

Board Members

Joseph A. Martinez, Chair
Loretta Thomas-Whiteside, Vice Chair
Mary Ellen Wiese
Dennis W. Lee
Jeffrey C. Brittain



Dorraine Hernandez
Director

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MINUTES

BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

January 21, 2016

Board Present

Joseph Martinez, Chair
Loretta Thomas-Whiteside, Vice-Chair
Dennis Lee
Jeff Brittain
Mary Ellen Wiese

DSS Staff Present

Dorraine Hernandez, Burke County DSS Director
Rebecca Finney, Services Program Administrator
Tracey Kincaid, Income Maintenance Administrator
Viveca Huffman, Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joseph Martinez called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m.

INVOCATION

Chair Martinez led the group in an Invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Martinez asked if there was a motion to approve the Agenda as presented. Dennis Lee made a motion to approve the Agenda with a second by Mary Ellen Weise. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Mr. Jeff Brittain made a motion to approve the Minutes from the November 19, 2015 meeting. Mrs. Weise seconded the motion and the Minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments at this time.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Chair Martinez called on Program Administrator, Rebecca Finney, to update the Board on the happenings within Adult and Children Services as well as Child Support. Ms. Finney reported that unfortunately CPS and the Foster Care unit had been extremely busy. She shared that in January 2015 there were 130 children in DSS custody and as of last week the agency had 158 in care. Ms. Finney explained that these children were at imminent risk and in some cases are in place with safe relatives and others are court ordered into foster care. Mrs. Whiteside inquired on the process relatives must go through to be considered safe placement. It was explained that the judge can place the children with approved relative while DSS staff completes a Home Study and background check. The County's Guardian Ad Litem makes recommendations as well. In order for the relative to receive financial assistance they must complete group training called MAPP training. There is also one-on-one training with the Social Worker called Deciding Together and this training lasts approximately 6 months. While the child remains in the approved relative or kinship placement the Social Workers monitor the placement on a monthly basis.

Director, Dorraine Hernandez, offered that some justification to this increase may be due to new judges who are stricter to ensure the safety of these children. She added that every case is a risk.

Next, Ms. Finney discussed staffing in her unit. She advised that a new Social Worker would begin on the upcoming Monday with experience coming from Cleveland County. She shared that one employee would be leaving the agency on January 27th. Additionally, there is a current Supervisor position available that can be filled on/or about February 11th. Ms. Finney was pleased to announce that Adult Protective Services has been fully staffed for several months.

Next, Ms. Finney introduced the Aging In-Home Aide Policy. Ms. Finney explained that the policy services adults 18 and older with 2 funding streams. One for 60 years of age and over; and one for 59 and below. The agency has 1 aide with a certification which allows her to provide services such as basic housekeeping for short periods of time. The clients do not need CAP services and this service prevents them from going into placement prematurely. Mr. Brittain inquired on the financial aspect of this program as it applies to the client and it was explained that there is a sliding scale. There are currently 28 clients participating in In-Home Services on an ongoing monthly basis and the agency Social Worker helps to link the clients to other services such as transportation services and Meals on Wheels. Ms. Finney advised that she, Ms. Hernandez and Adult Services Supervisor, Julia Port, have worked on this policy to ensure that it is in-line with the State Policy. She shared that it is now ready to be approved by the DSS Board. The Board reviewed this policy and it was unanimously approved.

The next item of business shared involved the consumer payee services provided by the department. It was explained by Ms. Finney that currently the agency has 13 payees that are not adult wards of the department in which staff manage their funds. These are typically SSI funds and the recipients average approximately \$700 per month. It was explained that this service is not a mandated service by the state; however, payee services for the DSS guardianships is mandated and the department currently has 74. Ms. Finney shared that there is a company willing to take on this responsibility for a monthly fee of \$30 to be incurred by the payee. She

also shared that none of the neighboring Departments of Social Services maintain payees at all, outside of those that are wards. Some concerns that were shared from the Board was the fear of exploitation of these individuals as well as the cost to such limited income. Ms. Hernandez explained that if this service is maintained, the department will need to ask for additional staff and because this is a non-mandated service the request will not be well received. Mr. Martinez advised staff to investigate the services offered from other agencies using them. Staff agreed.

Next, Ms. Whiteside took a moment to commend all DSS staff for their dedication and hard work. She expressed her hopes that Ms. Hernandez shared this sentiment routinely to staff as well. Ms. Hernandez advised that gratitude is expressed daily. Ms. Whiteside suggested that the department insert monthly blogs in the local newspaper. Mr. Lee suggested including information on what's available through DSS.

Mr. Martinez recalled the instance after November Board meeting when a client under the influence wandered into the Conference Room. He commended Ms. Hernandez for her very professional and non-confrontational intervention. Ms. Finney advised that staff do see positive things as well. Such as a client who has been clean for 200+ days and it was one of our Social Workers who facilitated this change. This is always very encouraging for staff.

Tracey Kincaid was next called on to share updates within the Economic Services programs. She advised that her unit has only 2 current vacancies and these are both results of promotions from IMC II positions to IMC III position in Adult Medicaid.

Ms. Kincaid shared that from October 19th to December 15th over \$397,000 was depleted in the CRISIS program. On December 1st the LIEAP program had approximately \$395,000 in funding and as of yesterday, January 20th, approximately \$254 had been depleted with over \$140,000 remaining. LIEAP applications will be taken until March 31st or until the funds are depleted. These are one time vendor payments in amounts of \$200, \$300, or \$400. Ms. Kincaid was happy to announce that there was no longer a daycare assistance waiting list and the agency didn't have to terminate services for any clients. On the downside, because there is no waiting list the state may take some of the agency's funding to distribute to other counties whose money has been depleted and do have a waiting list.

Next, Ms. Kincaid shared that NCFAST had a major program update on November 23rd and since this update, the program has been extremely slow and unavailable. There has been an increase in help desk tickets due to cases not processing. The staff were given a "work-around" to key MAJI cases in the traditional system. Despite these issues Ms. Kincaid shared that there are no backlogs in applications except in Long Term Care and she feels confident that all recertifications will be keyed timely.

Ms. Kincaid was happy to announce that one worker had returned from FMLA and are only 2 current vacancies. She shared that supervisors are giving each worker a work-plan on Mondays and this is creating a positive reaction and productivity.

Ms. Hernandez, next, added that the department had absorbed the tasks of an Administrative III position to allow the creation of 2 new Long Term Care positions.

Ms. Hernandez advised that she and Ms. Kincaid just returned from a 7 am meeting with Representative Ron Lambeth where they shared the agency's struggles to meet client needs as well as struggles with NCFAST. This was the theme shared across the room and is not a Burke County issue alone.

She further explained that the 2016-2017 budget is due in February and she would be requesting input and thoughts from the Board once all statistics, comp time and overtime are gathered and computed. She shared that positions will be requested and that these positions are a dire need. Ms. Hernandez thanked Mr. Brittain and commended him on a great job of reporting DSS happenings to the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Hernandez shared that rumors have been swirling that temporary staff can't be used in Medicaid. The County's HR department is investigating this to see if this is correct. If true this could cause significant problems because the agency currently has 6 temporary staff in Medicaid. The current tool provided by the state to determine staffing needs shows that Burke County needs 5 additional staff members in Family and Children's Medicaid, 4 additional in Adult Medicaid and 1 Lead Worker in FNS. Each Medicaid worker is a 75% funding match. The need for these additional workers is due to the 1,800 new Medicaid recipients. In Services 3 positions are needed including 1 Long Term Care Clerical positions. Two of these positions would be reimbursed at 50% while a Paralegal position for Child Support would receive a 66% match.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lee made a motion to adjourn the meeting and move into Executive Session. Vice-Chair Whiteside seconded the motion.

Submitted by: Viveca M. Huffman, Clerk to the Board

Approved by: _____
Joseph A. Martinez, Chair
Loretta Thomas-Whiteside, Vice-Chair

Date: _____