

COUNTY OF CHATHAM

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Services Board:
Sara Welch
Memory Dossenbach
Cecil Wilson
Peter Varney
Maria Soto

ORGANIZED 1770

707 SQUARE MILES

Chatham County Board of Social Services Session Meeting Minutes February 21, 2024

Members in attendance: Sara Welch, President; Memory Dossenbach Vice Chair; Cecil Wilson, Member; Peter Varney, Member; Maria Soto, Member; Jennie Kristiansen; Director and LeAnn McKoy, Planner/Evaluator.

Memory Dossenbach called the meeting to order.

January Meeting Minutes were approved with a motion from Memory Dossenbach, a second motion from Maria Soto with all in favor.

Members reviewed the monthly data report.

Economic Services Updates:

Medicaid Expansion enrollment remains strong with approximately 1,000 people enrolling each day (over 352,000 in the first 70 days). This is double what many other states have seen in terms of enrollment rates. Locally, timeliness standards are being monitored and thus far, meeting standards. As mentioned in January, the Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM) started making Medicaid determinations for NC applicants. So far, this has gone smoothly with more applications being processed statewide than anticipated. It is unclear exactly what county impacts will be, but DHB has notified counties that when the county "touches" the application, the accuracy becomes the responsibility of the county (even if the FFM made an error in determining the initial eligibility). So, it appears that case workers will need to review the application for accuracy.

There is a NCFast modernization initiative called the AIM Project (Application and Infrastructure Modernization) that is working to transform and modernize NCFast applications and infrastructure. This will be done through cloud migration and the implementation of new tools, technologies, and automation to respond to business and citizen's needs faster. The first phase of the project is to migrate NCFast to the cloud (currently operates from on-premises servers) and to make it available 24/7. The second phase will be focused on updating inefficient programs to improve the caseworker experience and make it easier to enhance and maintain the system. There is also work underway to require the Medicaid program to use NCFast as a document management system. The goal is to make this transition by July 1. Currently, functionality for scanning documents into NCFast is limited (page limits, cannot scan directly into the system). The goal is to enable a drag and drop feature to assist with some of the problems. There are no plans to make any further improvements to the system because there are plans for replacement of the technology.

The new summer EBT program, called "Sun Bucks" is the first USDA permanent program added in decades and involves a \$120.00 per child automatic payment (\$40.00 per month) for the summer. Eligible children are on the free or reduced lunches and children ages 7-16 and participate in Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, and Work First. Cecil Wilson asked when families would get this first payment and Ms. Kristiansen will follow up on this.

The Childcare Subsidy Program will be monitored next week by Division of Child Development and Early Education. This monitoring takes place every three years and evaluates eligibility and re-eligibility determinations. DCDEE- state is spending at 85.5%. ARPA dollars expire 9/24, could see a change in numbers due to reduction in direct services dollars. The stabilization grant for providers is due to expire 6/24.

There is a significant change to the Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) policy that is the result of an audit by the Administration for Children and Families, taking effect 2/17/2024. The definition of crisis has been updated and a medical reason is no longer a requirement. If a household is disconnected or in jeopardy of being disconnected and meet the CIP income requirements, then they are eligible for CIP. For households facing a medical crisis or who are already disconnected, the processing time frame has been shortened from 48 hours to 18 hours. This will likely result in more households being eligible for services, however, there is no anticipated increase in funding.

During the month of January, 291 applications were processed for the Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) with a 71% approval rate. There is approximately \$23,000 remaining in the LIEAP allocation and \$17,000 in the CIP allocation.

Family Services Updates:

An overview of the behavioral health funding that was included in the budget for fiscal year 24 and 25 was provided to counties last week (approximately \$312 million in FY 24 and \$498 million in FY 25). In year one, the priority is on funding infrastructure within DHHS to expand impact of programs, identifying federal funding opportunities by leveraging state dollars, and using data and community input to prioritize projects. Provider rates, including hospital rates, have also been raised. In the second year, funds will be used to support innovative programming and to enhance existing programs to improve service quality. These include improvements to NC's Crisis System, including investments to ensure access to safe places to go (e.g. Behavioral Health Urgent Care, Facility Based Crisis, Peer and Community Respite, and NCSTART).

NC DHHS hosted a meeting in Raleigh for NCFast/CWIS pilot counties to see functionality of the new technology solution as the state is transitioning away from the Curam software for child welfare. The new system will be in Salesforce, a different technology platform and is expected to be much easier to use and maintain. It is anticipated that counties will start using the new system for CPS Intake and Assessments in January 2025 with the pilot counties going in last in August or September of 2025. When the pilot counties transition over, they will also transition foster care and ongoing to avoid working in two systems. All counties agreed with this plan.

Agency Updates:

The budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 is well underway. The Department submitted estimated budgets, projecting expenditures and revenue through the end of the current fiscal year. All budgets for the next fiscal year are due at the end of February. DSS is requesting additional positions in the Food and Nutrition unit and child welfare.

The FY 24 Record Retention and Confidentiality Training finished last week, conducting three sessions for all employees that covered public records, best practices for naming documents, secure passwords, and internal information sessions. The goal has been to offer this annually with a section of review and also new material.

Jason Smith will be transitioning to the housing director position in the manager's office next week. The Emergency Housing Assistance Program will stay at DSS and there will be continued collaboration moving forward. There are details that are unresolved that need to be worked through in the weeks to come.

Pastor Wilson asked a question about the newly implemented peer warm line and shared some information. Also, asked about agency utilization of NCCARE 360. Ms. Kristiansen reported that the agency has considered it and it was also something that the Housing Collective explored early on, however, it did not meet the needs of what agencies were seeking, nor did it have reporting options.

Then next meeting will be held on March 20, 2024 at 4:00pm in the Ground Conference Room at CCDSS.

With no further items to discuss there was a motion to adjourn from Cecil Wilson with a second motion from Peter Varney with all in favor.

Chair

Date

Secretary

Date