Board Members
John Day, Chair
Brian Barrier
Maureen Schwind
Keith Bowman
Nancy Wood

Korey Fisher-Wellman
Director

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MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, August 5, 2025
10am

Board Present: Brian Barrier
Maureen Schwind
Keith Bowman

Staff Present: Korey Fisher-Wellman, DSS Director
Chazlyn Thomas, Deputy Director
Amanda Grady, Assistant Director
Amber Conley. CPS Program Manager
Thadd Hodges, Business Officer

CALL TO ORDER
Maureen Schwind called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Maureen Schwind made a motion to approve the minutes and agenda from the last meeting. Brian Barrier and Keith Bowman were both in favor of approving them.

CONSENT AGENDA -DIRECTOR'S REPORT
There were no questions that pertained to the Director's report.

OLD OR NEW BUSINESS
Director Korey Fisher-Wellman introduced Amber Conley as the new CPS Program Manager.

Amber Conley introduced herself to the board:

• Completed 20 years of service.

• Husband retired from the highway patrol.
• Was consulting across the state for DSS.

DSS AGENCY OVERVIEW

Director Korey Fisher-Wellman went over the presentation that was similar to the report done each month in the commissioner's meeting.
• Update on personnel. Openings list is a moment in time.
• 10 open positions.
• Vacancy rate of 5%.
• Several months ago, vacancy rate was 15% or more.

Brian Barrier asked about the Hiring Process. Director Fisher-Wellman stated that
• Most people accept offers after the interview process.
In the past we did lose people to surrounding counties, however since the pay adjustment DSS has had better success hiring.
• Burke County does have a good benefits package.
• Conditional offer made after interview, pending drug screen, background check, and references.
• Final offers after passing background checks and references, and agreeing on salary and start date. Before having HR staff in the building, DSS changed the process to make it more efficient.
• Brian Barrier stated that communicating a great culture and positivity is important.
• "Pay is very important, but it's not most important because people want to feel like they're valued and respected and that they're going to be able to have some enjoyment."
• June numbers: 2 people left, 4 people came.
Director Fisher-Wellman spoke briefly on the different areas within DSS. He stated that Economic Services continue to meet MOU measures every month.
Amanda Grady stated that the Medicaid numbers continue to rise, and Food Nutrition Services numbers have slowly started to go down.
• 28,851 Medicaid recipients in Burke County. FNS- active caseloads are decreasing, the number of applications remains high. Some applicants are no longer eligible due to returning to work or not meeting the able-bodied without dependents (ABAWD) work requirements.
• ABAWD's must work or volunteer at least 20 hours per week.
• Work requirements for the expanded Medicaid cases and FNS- Adults with a child 14 years or older must seek work or volunteer to receive benefits (changes coming based on the BBB).

Korey Fisher Wellman then discussed how Child Welfare is transitioning to PATHNC, a statewide universal system. PATHNC aims to provide consistency and ease of access to client history across counties. The system goes live on Monday, requiring staff to attend training sessions. The old system will be permanently cut off for intake and investigation, but other parts of child welfare will remain in the old system until a later transition.

- Amanda is filling in the security officer role while the worker is out.
- NC FAST is primarily for eligibility, while NC PATH is the child welfare system.

Foster Care and Kinship

• As of the creation of the PowerPoint, there were 187 children in foster care.

• The number of children in foster care is trending slightly upward.
• There is a continued emphasis on increasing the number of foster parents and utilizing kinship placements.
• Increasing foster parents may not reduce the number of children in the building, as those children often have high needs requiring a higher level of care.

Megan's Place and Community Support

There is an effort to find a location for Megan's Place in Burke County.
• The preference is to have a facility on campus to keep staff readily available.
• The possibility of building tiny homes on campus is being discussed with the community college.
• The goal is to create a home-like setting for children and families, including parent-child Visits

Adult Services Data

• The number of wards continues to rise, with an increasing number of younger individuals requiring services.
• The county is exploring the possibility of increasing the number of contracted slots to support adult services staff.
• CAP (Community Alternatives Program) is a non-mandated program that generates revenue to offset costs in economic and adult services.

House Bill One and Potential Changes

House Bill One could bring significant changes to Medicaid and SNAP programs.
• A work requirement may be added to both programs, specifically for Medicaid expansion and FNS for ages 19 to 64. Recipients must engage in approved activities for 20 hours a week, totaling 80 hours a month. Parents with the youngest child aged 14 or older would be required to work or volunteer to maintain benefits.
Korey Fisher-Wellman stated that if things were to stay as they are with the addition of their work requirement, it could cost 255,000 North Carolinians to lose coverage.

Funding Changes and Potential Impacts

• Changes in funding could lead to states being required to cover a larger portion of costs, potentially increasing from 25% to 50%.
Medicaid cuts could affect hospitals, pharmacies, and other healthcare providers, potentially leading to closures, especially for smaller pharmacies. Decreased Medicaid rates could worsen the existing lack of services in the community, particularly in mental health, making it more difficult for providers to operate and accept Medicaid.
• There is a lack of guidance from the federal level regarding the implementation of these changes, and the state has not made decisions on how to absorb potential costs.
• Significant cuts to Medicaid and SNAP could have a tremendous impact on communities, especially rural areas.
•The amount of money that flows through DSS into the local economy is significant, and cutting SNAP benefits could have a tremendous impact on grocery stores and convenience stores, gas stations, and other businesses. Food pantries are already seeing increased utilization.

ADULT AND CHILDREN SERVICES UPDATE

CPS UPDATES- Chazlyn Thomas

• Two new supervisor positions were added to the agency: CQI supervisor: to audit and identify areas for improvement. Training supervisor: to work with the CQI supervisor to train staff based on identified needs and support new staff onboarding.

• One supervisor started last week, the other started this week. The goal is to improve retention and support staff, especially when they are in the field. CPS Open Positions: There were previously significant open positions in CPS. However, now there are only two on-call positions open.
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ECONOMIC SERVICES PROGRAM UPDATE

Economic Services- Amanda Grady

•Clerical staff, Lead workers, and front desk staff are participating in customer service training.
• Supervisors are participating in supervisor training and will graduate next Wednesday.
• This is the first group in Burke to do a group supervisor training with a teacher from Western Piedmont. The training focuses on soft skills such as conflict resolution and staff management. The goal is to invest in staff, improve retention, and create a positive culture.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Director- Korey Fisher-Wellman

The building will be closed to the public this Friday due to air conditioner repairs. Essential services will continue to operate as usual.
• The kickoff meeting for the building renovations has taken place. The architect design team has been selected and is holding meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Maureen Schwind adjourned the meeting.