

COUNTY OF CHATHAM

CHATHAM COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Jennie Kristiansen, Director

Social Services Board
Richard Edwards
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Valerie Broadway
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ORGANIZED 1770

707 SQUARE MILES

Chatham County Board of Social Services Meeting Minutes March 18, 2020

The March meeting was conducted by conference call due to COVID-19 social distancing. Members and Guest callers in attendance were: Richard Edwards, Chair; Tom Droke; Vice Chair; Valerie Broadway, Member; Emily Lowrance, Member; Jennie Kristiansen, Director; Carl Thompson, Sr., Guest and Nancy Burgess, Executive Assistant.

Richard Edwards called the meeting to order.

February meeting minutes were amended and approved with a motion from Tom Droke, a second motion from Emily Lowrance; all in favor.

COVID-19 Update:

Ms. Kristiansen provided an update on the DSS response to COVID 19. The situation was changing daily (and sometimes hourly). The agency was working to be as adaptable as possible, serving the community and also taking precautions for staff. As of March 18th the county manager advised that public lobby areas would be closed. Walk in traffic at DSS remained the same with 54 people on the 16th and 35 on 17th. The purpose of the closure of public areas was to reduce the risk of exposure. Employees who could work from home were being strongly encouraged not to come into the office except for necessities. The agency worked on plans for alternatives for all major agency functions. The county government website had agency updates and information that were being regularly shared. Some of the changes in services were as follows:

- DHHS waived the required face to face interview for CIP/LIEAP applications and were allowing a telephone interview for applications.
- Some face to face contacts could be done by phone for Adult Guardianship cases in facilities and Special Assistance beneficiaries in a Special Care Unit (SCU), and home visits for Special Assistance In-Home cases could be waived.
- Young adults in foster care could still receive their 18-21 board rate benefit if they are college students who live on college campuses that have been closed due to precautions related to COVID-19 and they return home to live with the parent from whom they were removed.
- For child welfare and adult services, the recommended protocol for required home visits was provided by the NC Office of Emergency Medical Services. The recommendation included that each social worker be equipped with masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and disposable bags.
- There was a drop box available at the entrance of DSS available Monday through Friday from 8-5.
- For current recipients of Food and Nutrition Services (SNAP) who will renew benefits in March or April, benefits will automatically renew for 6-12 months.

Economic Services Updates:

Much of the work in economic services had been working to restructure services in response to COVID-19.

Chatham County received a LIEAP Reallocation of \$4079 with most of the funds already spent.

The space heater pilot program was almost ready to be implemented, however, given the amount of time it had taken to work through the procedural and legal issues, it may be more appropriate to wait until next year.

The Division of Child Development and Early Education provided some guidance for childcare providers and will be paying subsidy payments for the full month of March, regardless of a child’s attendance. Parents were still required to pay all parent fees at this time.

Family Services Updates:

Ms. Kristiansen provided CPS timeliness data for both January and February (January was inadvertently left out the last meeting). For January CPS initiation timeliness was 94% (2 out of 33 cases). In both situations diligent efforts were made to locate families but there were difficulties in reaching parents. Both were family assessment cases (i.e. not abuse or serious neglect). For February, CPS initiation timeliness was 92% (two cases of 26 were late). One was sent to us from another county 6 days after the report was received. The other case was several hours outside of time frame.

As of last week, 14 families were registered for the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting spring class, 6 of whom are kinship families. This class may have to be modified or rescheduled, depending on the status of COVID 19 response.

General Agency Updates:

All employees attended a mandatory Groundwater training event at the New Agriculture Conference On March 3rd. The event was hosted by Chatham County Schools with Chatham County Health Department in attendance as well.

The Social Services Institute is scheduled for August 5-7th in Hickory, NC. This training is open and available to all board members who may be interested.

The board was very happy to hear that Carl Thompson, Sr. was willing to return for a second term. His appointment is on the April Board of Commissioners agenda for approval.

There was a motion to adjourn from Tom Droke, a second motion from Emily Lowrance; all in favor.

The next meeting will be conducted via conference call on April 15th at 3:00pm.

Chair

Date

Secretary

Date