

CHEROKEE COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

4800 West U.S. Highway 64, Murphy, NC 28906

828-837-5527

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**Cherokee County Department of Social Services**

**Board Meeting**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**April 16, 2024**

1. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Cherokee County Department of Social Services was duly held on April 16, 2024, at 5:03 P.M. at 4800 West Highway 64, Murphy, N.C. 28906.

**Present were:**

Bo Phillips, Member

James Jallah, Member

Pat Ivie, Member

**Staff present were:**

Andria Duncan, Attorney

Tracy Jones, Program Manager

Brandy Clonts, Administrative Officer

Michele Chastain, F&C Medicaid Supervisor

Mendy Lance, Adult Medicaid Supervisor

1. **Public Forum**

GAL – Dawn McCurdy

GAL – Connie Lance

Catherine Yost

Lisa Wells

1. **Approval of DSS Board Minutes**

Board minutes from March 19, 2024 approved.

Motion was made by Mrs. Ivie. Seconded by Mr. Jallah.

1. **DSS Board Applicants Comments**

Cathrine Yost and Lisa Wells provide comments regarding their applications for the 5th Board Member seat.

1. **Walk Me Home Event / Cottage Opening**

Tracy Jones, Program Manager provided update regarding the Walk Me Home Event scheduled originally scheduled for June 15, 2024. Walk Me Home has not released the official logo, therefore delaying the planning process. The event will now be held at the end of July or first part of August 2024. Julie Thompson is currently working on the donor list.

Cottage Grand Opening is May 21st, 2024 at 5PM

1. **DHHS Pre-Service Training Re-Design**

Director, Amanda McGee explained the new 7-week training program that will start May 2024. Amanda also explained how the re-design causes crisis with the workforce. Some of the problems being:

-New employees have to be out of town 3-4 days a week for 7 weeks, or not return home until after 8PM each night.

-The cost of travel (per diem and lodging) for each new employee is estimated to me a minimum of $8,000 per new child welfare employee.

-The new program will change the roll of supervisors which means, for this DSS, the supervisor: social worker ratio needs to come down to three or four.

McGee informed the Board that DHHS has created a reimbursement process for travel and training time. This will now allow some reimbursement for the agency.

1. **DHHS Child Welfare Case and Work Load Study**

Director, Amanda McGee explained the difference between work load and case load. Work load is the amount of time it takes to do the job. Case load is the amount of cases the social worker has assigned to them. During a recent study the state found that social workers in large counties should have 7.6 cases, and Social Workers in small counties should have 8.1 cases. McGee stated this requires further study. Director McGee reviewed the Workload Size Chart provided to each Board Member.

1. **CCDSS Specific Child Welfare Court Improvement Plan**

Director McGee explained a court improvement process aimed at reducing court continuances and facilitating more timely permanence for children in the foster care system. Director McGee is working with a consultant to identify an attorney or retired judge to facilitate training for local court stakeholders as well as improving court reports, petitions, and a host of court related processes.

1. Medicaid Expansion Up-date

Michele Chastain, Family and Children Medicaid Supervisor and Mendy Lance, Adult Medicaid Supervisor provided an update on Medicaid expansion.

* E-14 Waivers were provided stating that children 18 years of age and under cannot have Medicaid benefits removed. This is expected to continue until December 2024. However, parents can be removed from the Medicaid case due to income.
* Supervisors Chastain and Lance explained how Family Planning Medicaid works for all ages.
* Chastain stated that Medicaid Expansion has helped our county. Director McGee reviewed the numbers for Medicaid expansion showing the projected vs. actual number of applicants. Director McGee also explained that Medicaid is not 100% Federally funded.
* Director McGee stated that at this time 40% of Cherokee County is currently receiving Medicaid benefits.
1. **Closed Session – Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (1) To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential.**

Closed session was adjourned at 6:06 PM with Mrs. Ivie making a motion to adjourn, Mr. Jallah seconding the motion, with all in favor.

1. **Open Session**

GAL– Dawn McCurdy, GAL – Connie Lance, Lisa Wells and Brandy Clonts returned to the meeting.

1. **DSS Board Appointment**

Board Chair Bo Phillips announced Catherine Yost, MD as 5th Board Member.

1. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:29 PM with Mrs. Ivie making a motion to adjourn, Mr. Jallah seconding the motion, with all in favor.