

**DAVIDSON COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

*Patricia Baker, Director*



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services  
Board Meeting Minutes  
May 25, 2021**

**Board Members Present via Video Conference and in Person**

**Mrs. Karen Watford; Mrs. Minnie Dukes;  
Mr. Todd Yates; Mr. Ed Dawson**

**Others Present**

**Ms. Trish Baker; Mrs. Susan Bryan; Ms. Elizabeth Huff; Ms. Katrina McMasters; Mr. Scott Craver;  
Mrs. Lexa Eagle; Ms. Sheri Woodyard; Mr. Jason Hicks; Mr. Casey Smith;  
Mr. Chuck Frye; Ms. Victoria Whitt, CEO, Sandhills Center;  
Mr. Anthony Ward, COO, Sandhills Center; Mr. Tony Dill**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Mrs. Karen Watford. Mrs. Watford let the Board know that Ms. Jane Murphy would not be in attendance for today's meeting.

**Review of the Agenda – Additions/Modifications**

There were no additions or modifications to the Agenda.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Ms. Minnie Dukes made a motion to adopt the Agenda for the meeting. Mr. Ed Dawson seconded the motion. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes from regular meeting held on April 27, 2021 were reviewed. Mr. Ed Dawson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Todd Yates seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Ms. Sheri Woodyard provided the minutes of the Closed Sessions for March and April to the Board for their review and written approval.

**Public Comments**

There was no public comment.

## **Board Member Comments**

Mrs. Karen Watford took this time to express that she understands that this is our chosen job and wanted to thank staff for their commitment to Social Services and the citizens of Davidson County. She further stated that she feels closer to the Agency and feels we have a wonderful team doing a difficult job. She expressed her thanks to Trish Baker for her leadership role. She also expressed thanks to Mr. Casey Smith, County Manager, for learning more about DSS this year, trying to help us in our endeavors and through difficult situations. Mr. Tony Dill was also recognized.

Mrs. Watford also announced that Mrs. Minnie Dukes will be leaving the Board, because she is moving away from Lexington and Davidson County. Mrs. Dukes will be missed. Mrs. Watford expressed that she appreciates the fact the Ms. Dukes is genuinely caring.

Mrs. Dukes shared that this has been an enrichment in her life. She has really appreciated getting to know everyone and knowing that people will be taken care of. She will miss being on the Board.

## **Presentation and Discussion – Sandhills LME/MCO – Victoria Whitt, CEO**

In looking at different LME/MCO's, it was felt that it would be beneficial for the DSS Board to hear from Sandhills Center. Ms. Baker introduced Ms. Victoria Whitt and Mr. Anthony Ward. Ms. Whitt shared that she has been the CEO of Sandhills for the past 11 years. She started at Sandhills in 1980 and has worked her way up the ladder to the CEO position. Ms. Whitt shared her credentials. Mr. Anthony Ward, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Director of Sandhills, shared his appreciation for being a part of the meeting. He is a nine-year veteran of Sandhills. Before Sandhills, he was with Guilford County Community Health.

Ms. Whitt started with a general overview of Sandhills history. Quarterly and Annual reports were shared with the Board as well as other written information about Sandhills Center and how they operate. Their catchment area includes nine counties, in the middle of NC. They have a population of 1.1 million. They serve 192,000 Medicaid covered lives and 124,871 uninsured lives. They have a 21-member Board and there is a County Commissioner from each of the nine counties they cover. Ms. Whitt spoke about commissioner appointment. She has spoken to all of her Board, especially the commissioners, on the Sandhills Board to let them know Davidson County Commissioners may be contacting them.

Ms. Whitt shared a few basic facts about Sandhills Center. They started out in the late 70's as Sandhills Center and remain under that name to this date. The counties they served at that time were Anson, Moore, Richmond, Montgomery and Hoke. In June 2003, Randolph County approached Sandhills Center about a merger. They were approached again in 2005 by Lee and Harnett counties merged with Sandhills Center. In 2013 with the beginning of Medicaid waiver, Guilford County approached Sandhills about merging with them as well. Their corporate office is in West End, North Carolina. At this time, all of the merger counties have satellite offices/clinics. The people that interact most with the people they serve are located in these satellite offices. The Board approved budget for Sandhills Center for this year is approximately \$484.2 million. This is higher this year due to COVID money. They have 299 employees and 592 providers of service.

Ms. Whitt spoke about community investment and reinvestment. In 2012 and 2013, LME's became MCO's and took on the management of Medicaid dollars. The Medicaid dollars saved by the LME/MCO had to be reinvested into the community. Sandhills met with each county in their catchment area and discovered that all counties felt the need for 24 hour community based crisis centers. There are now three centers with 16 beds each; one in Randolph County for adults, one

in Richmond County that is scheduled to open for children, and another child facility will be opening in Guildford County. There were questions about other LME/MCO's operating with this same approach. They also found a need for more in-patient beds, so they are partnering with Good Hope Hospital in Harnett County. They will be expanding their inpatient beds in the very near future. They are also partnering with Samaritan Colony in Rockingham, North Carolina to expand their men's treatment program and they will begin a women's treatment program. All of the partnering funds from Sandhills Center will come from their Medicaid savings/fund balance to assist in getting the facilities up and running. The fund balance is being used to increase rates for providers as well. They have tried to address each county's needs. They also try to make the plans for each county as flexible as possible. Four counties had requested 2 mental health therapists in their school systems. Ms. Whitt described the process the county had to go through to get this approved. This program was started 4 years ago and remains in place. There have been no cut backs on any of the projects discussed.

There was discussion about non-Medicaid funding. They have limited state dollars. The State gives them a benchmark each year and they have exceeded the benchmark spending each year. The costs have been covered by using funds from their Fund balance. They don't just serve Medicaid recipients. COVID funding was discussed. These dollars have been put toward assisting providers.

Mr. Anthony Ward is over the people who operate their provider network system. Mr. Ward pointed out the three largest crisis providers in their catchment area – Daymark, Monarch and RHA. There are also 14 other providers to help with Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the present time. There would be additional providers if Davidson County joins Sandhills. The provider networks give feedback on the provider network survey sent out each year. Sandhills Center has ranked number one in the past 4 years when compared to their peer organizations. Mr. Ward provided detail regarding the items rated on the survey. They always try to talk about overall success and their high ratings.

Mr. Ward went over the operations reports that were provided to the Board. Utilization management was gone over as well. Numerous statistics were shared with the Board as well as procedures for denials. He also shared how they serve individuals who have need outside their provider network.

Mrs. Dukes raised a concern about not having services available in a timely manner for the people in Davidson County and how that would be addressed by Sandhills. Ms. Whitt shared that Sandhills would take the lead to get the services needed in the County or nearby. She also stated that Sandhills would attempt to development services in the County. Some services are mobile, some are taken out into the community and some are facility based. Gaps assessment was explained to the Board. State dollars are made available to non-Medicaid recipients, which are just as important as Medicaid dollars. If they have a gap in services in an area, they put out an RFP for the needs of the Sandhills Center. They keep on top of stats to be sure they are serving all individuals' needs. If there is a need and a provider can provide the need at a reasonable cost, then they are open to including them as a provider.

Ms. Baker shared the questions regarding the DSS Foster Children. Ms. Baker asked that Ms. Whitt share the process they use to serve the foster children. The process was shared with the Board. They take an all hands-on-deck approach. If there is a child that looks like they may be displaced, the first people to contact are Ms. Whitt, Mr. Ward and the medical director for Sandhills Center. They have an Acute Care Clinical Unit which is a smaller subsection of the Care Coordination staff. The unit is staffed with the best care coordinators, to address the issues that may arise or that are on-going to serve the children of the catchment area. They have direct access to Mr. Ward and Ms. Whitt. They try to have a process to cover all of the bases with

regards the basic need to critical cases. He gave an explanation regarding how funding is used for these services. Residential levels for children typically go up, not down.

Rapid Response requests that are pushed to the State for Sandhills Center total five since the new program was put in place in December 2020. Two were sent in December, none in January, one in February, one in March, one in April, and none in May. Examples were provided and how they were resolved. They work with the DSS Directors in all of their catchment counties.

PRTF placements that Sandhills are responsible for were reviewed. They have 68 children in PRTF placements. 67 are in-state and one is placed out of state in Georgia.

Mr. Ward expressed his appreciation to Mr. Casey Smith and Ms. Trish Baker for their knowledge about behavioral health and its issues as well as their willingness to seek solutions for the children and all people of Davidson County.

Ms. Baker expressed appreciation for information regarding the services that Sandhills Center provides, i.e. the number of in-patient beds available, the number of crisis facilities they have and the fact that they work well with existing providers as well as new, potential providers.

Mrs. Watford expressed the Board's appreciation to Ms. Whitt and Mr. Ward for coming to explain their process. She shared her concern about the process to get our kids cared for timely so that the Director is able to complete all tasks, not just securing placement for hard to place children and/or adults. Mr. Yates asked about Sandhills' fund balance as of today. Ms. Whitt shared that it is about \$90 million. She also stated that she can provide their audit from last year and can provide their budget when it is approved after June 8, 2021. There was more discussion about their budget. Mr. Yates requested a copy of their current fund balance and a history of their fund balance. Sandhills is closely watched by the State and they are required to provide their reinvestment plan to the State. Mr. Yates shared that he would want to see moneys invested in our community.

## **Management Reports**

All Management reports were submitted in writing.

Mrs. Watford shared that she sees positives on the reports today. She reviewed the items that she felt were important. As we continue the work of DSS, take notice of any "feel good" situation that you might want to share with the Board or with a worker. It may help someone get through a particularly bad time or day.

## **Old Business**

### **LME/MCO Discussion – Disengagement Process – Additional LME/MCO Presentations**

Mr. Smith and Ms. Baker have talked with Sandhills Center and Vaya. Vaya is in the western part of the State. Ms. Baker asked that the Board think about having a similar presentation from Vaya as was given by Sandhills Center. She asked that the Board consider a special meeting for June 3<sup>rd</sup> or June 8<sup>th</sup> if they were interested in hearing from Vaya. There are differences between Sandhills and Vaya. The Board has decided to change the regular meeting date for June to the 8<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Baker will try to set up a presentation from Vaya for that date.

Mr. Jason Hicks went over the legal criteria that would be necessary to disengage from Cardinal. There is a disengagement committee that has been created by the counties that have already disengaged from Cardinal. From start to finish, it could take a minimum of 9 months. We need to

start the disengagement process before June 30, 2021 or we could be locked into having to be served by Cardinal through 2026. Mr. Hicks shared some of the factors that are considered before a decision can be rendered by the Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services.

## **New Business**

### **Court Updates – Sheri Woodyard**

Ms. Sheri Woodyard shared that she has good news. There have been two new judges appointed, but they have not been sworn in yet. The new judges will be Rosalind Baker and Jon Myers.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 4:00 pm at the Governmental Center, fourth floor, Commissioners Meeting Room, Lexington, North Carolina.

Mr. Todd Yates made a motion to move the meeting into closed session. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Minnie Dukes. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting moved into closed session at 5:35 pm.

## **Closed Session**

No Action was taken during Closed Session.

Mr. Yates made a motion to return to open session. Mrs. Dukes seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting returned to open session at 5:51 pm.

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Ed Dawson 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 5:52 pm.

Minutes submitted by Patricia Baker