

Scotland County Department of Social Services Board
May 19, 2022
Regular Meeting

The vision of the Scotland County Social Services Board is to foster individual responsibility and to create a strong cooperative community that is responsive to the needs of its citizens.

DSS Board Members Present: Board Chair Leon Butler, Board Vice Chair Dorothy Tyson, John Ferguson

DSS Board Members Absent: Carol McCall

DSS Employees Present: April Snead, Director, Jessica Buehler, Administrative Assistant/Clerk to the Board, Carolyn Lewellen, Income Maintenance Program Administrator, Joy Hine, Income Maintenance Program Administrator, Antonia Rainer Lead Social Worker III

The DSS Board meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Board Chair, Leon Butler. Leon Butler also led the opening prayer.

A motion was made by John Ferguson to approve the agenda for the May 19, 2022 Board meeting. Dorothy Tyson seconded the motion. The Board unanimously passed the motion to approve the agenda for May 19, 2022.

Open Forum

- None

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 21, 2022 Board meeting was made by John Ferguson and seconded by Dorothy Tyson. The motion passed unanimously and the minutes accepted.

The board took a moment to recognize Mrs. Antonia Rainer, Lead Social Worker III. At a previous meeting, Mrs. Rainer brought it to the attention of the Social Services Board that other surrounding counties were receiving a second COVID bonus. Director, April Snead, received approval to present this at a Commissioners meeting. The Commissioners voted in favor of a second round of COVID bonuses for county employees. Mrs. Rainer thanked the Board for listening to her suggestion and also April Snead for allowing her to present the idea to the Board.

She spoke of the feeling of appreciation that other employees, as well as herself, felt. Mrs. Rainer also thanked the Leadership Team and Director Snead for the positive changes at DSS.

Director Snead gave the Administrative Report for the month of February.

Please see the attached report.

Discussion from the Administrative Report:

Budget and Finance:

Both State and County finance are behind and the most current numbers are not yet available. SCATS reimbursements are well above what they were at this time last year. By the end of the year, it is projected that SCATS will have had an additional \$200,000 as opposed to FY 21. Ferguson stated that the community has begun to see SCATS as a valid means of transportation. Director Snead discussed that ridership has increased significantly. Allocations have had to be moved around within the SCATS budget due to the increase in employment ridership. It was discussed that the County has a 20% portion of the cost to run SCATS.

Medicaid Managed Care was discussed. Board Vice Chair, Dorothy Tyson, wondered if \$200,000.00 would be an appropriate projection considering the amount of competition. Director Snead assured the Board that this would be appropriate as Medicaid Managed Care will not account for much income. There are also few riders using Medicaid Managed Care.

The Board discussed that SCATS will take riders to appointments in Chapel Hill, as that trip is made once a month. Director Snead discussed that in the future, SCATS may purchase an additional minivan to allow out of town trips to take place more often. Vice Chair, Dorothy Tyson, mentioned the possibility of discussing scheduling with providers in Chapel Hill so that clients would have appointments on the day SCATS visits the area. Director Snead stated that SCATS has not received complaints about this and providers are doing well with working with clients on this.

One concern with the Reentry Program is that the Department will not be able to sustain the program if it continues to provide support in the manner that it is. Currently, the program serves many citizens. The processes and guidelines will need to be reviewed in order to continue support to as many high risk participants as possible.

Personnel:

There are currently five vacancies within the agency. The Department's on-call social worker resigned last week and the administrative report does not reflect that resignation.

Child Support:

Currently, this unit is on track to meet both child support goals and their strategic goals for this fiscal year. Mrs. Tyson asked if another amnesty month had been considered. Mrs. Hine states that after speaking with the Child Support supervisors, they are not opposed to holding another amnesty month. Mrs. Hine and Director Snead also discussed speaking with the Sheriff's Office about doing a round up. A round up would take place after amnesty is offered. Officers would then round up anyone that did not participate in the amnesty event. This has not been done before and since there is not a large response to the amnesty event, it would be a good idea to implement this. It was noted that although deputies do arrest those that do not take advantage of the event, a round up would need a team.

Child Care:

Many children have benefited from the waitlist being depleted. There was concern of the lack of third shift options within the county. Director Snead stated that there are also classroom limitations which affect how many children a daycare can responsibly accommodate.

Food and Nutrition:

Two staff members will complete training this week. The Department is also in the process of hiring another IMC II for this unit. DHHS stated that it misinterpreted USDA guidelines. This has caused an issue because reviews have not taken place in over two years. With that being said, this unit began May with 800 reviews. Director Snead commended the unit on their hard work. Staff have worked over time and worked on Saturdays as well in order to continue to provide services to the community appropriately. The extra work will even out once FNS is fully staffed and trained.

Mrs. Tyson inquired about what a case review entails. Mrs. Lewellen discussed that all case numbers ending in an odd number will require a phone interview. Mr. Butler asked about the length of a phone interview. Mrs. Lewellen stated that it is reliant on if contact can be made. If contact is not made within a certain time period, a letter would be sent out in another attempt to make contact. Director Snead added that turning in an application late or non completion of a review would mean benefits are denied. The process would have to start over, meaning a delay in benefits and more work for staff.

Adult and Family Medicaid:

In order for REDA to end, the unit must pass on cases reviewed for three months in a row. This unit has passed all cases up for review for one month. Both units are working two months ahead. Mr. Ferguson wanted further clarification on how the units are able to work two months ahead. Director Snead stated that case distribution, organization, and management all contribute to this. Mrs. Lewellen stated that the Adult Medicaid unit had not previously been able to work ahead.

However, with a new supervisor, they are succeeding that. Director Snead warned that if Medicaid Expansion were to take place, the Department would become overwhelmed.

Work First:

This unit won the t-shirt design contest. This contest is in connection with the Values Committee.

Children Services:

Foster care staff are still over the caseload average as there are two new staff that cannot carry a caseload yet. This unit is on track to meet the MOU goal of meeting children face to face within a certain time period. The goal is to see 95% of children in care every month. The unit is on track to meet this for the rest of the year. Mrs. Tyson asked if virtual visits are still counting toward the goal. Director Snead stated that virtual visits are no longer acceptable. Although they were accepted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Director Snead also noted that it is important for those in care to see a consistent face. Once caseloads are able to be distributed to new staff, the unit will be able to focus on making a better connection with the children.

Reentry:

The Reentry Program won a NACo (National Association of Counties) award this month. Director Snead has asked for the employees to be recognized at the next Commissioners meeting.

SCATS:

Complaints about the deviated fixed route have drastically reduced since the new design has been implemented. Mr. Butler inquired about the drivers and Director Snead stated that although SCATS would like another part time driver, the drivers are doing well. Mrs. Hine stated that they are currently working on getting references on one potential driver. It was noted that SCATS does have a female driver. She retired from the local school system as a bus driver. It was also mentioned that there have been no drivers to have COVID-19 during the pandemic. The drivers are still required to wear masks due to guidelines and do not complain about having to do so.

Mr. Ferguson asked if having a CDL is still a requirement for drivers. Director Snead stated that SCATS could begin to hire drivers without their CDL. However, the liability for the county would increase. This option may be considered if SCATS were to have difficulties finding applicants. There is currently one bus that seats 16, which requires the driver to have a CDL. That bus will eventually be replaced with one that does not require a CDL to operate.

Ridership was also discussed. Mrs. Hine stated that SCATS trips range between 1,200 and 1,700 each month. There are between 70 to 80 riders each day. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are the busiest days for SCATS. Trips from Wagram, Gibson, and Laurel Hill have been underutilized.

As of now, two citizens have taken advantage of this. However, with additional advertising, this may increase. SCATS Supervisor, China Lett, will also reach out to the community at an upcoming community day. Mr. Ferguson suggested reaching out to the town boards to spread the word. Director Snead stated that it would be a good idea to reach out to local township boards and ask to present about the services that SCATS offer the county. Each town has a pick up spot. For example, the stop for Laurel Hill is located at the Laurel Hill Community Center. Once the Community Center's construction is completed, there will likely be an increase in ridership.

DSS Initiatives:

The Value Committee consists of volunteers throughout the agency. The group is diverse. Forty values were sent to the entire agency. They were asked to choose 20. The Value Committee chose the final values from that list. The next steps include rolling these out to the agency. The values will be featured on job descriptions, recruitment items, and employee evaluations. The values will also be on display in the conference room, lobby, and unit hallways. Mr. Ferguson commended Director Snead on working on the agency values from the bottom and valuing the input of the entire agency.

Mr. Ferguson asked if customer service has seen an improvement. Director Snead stated that the Department has seen improvement in this area. A Customer Service Survey has been created for clients to review their experience voluntarily. The results that have been received have been positive. Director Snead also stated that she no longer receives frequent calls about customer service from clients.

Mr. Ferguson also inquired about the employees. Director Snead stated that the environment of DSS feels lighter, even though the work done at DSS is not. Mr. Butler stated that leadership attributes to the overall mood of the agency as well. Better leadership creates an easier work environment for employees. Director Snead mentioned that she meets with each unit on a quarterly basis. The Leadership Team meetings, which occur monthly, have been redesigned. The majority of the meeting now consists of a leadership topic discussion. Accountability is the current topic. Each meeting begins with a team building exercise. Leadership has been doing a better job of identifying strengths and weaknesses. Director Snead stated that staff will leave an easy job due to bad leadership, but will stay at a difficult job with good leadership. Mrs. Hine mentioned that Mrs. Rainer stated that the employees are noticing a difference in the environment as well and appreciate it. Mr. Ferguson stated that hearing an employee say that their leadership listens to them should be seen as an accomplishment.

The Leadership Development Program has also been underway. Mrs. Tyson inquired about how participants in the past have been promoted in the agency. Director Snead stated that on the first round of the program, there were no supervisors in attendance. Over half of the first year

graduates were promoted to supervisory roles. When we have internal applicants apply for a promotion, participation in the program is always a plus. Mrs. Lewellen stated that when employees have asked about internal promotions in the past, she will mention the program.

Action Agenda (needing vote)

- None

Strategic Agenda

Director Snead has reached out to Social Services Commission through email about the appointment of a board member to carry out the later Mr. Rainer's term. Their response was that a decision would be made at their June meeting.

A motion to enter into executive session was made by John Ferguson and seconded by Dorothy Tyson. The motion passed unanimously and the Board entered into executive session.

Executive Session

- Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6) To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.

A motion was made by Leon Butler and seconded by John Ferguson to recess the DSS Board meeting until June 6, 2022 at 9:00 am. All in favor.

Jessica Buehler, Board Clerk

Leon Butler, Board Chair

Administrative Report

May 2022

**COVID reporting/updates will no longer be included in ongoing reports, unless new developments and interventions occur

Budget and Finance

- The FY 22 DSS budget is \$8,119,375 and the SCATS budget is \$499,839. The DSS budget spending is 68% through the end of March. April spending is not available.
- Salary has been under budgeted again for FY 22. For the fiscal year, through March, the lapse salary is \$-8,901.
- The FY 23 DSS budget amount is estimated at \$8,860,455 requiring \$2,612,881 in county funds. The FY 23 SCATS budget amount is estimated at \$480,350 requiring an approximate 20% match (\$96,070) in county funding. The Reentry budget is in mid year, as the budget runs from September to August each year.
- Munis implementation began 2/1/22. Training continues to use all aspects of the program. Several processes are not being used in Munis. **(Strategic Plan)**
- Five payee accounts are over the required threshold. Measures have been taken to stop payment and reduce the reserve. **(Strategic Plan)**
- Budget training for DSS was held in March with the Director and finance in attendance. In May an LBL site visit trained on MOE spending and year end reallocation. **(Strategic Plan Completed)**

Personnel Services

- The Department has four vacancies, two IMC II's, one IM Investigator II (frozen), and one SW IAT. The FY 22 turnover rate through the end of April was 16%. The FY 21 agency wide turnover rate was 31%.
- Paperless personnel files through Neo Gov cannot be funded in the DSS budget. Personnel has begun to scan recruitment files into Neo Gov. **(Strategic Plan)**
- The Department is considering using video pre interview questions through the agency Sparkhire. This was approved by the County's risk management attorney.

Child Support

- Child Support has completed the training manual. The training manual is being used for all incoming staff. **(Strategic Plan Completed)**
- During FY 22, the unit will focus on increasing the number of cases with a payment to arrears by 300 cases. At the end of April, the unit has added an arrears frequency to 244 additional cases since July 1st. **(Strategic Plan)**
- Using the Order vs. Distribution report, the unit is identifying cases that disbursements do not match the court ordered payment. At this time 99% of cases match. The year started with 261 cases identified. At the end of March, only 31 cases remain. **(Strategic Plan)**

- Scotland County is exceeding pandemic goals in all areas of self-assessment/incentive measures. It is also exceeding the pre-pandemic goals in all areas of self-assessment.

Economic Services:

Child Care

- The current combined spending coefficient is 85%. In November, Scotland County was given an additional \$448,665 allocation, significantly lowering the spending coefficient.
- The Daycare unit currently serves 523 children. The waiting list has been depleted at this time.
- Parent fees are waived through June 2022. The payment for parent fees will not be removed from the subsidy allocation.
- The Child Care unit is meeting MOU goals consistently. **(Strategic Plan)**

Food and Nutrition

- The FNS unit has worked on Saturdays in an attempt to keep FNS reviews completed timely. The unit has two staff in training at this time.
- The FNS unit is meeting MOU goals consistently. **(Strategic Plan)**
- The FNS unit will again work to strive for same-day processing. In April, 19% of expedited applications were processed the same day and 4% of non expedited applications were processed the same day. **(Strategic Plan)**

Family and Adult Medicaid

- REDA Audit AIP has begun. The units are in the fourth month of case review, reviewing April cases.
- Both Medicaid units are working two months ahead of recertification due dates.
- Both Medicaid units continue to exceed timeliness requirements of the MOU. **(Strategic Plan)**
- NEMT is not located in NC FAST. Laserfiche has been contacted regarding a paperless project for this program. **(Strategic Plan)**

Work First

- Applications for Work First services have steadily decreased over the last two years.
- The Work First unit is meeting MOU goals consistently **(Strategic Plan)**

Program Integrity

- All Program Integrity MOU goals are being met consistently. **(Strategic Plan)**
- Program Integrity has finished scanning all files and is completely paperless. **(Strategic Plan)**

Quality Assurance/Training

- Medicaid Transportation and Energy program training modules have been developed and are being used to train new IMC I staff. **(Strategic Plan Completed)**

Social Work Services:

Adult Services

- The Adult Services unit has been awarded three new wards, including the duty of estate guardian. The Department is working with the Division and attorneys to learn this process.
- New MAC coding allows for increased daysheet use and reimbursement. A 6% increase can be noted in the fiscal year through April 2022. **(Strategic Plan)**

Children Services

- FY 22 turnover rate for the unit is 35% (eight resignations) through April 2022. The turnover rate for the unit at the end of FY 21 was 51%. Another foster care resignation was received in May 2022.
- Foster care social workers continue to be over the caseload standard. Foster care staff have approximately 18 cases each, caseload standard being 10. Two part time temporary staff are working as of 3/15/22. There is a concern for providing required services to all children in care. All foster care positions have been filled as of 5/1/22. The three new hires are currently enrolled in Pre-Service Training.
- Court delays and the high average of continuances continues to keep children in foster care and other cases from closure. The Scotland Permanency Collaborative has met three times to work on barriers to permanence and meets again in August.
- The unit is working to improve four goal areas: 12 months to Permanency is 53% achieved, Timely Case Decisions is 67% achieved, and filing petitions timely is 73% achieved, providing more LINKS activities. **(Strategic Plan)**

Work First Employment

- The agency has one Work First Employment social worker with a caseload of Work First participants required to have a Mutual Responsibility Agreement.

DPS Reentry Program

- The Reentry Stakeholders Event was held April 29, 2022. Over 20 agencies participated in the event.
- Revised Reentry bylaws were voted on and adopted in April 2022.
- Reentry received the first of two \$25,000 additional allocations for program use through 6/30/23.
- The Scotland County Reentry Program won a national 2022 NACo Achievement award in May 2022.

Scotland Area Transit System (SCATS)

- SCATS began full implementation of the new fixed deviated line on March 1st. After one month of the new line, route stop times were reviewed and one leg of the route reversed for improvement of services. **(Strategic Plan)**.
- The Department is gathering information to begin the process of analyzing the cost per each SCATS trip. Information is required from DOT and county finance. **(Strategic Plan)**
- SCATS is working with a new Medicaid Managed Care NEMT provider. This company is providing an extra .41 cents per mile as a fuel surcharge.
- Several billing cycles have been completed with the two Medicaid Managed Care providers. This process appears to be fluid now and all invoices have been paid to SCATS. **(Strategic Plan)**
- The SCATS Transportation Advisory Board is recruiting members to represent the community.

Other Impacts on DSS:

- The Department is working with IT to correct the voicemail directory. There are concerns this cannot be corrected, having an impact on customer service and provision of services.

New DSS Initiatives

- The agency created a Values Committee to define the values for DSS. The values have been defined as Respect, Teamwork, Dependability, Accountability, Innovation and Excellence. The Committee works to roll these out to all staff and ingrain them into our work environment. (see handout)
- The 2021-2022 Leadership Development finished the application process and has begun regular meetings and projects. Presentations to the leadership team began in April 2022 with an outdoor wellness area proposal.
- Beginning 2/1/2020 the Department kicked off a customer service campaign - STARS. S-Service, T-Trust, A-Accountability, R-Respect. This continues with painting of the building and revamping the lobby, also creating a “kids corner” in the lobby. Customer Service surveys received are positive feedback and are incorporated into annual evaluations.
- The county and DSS has been working with Spectrum for several months to upgrade the Wifi in the building and the security cameras. Cameras will also be installed to monitor the SCATS bus parking. This project is ongoing.

Common Acronyms

ADA - American with Disabilities Act

APS - Adult Protective Services

CPS - Child Protective Services

COVID - 19 - Coronavirus

DCDEE - Department of Child Development and Early Education (Daycare)
DHB - Department of Health Benefits (Medicaid)
DHHS - Department of Health and Human Services
FNS - Food and Nutrition Services
IT - Information Technology
LIHEAP - Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program
LIHWAP - Low Income Housing Water Assistance Program
LBL - Local Business Liaison
MAC - Medicaid Administrative Claiming (funding source)
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
OHSR - Office of Human State Resources
OST - Operational Support Team
REDA - Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit
SCATS - Scotland County Area Transit System
SSBG - Social Services Block Grant (funding source)
SWAP - Scotland Wellness Assistance Program
PPE - Personal Protective Equipment
PSNAP - Pandemic Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
WFFA - Work First Family Assistance