

MINUTES

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HENDERSON

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
APRIL 21, 1998

The Henderson County Board of Commissioners met for a special-called meeting with the Department of Social Services Board on Tuesday, April 21, 1998 at 5:30 pm in the Commissioners meeting room 140 to discuss issues as related to Child Welfare Improvements.

Present were: Chairman Robert D. Eklund, Vice-Chair Grady Hawkins, Commissioners Vollie G. Good, Renee Kumor, and Donald G. Ward. Also present was County Manager, David E. Nicholson.

Present from the Department of Social Services Board were: Chairman Frank Blazey, Grace Poli, Savie Underhill and John Drill. Also present was DSS Director, Liston B. Smith. Absent was DSS Board member William Lapsley.

Chairman Eklund welcomed all in attendance and introduced DSS Board Chairman Frank Blazey.

Chairman Blazey informed the Board of Commissioners the purpose of this special-called meeting was to discuss Child Welfare Improvements and asked Liston Smith to proceed with the presentation.

Mr. Smith provided a handout entitled Child Welfare Improvement Initiative. This report outlines a new state law to bring county foster care, adoptions and child protective services staffing in compliance with minimum standards. Henderson County must provide a 25% match, which is already included within the current DSS budget. The Department of Health and Human Services determined that Henderson County DSS needed nine front line workers and two additional supervisors to meet these required standards. To assure that DSS met these standards, the state funding of 75% is included in our Maintenance of Effort in the Work First program.

The State in its biennial review found that Henderson County's DSS had a high supervisor-to-staff ratio and a high staff-to-customer ratio. Because of these findings, DSS dropped from exemplary to acceptable in child protective services. They were also below the State Standard in the frequency of contacts with foster care children and their families and in the development of family case plans.

Mr. Smith explained that besides the state findings that he had noticed an increase in the number of reported child abuse and neglect cases. Henderson County had the seventeenth highest number of reported cases in the state last year. Currently, DSS have over 50 children in foster care for over one year. Turnover is also a problem within the child protective services staff.

The DSS Board and Chief District Court Judge Cilley have established a Joint Task Force for Achieving Permanence for Children on a Timely Basis. This group has recommended that DSS apply for a grant from W. K. Kellogg Foundation for the Families for Kids program. This program has the goal of eliminating the backlog of children awaiting to be returned home or be

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adopted. It also has a built-in community awareness program.

Mr. Smith recommended the Commissioners establish six new positions. These are two Social Worker III positions who will handle after hours calls. Also, two Social Worker III positions as project employees to assume Foster Care case management and two Social Worker III Supervisors to comply with the state's staff ratios. The DSS Board will contract with outside agencies to provide for five additional workers. The DSS Board would also like the Commissioners' approval to apply for the Kellogg Foundation grant. This grant is for \$100,000 with no match required.

Mr. Smith reminded the Commissioners that funding for the additional positions and contacts is already in their budget and will require no additional funding.

The Commissioners discussed and asked questions concerning how the funds for the social worker positions was included in the Work First Program. Mr. Smith stated that no one really understands; however, child welfare is both a requirement and an important part of the Work First program. There was also discussion over contracting with not-for-profit agencies and the relationship to the work of the Blue Ribbon Committee.

Commissioner Good made the motion to accept the DSS Board's recommendations as submitted. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Chairman Eklund adjourned the meeting at 6:25 pm.

APPROVED:



**ROBERT D. EKLUND, CHAIRMAN
HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

ATTEST:



**ELIZABETH W. CORN,
CLERK TO THE BOARD**

APPROVED