



**LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 26, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Lincoln County Social Services Board was held on Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Social Services Building. Members present were Chrystal Hoyle, Chairperson; Dr. Sherry Hoyle, Vice Chairperson; Jill Eaddy; and Daphne Ingram. Others in attendance were Matthew Hillman, Director; Kelley Miles, Deputy Director; Ruth Lockman, Business Manager; Mendie Kelly, Children Services Program Manager; Jason Hughes, Placement Services Program Manager; Tiffany Barnette, Medicaid Program Manager; Roni Duckworth, Economic Services Program Manager; and Denise Dula, Economic Services Support Supervisor/Designated Clerk to the Social Services Board.

Call to Order-Chrystal Hoyle called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Invocation-Matthew Hillman gave an invocation.

Adoption of the Agenda-Adoption of the Agenda was approved by motion from Jill Eaddy, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

Public Comment-No public comments were made.

Minutes-Minutes from the October 29, 2024 meeting was approved by motion from Daphne Ingram, second by Jill Eaddy, with all members in favor.

Old Business-Matthew Hillman gave an update on the Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit (REDA)-Round Two. During the implementation of the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) in October 2024, counties impacted by Hurricane Helene were informed there would be a three month blanket waiver for the Medicaid Application Report Card. However, in a "Dear County Letter" dated November 6, 2024, counties learned the Division of Health Benefits (DHB) had only issued a blanket waiver for Medicaid Application Report Card failures for the month October 2024. This created a huge impact on counties trying to catch up on Medicaid reviews. Mr. Hillman noted there are gray areas in communication and policy interpretation surrounding REDA. In addition, REDA has virtually no appeal process which can be very frustrating from the standpoint of DSS.

Matthew Hillman stated a legislative priority has been to offer state training (pre-service) for Medicaid workers. The state reached out to all 100 counties in North Carolina asking each to develop a training module. Mr. Hillman noted Medicaid Program Manager Tiffany Barnette developed guidance for Medicaid eligibility workers. Lincoln County's Operational Support

Team (OST) consult was so impressed with Ms. Barnette's plan, it was shared with all 100 counties and named "Best Practice Training Plan." Board members congratulated Ms. Barnette and all Medicaid staff on an excellent job in providing Medicaid eligibility to the citizens of Lincoln County.

Matthew Hillman expressed during the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) in October 2024, over 2000 Lincoln County residents were served. There were 392 D-SNAP applications in the online working que that had to be completed by November 1, 2024. Lincoln County DSS eligibility workers completed all 392 applications and, also volunteered to help other surrounding counties impacted by Hurricane Helene. The eastern counties of North Carolina worked the state call center for D-SNAP assistance. The call center was a success, however, there were issues, such as, calls being dropped, etc. Throughout the entire process of D-SNAP, counties showed resilience in overcoming obstacles to ensure North Carolina residents were provided the best services possible. Mr. Hillman noted the Director's Association plans to use a press release agency to show the positive perspective and success stories regarding D-SNAP.

Matthew Hillman stated during the pre-county budget meeting for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY 25-26) with County Manager Davin Madden, emergency placement staff compensation for Child Welfare staff was proposed. Behavioral health demands of some children in foster care with no place for them to go significant for their needs, often means they are living in DSS offices. When these instances occur, staff are required to work shifts overnight to monitor the children. There must be two workers involved with overnight shifts. Over Veteran's Day holiday, there was a foster child with no placement options. Mr. Hillman expressed he contacted County Manager Madden and explained the situation and asked for staff compensation throughout the holiday weekend. Mr. Madden approved this request. However, DSS continued to work through resources and was able to find placement before 5:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon. Mr. Hillman notified County Manager Madden of the positive outcome. Board members expressed emergency placement staff compensation is great news and should have a positive outcome.

New Business-Matthew Hillman noted November is Adoption Awareness Month. Jason Hughes, Placement Services Program Manager, stated the Foster Care Adoption Ceremony was held on November 22, 2024 at DSS. The event was a great success and enjoyed by all attending. The fifteen adoptions in 2024 included seven independent adoptions and eight adoptions out of DSS custody. Mr. Hughes presented a slide show of the children adopted in 2024. Foster care workers presented the certificates to the families. At the end of the ceremony, each child released a biodegradable balloon into the sky. Families then returned to have refreshments and time of fellowship.

Matthew Hillman stated North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) was implemented in 2012 in economic services. The goal of NC FAST was to reduce paperwork and streamline data gathering allowing caseworkers to provide better support to clients. NC FAST created a uniform case management system across all 100 counties in North Carolina. NC FAST was executed in children services seven or eight years ago. However, there were many obstacles and issues utilizing NC FAST for child welfare and counties considered the system a failure and withdrew from the program. After studying NC FAST system breakdowns

in children services and receiving county input, a new support network has been launched. The official name of the Child Welfare Information System is PATH NC (Partnership and Technology Hub of North Carolina). PATH NC will bring together information from multiple agencies and organizations to better support work. The transition to PATH NC signifies an emphasis on user-friendly tools, data-driven decision making, collaborative partnerships, and a renewed focus on the needs of the child and family. Full execution of PATH NC is expected by Summer 2025.

Matthew Hillman discussed space needs of Lincoln County DSS. The current building size does not support current staff needs. DSS has vastly outgrown the building. Workers are placed in hallways, cubicle areas, and teleworking from home due to the dimensions of the building. Mr. Hillman noted he and Deputy Director Kelley Miles have met with county management and an architectural firm to help determine the exact need and plan going forward. As more information is learned, it will be shared with the Board.

Budget Reports-Ruth Lockman gave an overview of D-SNAP expenditures versus reimbursement. Expenditures for D-SNAP included police presence, porta johns, supplies, food for staff, and worker overtime pay. She explained the expenses reimbursed one hundred percent and those not fully reimbursable. The projected return to the county was noted and line items reflecting the largest revenue was discussed. Board members thanked Ms. Lockman for her detailed budget analysis.

Statistical Reports-Matthew Hillman stated the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) continues to look good. The data reflects the hard work of staff members to consistently produce desirable outcomes. Mr. Hillman expressed Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) utilizes a work ahead schedule by not waiting to the last minute to send notices out, etc. This practice has greatly improved the efficiency of FNS.

Other-Matthew Hillman expressed congratulations to Daphne Ingram on her appointment as Director of Region 4 in the North Carolina Association of County Boards of Social Services (NCACBSS). Ms. Ingram stated she will serve as an advocate for the interest of County Boards of Social Services, County Departments of Social Services, employees of County Departments of Social Services, and clients of County Departments of Social Services at the county, state, and federal levels of government. Ms. Ingram indicated as she learns more about her role, she will share with Board members. Everyone complimented Ms. Ingram on her new appointment.

Closed Session-Chrystal Hoyle expressed a need for Closed Session. Chrystal Hoyle stated the Board would enter Closed Session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11. Jill Eaddy made the motion to enter Closed Session, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor. The Board entered Closed Session at 2:15 p.m.

Return to Regular Session-Jill Eaddy made the motion to return to Regular Session, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor. The Board returned to Regular Session at 2:35 p.m.

Date of Next Meeting-Matt Hillman expressed he would like to invite Board members to the agency Christmas Breakfast on Friday, December 13, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. Board members noted

the Social Services Board Meeting for December 2024 could be held right after the event. All Board members agreed the Social Services Board Meeting will be on Friday, December 13, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Motion to adjourn by Jill Eaddy, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

This meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Date Minutes Approved

Chrystal Hoyle, Chairperson

Matthew Hillman, Director

Respectfully Submitted:

Denise S. Dula
Economic Services Support Supervisor;
Designated Clerk to the Social Services Board of Lincoln County DSS
Cc: file copy