

**DAVIDSON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Patricia Baker, Director



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**Davidson County Department of Social Services
Board Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2021**

Board Members Present

Mrs. Karen Watford; Ms. Jane Murphy; Mr. Ed Dawson

Others Present

**Mrs. Trish Baker; Mr. Scott Craver; Ms. Katrina McMasters;
Ms. Elizabeth Huff; Mr. Jason Hicks; Ms. Sheri Woodyard; Mr. Tony Dill**

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 modifications were requested.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Jane Murphy made a motion to adopt the Agenda. Mr. Ed Dawson seconded the motion. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes from September 28, 2021 were reviewed. Mr. Ed Dawson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Jane Murphy seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Board Member Comments

There were no Board Member comments.

Management Report

Ms. Trish Baker reported that the Agency is right on track, with expenditures, for this time of the year. Payments for copiers are at 25 percent as of last month, but this included a lump sum payment and everything should even out by the end of December. There was an explanation regarding Special Links funds approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Baker shared information from the Vacancy Report. We remain at 27 vacancies. There has been some movement within the Agency, promoting and moving individuals around. We have seven offers that have been accepted and those folks will come in on November 8, 2021 and November 22, 2021. Explanations were given regarding the Social Work Supervisor positions with hopes of having recommendations in place in November. Vacancies are an issue across the State in all Departments of Social Services.

Ms. Elizabeth Huff reported that Income Maintenance is staying the same, even with the vacancies and the teams are sharing the work. They help each other and work together to cover the vacancies. The teams are meeting their goals and well above the State standards. Ms. Huff shared that she has asked for staff throughout all units to help with the vacant caseloads. She gave a detailed overview of what staff are doing. She reported that the Agency is beginning to serve children from the child care subsidy waiting list. In the Emergency Assistance area, there has been no big increase, even with cooler temperatures. Individuals who might be eligible are using funding from other resources within the County through other helping agencies.

Mrs. Watford shared that she is glad to see that Program Integrity continues to remain at 100 percent of their goal and doing well.

Ms. Katrina McMasters reported that September looks good with numbers down in every area. She is very pleased that the CPS staff continue to maintain, even with the vacancies and new staff that have been hired and must be trained. She was very complimentary of the staff for sticking with the job and seeing things through. We do not seem to be seeing as many reports as compared to previous years at the same time. Overall, success seems to be in the very near future.

Mrs. Watford commented that she sees that the numbers are down and hopes that this brings a ray of hope to staff.

Mr. Scott Craver reported that Child Support Enforcement continues to be steady in numbers. They, too, are down some staff, but have kept their numbers up. Mr. Craver gave a breakdown regarding the vacancies and possibilities for new hire.

Mr. Craver reported that Adult Services has been steady. They had 37 reports for the month, but workers are doing the work and getting these cases closed and taken care of in other ways.

Old Business

Facilities Update

Mrs. Trish Baker reported that the playground fence has shipped, but there has been no arrival date given. The playground was recognized as a Performance Based Budget spending project. The Thomasville office will be getting new windows in the not too distant future. Brick repairs will also be made. A site has been suggested for a Community Garden in order to honor and memorialize individuals in our care at their passing. The project of locating and potential site was handled by the Casey Smith, County Manager and Chuck Frye, County Attorney. The project will

be taken to Facilities Committee with hopes that the project will be completed sometime next Spring. Davidson House basement is still on hold due to manpower for completing the work and the cost of concrete. We are still waiting for equipment to be delivered so that it can be installed as soon as it arrives for the old DA/911 Center.

LME/MCO Transition

Ms. Baker reported that there was a transition meeting held on Friday, October 22, 2021. She felt that the meeting was very informative. It appears that Sandhills is ready to step in and help our Agency with the mental health needs for the children in care. The Transition Team for Cardinal let the group know that the State is trying to get everything completed for all counties to transition by the end of December, 2021. It will be a huge transition because all counties that Cardinal served will be transitioned to another LME/MCO. Ms. Baker shared that Sandhills has opened more sites and almost all providers contracted with Cardinal would be contracted with Sandhills. Davidson County will have three members represented on the Sandhills Board, one of which will be a County Commissioner. Ms. Baker shared the breakdown of all county represented Sandhills Board Members. She also shared that Sandhills has added 44 more positions to their team. Authorizations will be sent from Cardinal to Sandhills at the end of November. Concerns were shared regarding the children whose authorizations would expire effective November 30, 2021 and the serious impact that would have on those children. There will be a meet and greet at Davidson-Davie Community College on November 2, 2021 for Davidson County residents that are receiving services from Cardinal that will transition to Sandhills. There will also be one in Rockingham County that Davidson County residents may attend. We continue to be excited about the services that Sandhills will be able to provide.

DSS Board Member Training

Ms. Baker reminded the Board the New Board member training is November 16 and 17, 2021. We will have the recording available if needed. The Board Members who have been registered should have received a link for the training. Ms. Baker will double check to be sure all registrants have the link.

New Business

Leadership Training Updates – Tony Dill

Mr. Tony Dill shared information regarding the Leadership Training being offered by the County. The Leadership Academy has three levels. The Introductory Level is for employees to explore and learn more about leadership to determine if that is an avenue they wish to pursue. The second is Emerging Leaders which would be comprised of existing supervisors or program managers who may want to improve on their leadership skills. The third level is for Directors. The first group is comprised of all DSS Supervisors and they have had two meetings. Topics for these meetings were shared. A second group for Emerging Leaders will most likely be started around the first of December. This group is made up from numerous departments in the County, including DSS. Career development was discussed in the first group and a career development form was completed by each member of the group. This will be done in the second group as well. Mr. Dill spent some time with the group to let them know why this Leadership Training is being conducted; making sure Davidson County is working to continually create leaders and have people ready to move to the next level of their career; to develop a common language among the leadership teams and managers so that we all speak the same language and understand what is meant by what is being said; and to develop each individuals' skills as a leader. There were questions about numbers in the groups and keeping them small so they can learn from each other from other departments.

Record Destruction Request

There have been 1148 Child Support Enforcement files identified that meet the destruction criteria for the State, all of which were closed on June 30, 2015 or before. We are asking the Board to approve the destruction of these files.

Mr. Ed Dawson made a motion to have the identified 1148 Child Support Enforcement files destroyed. Ms. Jane Murphy seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agency Updates

Ms. Baker shared that we had a request from a Social Worker to begin holding EAP meetings again and we invited Melissa Snapp, the County's EAP coordinator to come and hold a meeting. There has been one meeting thus far and approximately 10 attended. There were several common topics discussed. Ms. Baker and Ms. Snapp will be conducting focus groups to work on these topics, one of which was morale. We will be trying to conduct EAP support meetings monthly. One was held today and there are no supervisors or program managers involved in those meetings. These are being held primarily for the workers, mostly social workers in Child Welfare. Adult Services social workers have also been invited to these meetings. The trauma of these jobs is of the utmost concern. Ms. Baker and Ms. Snapp will meet after the support group meetings to discuss the issues brought to the table. Morale and schedules are two of the main topics discussed. Dress code was also a topic of discussion for the social workers due to concerns about wearing "good" clothes into some of the homes they have to visit. This will be checked on and shared with the groups. The next meeting is set for November 2, 2021 and it will be about scheduling. We are hoping for good options to help with meeting the needs of the Agency as well as meeting the needs of the workers and their home lives. There will be another meeting about morale after suggestions are gathered by members of the support group from their own unit and other peers. There were questions about having the meetings at different times in order to allow all groups an opportunity to attend, given their already full schedules and the shortage of staff. Mr. Ed Dawson volunteered to conduct or help conduct any sessions that may involve mental health issues. Ms. Baker let him know that she would share that information with Ms. Snapp. Mrs. Watford suggested doing Secret Santa to help with morale. This could be done at any time of the year and called something other than Secret Santa.

Ms. Baker shared that the Agency decided this year to give everyone who had been employed since July 1, 2020 the PBB bonus, regardless of whether they met their individual goals or not. The Agency met its goals collectively, so it was decided that this would be good for morale to let everyone share in the bonus. We also reminded staff that Longevity and Christmas bonuses are coming in November. While money is not the only thing that can boost morale, it seems to be much appreciated.

The Director's Association put together a power point presentation about vacancies across the State, which was shared with the Board. Only 58 counties participated in the study, but there is still good information in the presentation. Ms. Baker shared highlights from the presentation and shared that turnover was high across the State. Turnover rates were looked at in the Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services. The power point was presented at the Director's Association's Joint State and County Relations Committee meeting. There was discussion about the things that add stress to the already stressful jobs. State leadership attend those meetings and potential solutions were discussed. Some of the things that have been put into place by the State may be looked at by the State and reconsidered, considering the benefit and need to do – i.e. a policy change. However, this will not help with the vacancy situation now. This is being shared with the Board because it was shared with the State. The hope is that the

State will come back to the meeting and have some possible solutions to the problems that have been identified.

Several counties around us have used the ARPA moneys for hazard or premium pay for their employees – Rowan, Forsyth, Iredell and Guilford. A handout was shared as to how they determined how to distribute the moneys. Several other Boards for other counties are considering the same as well as some City governments. Ms. Baker asks the Board to support giving employees extra pay for being here and working through COVID. This would ultimately be a decision to be made by the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Huff shared a situation brought to her attention by an Income Maintenance Caseworker that left. Could there be a consideration for future employees to have medical insurance paid after retirement through Medicare eligible age? Could this be considered as a benefit to possibly help with retention.

Mr. Ed Dawson made a motion to go into Closed Session to discuss Child Welfare and Personnel items. The motion was second by Ms. Jane Murphy and approved unanimously.

Closed Session

No action was taken during closed session.

Date of Next Meeting

The next DSS Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 23, 2021 at 4:00 pm at the Governmental Center on the fourth floor in the Commissioners Meeting Room.

Adjournment

The Board returned from closed session and Ms. Baker asked if there would be a motion to excuse Mr. Todd Yates from the meeting. There was some discussion about meeting attendance. Upon motion by Mr. Ed Dawson and seconded by Mrs. Karen Watford, the Board voted 3-0 to excuse Mr. Yates from the meeting. Ms. Jane Murphy abstained from voting, but in using the Board of Commissioners' Rules of Procedure, an abstention is counted as a "yes" vote; therefore; Ms. Murphy's vote was counted in the affirmative.

Mr. Ed Dawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jane Murphy. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 5:31 pm.

Minutes submitted by Patricia Baker