

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

**HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: June 20, 2012
SUBJECT: Social Services' Informational Update
PRESENTER: Lee Luebbe, DSS Board Chair
ATTACHMENTS: Yes

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The DSS Board is providing monthly three-minute informational updates to the Board of Commissioners regarding various Social Services issues. The June 2012 update, provided by DSS Board Chair Lee Luebbe, pertains to the issue of Foster Care/Foster Parenting in Henderson County.

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 Henderson County Board of Social Services. I am here to present information regarding Foster Care, specifically foster parenting, the fifth topic in our series on the role of DSS in the community. We appreciate the support of the Board of Commissioners for this series of presentations as part of our efforts to educate the public and advocate for the state-mandated role of DSS.

Foster parenting can be one of the most demanding jobs a person can assume...and one of the most rewarding. Foster parents provide a temporary home for abused, neglected and dependent children when their parents cannot take care of them. They provide for the day-to-day needs of the children in a safe and caring home while the parents are working with juvenile court officials, social workers, and a Guardian ad Litem on a plan for reunification.

A license is required to foster parent. Licensure requirements include 30 hours of classroom training, a mutual home assessment, criminal history checks, CPS & First Aide certification, medical clearances, and a stable income and home. A fire inspection is required as well as an Environment and Health regulations check conducted by agency staff to ensure the foster home is safe. Henderson County has on average 60 foster parents.

The basic cost for a child's room, board and other living expenses are reimbursed by Social Services. Foster parents are not paid a salary. From a monthly rate, foster parents are expected to provide for the child's day-to-day needs such as transportation, babysitting, school supplies, food, baby formula and diapers, shelter, utilities and other basic needs. The current state approved rates are as follows: \$475 for children ages 0-5; \$581 for children ages 6-12; and \$634 for children ages 13 and older. Many Henderson County foster parents consider this rate inadequate to cover all the child's needs and expenses and often spend their own money. Most individuals become foster parents out of a sense of social obligation or religious values and a desire to enhance the life chances for a child.

Foster children have many times the developmental delays of similar children who are not in foster care. Foster parents respond to their emotional and behavioral needs, transport them to medical appointments and mental health counseling sessions, advocate on behalf of the child at school, go to court hearings and work with the child's social worker, Guardian ad Litem and parents.

Living within the foster care system can be trying. Most foster parents take care of children for a short time which can be very difficult emotionally. When a child's parents fulfill the court plan to a judge's satisfaction, the County Director of Social Services is removed as legal guardian and the child returns home.

As challenging as being a foster parent is...it can be highly rewarding. Foster parents know they have provided a good home for a child and sometimes have turned a child's entire life around.

In closing, a true story from a Henderson County DSS Foster Parent:

"I've been fostering for 18 years and have taken care of 21 children so far. It's wonderful to be a foster parent...you just have to take it as it goes. Some have stayed with me a few days and some have stayed six or seven years until they emancipated. It's a hard job but you can see the good for the children. When they come to you, they are scared and depressed and you can open them up. Watching them develop, reunifying kids with family and knowing that I had something to do with that all makes me feel good. I have adopted one child who was placed with me. When he first came, it was as if he decided this was where he was going to be. He said, "This is my place" and it's always been like that. He's still here...he was 2 days old and now he's 12 and it's just a wonderful thing."

Thank you for your interest and support. I would be glad to take any questions.