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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**

**May 20, 2025**

1. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Cherokee County Department of Social Services was duly held on May 20, 2025, at 5:04 P.M. Teams Meeting and 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

Anita Bradshaw, Allies 4 Outcomes

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:**

Dawn McCurdy

Rebecca Philpott

1. **Discussion and Adoption of Agenda**

**•Motion to Adopt Agenda:** Mrs. Pat Ivie made a motion to add the items and adopt the agenda. Mr. James Jallah seconded. All voted in favor.

1. **Meeting Minutes**

**•Motion to Approve Minutes:** Mr. James Jallah made a motion to approve the April 22, 2025 meeting minutes. Mrs. Pat Ivie seconded. All voted in favor.

1. **Public Comments**

None

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

* A total of **$18,694** was raised in this very successful event.
* There was significant community support.
* A meeting is planned with staff to discuss potential improvements for next year.

* 1. **SCAM JAM Summary / Results**
* Director McGee commended Daunita Maennle, APS Supervisor, for doing a terrific job organizing and leading the event with minimal assistance.
* The event provided a valuable service to the community.
  1. **N.C. General Assembly – Bills of Interest / State / National Interest Topics**
* Director McGee will send out documentation on legislation affecting Child Welfare.
* She expressed support for most of the proposed bills, with the exception of the Baby Boxes bill.
  + Concern: DSS would be required to monitor Baby Boxes 24/7.
  + Director McGee is working with NACDSS to remove DSS from this responsibility within the bill.
  1. **Medicaid / TANF / SNAP**
* Katrina Plemmons, FNS Supervisor, reported awaiting further action from the state Senate and House.
* **TANF** (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families):
  + Primarily serves grandparents raising grandchildren.
  + Participation is declining in Cherokee County and statewide.
  + Due to excess funds in the block grant, a one-time $500 payment was issued.
* **Energy Assistance Programs:**
  + These programs faced cuts post-COVID.
  + Funds had to be reallocated from the CRISIS program.
* **Adult Medicaid:**
  + Supervisor Mendy Lance reported a potential introduction of work requirements for Medicaid eligibility.
  + Noted that 92% of the eligible population is already working, with only 8% unemployed.

1. **New Business**
2. **CCDSS Proposed Budget**

* Director McGee commended the county for doing a good job developing the budget under tight constraints.
* Projected revenue from the state is stable, and while expenses remain as expected, the overall budget is flat.
* All safety-related items and remodeling projects were removed from the budget to prioritize funding for the file room digitalization project.
* Retirement contributions increased to 17%.
* The county considered having employees pay a portion of their health insurance, but ultimately decided to forgo a COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustment) and continue covering full insurance costs for employees.
* A request was made for $200,000 for training; the department received $145,000.
  + The additional funds were requested due to the requirement for a 7-week out-of-county pre-service training for all new hire social workers.
* Two new vehicles were approved.
* The department was not asked to attend the budget presentation, indicating that commissioners are likely to approve the proposed budget.

1. **NCPATH Implementation**
   * The NCPATH system will roll out on June 2, 2025, replacing NCFAST as the new technology platform.
   * All staff have been trained by the state on the new system.
   * Cherokee DSS is in the first group to roll out NCPATH.
   * The new dashboard will enhance case tracking capabilities.
   * The initial phase will include CPS (Child Protective Services) intake and case management only.
   * Anita Bradshaw, a contract employee from Allies for Outcomes, and CPS Social Worker Christopher Zangara participated in the initial testing group.
   * Currently, data tracking is not available in NCFAST, so this will be a significant improvement.
   * Anita Bradshaw, Christopher Zangara, and CPS Social Worker Gabrielle Grant have all played a key role in training staff and helping develop new policies.
   * The system includes integrated SDM (Structured Decision Making) tools to support CPS work.
   * Brandy Clonts, Administrative Officer, worked closely with the state to provide all necessary employee data to ensure successful system setup.
   * This transition marks a major change for the state of North Carolina.
2. **Court Improvements**
   * + Our district is 1 of 2 in the state that covers seven counties.
     + DSS Attorney Andria Duncan met with Judge Forga to discuss improvements.
     + PIP (Program Improvement Plan) information has been submitted, and the district is being restructured.
       - The proposal has passed the Senate and is currently awaiting approval in the House.
       - The restructure would include five counties: Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Swain, and Macon.
     + There are new offices for the Public Defender, District Attorney, and District Court Judge.
     + The district is actively working to address ongoing systemic issues.
     + One key improvement is the development of a court-appointed attorney list to reduce conflicts and ensure consistency across cases.
3. **Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Update**
   * + Handout provided. No discussion.
4. **DHHS MOU Measure – 100% CCDSS Programs in Compliance**
   * + Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were established in response to Rylan’s Law, named after a child who tragically died in foster care.
     + Since 2018, the state is legally required to issue MOUs to every DSS agency with specific performance benchmarks.
     + The state has reinitiated Corrective Action Plans for DSS agencies that do not meet these measures. Currently, four DSS agencies are on corrective action plans du to MOU deficiencies.
     + Our agency is currently meeting all MOU measures at 100% compliance.
       - Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), including energy programs, require extensive tracking focused on timeliness.
       - In Child Welfare, due to the lack of a state-wide comprehensive data system, only one measure is currently being tracked, monthly face to face visits with foster children.

CCDSS consistently achieves 100% in this area, with the exception of July and august 2024 due to two children on runaway status. CCDSS tracks the additional measures internally including:

* + - * 1. Screening of reports
        2. Repeat maltreatment
        3. Achieving permanency within 12 months
    - Adult Protective Services (APS) and Special Assistance programs are achieving 100% compliance across the board.
    - Child Support is performing exceptionally well. While some of the performance measures related to collections are challenging, the program remains on track to meet its goals. Overall, the agency is fully compliant with all accountability measures, maintaining 100% performance in all applicable areas.

1. **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.
2. **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.
     + **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.
3. **DSS Service Report / Retention Data / Staff / Unit Accomplishments**
   * + Service Report sent to all board members in advance for review.
4. **Adjourn**
   * + Mr. James Jallah made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Catherin Yost seconded. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 PM.