



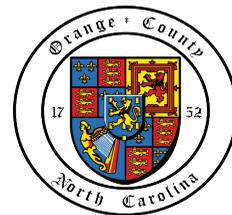
Orange County, NC
Department of Social Services

ANNUAL REPORT

2005-2006



Celebrating the outstanding achievements of
our staff, clients, and community...



Board of Directors:
Rosetta Wash, Chair
Joe Robbins, Vice-Chair
Valerie Foushee
Harold Russell
Karen Long

Reflections

The Orange County Department of Social Services is a vital and integral part of the structure of Orange County. With 154 employees, the agency serves more than 5,000 county residents every month. Programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, Adult In-home Services, Adoption, Child Protective Services and Guardianship aid and protect some of the county's most vulnerable citizens.

In addition to providing the basic federal programs on a local level, the agency adapts programs and services based on the ever-changing landscape of the county. In the last two years, specialized foster care placements have been utilized to help maintain some of our most fragile children in a safe and secure environment. Social Workers are working in the Orange County School System full-time to help assess the needs of children early in a familiar setting and provide intervention and wrap around services to help strengthen families. More and more families are in need of subsidized child care to make this enormous expense more affordable, so the agency has partnered with employers and the Board of County Commissioners to explore ways of expanding resources for families.

The Department of Social Services owes many of its accomplishments to its wonderful partnerships. The continued support of the Board of County Commissioners has been fundamental to the successes of the agency, staff, and clients. Social Services has also partnered with many outside agencies in the county, and would not be able to provide the myriad of programs and services without this support. In addition, the generous donations of groups and individuals allow the agency to continue and expand the types of services offered to residents.

Simply being able to report to the community that we met our budget projections and that we exceeded our annual goals and objectives is very gratifying. We would be missing the point, however, if we rely solely on those measures as the proof of our "good works". In the corporate world, success is measured solely in numbers. In our world of caring for vulnerable citizens, success is also measured in the improved lives of people. This 2005-2006 annual report spotlights the positive impact our vital social programs and services have on the lives of citizens.

- Rosetta Wash, Board Chair



Administration



Richard E. Whitted Building

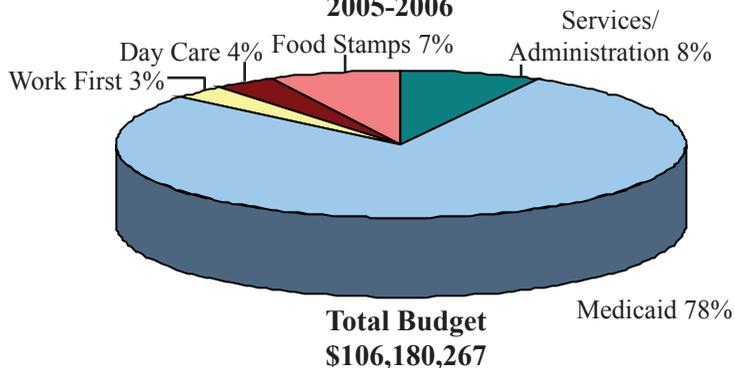


Southern Human Services Building

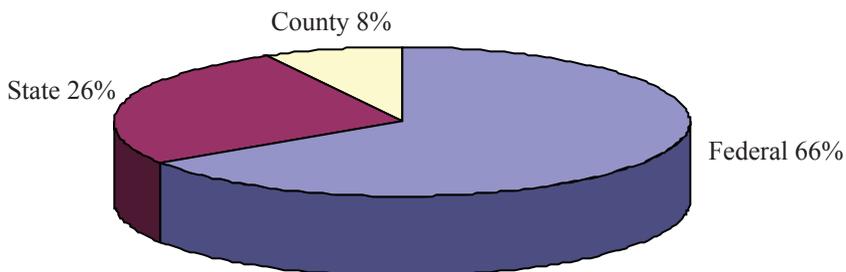


Skills Development Center

Social Services Budget 2005-2006



Share Comparisons 2005-2006



Contact Information

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Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program is a federal program that provides a monthly allotment of Food Stamp benefits issued via Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (EBT cards) that can be used like debit cards. Food Stamp benefits may be used to purchase most foods at participating stores.

- 2,987 households were served monthly (average)
- 6,275 individuals were served monthly (average)
- \$7,926,865 in Food Stamps was issued
- 8% increase in caseload occurred from 2004-05

Medicaid

Medicaid is a health insurance program for certain families and individuals whose income makes it difficult for them to afford health care. It is a publicly funded program governed by federal and state laws.

- 7,128 households were served monthly (average)
- 9,563 individuals were served monthly (average)
- 8% increase in caseload occurred from 2004-05

Medicaid Transportation

Transportation services are available to Medicaid recipients to enable them to get to and from medical appointments.

- 6,756 trips were made to or from appointments

Health Choice

North Carolina Health Choice (NCHC) is North Carolina's health insurance program for children age 6-19 who have no health insurance and whose family's income prevents them from affording health care, but who are ineligible for Medicaid. Coverage is through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, but the program is publicly funded and governed by federal and state laws.

In 2005, the NC General Assembly passed legislation that moved children ages birth through 5, and under 200% Federal Poverty Level, from NCHC to the Medicaid Program effective January 1, 2006. This change provided care of younger children at a lower cost, and ensures coverage of these children, even during budgetary shortfalls, since Medicaid is an entitlement program.

- 852 children were served through Health Choice

Low Income Energy Assistance Program

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) provides for a one-time cash payment to help eligible families pay their heating bills.

- 1,904 individuals and families were assisted
- \$56.91 was the average payment per family
- \$108,363 in total payments were issued

Economic Services



Emergency Assistance

Families who are experiencing a financial emergency may be eligible for financial help to pay for housing, utilities, food, gas, and/or medicine.

- 3,754 people were assisted
- \$121 was the average payment
- \$456,328 total in payments were issued
- 54% of funding went toward electric payments

Financial Counseling

Financial counseling services provide financial literacy training and household management to recipients of Emergency Assistance.

- 348 families were served

Fathers on the Move

The Fathers on the Move Program assists non-custodial fathers of Work First children to obtain life-skills and job-related training so they can provide more support for themselves and their children. The group meets twice monthly as well as one-on-one meetings with the coordinator. Each father spends at least 4 days/month with his child.

- 16 fathers participated in the program
- 14 participants are current on child support payments
- 7 fathers are employed either full or part-time

Janice is a single mother of 3 children. Prior to moving to Orange County, she was living in a distant state facing disturbing circumstances. There were issues of domestic sexual assault, and drug and gang activity was increasing in her neighborhood. In a desire for a better and safer environment for her children, she moved. She arrived with no support system, but with a desire to provide a stable life for her children. Janice came to Social Services looking for help and willing to work hard to achieve her goals. She committed herself completely to job preparation classes and job coaching. Social Workers assisted Janice in getting settled in an apartment, connecting her utilities, improving her work wardrobe, and enhancing job readiness skills. Through Work First resources Janice obtained her North Carolina insurance license, found employment, and is today self-sufficient, working as an office administrator making over \$10.00 per hour.

Janice is not content to simply receive services. She has served as a special speaker to agency On Track classes and is serving on the Orange County Work First Planning Committee.

Economic Services

Orange County Skills Development Center (JobLink)

The Orange County Skills Development Center, located at 503 West Franklin Street in downtown Chapel Hill, offers labor market information, provides access to career training and job placement services, and serves as the connection between employers and qualified workers.

- 9,206 visits were made to the Center
- 483 clients found job placements
- 2,713 people received further education and training



Ralph enrolled in the Building Futures program at the Orange County Job Link Center at the age of 21. He is the sole provider of his household, and provides support for his older sister and her three children. Prior to enrolling in the program, he was a full time student at a local University until the school lost its accreditation. This left him without the opportunity to continue his education and no work experience to fall back on to gain employment. Frustrated with no employment and a lack of education and training, he started visiting the Orange County JobLink Center and attended meetings hosted by the Department of Social Services' single Father's Program. These meetings were a positive force for him and instilled the importance of remaining focused and motivated in order to accomplish his goals. Ralph entered the Building Futures program and enrolled in training at Carolina Trucking Academy. He received his CDL, and is now employed with an annual income of roughly \$28,000. Ralph was always a model participant and exemplified what a person can accomplish if he remains focused and motivated towards achieving his goals.

Economic Services

Work First

Work First is North Carolina's TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) plan to help families move from welfare into jobs. Work First provides assistance with job search, vocational training, day care, transportation and time limited cash assistance to families with children under age 18 who meet income and resource guidelines.

- 588 clients received Work First assistance
- 116 participants found employment
- 36 families received a vehicle through Wheels for Work

Faith Partnership Program

The Faith Partnership Program provides a support system of caring volunteers to Work First families as they transition from Work First to self-sufficiency. The program coordinator works with faith groups and the community to assist Work First families by matching them with individuals, UNC interns, tutors, and/or individual coaches, or providing the family with a needed resource through the request of the family's Social Worker.

- 30 families were served

*M*Myra entered the Work First Family Assistance Program at the Orange County Department of Social Services in May of 2005. She was in the process of pursuing a degree in Nursing from Durham Technical Community College, but needed help. While attending school full time, Myra maintained part time employment as a Certified Nursing Assistant, but the income was not sufficient to support herself and her four boys who range in age from 4 to 13. Through services provided by Social Services, including day care for her children one of whom has special needs, Myra was able to stay in school and support her family. In May of 2006 Myra graduated from Durham Tech and was able to successfully pass the North Carolina State Boards on her first attempt. She is currently employed as a Registered Nurse at one of the top hospitals in the nation and is no longer in need of services.





Child Protective Services (CPS)

The CPS staff investigate reports of abuse, neglect and dependency, and provide services to families around the clock.

- 1,240 children were assessed for abuse and/or neglect allegations
- 133 children were in DSS custody monthly (average)

Adolescent Parenting Program

The Adolescent Parenting Program provides services and support to teenage parents who are working towards remaining in school, delaying a second pregnancy, improving parenting skills, preparing for employment, avoiding abuse and neglect, and improving the health status of mother and child.

- 33 teens participated
- 11 teens successfully graduated from High School

Day Care

The Child Care Subsidy Program provides low-income families with information and financial resources to find and afford quality child care for their children. Resources enable families to make informed choices regarding child care providers.

- 661 families were able to obtain day care
- 1,025 children were served
- 131 licensed child care providers participated
- 79% of cases were to support parents' employment
- Over \$3.8 million dollars was spent to subsidize child care

*M*issy participated in the Adolescent Parenting Program for the entire four years of her high school career. During those years, she utilized the services of the program as well as her support system to assist her in attaining the goals she set for herself. She was able to maintain good grades while being a star member of the Varsity Basketball team. In addition, she worked as a receptionist during the summers and continued to work a part-time job during the school year, all while parenting her daughter. She is now a freshman at one of North Carolina's state universities majoring in Elementary Education. We look forward to hearing more great things about her accomplishments in the future.

Family Services



LINKS

The Orange County Department of Social Services provides services to youth in DSS custody ages 13 through 18. Young adults who were discharged from custody as teens can continue to receive services up to age 21. The focus is to help them prepare for lives as healthy adults by learning about budgeting, maintaining a household, and emphasizing the importance of education.

- 64 young adults received services
- 9 youth received high school diplomas or GEDs
- 6 young adults were enrolled in college or vocational school

*I*n 2005-2006 the Orange County LINKS program partnered with The Seven Cedars Group to offer equine-assisted group activities for teenagers in the LINKS program. A group of seven teens between the ages of 14-17 participated in the activities, which occurred once a month from September through May. The group activities focused on developing and strengthening soft skills (e.g. communication, decision making, and leadership). All of the activities involved the use of trained horses to achieve the stated goal. The program has been very successful, and will be continued.

School-based Social Workers

Through a partnership with the Orange County School System, the Department of Social Services provides trained social workers to work in the schools to provide preventative social work services to children and their families.

- 266 families were served
- 667 children received services

*A*n elementary age child, who was living with grandparents, was experiencing behavioral issues that were impacting her ability to be successful at school. Through the services provided by the Family Specialist social worker at this child's school, the family was able to develop strategies to address their grandchild's needs. The child received appropriate counseling from a behavioral intervention counselor and medication to assist with focusing difficulties. The child is thriving and the family is stronger due to the Family plan developed through School Social Work Services.

Family Services



Adoption/Foster Care

The goal of foster parenting is to provide temporary care to the child while working toward reuniting the child with his/her birth family. Foster families help children feel secure and assist the child with the tasks of normal development. They also support the child's birth family toward reunification by providing information on the child's progress, cooperating with visitation and offering support to the child's parent. When children are not able to return to their parents, adoption gives children in need of a loving family a permanent home.

- 22 adoptions were completed
- 73 licensed foster homes were available for children
- 8 new foster homes were licensed during the fiscal year
- 85 children in foster care received gifts for the holidays

*D*ear Social Services,

I want to thank the child welfare staff for their support and dedication, and for making sure that childrens' interest and voices are heard. You are appreciated and we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

During the holiday season we take for granted close family, friends, stable income, health care, and a safe home. Having foster kids opened my eyes to a different kind of silent struggle many are unaware of. The foster feeling of not belonging. Not knowing who you are, where you come from, where you are going, and who will walk with you along the way.

This year I reflect on how far our foster kids have come and how they are still adjusting to life. We want to provide them a gift most kids take for granted. To be there for them forever, to offer a secure and safe home, to love them and let them feel like they can trust adults. Unfortunately for foster children, it is not a simple gift that is easily received. It takes months and years of positive reinforcement and actions. I hope no matter what takes place Jeffrey and Kayla will know this gift is their's forever.

This is the Christmas Jeffrey is learning what Christmas is all about. It seems to be a little confusing with Santa Claus, the story of Jesus, and explaining why his Jewish friends at school celebrate something different. He is excited about presents and learning Christmas songs. Kayla is

young enough she just likes all of us home playing with her.

I struggle with the balance of wanting to get them cool, exciting presents and making sure they do not forget the desire and feeling to give to others; to care about the less fortunate and think of people's feelings all year long.

We were in Eckerd Drugs and a lady gave Jeffrey a candy cane. Jeffrey told her "Thank you! Merry Christmas!" She was shocked, she said "Merry Christmas" back. Jeffrey then sang "I wish you a Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas." After singing he said "I sang Merry Christmas to her and she was happy." It melted my heart, he was singing to make her happy. I hope we can encourage the desire to be open, loving, and caring to others for their whole life. I hope they can see adults in the same manner.

Looking from Jeffrey's eyes it is all a little confusing but he understands we love him and he cares for Tina a lot. I think it is healthy for him to connect Tina with Social Services and know that her job is to help him. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to touch these children's hearts. In return they have really touched our hearts as well. We hope 20 years from now they will be coming home for Christmas...

H.R.

Adult Services



Adult Services

The Adult Services Department administers programs that help to promote independence and enhance the dignity of North Carolina's older and disabled persons and their families through a community-based system of opportunities, services, benefits, and protections. These programs include Adult Protective Services, Placement Services, Guardianship, In-Home Aide Services, Day Care Services for Adults, and Long-term Care Placements.

- 18 clients received assistance to manage their own funds so as to pay bills.
- 84 clients were provided in-home services through the Community Alternatives Program (CAP) to avoid inappropriate placement into a nursing home.
- 35 clients who were in need of assistance with feeding, bathing and personal care were provided services in Adult Care Homes.
- 30 clients received services in their homes and were maintained with health support rather than entering a Group Home.
- 49 clients received assistance in finding appropriate group facility arrangements when they could no longer live in their own homes.

Special Needs Registry

The Special Needs Registry is a voluntary database containing information about individuals in Orange County with special needs who may require assistance in the event of a disaster.

- 33 Orange County residents participated in the Special Needs Disaster Registry.

Veteran's Affairs

The Veteran's Services Office assists veterans and dependents in obtaining, retaining, or reinstating compensation, pension, medical, education, training, loan, insurance, and other applicable benefits and services.

- 427 individuals were served.

Voter Registration

Clients at the Department of Social Services can register to vote or change their voting information while at the agency.

Volunteer & Donate



Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program

This program allows families working with Social Services to enjoy the holidays.

- 122 families received gifts
- Over \$10,000 was donated for agency families in addition to thousands of dollars worth of gifts

Summer Camp Program

The Summer Camp program allows low-income and/or special needs children to attend area summer camps.

- 251 children attended camp
- Over \$20,000 in donations were received

Day Care Sponsorship Program

Benefactors may choose to donate funds to sponsor families on the waiting list for day care subsidy. Donors can choose to designate the donation for employees of a specific business, members of a church or a specific family, or can donate to a general fund that is then matched by the county. 100% of donations go directly to costs of care.

***T*hanks to our Community Partners...**

We are able to serve the thousands of clients that come through our doors throughout the year due to the tremendous support that the agency receives. The support of our donors and volunteers helps to improve the lives of all Orange County residents. Without them, thousands of men, women and children in our community would lead lives less dignified and free.

We have ongoing volunteer/donor opportunities in the following areas:

Friends of DSS
Adolescent Parenting Program
Foster and Adoptive Parenting
Faith Partnership
Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program
Summer Camp Program
Foster Children Donation Fund
Day Care Sponsorship Program

For more information on any of these opportunities, call Lindsey Dennis at (919) 245-2817

Highlights 2005-2006



- The Adopt-A-Family program was able to provide 122 families with clothes, toys, bicycles, and an array of other items. The Foster Children's Holiday Program provided an additional 85 children with gifts.
- 22 adoptions were finalized in 2005-2006, providing safe and loving homes to children in need.
- The Adolescent Parenting Program enabled 11 teenage mothers to graduate from high school, a new record.
- The intake unit provided over 14,000 assessments for Orange County families who came in for assistance.
- The Work First program provided services that helped 116 clients find employment and move off assistance.
- The Wheels for Work program provided cars for 36 participants.
- 114 elderly Orange County residents received in-home services instead of entering Nursing or Rest Homes.
- 661 families were able to obtain subsidized day care to support employment.
- Alternatives were developed for children previously served by Sheaffer House. These included new contracts for emergency placements and a new contract for a part time Mental Health liaison position with the Orange Person Chatham Area Program to assist with access to alternative services. Funds are also being used for specialized foster care as a way to stabilize placements.
- Staff coordinated the Helping Neighbor Fund to benefit relocated victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The hallmark of the Orange County Department of Social Services is to commend all of them on the wonderful job that they do. - Steve

Highlights 2005-2006

The program provided counseling and support to 17 relocated individuals, as well as \$5,220.83 in assistance. The agency also provided emergency Medicaid and Food Stamp benefits to 28 Katrina families.

- 7 children were served through a new equine assisted therapy program. This program supports children who have bonding issues by providing counseling while they interact with specially trained horses.
- Financial counseling was provided to 348 families through two contracts.
- Emergency financial assistance was provided to 3,754 families.
- The budget office used resources judiciously to keep county costs down while providing a high level of service. Overall costs to the county for all services except Medicaid decreased by 8%

from 2004-05.

- The agency received the Challenge for Children award from the state for decreasing the “backlog” of number of children in foster care by helping children reach a permanent plan. Last year 15 children were reunified with their parents, custody of 27 children was given to relatives, and 22 children were adopted.
- Assistance was provided to over 300 Medicaid recipients during transition to Medicare D prescription drug plan.
- Services were increased to child welfare families through IV-E waiver funding. Through these specialized funds, 4 children now have guardians who are providing a permanent home for them, and other families have received special services such as parent training and emergency assistance.



*Services is the strong commitment of the director and staff. I wish to
Orange County Commissioner*

**Orange County Department of Social Services
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Place
Stamp
Here