

**Rowan County
Board of Social Services
April 27, 2010
Minutes**

The Rowan County Board of Social Services met on Tuesday, April 27, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the large meeting room at 1813 East Innes Street, Salisbury, NC.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Lillian Morgan, Chairman
Mr. John Blair
Mr. Carl Ford
Ms. Ruth Kennerly
Mr. Jim Sides

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Community: Mr. Robert Boone
DSS Staff: Sandra Wilkes, Barbara Sharpe, Tom Brewer, Kelley Williams

PROCEEDINGS:

1. Call to order: Ms. Morgan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Review of Mission Statement: Ms. Morgan read the Mission Statement.
3. Invocation: Mr. Sides had the opening prayer.
4. Pledge of Allegiance: Ms. Kennerly led the Pledge.
5. Approval of the Agenda: **Mr. Sides moved approval of the Agenda. Mr. Blair seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**
6. Approval of Minutes of the March 23, 2010 Meeting: **Mr. Blair moved approval of the Minutes of the March meeting. Mr. Sides seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.**
7. Comments from the Community: Mr. Robert Boone addressed the Board with several observations and concerns. Mr. Boone shared as information that Duke Hospital is developing new treatments for cancer that may have originated in Rowan County. Mr. Boone referenced the Child Advocacy Center, noting that he is unsure of the services provided, but he stressed the importance of parents and marriage in a child's life. He stated this "needs to be looked as closer." Lastly, Mr. Boone expressed his concerns about the access to records used by Child Support workers. He feels there needs to be some protection for people who are not paying child support. Workers should not access information for the general public, but for clients only. He feels access to records has been abused by workers in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, and Rowan counties.

8. Comments from Board Liaisons: **Administration:** Mr. Ford reported that at its April meeting, the Leadership Team discussed the following policies to make sure they were in compliance:

- Employee Complaint Process
- Employee Grievance Process
- Comp Time Issues
- Random Drug Testing
- ID Badge and Access Security. Mr. Ford pointed out that building security is changing county wide.

There may be changes in Leading by Results as all indicators recommended by the State Division of Social Services have been exhausted.

Finance: Mr. Sides had not gotten a report from Ms. Johnson, but advised that the Finance department had been busy with preparing the budget for the next fiscal year, and finishing up the last quarter of this fiscal year. Ms. Wilkes advised she had received an e-mail from Ms. Johnson this afternoon. We are on track with all allocations and expenditures. Ms. Wilkes updated Board members on the condition of Ms. Johnson's husband. He continues his treatment for cancer. He is very weak, and Jane is working from home as much as possible. Please keep the family in your prayers.

Economic Services: Mr. Blair reported that Food and Nutrition benefits have gone back up for the month of March. In June of 2008, 71% of the potentially eligible residents of Rowan County were participating in the program. As of December 2009, the participation rate is over 102%. The State's participation rate is 95% for the same period. The FNS income guideline is going to increase from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200%. The change will be effective July 1, 2010. We expect a large increase in FNS applicants. Plans are to hire two workers in the FNS program using ARRA funds. These positions will be funded for 12 months.

A new target population of Medicaid recipients will be added soon. This population is single people who are not aged, blind, or disabled and/or who do not have children in the home. We await directives from the State on when this change will occur.

Services Support: Ms. Kennerly commented that the division continues to improve in State ratings, and commended staff for their hard work during difficult times. **Day Care:** There are staffing changes in the unit. To get work completed and to train new staff, it was necessary to implement a waiting list, beginning April 26. Workers are working on transitioning from school care to summer care.

The governor has asked State divisions to submit budget adjustments representing 3%, 5%, and 7% reductions in State funding. The DHHS is requesting the Division of Child Development to continue day care services to the children receiving care through ARRA temporary funds. The RFP for the Electronic Benefits Transfer program for provider payments is complete. Plans are to pilot the program in July or August.

Work First: Great ratings for the month of March. Staff obtained a rate of 89%, which is sixth in the State. However, performance was the highest at #1 in the State.

Child Support: The quarterly 9 Factor Report showed an improvement of another 3 levels in performance. Rowan County now ranks #46 in the State, which is up from 72 out of 88 programs. Collections for the month of March were \$975,118.

Adult Services: Congress passed a Federal Elder Justice Act. There is no funding attached to it, so its impact is unknown at this time. Our response time to APS reports is above the State average.

Children's Services: Ms. Morgan reported the vacant Social Worker III positions in Foster Care and Child Protective Services have been filled. The quarterly birthday celebration for teens in foster care was hosted by Rock Grove United Methodist Church on April 21. Children's services staff and Juvenile Services Court Counselors renewed an agreement for monthly meetings to review case concerns and maintain a collaborative work team. The spring MAPP Class to train new foster parents will be completed in April. There are five new families. Staff participated in the Annual Rowan County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force meeting. Revised Community Protocol books were printed for each supervisor. The month of May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month. Rowan County has 32 foster homes, and each home will receive individual recognition. The Annual One Church One Child banquet is scheduled for April 29 at 6:00 p.m. at the Agricultural Extension Offices on Old Concord Road. Board members are invited to attend.

9. Comments from the Director: Ms. Wilkes expanded upon the One Church One Child celebration banquet. There are now 41 churches that are part of the One Church One Child program. Since the program began three years ago, the churches have helped over 550 children. They have helped in many ways, such as donations of shoes, toys, clothes, school supplies, and cribs. They have hosted end of school parties and birthday parties.

All donations to the OCOC program are currently housed in several rooms in the Crawford Building. Once Phase II of the construction is completed, and Crawford Building staff is relocated to the new building, that storage space will no longer be available to DSS. Mr. Hunter put the word out to the churches, and Main Street United Methodist Church has offered their Educational Building as a new ministry partnership with Rowan County DSS. The partnership will permit One Church One Child to use the space as a "clothing boutique" for Rowan County's foster children. Donated items will be sorted by volunteers from Bethel United Methodist Church. The building underwent some renovations, which was done by members of the OCOC church family. Asbestos was found during the renovations, and church members from another OCOC church family volunteered to handle the asbestos removal. Another church held fundraisers to purchase new flooring. Main Street UMC will have church members staff the clothing store so foster families can come in and get clothing.

Phase II update: Asbestos was found in the Daymark building. Removal of the asbestos has delayed the completion of Phase II. The projected completion date is the end of July. The contractor has indicated that the work may go faster than expected. The next building meeting is Tuesday, May 18 at 10:00 a.m. in the large conference room at DSS.

Status of Northwoods System: Workers began scanning FNS and F/C Medicaid records in November. By July, all FNS records should be scanned. By September, we hope to have all the F/C Medicaid records scanned. With the increase in caseloads in these two programs, being able to scan all these records in this timeframe has been an incredible goal.

We have gone to a numbering system in the lobby due to lines of people coming into the Economic Services area. There is a “take a number” stand in the lobby, and the numbers flash on an electronic board. This has been a good way to manage the lines, but also to insure client confidentiality as only one person at a time is at the reception window. In five days, the first roll of tickets was exhausted. There are 999 in a roll. That is an indication of the numbers of clients conducting business with DSS. With the numbering system, we are trying to enhance customer service.

The Association of County Boards of Social Services has developed a new resource manual for DSS Boards. The manual was passed around for Board members to see, and a copy of the letter was distributed. Copies of the manual will be available at the next Board meeting. The manual is available on line at www.ncacbss.org.

10. Child Protective Services: Noting that April is Child Abuse Awareness Month, Ms. Morgan introduced Barbara Sharpe, Program Administrator of Child Protective Services. Ms. Sharpe presented a PowerPoint presentation on child abuse statistics and Rowan County Children’s Services.

Ms. Sharpe reported that in North Carolina in 2005 there were 37 child abuse homicides. Each year in our state there are over 100,000 children assessed for abuse and neglect. Ms. Sharpe shared information about Rowan County Children’s Services. Positions within the department consist of: Investigators, In-home Services workers, Foster Care Services, Adoptions, and Intake workers. All these positions are social workers.

In 2009, there were 2,947 reports received. Of those reports, 1,828 reports were screened in (accepted) for investigation. There are two tracts for reports—investigations or family assessments. There were 1,438 reports investigated, and 390 referred to family assessments. In 2009, 207 cases were substantiated for abuse or neglect. Family assessments are not substantiated as those are milder neglect cases. The county must provide various types of services to clients in family assessments. There were 104 family assessment cases. Out of the 207 substantiated cases, 63 were closed due to family assessment providing services to the families and issues being resolved, 191 cases received In-Home services, and Foster Care received 57 cases. Services were provided and are no longer needed on 82 cases. Those are cases that would have gone to In-Home services; however, workers in investigations or family assessments worked with those

clients to alleviate potential problems. Substantiated cases receive “full attention” including: medical exams, mental health evaluations, and counseling.

Over the last year, DSS addressed many areas to assure the safety of children. A response plan was developed for when a child is abducted from DSS custody. Another response plan was developed which addresses a child fatality. Both response plans detail step by step instructions should either situation occur.

The Administrative Placement Team was formed. The Placement Team reviews the case when a foster child has been abused or neglected in a foster home. They also determine if it is safe for the child to remain in the home or if the child should be removed. They determine if it is necessary to remove other children from the home or if it is safe to place other children in the home.

Abuse and neglect reporting procedures were placed on Access 16 to educate the public on making reports.

A job description and restrictions were defined for student interns that limited their responsibilities in active cases.

A safe sleeping practices sheet was developed and distributed to clients. These practices are in response to a fatality where it was believed co-sleeping played a part in the child’s death. A Community Roundtable was held to discuss safe sleeping and the dangers of co-sleeping with infants. Dr. Sinal from NC Baptist Hospital was the guest speaker. Dr. Sinal also presented information about the period of purple crying.

Ms. Sharpe advised that protecting children and supporting families is what Children’s Services does. Ms. Sharpe distributed blue ribbons to Board members to symbolize preventing child abuse. She asked Board members to wear the ribbons for the remainder of April.

Ms. Morgan referenced a recent article in the Salisbury Post which reported some uncomplimentary comments made about DSS and Children’s Services at the recent Child Abuse Prevention Task Force meeting. Discussion followed about the article. Mr. Ford advised that Kecia Barnes, representative from the DJJDP, was unable to attend the Task Force meeting. She sent someone else in her place. This person advised that DJJDP had some cases that were not being seen and that things were not working right with DSS and the Sheriff’s Department. No one from DSS or the Sheriff’s office was aware of any problems or complaints. Ms. Sharpe went back and investigated each complaint and found that all cases were followed up on as they should have been. At a follow-up meeting, Ms. Barnes advised that this individual was uninformed and that the protocol was being followed. DSS has done what it was supposed to do. Ms. Barnes apologized more than once for the misunderstanding. Mr. Ford advised that the reason the LEPC meets quarterly is to correct issues as they arise. Sadly the negative story went out in the Salisbury Post, but there have been no reporters at all follow-up meetings, so the public has only one side of the story. Reporter, Shavonne Potts, was unable to attend the Board

meeting this evening. Ms. Morgan and Mr. Ford thanked employees for their diligence in making sure that all the gaps are closed and that children are being protected according to protocol.

11. Prescription Drug Abuse by Teens: Ms. Wilkes advised there has been a lot of interest expressed in the subject. People want to hear more about it, and other groups need access to this information. Ms. Wilkes has been in contact with Ernie Kirchen, and he is willing to lead another roundtable or provide information to other groups if the Board is interested in sponsoring other sessions. Mr. Kirchen said he would be willing to provide separate trainings depending on the target group. Mr. Ford stated he would like for Mr. Kirchen to go into the schools with information for students and parents. Ms. Kennerly expressed that it is important to get this information out to the public, but it is also important to keep it out there on a continuous basis. It was noted that the sub-committee will concentrate on getting some legislative changes. The Board could have a larger impact on focusing on education of the public. There is an urgent need to get this information out to the community at large and to continue to get the word out.

Ms Morgan advised that now is the time to contact school administration about getting this in the school curriculum for next school year. It could be a topic for teacher education on a teacher's work day.

Mr. Ford suggested having Mr. Kirchen prepare a half hour segment for Access Channel 16 and Channel 22 as a public service announcement.

Ms. Kennerly offered to take information to the Hispanic Coalition to have it translated into Spanish and distributed in the Hispanic community.

Ms. Morgan called for a motion that the Board continue the topic of teen prescription drug abuse. **Mr. Ford moved that the Board continue to discuss teen prescription drug abuse and disseminate information. Ms. Kennerly seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor.** Ms. Wilkes is to bring back additional ideas to the Board.

12. Director's Performance Appraisal: The Director's performance appraisal is due to the County office by June 1st. The appraisal form is available on the County web-site, and Ms. Wilkes will e-mail a copy to Board members. Completed copies may be returned via e-mail to Ms. Morgan at www.morganll@rss.k12.nc.us. Hard copies were distributed as well. Board members had three different options for completing the appraisal. Once completed, the appraisal should be dropped of at Ms. Morgan's office at 314 N. Ellis Street or to Kelley Williams as the main DSS office. Performance appraisals should be completed and turned in to Ms. Morgan by May 14 so that she may compile all information into one document.

13. Other Matters:

- Mr. Ford revisited the issues brought up at the Child Abuse Prevention Task Force meeting. One issue was that child medical exams (CMEs) were not being

done. There were 11 cases in question. After review, it was determined that 10 children received CMEs, and one did not require an exam.

- Mr. Brewer reported that the State has advised that one of the most important components for protecting children is informing the public of reporting procedures and their obligation to report. To that end, the State partnered with Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina to have posters printed to distribute to counties. The posters detail reporting procedures. Each county was given 100 posters to post throughout the county. Board members were given a poster and asked to place it somewhere where it can be seen. Contact Kelley Williams for more posters.
- Ms. Morgan called the Board's attention to the Foster Children's newsletter. Micah Ennis will be the keynote speaker at a mini-conference on May 1.

14. Date of Next Meeting: May 25, 2010, 6:00 p.m. in the large conference room. Director's performance appraisal will be discussed at that meeting. June meeting: June 22, 2010.

15. Adjourn: **Mr. Blair moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ford seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor at 6:55 p.m.**

Minutes prepared by:
Kelley Williams

Signed Date

Secretary Date