

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

**HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: November 16, 2011

SUBJECT: Social Services' Informational Update

PRESENTER: Lee Luebbe, DSS Board Chair

ATTACHMENTS: Yes
1. Guardianship Presentation

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

At the suggestion of BOC Chairman Edney, the DSS Board is providing monthly three-minute informational updates to the Board of Commissioners regarding various Social Services issues. The November 2011 update, provided by DSS Board Chair Lee Luebbe, pertains to the agency's responsibility to serve as Guardian when appointed by the Henderson County Clerk of Court to individuals determined incompetent to manage their personal business.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

No Board action requested. This item is for information only.

Suggested Motion:

No motion suggested.

Good Morning! I am Lee Luebbe, Chair of the Social Services Board of Henderson County.

Goals of the Social Services Board this year are to educate citizens and advocate for Social Service needs as the Statute directs. To achieve these goals, we periodically publish articles in the Times News; and, in coordination with Chairman Edney, are now beginning a 3-minute presentation to the BOC on a monthly basis. Our selected subjects are timely; however, we are open to any topic that you as Commissioners would like to suggest. Future topics will include: home care vs. institutionalization, poverty, and partnering with non-profits.

Our first topic selected by the Board is **Guardianships** - a topic that citizens will not read about as newsworthy, but one we see as a growing responsibility of Social Services.

What is happening in Henderson County?

It's no surprise that people are living longer. In their later years, many older adults need to have courts appoint an individual, family member, corporation, or disinterested public agent as their guardian. Our graying population is growing faster in the last five years.

What is Social Services Guardianship?

Social Services' Directors are appointed when the individual's primary unmet needs are related to dementia, Alzheimer's, neglect, abuse or exploitation and no one else is available, willing or able to be the appointed guardian. Legal duties of the guardian include managing affairs and making important decisions regarding where the adult will live, consent/approval for medical care, taking legal action, arranging services, and managing income/property.

1. If an individual lacks the capacity to manage their own affairs or make important decisions concerning person, family or property; and,
2. The individual is adjudicated incompetent by the Court; then
3. The Court can appoint an individual, family member, corporation, or disinterested public agent guardian.

What are the recent trends?

Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that guardianship hearings in Henderson County have increased from 17 in FY 08-09 to 72 in FY 10-11...a **324% increase**. More specifically, the number of county residents the Social Services Director has been appointed guardian for by the Court has grown during that same time period from 30 in FY 08-09 to 51 in FY 10-11...a **70% increase**.

How is this increased caseload handled by the Social Services Director?

Because we do not have staff in the department to manage this increase, a contract has been negotiated with Hope for the Future, Inc. (a non-profit located in Asheville specializing in this type of care) that will become effective this month to address the excess our department cannot manage. The recommended caseload per case manager is 20; our current case load is 44. The average age of people who need guardianship because of dementia, Alzheimer's, neglect, abuse, or exploitation is 80 (75% female). For those who need guardianship because of mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse, the average age drops to 47 (60% male). We believe the contract with Hope for the Future, Inc. will be an effective means in a cost-effective way to provide this much-needed service to our citizens of Henderson County.

I invite your questions. If I cannot answer them, I have DSS staff (Penny Summey, Assistant Director of Social Services) here to assist.

On behalf of the Board of Social Services, I thank you for your time and your interests in Social Services. We trust these 3-minute reports each month will give the citizens and you a more detailed picture of where the tax dollars for Social Services are spent in Henderson County.