vacancies:

Director Gobble shared we continued to see vacancies in our high turnover areas. Since February 2024, we have continued to hold around 25-30 vacancies. Once College Job Fairs opened back up from COVID, our teams ensured presence in as many that were available. We also worked to update our web page which included sharing the benefits of social work and testimonies by a few of our staff members. We pushed a web campaign with hopes of receiving more applications to the agency. We established a recruitment billboard which is now located on I-85. We continue to work internally with our hiring committee on our hiring processes, timeframes for submission of application packets and our latest work have been around “*hiring the right fit*” for the agency. Within the hiring committee, we have revamped interview tools to assist supervisors in hiring the right fit. Our Adult Services Teams do a great job with hiring processes with successfully completing timelines to get the “right fit” hired.

Question: Did sign-on bonuses work?

We did try sign-on bonuses in 2021 – they were only active for four months until we received \$2k bonuses. We did have 27 eligible employees for the bonuses. There are 5 staff still employed at DSS and 2 of them have moved into supervisory roles.

Question: How long has the vacancies been an issue?

Discussions ensued regarding vacancies pre-covid to post-covid. At one point, we had 60 vacancies out of 231 staff positions. We have slowly closed that gap to now 29 vacancies. The vacancies are a statewide issue for social workers. We typically see issues with hiring social workers due to the amount of high case loads for staff due to the amounts of reports.

Question: Has there been any kind of bonus requirement for employees to recruit?

Yes – we tried the bonus requirement county wide. We had two that were employees of DSS.

Accomplishments:

- We continue development of our Adult Services and Child Welfare Training Areas.
- Successfully finalized 22 Adoptions in 2024.
- 36 children reached permanency by leaving foster care through adoption, guardianship or reunification of 46 total foster care closures. 10 of those children aged-out.
- Recruited 10 new foster families who were licensed. During COVID, the State of NC were struggling trying to recruit foster families. Placement disruptions occurred across the State which forced DSS to house foster children in their locations until placement found. We are fortunate in Alamance County to have VAYA funds which allows DSS to supplement foster families for placement needs, if needed.
- Continued efforts of outreach within the community. Since July, we have participated in over 30 events in the community.
- Adult Services Team organized and delivered Christmas gifts to 138 Persons Under Guardianship.
- Child Welfare Team successfully partnered with St. Marks Church on the Foster Care Christmas Event as well as other local churches who provided gifts for all foster children within Alamance Co. DSS.

A Look Forward to 2025:

Director Gobble expressed the look forward to FY 2025:

- We are beginning to shift to a **CQI** (Continuous Quality Improvement) as we work to find ways to incorporate CQI into our programs. Some counties have teams committed to CQI as departments. Here at DSS – we have incorporated CQI as a part of the trainer position duties. We are working to try and figure out small increments to implement that will help advance this work.
- The State has begun to work on **Adult Services Work Load study**. This study will provide insight into the amount of time staff spend on identified task, such as home visits, documentation, collateral contacts etc. This study is similar to child welfare work load study that was previously completed which indicated that these staff members spend the majority of their time on clerical part of the work, such as completing forms and submitting documentation.
- **PATH NC** – The Partnership and Technology Hub for North Carolina is a technology platform for NC Child Welfare staff that will support their efforts in promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. This technology along with policy changes will impact the way services are currently delivered.

Question: Do you consider cross-training?

Most of our departments are not able to cross train due to eligibility requirements. There are some units that have tried the Universal Worker within Economic Services.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, March 25, 2025** at DSS – Professional Board Room located on the 1st Floor at 319 N. Graham Hopedale Rd., Burlington NC.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date Approved: _____