

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
May 18, 2015

THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MET ON MONDAY: May 18, 2015 at the Hillsborough Commons, Hillsborough, North Carolina.

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MEMBERS PRESENT: Claire Millar, Chair; Tamara Dempsey-Tanner, Vice-Chair; and Ann Wilkerson.

GUEST: Pat Garavaglia.

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MEMBER ABSENT: Earl McKee.

STAFF PRESENT: Nancy Coston, Director; Denise Shaffer, Assistant Director; Sharron Hinton, Human Services Manager; Joyce Lee, Business Officer; and Katherine Thompson, Management Analyst.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

DSS Chair, Claire Millar, called the meeting to order at 4:08pm.

II. Board Comments

None.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Agenda Changes

None.

V. Action Items

On a motion by Tamara Dempsey-Tanner, the Board approved the minutes of April 20, 2015. Ann Wilkerson seconded the motion. The motion was carried without dissent.

VI. Items for Discussion and/or Decision

1. Jail Alternatives Program

Effective July 1, the Jail Alternatives and Drug Court Programs will be moved to the Orange County Sheriff's Office. The Drug Court Program will be administered by Courtney Kennedy, the Drug Court Coordinator. DSS will continue to serve as the fiscal agent for these programs through June 30. Ann Wilkerson asked for more details about the Drug Court Program. Sharron Hinton explained that DSS deals more with Family Drug Court than with Adult Drug Court. Often, families involved in Family Drug Court are also involved with Child Protective Services. These individuals are referred to the program by the courts and have significant substance abuse issues. Courtney Kennedy works with program participants throughout the year, administers drug tests, and plans a graduation ceremony at the end of the year. Nancy Coston and Sharron Hinton explained that the Sherriff's Office seems to be a better fit for these programs.

DSS still administers the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC). DSS funds various services to

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
May 18, 2015

help support individuals involved with the juvenile court system. Sharron Hinton explained that these services help rehabilitate individuals and reduce recidivism. DSS also provides oversight to the JCPC's board.

2. Homelessness Prevention

The Homelessness Grant is focused on rapid rehousing of homeless individuals. Nancy Coston explained that DSS is looking to partner with agencies that are currently doing this kind of work. She and Sharron Hinton will meet this week with the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), a nonprofit organization in Chapel Hill that is working to resolve the homelessness problem on Franklin Street. DSS will also participate in a larger meeting with Housing for New Hope, the Interfaith Council, and CEF. DSS is the fiscal agent for the Homelessness Grant through September 30. Nancy Coston explained that DSS can do homelessness prevention work pretty effectively but may not be the best agency to work on street homelessness. For this reason, DSS is interested in partnering with organizations that specialize in this type of work. Sharron Hinton explained that the Homelessness Grant can be time-consuming with all of the required documentation and paperwork. Housing must also pass inspection and meet all HUD requirements, which can prove difficult. Nancy Coston explained to the Board that the Homelessness Grant requires no action right now but that the grant may be revisited at a future meeting.

Ann Wilkerson asked where the highest rates of homelessness are in Orange County. Nancy Coston replied that there is need all over Orange County. However, Chapel Hill likely has the highest rate of homelessness. Sharron Hinton explained that homelessness may not be as visible in other parts of the county. The homeless population tends to have mental health as well as financial issues. During the snow this winter, DSS paid for a number of homeless individuals to stay in hotel rooms. Claire Millar asked how many homeless individuals there are in Orange County. Nancy Coston stated that the point-in-time count usually totals around 70 truly homeless individuals. However, this number varies according to the definition of homelessness, which changes.

3. Employment

Nancy Coston and Sharron Hinton showed the Board internal and external blueprints of the Hillsborough Commons expansion. The new space will be used for rich programming, including training activities and perhaps tutoring of at-risk children. DSS hopes to start using the space for programming by the fall. Tamara Dempsey-Tanner stated that she thinks it is great that the county supports DSS's use of the space.

Employment Supervisor Robert Gilmore is now hosting job club for anyone who wants to participate (not just DSS clients). Recently, a client sent an email to Robert Gilmore thanking him for his and DSS's positive influence on her life. Ann Wilkerson asked where someone new to the area would start if he or she was looking for employment. Nancy Coston replied that when clients come to DSS to enroll in other programs, they are always referred to employment services. Sharron Hinton stated that DSS is also trying to market its employment programs to people who are not DSS clients. Orange County officially refers people to Job Link/the Skills Development Center.

4. Contracts

There are no new contracts this year. Nancy Coston is no longer required to take every contract to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. DSS Board members were supplied with a list of the agency's contracts for FY 2015-2016 (Justice Partnerships were not included in this list). Ann Wilkerson asked about the contract for daysheet maintenance. Nancy Coston explained that staff

MINUTES
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members use the daysheet program to code every 15 minutes of their day in order to receive funding for certain federal programs.

The County Manager released her recommended budget for FY 2015-2016. She did not change anything regarding DSS. Tamara Dempsey-Tanner asked about the budget for child care. Nancy Coston explained that DSS is using county funding to clear the waitlist and continue services for clients affected by this year's state policy changes. DSS may restart the waitlist come July 1. The Governor has recommended to undo all of last year's changes to child care, but this recommendation is subject to approval by the General Assembly.

5. Director's Report

There has been a 61 percent decline in voter registration. DSS is required to offer voter registration to clients. Nancy Coston met with supervisors to remind them that clients must be offered voter registration when applying for services. Clients who are already registered must sign a declination of services form.

DSS will be caught up on all Medicaid recertifications by June 30. DSS will have to roll over some cases in May since there are a few hundred left.

Drug testing for Work First clients will start on July 1. The program regulations were approved without much public commentary. The program will be paid for by the state, which has hired a contractor. Clients will be tested "under suspicion."

Ann Wilkerson motioned to re-appoint Tamara Dempsey-Tanner to the DSS Board. Claire Millar seconded the motion. The motion was carried without dissent.

VII. Announcements

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 15, 2015 at the Hillsborough Commons, 113 Mayo Street, Hillsborough, North Carolina at 4:00pm.

Tamara Dempsey-Tanner moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:38pm. Ann Wilkerson seconded the motion. The motion was carried without dissent.

Submitted by:

Nancy Coston
Director

Claire Millar
Chair