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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**

**November 19, 2024**

1. **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Cherokee County Department of Social Services was duly held on November 19, 2024, at 5:00 P.M. at 4800 West Highway 64, Murphy, N.C. 28906.

**Present were:**

Dr. Cathrine Yost

Bo Phillips, Member

James Jallah, Member

Dixie Carter, Member

Pat Ivie, Member

**Staff present were:**

Amanda T. McGee, Director

Andria Duncan, Attorney

Miriam Aguero, Business Officer

Brandy Clonts, Administrative Officer

1. **Discussion and Adoption of Agenda**

Adoption of agenda was approved.

Motion was made by Mr. James Jallah. Seconded by Ms. Pat Ivie. All voted in favor.

1. **Meeting Minute**

Meeting minutes from October 15, 2024 were approved.

Motion was made by Ms. Pat Ivie. Seconded by Mr. James Jallah. All voted in favor.

1. **Public Comments**

No public forum.

1. **Old Business**
   1. **Up-date New DSS Signage Update**

A new sign was placed at the entrance of DSS to direct the clients and visitors to the front entrance. The existing sign in front of the building is in the process of being updated. There is a need for a light to illuminate the signs that will be entered in next year’s budget.

* 1. **Up-Date Threat Assessment Progress**
* Administrative Officer Brandy Clonts worked with IT and Emergency Services for a box to hold a key for entrance into the agency for emergency situations. Fire Chief, Kevin Carter recommended a “Knox Box.” This box would hold a key for entrance to the agency and would be managed by the Ranger Fire Department. The initial cost would be $600, along with the fee for the cost of the program and the subscription for the Ranger Fire Department. Chief Carter is to discuss this option with Chief Mike and update Brandy Clonts.
* Administrative Officer Brandy has worked with Cherokee County Emergency Management and Chief Deputy Jacobs on scheduling emergency trainings with all staff for an active shooter drill to occur in January 2025.
* County Maintenance did an excellent job removing all the bushes and trees from around the building, and hardscaping with white stone. Employees fill much more safe entering and exiting the building.
* Badge access was added for the CPS unit, making it safer and more convenient for entry.
* Business Officer, Miriam Aguero discussed adding Simply Safe to next year’s budget to improve safety for “The Cottage.”
* Business Officer Miriam Aguero explained “Honeywell,” a reception management system purchased to check in all clients, visitors and staff. The system will print badges, notify employees that their client have arrived for meetings, and keep track of everyone in the building for safety purposes.
* The need for a larger scanner was brought to the County Manager Wiggins attention by Director McGee at the county meeting, after discussed in the last Board Meeting.
* After Hurricane Helene, the need for another form of communication was apparent when all cell phone tower were down. Viper radios are used throughout the county by 1st responders. Upon research, the administrative team learned that viper radios can only be purchased and used by 1st responders, and unfortunately DSS is not listed as a 1st responder for that vendor.
* DSS is testing emergency “beepers” managed by Vestige. The emergency beepers operate via cell phone towers and are reported to work well in low cell service areas. The emergency beepers notify law enforcement and a supervisor when activated. The CPS Unit his testing the coverage ability for the beepers.

1. **New Business**
   1. **Honeywell Reception System Implementation**

Business Officer, Miriam Aguero is working on implementing the system by mid-December.

* 1. **NCACDSS Draft Legislative Goals**

Board members were provided an overview and handouts regarding goals.

**1st Goal:** Child Welfare Training Sites are not accessible to many DSS agencies with training sites between 3 and 9 hours away from Cherokee County requiring up to 22 nights away from home in a 7 week period. An online training version or the creation of additional training sites is requested to be funded by the legislature.

**2nd Goal:** Auditing Systems for IV-E federal funds. The request is to prevent paybacks for items not in a current DHHS policy manual, and cut-off on look-backs for pay backs. Other state child welfare agencies are working on similar legislative goals.

**3rd Goal:** Match Commissioners goals. There is a behavioral health service gap that unveils Qualified Residential Treatment Programs for high acuity children. There is a request for a national study for funding streams for state and federal funds for an array of services.

* 1. **DSS Flooring and Pain Project**

Business Officer, Miriam Aguero discussed the process of the remodel on the 2nd floor of the agency. All 2nd floor staff must have their offices packed by November 27, 2024. Movers, painters and flooring workers will begin the project on December 2. 2024. The project should be completed by December 20, 2024.

1. **DSS Service Report**
   1. **Child Support Spot Light –** Child Support Supervisor, Jessica Watkins provided Director McGee with the CQI Goals and Performance Measures by County. Cherokee County is the only county in Region 1 with all goals met and on-track.
2. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM with Dr. Kathrine Yost making a motion to adjourn, Ms. Dixie Carter seconding the motion, with all in favor.