ECONOMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

February 7, 2024

Co-Chairs: Trish Baker, Davidson County, Angi Karchmer, Gaston County, Willie Smith, Gates County, Brenda Brown, Hertford County

**NC Fast Updates**

2 phases – AIM – Application and Infrastructure Modernization project. Moving applications, servers, databases to AWS cloud which is Phase 1, go live March 2024. In Phase 2, will modernize existing tech to enhance and support faster speed (over next two years). Phase 2 lays groundwork for 24/7 availability and goal to have better caseworker experience.

For implementation of Phase 1 – downtime from 7:00 on 3/16 Saturday to 6:00 am on Monday 3/18. Nothing changing for counties – same login, will be seamless moving to AWS cloud. No training needed.

OVS data will be migrated back to 2022 through present, and the prior years will migrate within 6 months of go-live. AVS, TWN, SAVE will not be affected. Question about OVS data for PI – will be a process to request data that has not migrated yet. Changes will have a positive impact on workload.

**DHB – Gina Hamilton**

FFM Determinations – as of 2/1 we are now an FFM-D state. Healthcare.gov will determine eligibility. We accept that determination. NC Fast will STP into the appropriate category. Evidence that is present will also show referrals – as non-MAGI programs are not determined by FFM. Local agency must process non-MAGI.

FFM-D office hours conducted; 3 more sessions scheduled. Will determine need to hold additional ones after that. Hold FFM-D questions and ask at the next scheduled meeting.

**Pending applications – focus on overdue applications pending now with expansion. Will be $100,000 penalty to state each day for overdue applications. State will not take on that burden alone.** If fail report card, submit a waiver to avoid submitting a CAP. Review policy, consult with OST will heavily look at overdue applications. Review DDS applications to insure we have submitting timely, that a decision has been made, and that we take actions. If having trouble with getting responses from DDS, let OST know – Gina works with DDS to resolve issues. Application timeliness is a big focus and push. Question asked about reports – answer is to use O&M NC Fast reports for overdues and to determine pending apps.

Process not worked out for counties that have overdue applications and the charge. State will be charged 100,000 per day and will not take that on themselves. Someone asked about cross-county help? Mandatory overtime? See director in your county.

Bringing back regional cluster meetings with supervisors. Will hold in May and in the fall. Will have presentations at SSI.

Lot of discussion about processing reports, pending days and issues with overdue cases.

**2024 Summer EBT**

New Program – SUN Bucks – permanent program AKA Summer EBT. 56% of students rely on free lunches at school. 12.8% live under poverty line. P-EBT ended in 2023, serving 1.76 million students and youth at $2.5 billion tax dollars.

Partnership with DPI. Issuing $120 per child ($40 per month, in one amount), automatically given to students who are included in free/reduced meals and those between 7-16 who receive FNS, TANF or Medicaid. Will have an application for others to apply.

Three approaches – Non-Congregate Meals, Group Meals and now SUN Bucks. If can’t attend a group site, if can’t go to a site and pick up for the home, will have on a card.

USDA – piloted this program and noticed 33% decrease in “very low” food insecurity in children. Increased quality of food consumed, 89% redeemed benefits.

Next steps: DSS will provide information, receive communications, handle undelivered cards, distribute SUN Bucks cards for homeless, educate foster care workers.

Program is for the summer to bridge gap from when students are out of school. State will set up program and processing applications. Call center will be up and running in May.

**DCDEE**

85.5% spending coefficient. Non-Smart 82.44%, 128.10% Smart Start – overspending by design to spend allocations. If county is overspending, will work to get that down by end of fiscal year. ARPA dollars will expire as early as 9/24. Working on budget estimates for next fiscal year. DCDEE will request continued and increased funding for subsidy program. Asking for market rate increases.

Stabilization grants – exhausting funds – end 6/30, pending outcome of budget request. Last quarterly payment will be in April and then new providers in May/June would receive prorated payment.

Policy Change – Children 0-2 – NC Fast will allow to be paid at blended rate if appropriate. Will work same as for 3-5 children. More and more going into early Head Start.

Working on feedback for new online manual, adjustments have been made. Clarifications will come out through Change Notices.

Regarding updated application - vertical format instead of horizontal. Cosmetic update. Questions surrounding new app – workgroup has been set up with county participation. Can use either paper application at this time. Once new application is finalized, we expect everyone to switch over.

**Child Support**

Compliance with Medicaid – stopped receiving referrals in 8/23. Based on CS policy, had to work cases to comply with policy and refer to Medicaid as normal even though Medicaid could not implement sanctions. Have cases that may need to be closed. How to handle? Waiting on guidance from federal partners. No updates as of today.

Invited to director regional meeting to present on Child Support, Confidentiality and Security, goals, incentive funds. Will discuss reports and data available to directors.

**Energy**

Survey to 100 counties for funding needs and/or reallocations. Did not get a lot of response. Sent another request. Received $55 million less than prior year. New survey is due today, ask for all 100 counties to respond but less than 60 have responded. See listserv, and contact made with directors. **All 100 counties should respond to the latest survey so all information is together even if you submitted before.**

Other updates: CQI in process of scheduling regional meetings.

Clarified: reallocations offered by counties will not impact future allocations. Will not affect ability to get additional funding if federal gov’t releases more.