

**NCACDSS Executive Board Meeting  
February 12, 2026 | Raleigh, NC**

**Members Present:**

Candice Gobble	Alamance	Tracie McMillan	Ashe
Yolanda White	Bertie	Jill Sampson	Bladen
Cathy Lytch	Brunswick	Robby Hall	Brunswick
David Sweat	Buncombe	Korey Fisher Wellman	Burke
Kim Arnett	Caldwell	Jessica Adams	Carteret
Michelle Waddell	Caswell	Karen Harrington	Catawba
Jennie Kristiansen	Chatham	Amanda Tanner McGee	Cherokee
Todd Goins	Clay	Rebecca Johnson	Cleveland
Dwella Hall	Columbus	Geoffrey Marett	Craven
Brenda Jackson	Cumberland	Samantha Hurd	Currituck
Charles Lycett	Dare	Patricia Baker	Davidson
Annie Murrell	Duplin	Willie Smith III	Gates
Amanda Smith	Greene	Sharon Barlow	Guilford
Felicia Exum	Halifax	Kelly Kelly	Harnett
Ira Dove	Haywood	Lori Horne	Henderson
Tiffany Walton	Hertford	Micka Terry Stanton	Hoke
Yvette Smith	Iredell	Christine Dowdell	Johnston
Dr. Chris Meadows	Jones	Takishia McMiller	Lee
Brittany Naylor	Lenoir	Matthew Hillman	Lincoln
Patrick Betancourt	Macon	Angela Ellis	Martin
Sarah Brewer	McDowell	Wendy Boone	Mitchell
David Richmond	Moore	Denita DeVega	Nash
Rhonda Taylor	Northampton	Susan Thigpen	Onslow
Lindsey Shewmaker	Orange	Deborah Green	Pamlico
Katherine Ford	Pasquotank	Joseph Blankenship	Pender
Tracie Murphy	Randolph	Theressa Smith	Richmond
Carye Dickerson	Rockingham	Micah Ennis	Rowan
Delores Hunt	Rutherford	Patty Santos	Sampson
Dolly Clayton	Stanly	Stacey Elmes	Stokes
Valerie Phelps	Tyrrell	Ashley Lantz	Union
Janet Payne	Union	Antonia Pedroza	Wake
Rena Alston	Warren	Clifton Hardison	Washington

Kimberly McGuire	Wayne	Kevin Brown	Wilkes
Kimberly Irvine	Wilson	Jessica Wall	Yadkin
Karen Powell	NCACDSS	La Verne Bennett	NCACDSS
Jamie Bazemore	CCR		

President Lantz opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the February 2026 meeting.

Karen Powell, new ED for the Association introduced herself. Ms. Powell expressed she is learning and thankful for the opportunity to work with the Association. Ms. Powell shared a power point to explain the first 30 days of being in the position. Ms. Powell shared scheduling meetings with Directors and DHHS staff. Ms. Powell has been working with Sharnese Ransome on upcoming events/meetings and transfer of learning to ensure a smooth transition. Ms. Powell wants to work on the website to have all information in one place for the Directors.

**Open Mic:**

Christa Smith – working on her budget and budgeting for the county cost of SA, this year it is way off. She shared her portion was about 1.4 million dollars for SA. This year it’s about 2 million dollars; SA is a 50/50 split. There is concern and would like to have more information as to the effect this will have on the counties.

Rhonda Taylor – situation with another county in which the Judge called her to court in another county. The Judge deemed it a conflict although many counties did not see it as a conflict. Ms. Taylor shared she is paying a lot for this child. Express wanting information to be shared with the Judges regarding the policy of Child Welfare. Ms. Taylor asked if there would be a training with the Judges regarding these situations. Brenda Jackson shared the conversation of COI came up during one of the Region 6 meetings. Cumberland uses a court order expense sheet which is shared with county leaders.

**Medicaid Update:**

Sarah Gregosky and Gina Hamilton - Melanie Bush has been named as the Interim Medicaid Director, Jay Ludlam is leaving NC Medicaid. Jay Ludlam last day is March. Continued discussion around HR 1 and the funding requirements. State dollars cannot be used for State Expansion. There are regular meetings with Federal partners regarding ongoing work. Ms. Gregosky shared they are working through what the budget is going to look like; rates were cut for medical providers. There is a budget shortfall and we know that without sufficient funding we will not be able to continue with the program. The General Assembly (GA) has been slow with guidance which slows down the policy getting to the counties. Geoff Merritt – Has

there been discussion around admin cost around expansion Sarah – yes, we talk with them and explain the work is doubling and by adding the new requirement will continue to double the work. Geoff – are Legislators intent on changing eligibility within the state, Sarah: no. Geoff – state said they need money by March and legislators coming back in April, Sarah – we will know more after the primaries, they are working on the language now so that it will be ready. Chuck – Is the state looking at any waivers for Medicaid application as there will be a lot of churn Sarah – CMS said there are no waivers, and offering no flexibility. CMS has expressed attestation and exploring Medicaid screeners (at applications), at recertification will need more information. Chuck – other states involving other division around verification, is the state looking at pulling in other divisions Sarah – yes, looking at Dept. Commerce, and working to automate data from the community colleges. They are meeting with Commerce now to see how the connections can be made. Straight through processing will change, and you will see a decrease in Straight through with expansion. Tracie Murphy – a lot more work on the county level and counties will need staff to do more work, how are we going to get support to get the work done. Sarah – looking at ways to give the support, support through NC Fast, looking at chat support, working with some counties on intelligence documents, these are things we are trying to do. Working with CMS around work around income verification. Tracie Murphy – what do we know today that will assist us on day 1, Sarah – let me come back with a response. Brenda Jackson – great presentation that was presented in partnership with directors and commissioners. Brenda wanted to thank them for a great job. Christa Smith asked her questions about cost increase for SA in Medicaid, what can be done and is the state aware and any support to counties. Any consideration around Medicaid reinvestment dollars? Sarah – This was not on my radar and wants to follow up with Christa offline. Brenda shared during the meeting/presentation the State is also going to lose administrative dollars, there are some competing demands. Robby Hall – in JLOC we identified the State and County loss, and both would have to be matched.

**Path NC/Screenings** – Robby Hall shared he is now a part of a new work group which will look at the dashboards in Path NC. Robby explained some areas that he looked at which the data may not be accurate. Robby asked for volunteers (if interested email Robby Hall), Christa Smith shared she would be interested.

Angela Ellis shared the experience of the RCWC coming to the county to triage cases and the process she went through. Geoff M. shared there are no SOPs and there are no clear guidance/expectations. Brenda J. expressed the State is not following the CAP protocol. Brenda J. expressed we need to go to the root cause of the problem. Jessica Adams – what does it look like to do that, what is the first step? Brenda J – we can write letters of our concerns etc. and let it be on the record. Motion by Jessica Adams – that we write a letter as describe by Brenda Jackson, second by Geoff Merritt, Discussion: Tracie M what is the data that needs to be included in the letter, who is going to help with that, Kim McGuire, what is the PR Firm and where do we use them in this, Geoff M, write the letter first and then we can get the information

to the PR Firm. Micah Ennis asked about data on the interventions used when the state went in. Tracie McMillian shared that we have to be careful, focus on divesture is not working using wording like that could be helpful, Tracie asked about having a committee, Takisha Lee shared a conversation that she had with a member of the legislator. Antonia Pedroza Wake County Director shared an experience she had. Samantha Hurd – agreed with writing the letter and shared it needs to be a letter from strength and having the factual data. Timing is of the essence. Tracie McMillian called for the question; All in favor – None Opposed of 1<sup>st</sup> – yeah

Motion Amended by Ashley Lantz that we create a committee to write a letter to DHHS with our concerns and a fact based to be completed within next two weeks and present to membership for approval, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Robby Hall  
All were in favored Motion passes

**Davidson County Discussion:** The committee that creates the letter can work off the letter that was created and sent out in October 2026. Angela Ellis shared the question asked about SOP from DHHS and the response was “the expectation for you to read and interpret the policy”. A question was asked about DHHS being in Davidson County for a while, DHHS wanted to make some staffing changes and therefore divesture would be the way. Trish Baker shared some information in the letter was false. DHHS was not very helpful, Allied was in the county and they would push the cases back to the workers because they were complex. Jenny K – one of the challenges is making a black and white situation when it’s grey, how do we handle this and paint the full picture? Goeff explained we are an emergency response system, and we need to get more respect for what we do. Kim Arnett – shared they had a fatality and inquired about the new process, fatality review on 01/13 and it was a horrible experience. There was a report that came out as there were two children found deceased, the report mentioned that DHHS had taken over the county. David Sweat question – do they (DHHS) have data or evidence in which they are have better outcomes and statically significant improvement when the DHHS takes over. Ashely Lantz shared Micah Ennis asked those questions and the same comments were brought up in ULT. Dee Hunt – why couldn’t we start doing our own research and being intentional about it, we are smart enough/bright enough to do it. Sharon Barlow – I don’t think two weeks is a good time frame, we must make sure that what we send is factual and not emotional. Need to include CCR, some fact gathering and we have to stand on it. Brenda J shared she completely agrees with Sharon B, we as an Association have to decide are we going to continue to operate in this manner where we have to be strategic. My emotions are around this association we do not see the power that we have. This is a turning point for the association. Antonia Pedrozro shared if we are going to advocate, we advocate as an association. Need to know who is in support and those that are not. Micah Ennis read the comments from the chat

Motion by Brenda Jackson to extend the 2-week time line in the motion made by Ashley Lantz to 30/60 days to write the letter regarding Child Welfare oversight, Robby Hall second the motion, all were in favor Motion passes to extend the time frame.

### **Committee Reports**

Advocacy: Geoff Merritt

MA centralization and developed some talking points and email was sent out on 02/11 and requested some feedback. Geoff explained the talking points. Information regarding utilizing our PR firm. It was shared obtaining data for the legislative priorities, Matt and Amanda tallied the vote and ranked them in order of priority. An email will be forth coming. An email was sent out on 02/11 with child welfare data, please review this information and if you have any questions feel free to reach out. Instructions were also sent out. Discussion around CFSP and the concerns with the plan, counties expressed the challenges they were facing. Solving problems of children sleeping in DSS offices and children being discharged from PRTFs. Next advocacy meeting is scheduled for Monday. There was clarification on the procedural process of how positions were sent. Geoff clarified there were two emails that were sent out on 02/11 one for the workload study and the second on Medicaid talking points.

Economics Services: Willie Smith

Willie Smith – Energy – Crisis policy prepaid policy has ben updated. Change made regarding HH compositions. FNS goals – HR 1 policy implementation, office hours sessions to be held upcoming week. Creating a consolidated FAQ and an interview guide, reminder that Sunbucks returning summer of 2026. Looking for counties to pilot interview guide. DCDEE – DCDL from February and certification alignment, job aides have been updated. Smart Start allocation to be expended, if overspending seek out assistance. Asking counties to work the waitlist and to spend if possible. MA transportation rate reduction, contact DHB with questions. SA change notice regarding FL-2 and recommendation of LOC (Level of Care). Working on NC Fast project and automation. NC Fast curam enhancements are being worked on, counties can view display in the sandbox. Brenda asked a question to Sarah regarding how much of the information is going into job aids, is there any conversation about job aids? Willie shared will bring this information to the committee.

Children Services: Kim McGuire

First presented Dr Cindy Brown and CME overview and the process, number of providers the triage and collaboration. Discussed the wait time for a CME. Peter West talked about SMD training and implementation, the full function by end of 2026. Update on relevant tools. There will be a three day in person training with 18 hours, DCDL will be coming out with training dates. Looking at a model court report in Path NC. Carteret County talked about the “First 30”

working with families within the first 30 days, transferring of information, creating an early and warm handoff within the county. The CW committee sent out the power point information to the Directors.

Adult Services: Tracie McMillian

Several reports from counties, director of Caldwell County talked about guardianship reassessments, slides will be sent out. Susan Thigpen shared some tools that they use and that information will also be sent out. Donna Johns talked about Able Account that can assist adults and counties.

Sarah Richardson gave information on Adult Services numbers, and they will send out their information.

Professional Capacity

Sharon Barlow – Feb 19-20 ERM;

March 5-6 WRM

Still in the process of revamping Directors Academy and will assign mentors. Kimberly will be talking with individuals at the state regarding IMC qualifications. Have a presentation in March and will report back.

Ashley shared we have regional meetings coming up in the East and West and we would like the agendas to mirror as much as possible. I am imploring and empowering to please pull together and to have everyone on the team to pull their weight

ULT update: Chuck Lycett

Discussed Divestiture, roll out of Path NC and SDM. Requested that Directors receive training in Path. The Lumbee tribe is ICWA recognized and Directors need to pay attention to this information. Update on constituent concerns, state receives a number of concerns, 12 screening decision 7 upheld and 5 overturn. Still conducting survey of children in DSS offices and that information is being shared

Frist VP report: Micah Ennis

JSCR meeting conversation around Crisis intervention program and the prepaid electrical accounts. Huge apology from the state around counties receiving policy after the effective date. Discussed the Child Care waiting list and spending and the DCDL that came out to the counties. If Directors are receiving pushback from county leadership on spending, please reach out to Candice or Elizabeth and they will assist. Child support criminal records check was tabled due to issues around the server. There was a lot of discussion to get cases closed in the legacy system. Conversation around legacy and triaging cases. Per DHHS they will work to help get the cases closed. Conversation around reports in Path not being accurate.

Presidents report: Ashley Lantz

Introduction of new directors – Kelly Kelly interim director in Harnett County. Ashley shared that we need to appoint information to the Advisory Council Committee NCACDSS, which begin with NC Fast. Ashley read out the names of those that serve on the committee and receive the volunteers needed.

A letter was composed to request NC GA HR implementation and the impact on SNAP and Medicaid. Ashley read the letter to the Association, Motion by Brenda Jackson to accept the proposed letter, second by Jessica Adams, Brenda shared she would like to take this letter to NACO, Geoff shared this information in the letter can also help with the talking points. A friendly amendment was made to add audits to the motion made by Brenda and the friendly amendment was accepted. Tracie McMillian asked about adding some of this to the MOU, Ashley shared that some of the information, Chuck shared the MOU is somewhat flexible, all were in favor – motion passed

Ashley thanked everyone for attending. Laverne Bennett shared information regarding the Director of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards. Ms. Bennett shared the March and June meeting we will not be at this hotel, please see the email that was sent out. The Executive meeting will be held at NC Works off of Tillery Road. SSI registration and information will be sent out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March

Brenda Jackson talked about NACHSA and they are doing a fantastic job around HR 1, encouraging directors to talk with commissioners and managers to attend the legislative conference that is coming up in the next couple of weeks. The NACHSA meeting is normally held on Saturdays (February and March)

Motion to adjourn – Ashley  
Second Robby