

## **Carteret County Human Services Board Meeting April 11, 2022**

The Carteret County Human Services Board held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, April 11, 2022 at 6 p.m. The meeting was held at the Carteret County Health Department.

### **Present**

Carol Armistead  
Scott Cobb  
Lindsay Creech  
Darden Eure  
Kathy Foster  
Richard Gray  
Commissioner Mark Mansfield  
Ralph Merrill  
Ed Myers  
Dr. Gregory Reichert  
Carol Wray

### **Absent**

Betsy Daniels  
Jodi Lewis  
Tara Mitchell  
Davis Taylor  
Dr. Walter Westbrook

### **Staff**

Jessica Adams  
Alex Davis  
Kim Davis  
Melanie Eaton  
Kody Krebs  
Nina Oliver  
Jamie Willis

Cheryl Burke, Carteret County News-Times reporter, also attended the meeting.

### **Call to Order**

Chair Wray called the meeting to order. Carol Wray said the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

### **Adoption of Consent Agenda**

The Consent Agenda consisted of:

- A. Approval of March 14, 2022 Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting Minutes

Chair Wray requested a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda.

**MOTION** – Carol Armistead made a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Ed Myers, approved by all.

### **Adoption of Agenda**

Chair Wray requested a motion to adopt the March 14, 2022 Carteret County Human Services Board Meeting Agenda.

**MOTION**—Carol Armistead made a motion to adopt the March 14, 2022 Carteret County Human Services Board Meeting Agenda, seconded by Ed Myers, approved by all.

### **Public Comment**

None

## **Child Abuse Prevention Presentation**

*Koby Krebs, Child Welfare Social Work Program Manager*

*Melanie Eaton, Social Worker IA&T*

Kody began by stating that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. He said that the CPS unit is a reaction system, and they rely heavily on members of the community to prevent and bring awareness to child abuse. Some believe it is strictly the parent's job to prevent from abusing or neglecting their children, but Mr. Krebs stated that it takes an entire community to prevent it. The added stress of COVID is another reason members of the community should reach out to help raise awareness and prevention. The theme for Child Abuse Prevention Month 2022 is Growing Better Together.

Over the last 12 months, DSS has accepted nearly 700 reports of maltreatment. Over 80% of those were reporting neglect. There are currently 70 children in foster care and DSS is serving 60 families with in-home services. These children are at risk of entering foster care.

Melanie Eaton is a CPS Investigator. She said that while preventing child abuse may seem like a daunting task, people may ask where do we start or how do we stop it, helping kids stay safe is a community effort. Child abuse can occur anywhere, anytime, and with any family. Ms. Easton noted that often abuse spans generations. A common theme is "all you know is all you know." This simply means that if a parent was abused either physically or verbally growing up, they are more likely to do the same to their children. They don't know any other way than to repeat the cycle.

Melanie mentioned a few things that you can do to be a positive example in the lives of children. Some include volunteering as a coach, reading in the schools, teaching Sunday school class, just to name a few. She also stated that as adults we should know the signs of abuse. Most children will have the occasional bruising, especially on their knees, shins, and elbows. If you see bruising in unusual spots, these are the sign to look for. One place that most people don't know about is the ear. A common discipline technique is to pull on a child's ear. This spot will bruise very easily and is a warning sign. She also mentioned that infants who have not yet begun to walk or crawl should not have bruising. The motto is: "if they're not bruising, they're not bruising."

Ed Myers asked about disciplining your children as a way to make them behave. Jessica Adams stated that NC law does not prohibit physical discipline, but NC General Statutes determine what kind of discipline is considered inappropriate. Ms. Adams said that any mark or bruise that lasts for more than 24 hours would be considered inappropriate.

Melanie let everyone in attendance know that every adult in North Carolina is a mandated reporter. If you see something suspicious that you feel is child abuse, you should report it to your local DSS. If it appears to be an emergency, call 911. She mentioned that often children change their stories when asked about an unusual injury, this can be a sign that something is

amiss. Children may not even realize that what is happening is wrong, if this is what they are used to.

Ms. Eaton gave some advice on how we can help friends and neighbors with small children at home. Ask the neighbor how things are, let them vent, ask questions, give advice. If a stay-at-home mom needs to run an errand, offer to watch her kids for a little while. The mother may be stressed and just need a small break. She gave everyone a website that offers free online training. This training helps citizens recognize signs of abuse and neglect and gives them advice on prevention and reporting abuse. The website is: [www.preventchildabusenc.org](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org).

Melanie listed a few important things that we can all do to help prevent child abuse:

- Volunteer your time
- Discipline thoughtfully
- Examine your own behavior
- Educate yourself and others
- Teach children their rights
- Support prevention programs
- Know the signs- abuse is not always physical
- Report abuse
- Invest in kids

Kody Krebs reminded everyone that it is important to be a positive connection to the children they are around. He also stated that we should all share this message with others in the community. This Thursday there will be a pinwheel garden at the County courthouse and a march.

Carol Wray asked Kody about the 60 families who are receiving in-home services. Kody said that the goal is to remedy the behavior of the parents in these situations as soon as possible because once a child is placed in foster care, it is harder to reunify with the family. He stated that some families are visited once or twice a week, while others only a couple of times a month. Social workers provide families with the appropriate resources. Sometimes this means food or shelter, other times it can be mental or substance abuse resources.

Ms. Wray asked if social workers take these families to their appointments. Kody stated that with the help of the Co-responder program, many needs can be met in the home. He also said that sometimes the families are driven to their initial appointment, or transportation is coordinated for them. Carol asked if the new mobile unit will be used by any of these families. Mr. Krebs stated that some families will be able to use this unit, at those who live down east. Melanie mentioned that transportation is one of the issues holding down east families back from attending appointments in Morehead City and Beaufort and the mobile unit will be a wonderful asset.

Jessica Adams said that when DSS first engages with families they find out their three top needs. These needs can be access to mental health and substance abuse counseling, food,

shelter, or other needs. Activities to address these needs are discussed. She stated that once the families become fully engaged, they are motivated to change and have DSS out of their lives.

Carol Wray asked if the school system has clear communication with DSS for any school aged children DSS is working with. Carol Armistead stated that they know DSS number by heart and talk frequently with the social workers. The children are sometimes even seen during school hours. Ed Myers asked if schools teach children how not to be abusive, since so many children are bullied by their peers. Jessica Adams stated that the role of DSS is to focus on abuse and neglect by the caregiver. She did mention that a new NC Legislature has recently come out and schools will have to educate children on sexual abuse and other things. Carol Armistead stated she could ask someone from the school system to give a presentation at some point if needed.

Mr. Myers asked if there is a certain area in the county that has more reports of abuse than any other areas. Kody said there is a grouping down east and in Newport. Jessica Adams stated DSS does not track reports that way though. Commissioner Mansfield said that Newport will always have more reports in any category since this is the largest zip code in the county.

### **Health Department Updates**

*Nina Oliver, Health Department Director*

#### **Nursing Updates:**

- Second COVID boosters have been approved for those over 50 and anyone who is moderately to severely immune compromised over the age of 12. We are giving those boosters and have opened some additional times to accommodate the vaccine demand.
- NOMI Health continues to offer COVID testing in the old Armory parking lot. They are doing this Monday through Saturday 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
- This week is National STD Awareness Week. Nursing and Health Education will promote Awareness Week by educating on prevention, when to seek care, discussing issues with a trusted source, and treatment options.
- Hannah Nelson began her position as Hepatitis C Bridge Counselor on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We are very excited about this position and what it can offer to connect Hepatitis C patients with treatment and other resources. She has started her training with the state and is reaching out to contacts in other counties to form partnerships. There are 10 counties in our region.

#### **Health Education Updates:**

- Provided prescription medication lockboxes to Morehead Treatment Center for their patients in need.
- Hosted the Home Run for Health event in Smyrna. The following vendors participated: Coastal Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention; Carteret County Health Department; Carteret County Rape Crisis; Crystal Coast Family Al-Anon; Loaves & Fishes; Morehead City Treatment Center; Trillium Health Resources; and Hope Mission.
- Laci Shue received her certification for the Diabetes Prevention Program.

**Dental:**

- From July 2021-April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the dental program has seen a total of 577 non-duplicated clients. Of those clients, 214 are brand new resulting in a 37% increase in new clientele.
- We are still searching for a new dental hygienist. We are interviewing someone tomorrow.

**WIC:**

- On February 17<sup>th</sup>, Abbott initiated a proactive recall of powder formulas, including Similac which is widely used.
- Four consumers had complaints related to Salmonella in infants that had consumed power infant formula manufactured in Michigan.
- 20 Carteret County WIC clients were on this formula and have now all changed to a similar product, Enfamil Nutramigen.
- This has caused a nationwide shortage in Enfamil Nutramigen. WIC clients have not been able to purchase Nutramigen because of this shortage.
- The State WIC office informed us that the makers of Nutramigen has stocked a portion of their warehouse just for WIC. Carteret County WIC has received a small shipment to help some clients for a short period of time.
- WICH staff have encouraged clients to ask doctor's offices if they have any samples in stock that they can spare. Staff has also informed clients of options for similar products such as Gerber and Parents Choice.

**COVID Updates:**

- We continue to remain in low community transmission.
- Active cases: 8, Total cases: 14,380; Deaths: 119; Hospitalizations: 0
- Waste water program- no COVID is currently detected in the waste water system. This is a good indicator of any upcoming waves of the virus.
- Total amount of vaccines given by the CCHD: 14,951
- Total amount given to 12-17-year olds: 294 first doses given, 594 total
- Total amount given to 5-11-year olds: 173
- Total number of additional doses/boosters given: 3,169
- Total Population Vaccination Status: percent of population vaccinated with at least one dose: 69%; percent of population vaccinated with two doses or one dose J&J: 65%

**Other:**

- The health department applied for and received 120 doses of Narcan. 22 of those were given to PORT Health and Veteran Services of the Carolinas, and 10 doses to One Harbor Church.
- The county is still searching for a Consolidated Human Services Director. She will continue to update the board.

Carol Wray asked if Animal Control will be holding a spay and neuter clinic this spring. Nina said they plan on it, but the exact date is still unknown. Ms. Wray also asked if COVID testing is still free. Nina stated it is for now but HRSA will no longer be reimbursing for tests. Nina hopes that the General Assembly will be funding HRSA again. Ed Myers asked about the newest variant. Nina stated she doesn't have much information on the newest variant. She hopes any new variants will continue to be less severe. She feels that in about 6 weeks, we will see the newest wave come through Carteret County.

### **DSS Updates**

*Jessica Adams, DSS Director*

Jessica wanted everyone know that she recently attended the Consolidated Human Services Meeting in Chapel Hill. There are around 28 counties in North Carolina and some have different models than us. She said it was a nice opportunity to discuss the challenges that face consolidated counties. Ms. Adams stated she and Nina are holding down the fort until Cindy's replacement is found.

### **Child Care Update:**

Due to COVID, DCDEE is waiving all parent fees for March 2022 through June 2022 service months. We had no children on our Subsidized Child Care waitlist at the end of March.

### **Pandemic Emergency Assistance Funds:**

Two payments will be made to families enrolled in Work First with one or more children. The first payment will be \$500 for each child 0-17 and the second will be \$500 if funds are available. The 1<sup>st</sup> payment will be mailed beginning March 18<sup>th</sup>, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is expected to be made this summer. The intent of the General Assembly is to provide extra cash assistance to cover added costs due to the pandemic (clothing, school supplies, including technology devices and PPE). Carol Wray asked how do we know how the money is spent? Jessica stated it is a reimbursement for items already purchased.

### **LIEAP:**

Regular LIEAP ended on March 31<sup>st</sup>. A big thank you to our staff who worked over-time to get all applications keyed and processed. About 50% of funds (regular and ARPA) were spent statewide. DHHS will try to get supplemental payments out as soon as possible as a "catch-up payment". First payments will be to elderly and the second will be a flat rate to all other individuals.

### **FNS:**

Emergency Allotments are requested each month have been approved for April. COVID waivers to continue at least through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. We are to receive a 60-day notice of the PHE ending. Once we know the end date of maximum allotments, the State will notify counties as well as use available methods to notify households who are impacted. Counties are encouraged to provide outreach to households who will see a decrease in their food and

nutrition benefits when the maximum allotments end. Families will get back down to their original allotments.

**Child Support Modernization:**

New Smart e-Pay Options coming soon. Payments can be made by Google Pay, PayPal, or Venmo. Debit and Credit card payments can also be made online and by phone. There is a 2.5% service fee. Automatic Bank Draft is also available with no service fee. Payments will also be accepted at any Walmart with cash or debit cards. A \$2.00 service fee applies. Currently, payments are made through a check or money order through the mail. The goal is to ensure payment can be made fast and easy while keeping up with modern technology and get the money to the families who need it.

**Old Business**

Carol Armistead asked if the budget has been presented to the County Commissioners yet. Commissioner Mansfield stated the Commissioners don't receive the budgets until sometime in May. They then have budget meetings to discuss the budgets. They typically hold two meetings in June and have the budget approved before July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**New Business**

Ed Myers asked a question about board minutes. He said that if he is absent from the previous meeting, he abstains from approving the minutes. He states that if he wasn't in attendance, he can't verify that what is recorded actually happened. Commissioner Mansfield said that no other boards do it this way. Robert's Rules is consistent in stating that you are voting to the best of your ability.

Jessica Adams mentioned that 4 positions for the CHS board have been listed.

**Adjournment**

As there was no other business to be discussed, Chair Wray asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION** – Ed Myers made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Richard Gray, approved by all.

*Nina Oliver*

Deputy Director, Health Department Director

5/11/2022

Date

*Jessica Adams*

Deputy Director, DSS Director

5/09/2022

Date