



**LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 23, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Lincoln County Social Services Board was changed and held on Tuesday, September 23, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Social Services Building. The members present were Alex Patton, Chairperson; Daphne Ingram, Vice Chairperson; Dr. Sherry Hoyle; Jill Eaddy; and Mike Devine. Others in attendance were Matthew Hillman, Director; Kelley Miles, Deputy Director; Ruth Lockman, Business Manager; Mendie Kelly, Children Services Program Manager; Tiffany Barnette, Medicaid Program Manager; Roni Duckworth, Economic Services Program Manager; Jennifer Sigmon, Adult Services Program Manager; and, Denise Dula, Business Operations Supervisor/Designated Clerk to the Social Services Board. Also in attendance was LaTosha McLean, Guardianship Representative Social Worker, to give an outline of her job at Lincoln County DSS.

Call to Order-Alex Patton called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Invocation-Matt Hillman gave the invocation.

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

Public Comment-No public comments were made.

Minutes-Minutes from August 27, 2025 meeting was approved by motion from Dr. Sherry Hoyle, second by Daphne Ingram, with all members in favor.

Old Business-Matthew Hillman stated although he had planned to give a final update for Lincoln County DSS regarding the Recipient Eligibility Determination Audit (REDA)-Round Two, formal confirmation has not been received. Through verbal conversation, Lincoln County DSS has been notified enough improvements had been made during the audit and we should not be placed on an Accuracy Improvement Plan (AIP). Mr. Hillman stated in the future, a REDA-Round Two update will only be placed on the Board agenda if Lincoln County DSS is placed on an AIP or if there are paybacks over one thousand dollars. Board members agreed this would be sufficient.

Matthew Hillman noted he wanted to give a short update on the State Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Medicaid rebase. There is a shortfall of over 300 million dollars for the Medicaid rebase. As a result, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) have implemented rate reductions and will eliminate certain services altogether with an effective date

of October 1, 2025. The fear is that reduced rates and elimination of services will drive providers out of the Medicaid program which threatens care of those who need it most. Mr. Hillman stated on Monday, September 22, 2025, a mini budget covering the 300 million dollar shortfall for the Medicaid rebase passed in the Senate. Now, the mini budget will need approval by the House. If the mini budget does not get approved through the House, DSS will face the ramifications.

Matthew Hillman expressed in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, Lincoln County DSS received \$20,000.00 in Emergency Placement Funds from the state. Fortunately, none of those funds were used by DSS. As a result, Lincoln County DSS returned \$10,000.00 to the state and shared \$10,000.00 with other counties. For Fiscal Year 2024-2025, Lincoln County DSS received \$37,000.00 enabling enhanced rates to be paid, which was beneficial with more options available. However, Lincoln County foster children still spent a total of seventeen overnights at DSS because of no placement alternatives. For Fiscal Year 2025-2026, Emergency Placement Funds were not allocated and so far there has been eighteen overnights spent at DSS by Lincoln County foster children. A few weeks ago, Lincoln County DSS received \$11,000.00 to assist in placement options. Mr. Hillman noted he continues to keep County Manager Davin Madden updated on the emergency placement crisis facing Lincoln County DSS.

Matthew Hillman stated the Partnership and Technology of North Carolina (PATH NC) went live on August 11, 2025. PATH NC is a children services support network that streamlines data collection from multiple agencies and organizations throughout the full life of each case to better support work. Lincoln County DSS experienced an initial positive shift to PATH NC. However, statewide, the next stage has issues regarding interpretation of policy, timeframes, etc. Mr. Hillman noted prior to PATH NC, a family was assigned a specific case number that would be used each time a new report was received on that particular family. However, in PATH NC the case numbers change each time a new report is received. The family does not keep the same case number for every report. This is causing confusion among counties, and if the client's case is not properly closed, it will continue to be shown open with services being provided. Mr. Hillman noted the state was at a solution focus standpoint to see if there can be a resolution to the problems within PATH NC.

New Business-Matthew Hillman acknowledged "Meet our Staff" is something that Lincoln County DSS takes pride in presenting to the Social Services Board. Adult Services Program Manager, Jennifer Sigmon, introduced LaTosha McLean, Guardianship Representative Social Worker. Ms. McLean stated she has worked at Lincoln County DSS for over twenty-two years. She began as a data entry operator which later had a title change to Medicaid Billing Assistant. During this time, Ms. McLean went back to school and obtained her bachelor's degree to become a social worker because she wanted to be more hands-on with clients. She noted she has always had a strong passion for working with elderly individuals. Ms. McLean stated from an early age she valued the wisdom, resilience, and life experiences senior citizens bring to our communities. This passion inspired her to pursue opportunities where she could support, advocate, and learn from older adults. She explained a guardianship social worker is responsible for providing case management and advocacy services for individuals under guardianship, including older adults, and people with disabilities, who are unable to manage their own personal, medical, or financial affairs. Ms. McLean expressed her role involves assessing client

needs, developing and monitoring individualized service plans, and ensuring appropriate care and support is in place for the client. Her caseload age range is 18 years old to 92 years old. In addition, Ms. McLean noted the three types of guardians and the differences in each. She characterized the difficulties and rewards of being a guardianship social worker. In closing, Ms. McLean summarized a guardianship social worker as giving a voice to those who may not have one, protecting their rights, supporting their needs, and making sure they are treated with dignity and respect at every stage of life.

Board members thanked Ms. McLean for her very informative, personalized presentation, and the hard work she and all social workers do on a daily basis at Lincoln County DSS.

Matthew Hillman did a recap of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretary visit on Tuesday, September 16, 2025. Dr. Devdutta "Dev" Sangvai was sworn in as Secretary for DHHS on January 12, 2025. During Social Services Institute 2025, held in Hickory, North Carolina, Dr. Sangvai had expressed he would be visiting various DSS agencies in North Carolina. Mr. Hillman noted it was a great honor for Lincoln County DSS to be chosen as one of those agencies. He explained an action committee was formed and a plan was put in place. Mr. Hillman stated the visit went very well and he wanted to commend DSS staff, Board members, and everyone involved in making this event such a success. Alex Patton expressed he thought the visit was very professionally done, and he felt Dr. Sangvai came to listen and took it to heart. Jill Eaddy stated she did not think the visit could have gone any better.

Matthew Hillman stated the McGuire Graded Exercise was recently done. The exercise involved more emergency and fire response personnel. He felt it was good experience, and attendees were able to learn and grow. Mr. Hillman explained should a shelter be activated, Lincoln County DSS has twelve teams with nine staff members on each team. The first team will be assigned, and rotation of teams will follow.

Budget Reports-Ruth Lockman stated expenditure/revenue reports were provided in the Board packet. On page 2, line 39 (overtime), DSS is already at 49.50 percent used. This is due to staff having to stay with foster children overnight at DSS. There must be two staff members with a foster child at all times with one being a Social Worker and the other being another worker. In addition, extra security had to be hired one weekend because of the behaviors of a foster child. Also, on page 2, line 45 (seminar registration) reflects 422.50 percent used. Lincoln County DSS is sending four Foster Care Social Workers and four foster parents to the 50th Anniversary Adoption Conference in Florida. Reimbursement will be received for these expenses and money will be rolled forward offsetting the available and percentage total for the fiscal year. Ms. Lockman stated if Board members had any questions regarding the budget reports to contact her and she will be glad to explain.

Statistical Reports-Matthew Hillman stated Lincoln County DSS statistical data continues to look great. DSS staff remain positive and solution focused. He stated case closure in PATH NC may impact our numbers over the next few months or until resolution of the system errors are fixed.

Other-Matthew Hillman stated Lincoln County DSS recently celebrated Child Welfare Appreciation Week. Staff were provided with donuts, bagels, coffee, and juice as part of the celebration. DHHS sent out videos reflecting the roles of child welfare staff and the impact their work has on the lives of foster children.

Next, Matthew Hillman expressed Lincoln County DSS would like to present Dr. Sherry Hoyle with a plaque of appreciation for her service on the Lincoln County Social Services Board. Dr. Hoyle has served on the Board since 2020. She has been a valuable member of the Board and will be greatly missed. Dr. Hoyle stated it had been an honor to serve on the Board, and she commended all staff on the terrific work they do on a daily basis to provide services and take care of the citizens of Lincoln County. All Board members thanked Dr. Hoyle for her participation and wished her well in the future.

Matthew Hillman noted prior to the start of October's Board meeting, there will be a time of fellowship at 12:45 p.m. with lunch served. More information will be sent out by Denise Dula regarding the event.

Closed Session-Alex Patton expressed a need for Closed Session. Mr. Patton stated the Board would enter Closed Session pursuant to *G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(1)* To prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this State or the United States or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. *G. S. 7B-302 (a)(1)* Jill Eaddy made the motion to enter the Closed Session, second by Dr. Sherry Hoyle, with all members in favor. The Board entered Closed Session at 2:20 p.m.

Return to Regular Session-Jill Eaddy made the motion to return to Regular Session, second by Mike Devine, with all members in favor. The Board returned to Regular Session at 2:44 p.m.

Matthew Hillman noted the Social Services Commission (SSC) appointment to fill Dr. Sherry Hoyle's seat was discussed during Closed Session. The SSC met on September 10, 2025 and a nominee was not named. The SSC will meet next on December 10, 2025 and a nominee will be chosen. Dr. Sherry Hoyle has agreed to stay on as a "holdover" member until the SSC meets in December 2025.

Date of Next Meeting-Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Jill Eaddy, second by Mike Devine, with all members in favor.

This meeting adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

Date Minutes Approved-October 28, 2025

Alex Patton
Alex Patton, Chairperson

M. Hillman

Matthew Hillman, Director

Respectfully Submitted:

Denise S. Dula
Denise S. Dula, Designated Clerk
Social Services Board

Cc: file copy