

July 22, 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: Mrs. Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Vice-Chair; Commissioner Ed Priola, DSS Board Member; Dr. Darrell Warner, DSS Board Member; Ms. Candice J. Gobble, DSS Director; Ms. Virginia Hunker, DSS Business Officer; Ms. Danae Pickard, Economic Services Division Director; Ms. Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director of Services; Ms. Jamie Hamlett, DSS Attorney; and Ms. Mary McGinty Shaw, Child Welfare were present.

Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Vice-Chair, opened the meeting.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda: Tyronna Hooker, DSS Board Vice-Chair

June 2025 items on the consent agenda approved. Dr. Darrell Warner, DSS Board Member, made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner Ed Priola, DSS Board Member.

Staff Reports:

Fiscal: Virginia Hunker

	JUNE 2025	% OF BUDGET	PRIOR YTD	% OF BUDGET
REVENUES	\$12,980,101.00	104%	\$10,867,785.00	96%
EXPENDITURES	\$22,235,843.00	82%	\$21,180,350.00	85%

Ms. Hunker reported there were no additional changes to the DSS Budget. This is the last month before the year end. We will not receive year end revenues and expenditures possibility until August 2025.

Fraud: See report –

Unit	June 2025	June 2024	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Fraud	\$171,327.98	\$43,336.38	\$568,663.00	\$440,671.40

Services: Lynette Wellons, Assistant Director -

Assistant Director Wellons reported that DSS have successfully completed 27 adoptions this fiscal year with one social worker working on these cases. This is a huge accomplishment. We currently have six adoptions that are “pending” which will be reflected in the next fiscal year.

Assistant Director Wellons reported we continue Foster Care Recruitment for potential new foster families. We will host new MAPP (Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting) Training scheduled in August 2025. We have received a lot of interest in this upcoming course.

Assistant Director Wellons we continue to be plagued with vacancies in Child Welfare. Most recently, we are down to only (3) SW in Foster Care and (1) in Adoptions. We currently are holding 27 cases per caseload when the State calls for 15 cases per caseload. We have recently hired 2 new SW staff but are waiting on Pre-Service training before caseload is assigned.

Assistant Director Wellons reported we are heavy into Audit season. We are currently participating in 4 intense audits.

Assistant Director Wellons reported for Adult Services – MAC coding (billing) has been expanded to bring in additional revenue for all adult services cases.

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

Unit	June 2025	June 2024	Current YTD	Prior Fiscal Year
Child Support	\$920,237.10	\$988,662.81	\$10,862,013.78	\$11,140,767.61

Assistant Director Wellons reported there are new Medicaid requirements in Child Support which require individuals to apply for Medicaid if they are eligible. This change is part of the ongoing efforts to ensure that non-custodial parents contribute financially to their children’s healthcare costs. The collaboration between Medicaid and child support agencies aims to provide comprehensive assistance to families and children, ensuring that all necessary financial support is secured.

Economic Support: Ms. Danae Pickard

Ms. Pickard reported the following:

With Tropical Storm Chantal weather event and the devastation to communities could potentially open up DSNAP (Disaster Food Stamp Program) if the event is declared federal emergency. Governor Josh Stein declared the Type I Disaster Declaration for the following counties: Orange, Durham, Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Granville, Person, and Wake counties.

Webinar is scheduled for today to provide more guidance. Alamance Co. DSS is prepared if DSNAP is activated. We have been informed by Alamance County Emergency Management that Alamance County has met the financial threshold needed.

Ms. Pickard provided Mid-Year mark (6 months) for all Economic Services.

We have received the following:

- 36,000 applications with less than 100 staff
- 40,000 phone calls
- 15,000 visits to the reception area
- 10,000 coordination for Medicaid transportation
- Program Integrity (Fraud) established \$100k in claims

We continue to monitor State Budget/Legislature – we have scheduled meeting this afternoon.

The CIP Energy Program started July 1, 2025. We only received partial allotment of \$22k due to the State budget not approved yet. The funding was allotted within 2 days of the allotment. We are hopeful of getting a full allotment soon.

Operations – Director Candice J. Gobble

Administrative Support/Personnel: Robert Ring

See Statistical Report – as of June 30, 2025

Vacancies	23
New Hires	7
Interagency Transfers	0
Resignations	7

Mr. Ring reported as of July 22, 2025; we currently have 24 vacancies. We received 251 applications in the month of June. We completed 21 interviews in June and hired 8 of those applicants.

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

Director Gobble reported on the Tropical Storm Chantal event on July 6, 2025. DSS activated two shelters (Mebane Arts Center and Fairchild Recreation Center). We assisted 43 individuals and continue to provide care coordination for individuals impacted.

New Business: 2025-2028 Strategic Plan

Director Gobble expressed the new 2025-2028 Alamance County Strategic Plan. Director Gobble, Danae Pickard and Lynette Wellons presented the following:

Strategic Planning Process:

Organizing & analyzing	Readiness Assessment, Planning the plan, Stakeholder Assessment, SWOC Analysis
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Strategic Issues	Vision, Mission, Core Purpose & Values work and Identifying Strategic Issues
Strategic Strategies	Strategic Goals, Action Steps and Budget Impacts
Implementing & Monitoring	Navigating the strategies, putting them into action and ensuring appropriate evaluation tools in place.

The committee used surveys to adopt this planning process and spent many months with committee meetings.

Survey Results: (50 Community Partners – 28% responded)

How would you rate your overall experience working with the Department of Social Services over the past year?	21% (Fair) 42% (Good) 14% (Very Good) 21% (Excellent)
How satisfied are you with the responsiveness of DSS services?	21% (Very Satisfied) 35% (Satisfied) 28% (Neutral) 7% (Dissatisfied) 7% (Very dissatisfied)
How effectively does DSD communicate with your organization?	28% (Very Effective) 14% (Somewhat effective) 42% (Neutral) 7% (Somewhat ineffective) 7% (Very ineffective)

Common Trends Identified:

- Communication
- Education and Information Sharing
- Retention of Staff

Survey Results: (Staff Surveys) – (1) Not Likely to (5) Very Likely

How likely are you to recommend DSS as a place to work?	3.77% Average Rating
How satisfied are you with the support you receive from your direct supervisor in helping you succeed in your role?	4.35% Average Rating
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication across DSS as a whole?	3.29% Average Rating
How satisfied are you with the level of training and development opportunities provided?	3.59% Average Rating
How satisfied are you with the level of support you receive from the management team in achieving your work goals?	3.91% Average Rating
Do you feel you have the necessary resources to perform your job effectively?	3.96% Average Rating
How confident are you in the ability of DSS to address challenges and make improvements?	3.48% Average Rating
Do you feel like your work/contributions are adequately appreciated?	3.78% Average Rating

How clear are the expectations of your role?	4.36% Average Rating
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication within your team in terms of clarity and timeliness?	4.03% Average Rating

Common Trends Identified:

- Communication (between departments and across agency)
- Hiring and Retention
- Training
- Recognition
- Innovation

Question: As it relates to Innovation – were there are exceptions?

- *The discussions have been around AI. We were thinking about adding “chat boxes” in our application processes, etc. We know any AI tools will be in the future.*

Survey Results (Customer Surveys) – 100 surveys completed:

95.74% of customers gave us top ratings on:

- Customer Service they received
- Information being easy to understand
- Staff’s professionalism
- Agency being user-friendly

31.91% of customers gave additional feedback about:

- What other services/resources would be most helpful?
- What would have made their DSS experience more beneficial?
- One of the most common trends was regarding housing. Alamance County DSS does not provide housing resources, but we are aware we need to do better educating the community on what community partners do provide housing resources.

Assistant Director Lynette Wellons presented the following:

Mission, Vision and Core Purpose:

- **Our Mission:** To strengthen and support individuals and families through compassionate service, dependable care and responsive programs that promote safety, well-being and opportunity.
- **Our Vision:** A community where individuals and families have the support needed to thrive, through the dedication of a skilled workforce delivering efficient, compassionate and transparent services.
- **Our Core Purpose:** Building Better Tomorrows

Core Values:

1. **Integrity** – “Do the Right Thing – Even When No One’s Watching”
2. **Adaptability** – “Ready for the Unexpected, Built to Respond”
3. **Compassion** – “Lead with Heart, Serve with Purpose”
4. **Respect** – “Differences make us Stronger – Respect makes Us One”
5. **Dependability** – “We Show Up, We Follow Through”

Strategic Focus Area #1: Staff Recruitment and Retention -

- **Objective: To build and retain a skilled, compassionate and dependable workforce**

<u>Recruitment</u>	<u>Retention</u>
Update job postings to include engaging language highlighting agency values benefits, career growth and workplace culture. (Q2- 2025 Forward)	Create & implement a DSS Ambassador Program that identifies & trains staff to serve as agency representatives, supporting recruitment, onboarding, and community outreach. (2026 – 2027)
Revise & standardize interview procedures (Q2 – 2025 forward)	Design & implement a monthly recognition program that highlights staff members exemplifying the organization’s core values (Q4 – 2025)
Diversify recruitment efforts by leveraging social media platforms, professional associations, community organizations and strengthening partnerships with universities, community colleges and workforce training programs to attract a wider, qualified applicant pool. (Q2 – 2025 forward)	Strengthening agency morale, connections and workplace culture by supporting the Boosters Committee in planning and hosting quarterly events that engage and unite staff. (Q2 – 2025 forward)

Question: Diversity – What does that mean?

- *We have diversified our recruitment efforts through billboards, movie theaters, etc., to get the word out about our job postings. This month we started with Social Workers. We are highlighting some of our SW who are currently working.*

We have added to our interview process – to add more conversational tone and ask more conversational questions with the applicant. We have also added a series of emails that are forwarded to potential candidates such as:

- Top 10 Reasons to become a DSS Employee here at Alamance County DSS,
- We added bios of our Leadership Team members
- Training Opportunities are outlined

Question: What is the Ambassador Program?

- *This program will extend to line staff who would like to be more involved in leadership roles. The program would allow staff to participate Leadership Team meetings, DSS Board meetings and other leadership trainings.*

Economic Services Division Director Danae Pickard presented the following:

Strategic Focus Area #2 – Operational Efficiency

- **Objective: Deliver high quality services that meet or exceed standards and maximize value.**
 1. Implement quarterly customer satisfaction surveys (Q2 – 2025 forward)
 2. Evaluate current operational workflows and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency through new technologies or software solutions. (Q3 – 2025 forward)
 3. Ensure ongoing monitoring of state MOU performance measures with a focus on meeting monthly measures. (Ongoing all 3 years)
 4. Identify and implement modern training solutions – such as e-learning platforms, chatbots, and artificial intelligence tools. (2027 – 2028)
 5. Identify county departments and community organizations with similar services or shared goals (2026 – 2027)
 6. Establish a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Framework. (Q2 – 2025 to Q4 – 2026) Expansion Q1 – 2027)
 7. Promote collaboration across departments by establishing regular cross-team meetings, joint projects and knowledge sharing sessions (Q4 – 2025 forward)

Strategic Focus Area #3: Connect, Convey and Conquer

- **Objective: Enhance communication internally and with external partners to foster trust, raise awareness, and improve public perception.**
 1. Develop and distribute a regular newsletter that includes updates from the Director's Corner (Q4 – 2025 forward)
 2. Organize quarterly department informational sessions for staff (Q\$ - 2025 forward) – We conduct All Staff meetings currently quarterly.
 3. Increase community presence by attending local outreach events. (Q1 – 2025 forward)
 4. Enhance engagement by interacting with customers through various platforms, Research and pilot new communication tools. (2026 – 2027)

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- Bi-Annual Strategic Steering Committee Meetings focus on evaluating progress, identifying challenges and recommending adjustments needed to maintain momentum and alignment with agency priorities.
- Additional staff members will be added to the steering committee to provide diverse insight and support increased accountability across all strategic areas.
- A monitoring spreadsheet will be developed and maintained to serve as a central tracking tool for all goals, actions and performance metrics.

Question: Do you have SMART Goals that are measurable? Can you quantify those goals?

- *Yes – we will make sure all goals can be quantified and fiscally responsible.*

Director Gobble reported to the Board Members we will present to all DSS staff at the next DSS All Staff Meeting. We have condensed the one-page version of this presentation that will be forwarded to all staff that highlights the Vision, Mission and Core Purpose. As well as the three goals presented today:

- Hiring & Retention
- Operational Efficiency
- Connect, Convey and Conquer

Vice-Chair Hooker expressed that DSS did not focus on exit interviews to help with the strategic planning process.

Question: What’s the process to roll out to staff? What will be presented to line staff?

- *We are hopeful to encourage our staff with the “Mission”. We hope staff will be able to see that we focused on the comments/surveys and see the innovation and staff recognition aspects we tend to focus on in the coming years.*

DSS Board Members supported the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. Board Members congratulated the committee members and their efforts in pulling this plan together. Motion made by Vice -Chair Hooker to approve the plan and seconded by Commissioner Ed Priola.

Announcements:

None

Adjournment -

The next board meeting is 12:00 noon **Tuesday, August 26, 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 1:17pm. Motion was made by Dr. Darrell Warner and seconded by Commissioner Ed Priola to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carmen L. Morrow

Date Approved: _____