

The Northampton County Board of Social Services met in the Board Room of the Social Services Building on August 17, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am. Present were Edith Johnson, Chairwoman, Spencer Murray, Board Member, Janice Langley, Board Member, and Mozella Francis, Director.

On a motion by Mr. Spencer Murray, the Minutes of the July 21, 2021 meeting were approved with one small change which was noted. Ms. Janice Langley seconded the motion. There was no public comment or correspondence.

The Board was provided a copy of the FY 2022 budget. There were no discrepancies identified. Ms. Francis reviewed budget line expenditures to date and explained any significant variances in monthly spending. Board Member, Mr. Murray made a motion to approve the budget and, Board Member, Ms. Langley seconded the motion.

Ms. Francis updated the Board regarding the legislative update which was introduced by the General Assembly in regards to the Virginia Overtime Wage Act (VOWA). Effective August 9, 2021, the General Assembly reversed the VOWA legislature in regards to compensatory time so therefore the legislature now allows compensatory time.

Ms. Francis informed the Board that the Agency will be sponsoring the next Quarterly Collaborative Families First Lunch and Learn. This meeting will be the 2nd collaborative meeting and will be held on August 18, 2021. The meeting is especially beneficial

as we meet with the community case managers within the Community Services Board and the local schools in the county, Department of Juvenile Services, DJJ including the J & DR Judge for Northampton County. The goal is for agencies to continue fostering a collaborative strategic partnership that creates the greatest opportunity for each agency to support at-risk youth who are in jeopardy of coming into foster care.

Ms. Francis introduced the supervisors of the departments at Northampton County Department of Social Services respectively. The supervisor's briefed the Board of their responsibilities to our clients, caseloads updates, challenges with COVID, and how they kept their staff connected.

Ms. Brown introduced herself as the Family and Children Benefits Program Supervisor overseeing the cases comprised of parents, caretakers, relatives, children under 19 years of age and, pregnant women. Ms. Brown supervises (4) programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, (TANF), Medicaid for Families and Children and, IV-E Eligibility.

Since March 2020 some of the program rules have been relaxed, for example, the SNAP and TANF programs are not conducting interviews for renewals, however, interviews are required for new applications. Ms. Brown provided the Board with an informational package that is provided to the clients to educate them on the updated eligibility rules

Ms. Brown reviewed the staff she supervises of which are four Benefit Program Specialists and two

Senior Program Specialists. Ms. Brown also supervises the Fraud program of which there is one Fraud Investigator.

The team has done due diligence in assisting clients and responding to their needs and/or complaints promptly especially while teleworking during the Pandemic. Department communication is extremely important and the group meets, mostly virtually, more than once a week. There are department meetings that are held in person at the Agency regularly as well.

Ms. Kim Hudgins introduced herself as the Adult Services Benefits Programs Supervisor who supervises a team that specifically deals with the population from age 19 and older and as it relates to MEDICAID (the population of 19 and older that do not have a child in the household). Ms. Hudgins continued that she also supervises MEDICAID expansion which is the population from ages 19-64 of which eligibility is based on income. Also, Ms. Hudgins supervises other types of MEDICAID which are Qualified MEDICARE Beneficiaries (QMB) and Special Limited Beneficiaries (SLB) of which are part of the age group that is eligible for MEDICAID based on other qualifiers. Ms. Hudgins also supervises the long-term care service Auxiliary Care Program which provides income supplements to recipients of SSI and certain other aged, blind, or disabled individuals in a licensed assisted living facility or an approved adult foster home. Ms. Hudgins supervises the SNAP and finally, the Energy Assistance Program.

Program integrity is monitored at all times and the department is compliant in processing applications. The ability to telework without impacting the public has been phenomenal and we can't do that without constant communication within our team.

Mr. Murray inquired why we don't have any local assistance facilities on the shore. Ms. Hudgins responded that they are hard to manage, they require a lot of diligent oversight and tight management. The cost of managing a facility with the lack of funding to back its management (could be attributed to why we no longer have facilities). Ms. Langley reiterated that there is no local ownership of any facility on the Shore. The facilities are generally owned by an outside proprietor outside of the community therefore there is a gap within vigorous management that is required for the facility.

Ms. Taylor introduced herself as the Foster Care and Child Protective Services and Family Services Supervisor. The department utilizes Safe Measures and Oasis which assists the staff while we are in and out of the building to ensure that we are on track with clients and enables the supervisor to monitor reports and notes from any of the staff visits. Safe Measures is one of the many tools used by our workers that assist with staying in compliance with guidelines. There are currently six foster care cases and in the next 6-8 months there will be some children aging out of the program. On July 1, 2021, the Families First Act went into effect. The goal of this program is to prevent more children from entering Foster Care. The department

strongly focuses on family strength and working proactively to prevent out-of-home placement. This program's primary focus is for the prevention of placing children in foster care.

Ms. Taylor opened the floor for any questions. **Ms. Langley reviewed her overall understanding that Ms. Taylor utilizes community partners to “prevent” the child from being placed in Foster Care or Child Protective Services and that this prevention approach is the foremost key before any placement occurs. Ms. Langley remarked how pleased she was with this approach and thanked Ms. Taylor for the presentation.**

Ms. Major introduced herself as a Family Services Specialist. Ms. Major oversees the Child Care Program of which allows parents to work and also to job search, it also allows for childhood development. Effective March 2021 the growth income guideline was increased, referred to as Bill 2206. The Bill changed job search requirements and copay requirements. Also, as of July 1, 2021, child care licensing and child care subsidies no longer fall under the Department of Social Services it now falls under the Department of Education. **Ms. Langley inquired about child care providers, now being under the Department of Education, and if any provider certifications have changed since the reorganization?** Ms. Major responded that the certifications have not changed. The subsidy providers can have a maximum of four children. The licensed providers can have a maximum of 12 children. The Head Start programs can become a part of the Child Care Program. Ms. Major noted that we are working

with other organizations to participate in the subsidy program.

Ms. Major also oversees the Virginia Initiative for Education and Employment (VIEW) program which is a referral-based program and the clients are required to work under minimum wage. Currently, there are 25 clients in the program. We have an MOU with Sherry Pearson, of the JOB Assistance Center, to support with assessment testing, work readiness, and placement. The State has introduced a new program, FEP, that allows the participants to work for six months, and continue to receive their TANF benefits however, it may affect their SNAP and MEDICAID benefits.

Will Adkins introduced himself as the Fiscal Assistant and Supervisor of the Clerical department. The Clerical department is comprised of a Receptionist, Office Assistant, two Administrative Office Assistants, and one Fiscal Assistant. The Clerical department's primary responsibility is to support the caseworkers. The department is also responsible for processing the mail and incoming faxes, screen applications, and process documents expediently for our workers. The department is also responsible for disbursing Foster Care, VIEW, and Auxiliary Grant payments while ensuring all checks and balances. Mr. Adkins mentioned that the department participates in several yearly audits. The department has regular communications to ensure the team was aware of the fast-changing regulations. **Mr. Murray inquired if Mr. Adkins administers the vehicle fleet. Mr. Adkins responded that in the past he did but it has now been turned over to Ms.**

Wendi Wesberry. Mr. Murray remarked that he imagines they haven't been driven much during the Pandemic. Mr. Adkins responded that at the beginning of the Pandemic they were not being driven regularly. Ms. Langley inquired if Mr. Adkins is bonded? Will responded, "No".

Ms. Francis provided an update on Adult Protective Services & Adult Services. The federal funding has changed as mentioned with the budget lines that tie into the UAI's that Adult workers have to utilize when a client would like to be screened for MEDICAID personal care. The worker has to work in conjunction with the health department nurse and work as a team to conduct the screening. Due to COVID, this screening was performed via a telecom session. Effective August 29, 2021, the workers are required to conduct the visits face to face. Also, financial exploitation cases are on the rise due to the new mandate that financial institutions are required to make referrals to DSS if they suspect any fraudulent activity against a senior. The referral to DSS requires DSS to make a referral to the Sheriff's department.

Chairwoman Edith Johnson announced that on behalf of myself and the board members, based on the reports you presented, we commend you for the work you and your teams do and continue to do. Your performance and diligence towards the Agency and throughout the Pandemic is impressive and we appreciate your commitment to the community.

On a motion by Chairwoman Edith Johnson, the Board went into Closed Session in accordance with Section 2.1-344 of the Code of Virginia, as amended,

for the purpose of discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining appointees or employees of any public body. No motions came out of Closed Session.

The next Board of Director's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Edith Johnson, Chairman
August 17, 2021

Attested by _____
Mozella F. Francis
Director