# Foster Care and Adoptions

*Presented by*

Rebecca Smith, MSW

Director of Social Work

Buncombe County Health and Human Services

# What we are working toward…

| | |
|---|---|
| Safety | Absence of an imminent or immediate threat of moderate-to-serious harm to a child. |
| Permanency | Legal, permanent family relationship for every child and youth. |
| Well-Being | Educational, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of children and their families. |

# When someone suspects a child is being abused or neglected, they call our hotline at **828-250-5900**…

## CPS Intake

- Available to respond 24/7/365
- 360 per month
- 65% screen in rate
- Physical and Sexual Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Allegations

# Day or night, we respond to assess, plan for safety and determine needed interventions:

## CPS Assessments

- 220 per month
- Initiating within 0, 24 or 72 hours and open up to 45 days
- Crisis intervention, safety planning and critical decision making
- Findings related to Physical and Sexual Abuse, children impacted by parental substance use, domestic violence, unsafe care, supervision and discipline

# When children have been abused/ neglected, we do everything we can to keep them safely in the care of their biological family members:

## Mandated In-Home Services

- Interventions to address child maltreatment in the home, increase protective capacity and reduce risk of future harm
- Average 120 open families
- Successfully close when safety issues resolved
- Petition could be filed if safety issue not resolved

When all other options have been exhausted, we petition the court for custody of children to keep them safe:

## Permanency Planning

- Legal and physical custody removed from parents
- Average 305 open children
- Interventions are court-ordered
- Working toward reunification and other permanent plans, like custody, guardianship or adoption

# Permanency Planning

- When a child enters custody, we are fully responsible for ensuring:
  - they are cared for through appropriate placement providers,
  - their mental health, physical health, dental and educational needs are met, and
  - they are able to visit with their parents and siblings.

- We are also responsible for working with their parents to address the safety concerns that led to custody.



# What we do to reunify children with their parents:

## Reunification Specialist

### Domestic Violence Informed Practice

- Safe and Together Agency Assessment and Training in partnership with Family Justice Center/ Moving toward Domestic Violence Proficient Practice
- DV Fatality Review Team and Family Justice Center Leadership

## Kinship Support Specialist

### Substance Use Disorder Resources/ Services

- Two nationally certified Sobriety Treatment and Recover Teams in collaboration with October Road and Keystone Labs
- Contract with ABCCM for 12 rooms for mothers and their children at Transformation Village
- Access Opioid Settlement funding to meet basic needs and provide needed interventions

## Visitation Services Specialist

### Parenting Supports

- Circle of Security Parenting
- Visitation Services Team
- Support groups for DSS-involved parents
- Trauma Informed Parental Clinical Assessments
- Services in Spanish
- Youth Villages Partnership
- Mountain Child Advocacy two generational evidence-based treatment services

"Healthy and Safe Parents raise Healthy and Safe Children"

# Visitation Increases Reunification

The G.R.A.C.E. Center for Visitation offers a trauma responsive space for parents to visit with their children

Visitation Coaches provide oversight during visitation to keep children safe and build positive parenting skills

Visitation Coaches also transport children to and from visits

Over 200 hours of court-ordered supervised visits take place every week requiring 5 FTEs without counting transportation

# Building Placement Resources:

- Recruiting, training and licensing foster families
- Monitoring and supporting 73 licensed foster families
- Actively collaborating with Vaya to meet the complex behavioral health needs of children in foster care.
- Employing the 30 Days to Family Model (Family Finding) and KinCARE support
- In FY26, utilizing the Adoptions Promotion funding awarded by NC DHHS to contract with Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina for child-specific recruitment, training of foster families and licensing of foster families

# Children Exiting Foster Care



Reunification – 39%



Adoption – 24%



Custody/ Guardianship – 19%



Entering Extended Foster Care -16%

# FY 25 Adoptions

This year, BCHHS finalized 38 adoptions.

- Nine of those youth were over the age of 10.
- There were several sibling sets adopted together.
- 45% Of these children were adopted by relatives.



# Resources Needed

- Foster families who are willing to go through extensive training to provide care for sibling sets and pre-teens/ teens with complex trauma needs
- Improvement in the Medicaid provider network, soon to be managed by Healthy Blue Care Together through Blue Cross and Blue Shield
- Per PCG, LLC Workload Study, increase staffing to allow our Permanency Planning Social Workers to focus on 10 children at a time vs. the current 15
- Increase visitation resources to support parents spending time with their children in line with court orders

Foster our Future

BUNCOMBE COUNTY
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Call: 828-250-5865

E-mail: familiesforkids@buncombenc.gov