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CHEROKEE COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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

828-837-7455

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**Cherokee County Department of Social Services**

**Board Meeting**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**April 22, 2025**

1. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Cherokee County Department of Social Services was duly held on April 22, 2025, at 5:04 P.M. at 4800 West Highway 64, Murphy, N.C. 28906.

**Board Members Present:**

Dr. Catherine Yost, Member

Bo Phillips, Member

James Jallah, Member

Pat Ivie, Member

**Staff present:**

Amanda T. McGee, Director

Andria Duncan, Attorney

Tracy Jones, Program Manager

Mendy Lance, Adult Medicaid Supervisor

Michele Chastain, Family and Children Medicaid Supervisor

Katrina Plemmons, Food and Nutrition Supervisor

Christian Wilson, Permanency Planning Supervisor

Brandy Clonts, Administrative Officer

**Guests:**

None

1. **Discussion and Adoption of Agenda**

**•**Director Amanda McGee requested to add the following items under

VI. New Business:

J. Computer Use for Board Members

K. 5th DSS Board Member Seat

**•Motion to add items J. and K. under New Business and Adopt Agenda:** Dr. Catherine Yost made a motion to add the items and adopt the agenda. Mrs. Pat Ivie seconded. All voted in favor.

1. **Meeting Minutes**

**•Motion to Approve Minutes:** Mr. James Jallah made a motion to approve the March 18, 2025 meeting minutes. Dr. Catherine Yost seconded. All voted in favor.

1. **Public Comments**

None

1. **Old Business**
   1. **Miles that Matter**

* The 1st Annual Miles That Matter 5K will begin at Murphy Health and Fitness on April 26, 2025. Christian Wilson, Permanency Planning Supervisor and event organizer, provided an update on the event's progress.
* As of now, $15,294 has been raised, with 185 participants registered for the event.
* Several local businesses have generously contributed to the event:
  + Wal-Mart donated 220 bottles of water and boxes of Capri Sun.
  + Ingles donated fruit and granola bars.
  + Dunkin' Donuts donated coffee and munchkins.
* The event will feature emergency management vehicles for children to explore, along with face painting, hair extensions, and corn hole games.
* Cindy Bradshaw and Amanda Abernathy played key roles in securing donations and encouraging event registration.
* Murphy PD will assist with safety along the event path.

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* 1. **Pigeon Solutions**
* The current solution of installing netting over potential landing areas appears to be effective. While pigeons continue to sit on the roof, there is optimism that they will eventually relocate away from the DSS building.
  1. **General Assembly – Bills of Interest**
* Director McGee distributed a handout containing information on current bills of interest being discussed in the General Assembly.

1. **New Business**
2. **Program Integrity / Fraud – Michele Chastain**

* Family and Children Supervisor, Michele Chastain provided the Fraud Plan to all Board Members. Supervisor Chastain explained the Plan and how fraud works with Income Maintenance. The majority of fraud in the department is from household composition discrepancies not reported by the clients.
* **Motion to Approve Program Integrity/ Fraud Plan:** Mr. James Jallah made a motion to approve Program Integrity / Fraud Plan. Dr. Catherine Yost seconded. All voted in favor.

1. **Work First / Food and Nutrition Benefits – Katrina Plemmons**
   * + Katrina Plemmons, Food and Nutrition Supervisor, provided an overview of Work First Benefits. She explained that these benefits encompass a range of services, all based on income eligibility and the presence of children aged 18 or under in the household.
     + Emergency Assistance is available for families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.
     + Ongoing benefits are typically provided for child-only cases involving non-parent caregivers.
     + Parents must cooperate with Child Support Services. However, most non-parent caregivers are reluctant to pursue child support from the child’s biological parents.
     + Program participants are generally required to engage in 30 hours per week of job search or job readiness activities, though exemptions may apply.
2. **Medicaid – Proposed Work Requirements – Mendy Lance**
   * + Mendy Lance, Adult Medicaid Supervisor, provided an update on the proposed work requirements for individuals receiving Medicaid under the expansion. The proposal would require recipients to work 80 hours per month or qualify for an exemption.
     + Currently, five states have received approval for similar requirements; however, each is facing legal challenges. Georgia (GA) has implemented a "Work First" requirement. Final approval for any work requirement must come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
     + There is also a potential reduction in MQB (Medicare Qualified Beneficiary) benefits, which currently assist with covering Medicare premiums of approximately $175 per month.
3. **Spotlight on CCDSS Employee Triple P Certification – Stephanie Thomas**
   * + Stephanie Thomas, Social Worker for In-Home Services in Child Protective Services (CPS), provided an overview of the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program).
     + Triple P is a nationally recognized program that uses evidence-based procedures and forms to help assess and address family needs. The program supports workers in identifying and responding to the specific parenting challenges within families.
     + Stephanie wrote and submitted a grant application to fund the agency’s Triple P Certification. She was interviewed by the State of North Carolina and successfully secured a grant that will cover the cost of all related training.
4. **Spotlight on CCDSS Child Support – 4th in the State**
   * + During the recent statewide “100 County Call,” Cherokee County Department of Social Services Child Support Unit was recognized for being ranked 4th in the state.
     + DSS Attorney Andria Duncan highlighted the exceptional performance of Jessica Watkins, Child Support Supervisor, and Paul Biecker, Child Support Agent. Both were commended for their competence and dedication to their roles.
     + Despite having held their positions for less than one year, Jessica and Paul have significantly improved the unit’s performance metrics, bringing positive attention to Cherokee County.
5. **Spotlight on CCDSS Medicaid Measures – Int the State “Top Performers”**
   * + The Income Maintenance (IMC) staff were recognized for their outstanding performance and dedication to their work. Their passion and commitment continue to make a significant impact.
     + The State OST (Operations Support Team) acknowledged CCDSS as one of the top-performing agencies in North Carolina, as shared in a congratulatory email.
     + In addition, two separate emails were received commending IMC workers for being among the best in the state, further highlighting their exceptional service.
6. **Computers for Board Members**
   * + As part of an initiative to reduce paper usage, computers have been set up for all board members to review materials presented during board meetings.
     + Dr. Catherine Yost will bring her own computer to review documents.
     + Bo Phillips and Pat Ivie will print and review all paperwork at home.
     + James Jallah will use the computer provided during the meeting.
7. **5th DSS Board Member Seat**
   * + Director McGee requested that all board members consider and evaluate potential candidates from the community who would be a good fit for the vacant fifth board member seat. The topic will be revisited at the next meeting.
     + **Motion to revisit 5th DSS Board Member Seat:** Mr. James Jallah made a motion to revisit the discussion of the 5th Board Member Seat at the next meeting. Dr. Catherine Yost seconded. All voted in favor.
8. **DSS Service Report**
   * + - Child Care services are currently contracted through Southwest Child Care Development.
       - Dr. Catherine Yost inquired about the functionality of the “Cottage” visitation setting. Director McGee responded that visitations are taking place in the home-like environment and are going well. However, there is a future need for a washer and dryer at the location.
9. **Adjourn**
   * + - Dr. Catherin Yost made a motion to adjourn. Mr. James Jallah seconded. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 PM.