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

Korey Fisher-Wellman
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MINUTES
BURKE COUNTY ADVISOARY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Monday, December 1, 2025
10am

Board Present: John Daye
Brian Barrier
Nancy Wood
Maureen Schwind

Staff Present: Korey Fisher Wellman, County Director
Chazlyn Thomas, Deputy Director
Amanda Grady, Assistant Director
Amber Conley. CPS Program Manager
Will Winters, FC Program Manager
Kelsey Walker, Administrative Officer

CALL TO ORDER
John Daye called the meeting to order. Introductions are made for Amber Conley and Kelsey Walker.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes and agenda approved from the last meeting. Maureen Schwind and Nancy Wood was in favor of approving them.

CONSENT AGENDA -DIRECTOR'S REPORT
- Preparing for changes to SNAP and Medicaid as part of HR-1.
- Administration cost is affected.
- Benefit cost is affected and a 25% reduction in admin costs for SNAP.
- Goal is not to cut positions.
- Met with county manager to discuss options.

OLD OR NEW BUSINESS

Korey Fisher Wellman

• Cost shift: Federal govt used to pay 50%, the county paid 50%. Now it's going to be 75/25.
• North Carolina pays no admin cost for FNS.
• Based on error rate, the hope is that the state will pay some portion of the benefits.
• North Carolina's error rate would be about $400 million that the state would have to pay. Counties are working to reduce the error rate to reduce the admin cost starting October of next year.
• The HR-1 Policy will cut funding but also hold the state accountable for an error rate. This change will require more work with less money.
• State error rate is currently at 7%.
• Burke County's error rate: This year they've only done five cases, and we had one with an error.

Current Openings- Korey Fisher Wellman

• 14 openings, which is like a 7% vacancy rate.
• Two of those had offers in them. That would bring the agency down to a 6% vacancy rate.
• October: two separations and four hiring.

MOU- Amanda Grady

• The agency was able to achieve timeliness in all economic service areas.

Program Statistics for October

• Medicaid: Roughly 28,733 recipients in Burke County.
• Food Stamps: 10,695 recipients, 5,568 cases.
• Regarding the Federal shutdown and FNS, all of November's EBT benefits have been received.
• Low Income Energy Assistance Program: The county did receive $123,000 more funds to account for the delay in FNS benefits.

Adult Services -Korey Fisher Wellman

• 69 wards, plus 17 contracted out to a third party.
• Significant SA in home caseload and case cap caseload.
• 34 Adult Protective Services reports received in October.

CPS Reports and New Policy- Korey Fisher Wellman and Amber Conley

• New policy requires all reports to have immediate or 24-hour response time, increasing workload for social workers.
• Spike in reports around school start and after holidays due to children reporting Incidents to the schools.

CPS Caseloads and Foster Care- Korey Fisher Wellman

• CPS caseloads peaked in February, reduced to 288 by end of November through contract staff and other efforts.
• 187 children experiencing foster care at a point in time.
• 6 children entered foster care and 4 exited in October.

CPS Vacancies and Workforce Challenges- Korey Fisher Wellman

• Vacancies impact case movement. All counties have the same issues hiring and retaining staff.
• Offering a $3,000 sign-on bonus for those with three years of experience, but not successful due to lack of experienced workers.

• Pre-service training is inconvenient, long, and not offered often. Child welfare collaborative died down for a while, creating a gap in service training.

Christmas Gifts for Kids in Foster Care- Korey Fisher Wellman and Chazlyn Thomas

• Christmas gifts for kids experiencing foster care are housed at a local church.
• Community contributed to ensure kids have happiness during this time.
• Chazlyn coordinated over 400 sponsors from the community.

ADULT AND CHILDREN SERVICES UPDATE CPS UPDATES- Chazlyn Thomas

• Focus is on children entering care and the 18-21 population.
• Using monetary donations and gift cards to support them.

Trailer for Kids

• Trailer on the property is being fixed up for keeping kids or visitation. Social workers need to stay inside with kids, usually in pairs. We have had children stay in the agency consistently, however the staff have been really god at finding placement.

Healthy Blue and Building Space

• Healthy Blue taking over from partners for LMB.
• Embedded worker from Healthy Blue to help with placement and services.
• Out of building space for workers, especially with a new supervisor and CPS position.

Building Renovations

• Plans to start communicating about being out of the building for renovations.
• Construction to start when the school moves out, around late summer.
• Exploring options for remote work and managing economic services with public access.
• Moving towards workstations/cubicles, which may cause some pushbacks.
• The office will have offices for those who conduct interviews all day, and interview rooms for those in cubicles.
• The goal is to message the changes positively, focusing on the gains and sharing drawings early to get staff on board.
• There will be an attempt to get people to look at the adult services building across from the main county offices, which are in cubicles and is a “very nice space."
• An open environment can foster teamwork and reduce isolation. There will be growing pains, but eventually people will be happier, especially new staff.

ECONOMIC SERVICES PROGRAM UPDATE

Economic Services- Amanda Grady

CIP Funding

• CIP funding, but it is limited ($123,000) and for heating and cooling emergencies. LIEAP funding has not come in yet.
• The rules have some changes, not requiring a cutoff notice, just a past due bill.
• The funding can also purchase portable heaters.

FNS Policy Changes

• There have been many FNS policy changes, and a chart was created to highlight the differences between the old and new policies.
• The age for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABOD) increased to 64.
• Individuals aged 55 to 64 without dependents will now be considered ABAWD.
• Client statements can be used as verification unless questionable, such as when someone reapplies after being denied.
• Work requirements now include individuals aged 16 to 59, unless they meet an exemption.
• Veterans can now have any percentage of disability to be exempt, whereas before they had to be 100%.

• The policy for chronic homelessness has reverted to the old policy, where couch surfing is not considered homelessness.

Medicaid and Other Audits

• Medicaid policy is still changing, and the department is awaiting updates from the state representative.
• The department is currently undergoing two Medicaid audits.
• The special assistance (SA) program audit has just finished.
• All programs will be audited in the coming year, including a large FNS audit in February and a Medicaid audit (REDA).

Staffing Updates

• Two new staff members have been hired at the front desk.
• The staff development position has been reclassified to an admin officer/security officer to handle security audits and network security.
• A lead worker has given a two-week notice due to personal reasons.
• A supervisor in family and children is on FMLA, creating leadership challenges.

Caseload Alignment- Brian Barrier

• Caseload alignment with addiction-related removals was previously observed via heat overlay map.
• The county overlaid a map of 911 calls for overdoses with the locations of children being removed from homes. The alignment between the two was significant.
• Tricia has updated removal addresses.

Tier One County Status

• Burke County will be considered a Tier one county next year. Tier one status indicates economic need and opens access to state and federal
grants.
• This will help with workforce development, transportation, and broadband.
• The county received over $3 million from the state for a building project.
• This will reduce the burden on taxpayers.

County-Wide Understanding-Korey Fisher Wellman/ Brian Barrier

• There is a county-wide understanding of how economic and workforce development can help get kids out of foster care.
• Moving folks to the higher education center will be the plan temporarily while the process is completed in stages.
• Positive mental attitude is important.

Employee Morale- John Daye/Korey Fisher Wellman/ Amanda Grady

• Employee morale is better than it was this time last year.
• The "burnout buster team" has scheduled events for December.
• Thadd Hodges had Lowe's donate a new Christmas tree.
• Other activities include hot chocolate, cider, cookies, and an ornament exchange.
• FNS and Energy departments focus on ensuring families have what they need for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

ADJOURNMENT

John Daye adjourned the meeting.