



**CALDWELL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
MEETING MINUTES-JUNE 30, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Caldwell County Department of Social Services Board met on Tuesday, June 30, 2020 at the Alden E. Starnes County Office Plaza, City/County Chambers in Lenoir, North Carolina. Mr. Donnie Potter called the meeting to order at 4:30pm. Other Board members in attendance were Ms. Trilla Annas, Ms. Iris Whitt and Ms. Sarah Sponenberg.

II. CLOSED SESSION

The Chair called for the board to go into closed session. Ms. Iris Whitt made a motion to begin closed session, seconded by Ms. Trilla Annas and it was approved unanimously. The Chair called for a motion to adjourn closed session and begin the regular monthly board meeting. Ms. Sarah Sponenberg made a motion to end closed session, seconded by Ms. Trilla Annas and it was approved unanimously. The Board Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Mr. Will Wakefield, Director led the pledge of allegiance and the invocation.

IV. AGENDA, AMENDMENTS FROM BOARD OR DIRECTOR, MOTION TO APPROVE

The Board Chair called for approval/amendment of the June 30, 2020 agenda. Ms. Iris Whitt made a motion to approve the agenda as written, seconded by Ms. Sarah Sponenberg and it was approved unanimously.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board Chair called for approval/amendment of the May 26, 2020 board minutes. Ms. Trilla Annas made a motion the minutes be approved as written, seconded by Ms. Iris Whitt and it was approved unanimously.

VI. REPORTS

A. Adult Protective Services

Ms. Beverly Ruppard, Supervisor spoke to the board regarding Adult Protective Services. Ms. Ruppard reported that June 15th was World Elder Abuse Day. Ms. Ruppard explained that the awareness day was founded on June 15, 2016 in order to create an opportunity to raise awareness to this growing problem. Ms. Ruppard provided each board member a handout, which explains the warning signs of elder abuse. Ms. Ruppard stated that there are three types of abuse, which are physical, psychological, and exploitation. Ms. Ruppard stated that we are seeing financial exploitation rising within our county. Ms. Ruppard spoke to the board about two different cases that our agency worked on in which financial exploitation created detrimental effects to the individuals involved. Ms. Ruppard stated that our agency receives anywhere from 50 to 60 calls per month. Ms. Ruppard encourages all citizens to call, as there are resources that we can refer individuals to for assistance. Ms. Ruppard stated that anyone wanting to report abuse should call our intake line at 828-426-8288 during Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm. Ms. Ruppard stated that on weekends, after hours and holidays individuals may call the Caldwell County Sheriff's Department at 828-758-2324 and ask to speak to the Adult On-Call Social Worker. The board thanked Ms. Ruppard for her report.

B. Foster Children Graduates

Ms. Melinda Price, Supervisor spoke to the board regarding our Foster Children Graduates. Ms. Price stated that we had eight youth to graduate high school this year. Ms. Price shared a Power Point presentation with the board that showed what school each youth graduated from and what their plans are for the future. Ms. Price stated that we are so very proud as these individuals as most of them had to attend multiple schools

and multiple placements throughout their young lives. Ms. Price stated that all eight individuals plan to stay in Foster Care until age 21. The board congratulated all of the graduates on a job well done.

VII. MONTHLY UPDATES

A. Financial Report

Mr. Chris Conley, Business Officer presented the May 2020 County Finance Monthly Report. Mr. Conley stated that we expensed \$1,007,447.00, received \$1,166,159.00 and used \$194,205.00 of county funds to operate during the month. Mr. Conley stated that April expense reimbursements totaling \$732,613.00 in 1571 Federal/State, Adult & Temporary Resources were not received in May. Our Year to Date County dollars would be \$4,392,257.00 if revenues were received timely or \$70,049.00 more than prior year thru May. The board thanked Mr. Conley for his report.

B. Director's Report

Mr. Will Wakefield, Director stated that our agency is back to 50% capacity due to COVID-19. Mr. Wakefield stated by being at 50% capacity, social distancing can be followed for remaining staff due to less staff being in the building. Mr. Wakefield explained that all services and programs are running as usual but with safety precautions in place. Mr. Wakefield stated that we are still in need of PPE as many of our staff do require that equipment due to making mandatory visits with the public. Mr. Wakefield explained that we are working with EMS and are waiting to receive our own shipment of supplies in order for us to have a stockpile. Mr. Wakefield stated that we do not know where we are headed with this virus, having a stockpile is critical due to mandated visits, and the equipment needed to protect our staff. Mr. Wakefield also explained that we have done very well with our personnel turnover this year and are currently recruiting for one position. The board thanked Mr. Wakefield for his report.

C. Children's Services Highlights

Mr. Will Wakefield spoke to the board regarding our Child & Family Services Highlights, as Ms. Arnett was unable to be at tonight's meeting. Mr. Wakefield stated that May was National Foster Care Month and that normally we do a celebration for those families. Mr. Wakefield explained that due to social distancing this year we were unable to a gathering; however, we did provide our foster families a small gift to show our appreciation for all that they do for our children. Mr. Wakefield also pointed out our Foster Care numbers and our Adoptions numbers of six finalized adoptions. Mr. Wakefield stated that our transportation drivers will begin doing court ordered visits and will be transporting children and families. Mr. Wakefield stated that those staff have been fitted with an N95 mask and we are taking numerous precautions so that those visits can be completed safely. Mr. Wakefield stated that most all of our social work staff are working from home. Mr. Wakefield explained that those staff are out and about doing visits on a daily basis so there home is there office. Mr. Wakefield stated that supervisors are doing virtual meetings with their staff and are also checking in on them frequently. Mr. Wakefield stated that we know work is being done thanks to technology. Mr. Wakefield explained that we have actually had an increase in quantity and quality as more workers are focusing on their work with fewer daily in office distractions. Mr. Wakefield stated that although the process is different it does not change what we do program wise. The board thanked Mr. Wakefield for his report.

D. Adult & Family Support Highlights

Ms. Martha Hedrick, Income Maintenance Administrator spoke to the board regarding our Adult and Family Support Highlights. Ms. Hedrick stated that we have had an increase in numbers in both our Food and Nutrition area as well as our Medicaid area. Ms. Hedrick reiterated that we have several Income Maintenance Caseworker staff who are also teleworking. Ms. Hedrick reported that those workers are not only producing quality work, but are keeping up with the increased demand for services. Ms. Hedrick stated that due to state mandates no one can be terminated due to COVID-19 provisions. Ms. Hedrick stated that that beginning July 1st Medicaid and Food Stamp reviews will begin again. Ms. Hedrick stated that our Medicaid workers have already been keying reviews in order to stay ahead. Ms. Hedrick stated that not only are staff meeting demand they are also doing some manual training to stay up to date on all program policies and guidelines. Ms. Hedrick also reported on the P-EBT update which has been put in place by the state for

free or reduced lunch recipients. Mr. Hedrick stated that this benefit was a one-time paper Food Stamp card for families. Ms. Hedrick stated that we have had feedback from several parents thanking us for the assistance they received. The board thanked Ms. Hedrick for her report.

VIII. RECOGNITION OF PAT STONE

Mr. Donnie Potter, Board Chair thanked Ms. Pat Stone for her service to our board. Ms. Stone served two terms for a total of six years and has been a valuable asset to our board. The board and the agency will miss Ms. Stone as well as her energy and detail. Ms. Stone will receive a plaque in honor of her service. The board thanked Mr. Potter for his report.

IX. BOARD GOVERNANCE

A. Next Board Meeting-Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 5pm at the Alden E. Starnes County Office Plaza, City/County Chambers.

X. ADJUOURN

With no further business, The Board Chair called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Trilla Annas made a motion to adjourn seconded by Ms. Sarah Sponenberg. The meeting adjourned at 5:55pm.