

Henderson County Board of Social Services

September 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

A. Call to Order

The Henderson County Board of Social Services meeting was called to order by Chair Simpson at 12:02 pm.

Board Members Present	Josh Simpson, Member Melinda Lowrance, Member Judi Smith, Member Stephen Gwaltney, Member
Staff Leadership Present	Jerrie McFalls, Secretary to the Board/Director Lorie Horne, Social Work Program Administrator Melissa Novack, Accounting Tech III Debby Freeman, Economic Services Program Administrator Deborah Johnson, Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk
Guest	None

B. Public Input

None

C. Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair Simpson made an amendment to the agenda to swear in board member Melinda Lowrance for a second term. Mrs. Lowrance's second term was approved by the Social Services Commission on September 13th, 2023 and will expire on June 30th, 2026. Deborah Johnson, clerk to the board, swore in Mrs. Lowrance.

D. Approval of Minutes

Chair Simpson asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the August 15th, 2023 regular meeting, there were none. Mr. Gwaltney moved to approve the minutes as written, Mrs. Lowrance seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Chair Simpson asked there were any changes to the minutes from the August 15th, 2023 closed session, there were none. Mr. Gwaltney moved to approve the minutes as written, Mrs. Lowrance seconded the motion and the motion passed.

E. Board Education

Creating an Empowering Workplace

Stephanie Gunter, Family and Children's Medicaid Supervisor spoke to the board about attending the New Paths Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, in August. "New Paths" stands for National Eligibility Workers Professionals Associated through Human Services. This association was founded by eligibility workers in Norfolk, Virginia, that felt their needs were not being addressed by professional organizations. They believed that individuals in the eligibility field needed an association through which they could express their positions on policy issues and promote professionalism.

Stephanie attended the conference with three other workers. They were given the opportunity to work with New Path members from all over the US.

The workshop Stephanie found to be an inspiration was entitled, "Creating an Empowering Workplace." The workshop was facilitated by Dara Barlin, author of "A New Kind of Power." The workshop encouraged supervisors to change their mindset on the way they lead. Instead of using the old traditional "Command and Control" method of management, effective leaders are using the "Engage and Inspire" method. This approach doesn't eliminate hierarchy or the chain of command. This method just creates better structures for empowering all voices within the institution.

The "Engage and Inspire" method focuses on lifting employees' voices which enable them to feel heard and valued. This would encourage more employees to offer their suggestions and ideas which would increase their sense of equity and belonging.

Stephanie stated that she has recently been given the opportunity to supervise a newly created unit due to Medicaid expansion. Stephanie stated that she feels this is the perfect opportunity to implement the "Engage and Inspire" method of supervising. She feels this is a unique opportunity to build a working relationship with these individuals and learn the program with them at the same time while reminding them that their ideas and voices matter.

Stephanie stated that she sincerely hopes Henderson County can attend more New Paths conferences in the future.

F. Reports

**Director's Monthly Report (Attachment I)
Questions Only**

Mrs. Lowrance asked about the Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) program changes. ABAWDs can only receive FNS/Snap for only three months in a three-year period if they do not meet certain work requirement. This is called the ABAWD time limit. Recipients should be working at least thirty hours per week, taking care of a child under six or an incapacitated person, unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation or other requirements that would excuse them from the work. The intention is for the working people to be able to get food stamps. If you are able bodied, but not working or training to work, then you would no longer be eligible for food stamps.

Mr. Gwaltney noted that suicides in North Carolina are up per the report. Director McFalls said that Henderson County, alongside the Partnership for Health, is working with local youth to prevent suicide.

**September Employees of the Month (Attachment II)
Questions only
None**

August 2022 – August 2023 Statistical Report (Attachment III)

Questions only

Mr. Gwaltney asked why there was a dip in the Work First Program. Mr. Gwaltney inquired if it was due to the number of eligible recipients had decreased. Director McFalls explained that the eligibility requirements changed and that decreased the number of Work First recipients. The philosophy of Work First is, for the recipient to take action to become employed. If you are unemployed and apply for jobs, or attend school, we will give you a payment after meeting the requirements.

Mr. Gwaltney asked why the trips for Medicaid Transportation were down. Director McFalls explained that when we went to managed care, we lost a big group of people that were using Medicaid Transportation. Once Tailored plans roll out, we will lose another large group of clients.

Director McFalls stated that LIEAP won't begin until December 1st, so it is showing zero for now.

September Program Administrator's Report (Attachment IV)

Questions only

Mr. Gwaltney inquired what the waiting list number was for adult services since DSS added two more adult CSST's. Mrs. Horne stated we are increasing the new workers' caseloads. Currently, we have approximately 40 on the wait list. We should have a more concrete number next month as cases are still transitioning to the new workers.

Financial Report May 2023 (Attachment V)

Questions only

The Financial Report will be available later this month.

G. Old Business

DSS Staffing Update

Director McFalls stated that we currently have 20 vacancies. Ten vacancies are in social work and ten are in economic services. In addition, we have one Child Support agent that will be moving into a supervisor position and one Processing assistant 4 that will be retiring at the end of the month. The Admin Officer 3 position, being vacated by Joe Maxey isn't included in the total. He will be retiring October 13th. We have reposted the social worker positions. We have an adult services social worker coming from another county that will start next month. We have interviewed a pool for Income Maintenance Worker 2 positions and have four candidates from that pool.

We have filled the newly budgeted IM Supervisor, the audit position, lead worker and five front line workers. We have two remaining frontline positions to fill.

H. New Business

Medicaid Expansion

Mrs. Smith asked if all states are going through Medicaid Expansion? Director McFalls stated that most states have already gone through Medicaid Expansion. There are only a handful of states that have not already expanded.

