

Macon County Social Services Board

Thursday, August 17, 2023

Regular Meeting Minutes

Welcome/Call to Order

Patrick Betancourt called the regular meeting of the Macon County Social Services Board to order. Members attending were Anne Hyder, Dale West, Mike Williams, Patrick Betancourt (Executive Officer and Secretary to the Board), and Amy Sanderfur (Administrative Officer).

Proposed Agenda

Agenda was approved on motion of Anne Hyder and second by Dale West.

Minutes

July minutes were approved on motion of Dale West and second by Mike Williams.

Finance/Budget Update

Patrick Betancourt gave a general financial update, advising the Board that Cathy Makinson has been contracted to work to assist Administrative Officer, Amy Sanderfur, with continued training, as well as anticipated assistance with the Energy program in the fall, and ultimately the Budget next year. We anticipate having Cathy in the office one day per week for the next few weeks, revisiting the need on a regular basis, until Energy season nears.

Patrick elaborated on the changes to fiscal year funding streams, particularly Energy allocations and the recent switch to direct payments from the State to providers. The challenge for the local DSS office remains managing those payments and reconciling them. It is still a work in progress. Mike Williams inquired as to the Energy program's reach, to which Patrick responded in explanation that Macon County DSS has maintained a focus on heating assistance, as opposed to year-long distribution of the available funds. Rare exceptions to that come in the form of customer(s) with life-threatening conditions in which loss of electric power might cause serious health consequences. Amy added that the majority of our customers are aware that the funds are typically used for winter/heating assistance, so there are seldom requests from the public outside of the colder months. Patrick also gave a brief explanation of how the application and distribution process works during Energy season. He will be inviting Sheila Conley, Supervisor of the Energy program, to speak at the next Board meeting to further explain it.

Patrick briefly discussed MOE (Maintenance of Effort) and other funding streams.

Patrick encouraged the Board to reach out to him with any financial or budget questions as Amy continues to learn the many nuances of her position.

Patrick advised that he had attended a meeting on August 16 with County officials to discuss recruitment/retention/incentives in an effort to assure the ability to get good candidates for the many currently vacant positions. Remote work was part of that discussion, with further conversations expected. Any and all possible ways to improve the County's ability to be competitive in compensation are to be taken to the County Manager.

Medicaid Expansion Update

On July 26, DHHS announced that Medicaid Expansion's planned "go-live" date is October 1, based on the General Assembly either passing a budget, or decoupling Medicaid Expansion from the proposed budget by September 1. If neither of these takes place, a fallback date of December 1 has been stated.

These dates have no particular impact on the County level, no changes to our operating plan. We do still need to fill the three new, as well as two additional, Medicaid caseworker positions to be in the best

position for the Expansion. There are some potential candidates, so we hope to have interviews take place in the near future.

The new Medicaid Trainer position was discussed, as well as training options. Jody Brock, the Medicaid Trainer, will be asked to speak to the Board at a future meeting to share more about the position and how it is going.

County Human Services Consolidation

Patrick shared a slideshow presentation explaining the three potential options if the decision was ever made to consolidate DSS, Public Health, and/or other social services as one singular agency. While it is not on anyone's radar or agenda at this time, as far as we know, it is important to understand what might transpire if it became an item of consideration. Options, maps showing currently consolidated counties, and other pertinent information is available at the NC School of Government website -

<https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/north-carolina-public-health-law/consolidated-human-services-agencies-chsas>

Also, at a future Board meeting, Kristi Nickoden will be asked to join us to provide a more detailed Consolidation update.

DSS Directors Meeting with State Officials

Patrick Betancourt and four other North Carolina County DSS Directors met with Senator Corbin and Representative Clampitt recently, discussing the childcare crisis in North Carolina, particularly market rate allocations, as well as DSS Foster Care populations and placement issues. While no immediate action items were put in place, there was an open door to future conversations.

Personnel Updates/Agency Exits

Patrick touched on exit rates as outlined in each Board member's notebook, commenting that while the figures are "ok" for the calendar year, and too soon in the new fiscal year to get a feel for it, FY22-23 did have lower numbers of turnover than the previous year. However, our goal is to improve even more in the new year, FY23-24.

Two exits since July meeting: Page McCurry/Personnel Tech, and Cheyenne Mowery, Medicaid Caseworker who had transferred to Child Support just before being offered a remote work position with her previous employer, which she was unable to refuse. As mentioned previously, some hopeful candidates for the Medicaid position(s); at this writing, no hopeful candidates for the Personnel Tech position, but position is being posted with NC Works until filled.

One promotion since July meeting: Tammy Drinnon to Child Support Agent II.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Next month's meeting will be Thursday, September 21, at 9:00 a.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Dale West, second by Anne Hyder.

APPROVED BY:

Chairman

Date

Executive Officer/Secretary

Date