



RICHMOND COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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North Carolina
Public Health

Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Holly Haire, Deputy Health Director

Robby Hall, Social Services Director
Theresa Smith, Deputy Social Services Director

RICHMOND COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: March 15, 2022
TIME: 7:00pm
LOCATION: Large Classroom and Webinar

BOARD ATTENDANCE:

Paul Smart, Chairperson
Dr. Rick Watkins, County Commissioner
Thad Ussery, Public Member
Jon Marks, Pharmacist
Aletha Lanier, Nurse
Dr. Dale McInnis, President, Richmond Community College
Bryan Land, Richmond County Manager
Cassandra Byers, Daymark Center Director
Evonne Moore, Social Worker
Ronald Tillman, NC Department of Safety
Dr. John Stevenson, Retired Physician
Dr. Don Covington, Optometrist
Pat Solomon, Public Member

NON-BOARD ATTENDANCE:

Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Robby Hall, Director of Social Services
Jacqueline Welch, Director of Aging Services
Holly Haire, Deputy Health Director
Theresa Smith, Deputy Social Services Director
Tierra Gilbert, Quality Assurance Supervisor
Sheila Brosier, Administrative Assistant

- 1. CALL TO ORDER:** Paul Smart called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
- 2. INVOCATION:** Paul Smart delivered the invocation for the meeting.

3. **CONSENT AGENDA:** Paul Smart asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda.

- **Motion Offered By:** Aletha Lanier
- **Motion Seconded By:** Dr. McInnis
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

MEETING MINUTES: Paul Smart asked for a motion to approve the January 18, 2022, meeting minutes.

- **Motion Offered By:** Thad Ussery
- **Motion Seconded By:** Jon Marks
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

5. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Cheryl Speight, Health Director, discussed the Public Health Administrative Report. The health department offers several classes open to the public. The Lifestyle Change Program to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes is a free class that meets monthly for one year. It focuses on those who are at risk for diabetes or have pre-diabetes and participants receive an incentive for completion. Tobacco Cessation is a free four week class taught by certified tobacco counselors and is a part of the Quit Smoking campaign. Participants receive free patches and gifts for attending the meetings.

Free COVID-19 testing continues to be offered behind the Health Department on Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 6:00pm. Saturday testing has ended and the testing site at the Cole Auditorium closed due to the low number of residents seeking tests. Free Covid and Booster vaccinations continue to be offered at the Health Department on Monday-Thursday from 8:00am-5:00pm, and Friday from 8:00am-11:00am. No appointment is required.

- B. Robby Hall, Social Services Director, discussed Social Services Administrative Report. Total collections for Child Support are slightly behind compared to last year due to not collecting during COVID. However, they expect to meet the established goal of \$6,375,167.00 in collections by fiscal year-end. It was noted that almost half of the Richmond County population are Medicaid participants, and 1/3 of the population receive food and nutrition services. There are 226 children on the day care waiting list. DSS anticipates an increase in day care funding from the state in July which will decrease the waiting list. There are 73 children currently in foster care and we are aggressively recruiting foster parents.

- C. Jacqueline Welch, Aging Services Director, reported on the Aging Services Administrative Report. Aging Services is seeking to fill three full time and one part time vacancies for In-Home Aid. The positions require basic housekeeping skill, no CNA is needed, and there is reimbursement for mileage from home to work site and errands. The pay scale for In-Home Aide has increased to entice more applicants. Volunteers are still needed for the Meals on Wheels Programs to assist in delivering meals to seniors.

Aging Services continues to host many programs for seniors. In the Kitchen with Judy is gaining popularity and IGA has sponsored and purchased food items to cook on the show. Monthly Newsletters are sent to seniors with upcoming events, activities, and tidbits of resourceful information. Evonne Moore stated she shares the newsletters with the Richmond County school staff and assistance programs for the elderly. Field trips will resume in April. A community Yard Sale fundraiser is scheduled for May 14th.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Recommendation for Selection of Advisory Board Member:

The board received two recommendations and applications to fill the position of advisory board member. The board discussed a potential conflict with the number of offices/positions once can hold. General Statute 128-1.1 indicates:

- (a) Any person who holds an appointive office, place of trust or profit in State or local government is hereby authorized by the General Assembly, pursuant to Article VI, Sec. 9 of the North Carolina Constitution, to hold concurrently one other appointive office, place of trust or profit, or an elective office in either State or local government.
- (b) Any person who holds an elective office in State or local government is hereby authorized by the General Assembly, pursuant to Article VI, Sec. 9 of the North Carolina Constitution to hold concurrently one other appointive office, place of trust or profit, in either State or local government.

Mr. Smart recommended to postpone review of the applications and seek clarification of appointed and elected officials from the county attorney. Postponement was granted by general consent of the board members present.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

A. COVID-19 Update:

Cheryl Speight provided an update on COVID-19 in Richmond County. The number of positive COVID cases has decreased across the county, averaging 2-3 positive cases per day. The hospitalization and death rates have also decreased. The state created a confidential portal site to enter the positive cases. The NC Department of Health & Human Services reports updates on a weekly basis and the health department reports COVID data on Wednesdays on the webpage, which includes total cases and deaths.

B. Bad Debt Write-Off

Cheryl Speight presented the Bad Debt Write Off for charges the health department has not been paid for from July through December 2021. The charges are caused by clients who have not paid their bills. These clients are billed at least six times before the debt is sent to the North Carolina Department of Revenue Debt Offset Program. The clinics cannot deny service to clients due to non-payment of previous bills.

Paul Smart asked for a motion to approve the Bad Debt Write Off as presented.

- **Motion Offered By:** Aletha Lanier
- **Motion Seconded By:** Thad Ussery
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

C. Medicare/Medicaid Smoking Ban

Medicare and Medicaid will implement a mandate that prohibits smoking from any building that is funded by Medicare and Medicaid. Effective December 1, 2022, there will be no smoking allowed on the Human Services Building property, including the parking lot. The health department will purchase and signs to post for the public. Smoking Cessation classes are offered to the public and will be available for staff.

D. Foster Care Challenges

Director Hall introduced Theresa Smith, Deputy Social Services Director and Tierra Gilbert, Quality Assurance Supervisor to discuss many of the programmatic challenges we face in adult and children welfare after the COVID pandemic. Due to the demand for adult and children services, the focus of quality control has been on the adult and children programs. There is an increased demand for services, both economic and social assistance programs. Over the past 18 months, there has been a 38% increase in the demand for economic service benefits. These programs include Food & Nutrition Benefits, Medicaid, Adult & Family/Children, Daycare, Energy and Water Assistance, and Crisis Intervention. Although many of these programs are funded through grants, we have experienced an increase in the cost of operations and expenditures due to the pandemic.

Theresa Smith provided an overview of the challenges in the social assistance programs for adult and children welfare. COVID pandemic has reduced availability of appropriate Adult Placements, Foster Care Families, Treatment Providers, and recruitment to the extent that children are having to live in the DSS for periods of time and younger adults living in senior facilities. The State has been unable to provide any assistance in this area since Covid-19 Pandemic Declaration.

The number of children in foster care has doubled since 2018. As of March 2022, there has been 110 children in the custody of DSS. COVID has created multiple placement barriers. Children have experienced increased length of stay due to court closures and continuances. Due to the large number of children without placements residing in the agency for weeks or even months at a time, two existing rooms have been converted into a bedroom and shower facility.

In addition, lack of services ranged from education, mental health, substance abuse, and IDD. Data reflects an increase in the number of child medical exams (CMEPs) for cases involving physical and sexual abuse and serious neglect. Serious cases have been on the rise over the last several years, with the greatest increase attributed to social isolation since the State Pandemic Declaration in March 2020. The severity of CPS cases has increased due to abuse, domestic violence, substance misuse not seen in the past. Adult guardianship cases increased over 216% since the pandemic.

With regard to staffing, there is a higher rate of staff turnover, retirement, and absences, especially in adult and child welfare. Staffing shortages led to increased expenditures to compete with the current salary market rates. Even so, there is a lack of qualified applicants for vacant positions. The Social Worker turnover rate in Child Welfare since Covid-19 Declaration in March 2020 has reached 85%. As of March 15, 2022, the unit currently has two Social Worker positions and a Program Manager position vacant. Actually 100% of the APS/CPS management staff has turned over due to retirement or career change since the COVID pandemic. The increase in active Foster Care caseloads sizes has led to recycling of the Economic and Quality Assurance positions in other units to add additional staff to meet minimum state standards, while weakening those respective units.

Tierra Gilbert provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Quality Control and Program Integrity Support Unit. Ms. Gilbert supervises a team of six positions that cover Quality Analyst Economics, Program Integrity Investigations, Social Work Technician, Child Fatality Team Coordinator, Quality Analyst Services, and Legal Services. She also provides oversight of five positions which are funded through grants and provide additional services to the public. These include Peer Support, TOP Case Management, Triple P Parenting and other mental health and substance abuse assessment and treatment programs.

E. Proclamation for Social Work Month 2022

Director Hall presented a Proclamation in recognition of Social Work Month for the month of March 2022 with this year's theme, "The Time is Right for Social Work". Mr. Smart asked for a motion to approve the Proclamation for Social Work Month 2022 and present at the next County Commissioner meeting for adoption.

- **Motion Offered By:** Thad Ussery
- **Motion Seconded By:** Jon Marks
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

8. **INFORMAL DISCUSSION:** Mr. Smart asked if there were any other matters to discuss to which no one responded.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Smart asked for a motion to adjourn and the meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

- **Motion Offered By:** Dr. McInnis
- **Motion Seconded By:** Jon Marks
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held via webinar and/or in person based on the status and any restrictions imposed due to the Covid pandemic.

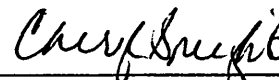
DATE: May 17, 2022

TIME: 7:00pm

LOCATION: Large Classroom and/or webinar



Paul Smart, Chairperson
Health & Human Services Advisory Board



Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Richmond County Health Department