

**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Patricia Baker, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
September 22, 2020**

Board Members Present

Mrs. Karen Watford; Ms. Minnie Dukes; Ms. Jane Murphy; Mr. Todd Yates

Others in Attendance

**Ms. Trish Baker; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Susan Craig; Ms. Katrina McMasters;
Mrs. Susan Bryan; Ms. Elizabeth Huff; Ms. Sheri Woodyard; Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Mr. Jason Franklin**

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Mrs. Karen Watford.

Review of the Agenda – Additions/Modifications

No changes to the Agenda.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Jane Murphy made a motion to approve the Agenda for the meeting. Mr. Todd Yates seconded the motion. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to approve the regular minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting. Mrs. Minnie Dukes seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Board Member Comments

Mrs. Karen Watford thanked Mr. Todd Yates for filling in for her last month.

Vote on Chairperson

The floor was opened for Nomination for DSS Board chair. Mrs. Minnie Dukes nominated Mrs. Karen Watford. Mr. Todd Yates seconded the nomination. No other nominations were offered. The nomination was approved unanimously.

Management Report – Submitted in Writing

Mrs. Susan Bryan reported the expenditures year to date is looking very good. Special LINKS spending is higher; however, this will be reimbursed at 100 percent. Dues and Subscriptions is at 99 percent spent, but that is a one time per year charge and that will level out as the year progresses.

Ms. Elizabeth Huff stated that it is early in the year and some things will be changing. The USDA has stopped most of the waivers and workers are beginning to receive recertification paperwork and they are working on these. Medicaid recertifications have been extended through October 2020. Workers have been asked to start working on these cases now so they will not be so far behind when the waivers end. No Medicaid cases are being terminated now except for very particular reasons.

Ms. Huff reported that in the Day Care area, paying child care providers for full time care of afterschool children has been discussed and decided at the State level. A report has been provided and those cases will be reviewed to assure that the providers are being paid at 100 percent care rather than 75 percent time. The foot traffic in the Agency has increased some but we continue to receive a large number of paper applications. PPE shields are being used by staff in offices or in conference rooms.

Ms. Huff let the Board know that Program Integrity will be addressed in a presentation that will be given by Jason Franklin later in the meeting.

Mr. Scott Craver reported that in the Child Support area the dip in collections that was anticipated for August did not materialize. Collections for August were at \$1.2 million. This looks very good and August was a seemingly strong month. Child Support is very much ahead of collections as compared to other years. The Establishment agent position has been filled by an internal employee. That promotion has caused another vacancy in Child Support.

Ms. Katrina McMasters reported that the management report provided to DSS Board is an internal report rather than the normal management report, which is more detailed. Reports received have steadily gone up. We have not been able to fill open positions; however, we are continuing to close cases. The State just came out with some continuous quality improvement guidelines that will take effect in the very near future. The division is doing okay in regards to the numbers of open cases. The number of children taken into care has decreased, but when school starts back in full swing, the numbers are likely to rise.

Mrs. Susan Craig reported that in the Permanency Planning area, children are finding permanence in a variety of ways. The children that are currently in care seem to have more significant needs and the workers are trying to get all needed services. The area currently has two vacancies. We hope to fill the licensing vacancy very soon.

Mrs. Craig reported that in the Adult Services area, there was a significant decrease in the number of reports received in August as compared to last month and last year at this same time. We had four wards that passed away. Visits continue virtually unless there is a need to transport one of wards to a doctor or dental appointment. We currently have one vacancy in this area.

Ms. Trish Baker reported that there are currently 16 vacancies and we are working to get some of them filled. We seem to be struggling to get good qualified applicants. There are two office support positions in the Income Maintenance area that have been put on hold due to lighter walk-in traffic. We do have Income Maintenance Caseworker I's at the front desk to greet walk-ins.

Program Integrity Presentation – Jason Franklin, Income Maintenance Investigator II

In the past 2 years, Davidson County had 3 stores substantiated by the Office of Attorney General for committing EBT fraud. Mr. Jason Franklin summarized the information provided in the packet regarding the number of referrals received due to the fraudulent activities. The categories of overissue were explained to the Board. Melody Clark is the hearings officer and hears all of the cases presented for Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH). Our Agency only investigates the individuals involved. The Office of Attorney General investigates the stores and forwards the referrals to the appropriate County Agency. There was lengthy discussion and description of the three stores and how the fraud referrals were handled. Mr. Yates would like to work on getting the legislature to add more investigators to the Office of Attorney General. Collections for fraud claims can be accomplished through recoupment from their ongoing benefits as well as cash payments. The rate of pay back was also explained to the Board. The most recent three-month average for fraud referrals is 26 per month. An explanation of how and why folks are investigated was also provided to the Board. Program Integrity is a hard job and hard to get the proof for some of the referrals. There was also lengthy discussion about the fraudulent use of benefits and the sharing of videos from bigger grocery stores. Mr. Yates asked that someone check to see if there was anything in the State agreement that makes big box stores liable to provide info to the Agency related to investigation of fraudulent benefits received.

Old Business

COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Program - Update

We have issued \$34,000 in benefits from the COVID/CARES Act monies. 234 individuals have applied and we have approved 68. The bulk of the payments are going to rent/mortgage and utilities. We are not using these funds to the level that we had hoped.

New Business

Record Destruction

23 Adoption Assistance files, 67 Child Protective Service files, 84 Adult Service files and 59 Adult Home Case Management Services for Medicaid files have been identified as being ready for purge from the system. They all meet the criteria for time frames for destruction. Ms. Baker asked that the Board consider approving the destruction of these files. Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to destroy the file as described. Mrs. Minnie Dukes seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Court Updates – Sheri Woodyard

Ms. Sheri Woodyard reported that court is still moving along. Cases are still being scheduled on an hour by hour basis. They have not had problems with getting smaller numbers in the court room. In October, they will lose two weeks of Court due Judges conferences and the Clerk of Court is moving into the new addition one of the weeks. Ms. Danielle DeAngelis will be leaving the Attorney's office at the end of the month. Her position has been posted.

Director Updates

Ms. Baker shared that she has worked with Mr. Chuck Frye, County Attorney and they have posted the position as a full time DSS attorney. We will be working on getting contracts out to outside attorneys for help during the interim of getting someone hired and trained.

Ms. Baker shared with the Board that she and Mr. Frye met with Judge Wayne Michael and had a really good meeting. There was discussion about the court calendar. Rotation of judges was discussed and that will begin again in the very near future. Judge Michael stated the court rooms are the judges and theirs to operate as they see fit. Judge Michael feels it is better to have some rotation of judges. Discussion was led by the State between judges, judicial districts and Guardians ad Litem regarding court collaborative. Davidson County did not participate in that discussion. Ms. Baker will revisit the possibility of Davidson County getting involved in the court collaborative after the new year. Ms. Baker feels that the Court Collaborative helps with getting things cohesive across districts and the entire state as well as getting to know the attorneys, judges, etc. in a more relaxed atmosphere.

We will have two requests going to Facility Committee. The first request is to seek approval to begin work on grading for Davidson House. This would need to be completed in order to use the basement of Davidson House for storage of files. The second request would be for approval of a DSS playground. Due to space constraints, it would probably not be a full playground. The proposal is to put it at the end of the Governmental Center building. The playground would be on a smaller scale and we will need to explore what could be put there. All of the moneys for these two projects would come from PBB funds. Davidson House area was explored for the playground, but this would not be a good option. This idea came from a parent who wanted to be able to take their children outside. There was discussion between Board members, Trish and Sheri regarding how well the proposed playground would be used. The children need an outlet outside of the play rooms. There was lengthy discussion about parenting happening in other places other than the Agency.

Ms. Baker shared that due to the number of vacancies in the Services area, she and Mrs. Susan Bryan will be looking at the budget to try to find available moneys to contract with Vanguard for two temporary workers for the remainder of the fiscal year. We may possibly have to use PBB funds.

Ms. Baker also shared that we will have a budget amendment going to the BOCC around the first of October for \$153,000 for APS/CPS funding. The proposal of how these monies would be used was shared. There will also be additional moneys given to us for Foster Care stipends, which would be for any child in a licensed placement. This stipend will be issued for July, August and September.

Ms. Baker let the Board know that the Davidson County Deputy that was placed in our building has retired and no replacement has been provided. The Sheriff is very short staffed and cannot dedicate an employee to this post at this time. We are looking at other ways to protect the building and Social Services will need to contribute to a replacement for this deputy.

Ms. Jane Murphy made a motion to move the meeting into closed session at 5:20 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Minnie Dukes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Closed Session

No Action was taken during Closed Session. The meeting returned to Open Session

Return to Open Session

Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes from the August 25, 2020 meeting. Mrs. Minnie Dukes second the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Date of Next Meeting

The next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 4:00 pm at the Governmental Center, fourth floor, Commissioners Meeting Room, Lexington, North Carolina.

Adjournment

Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Minnie Dukes. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 pm.

Minutes submitted by Patricia Baker