**NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ADVISORY & ISSUES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**DATE:**  December 9, 2021

**TIME:** 8:30am

**LOCATION:** Zoom webinar

**ATTENDEES**

Sharnese Ransome, Executive Director, NCACDSS

Geoffrey Marett, Craven County

Adrian Daye, Alamance County

Amanda Taner-McGee, Cherokee County

Angelina Noel, Lee County

April Snead, Scotland County

Brandy Mann, Tyrrell County

Carlton Paylor, Person County

Charles Lycett, Dare County

Christine Dowdell, Chowan County

Debbie Green, Pamlico County

Dolly Clayton, Stanley County

Felicia Exum, Halifax County

Felissa Ferrell, Rockingham County

Glenn Osborne, Wilson County

Jessica Adams, Carteret County

Katherine Ford, Pasquotank County

Kimberly McGuire, Wayne County

LaDawn Pearson, Guilford County

Laurie Potter, Hyde County

Lula Jackson, Anson County

Marcy Mays, Yadkin County

Stacey Elmes, Stokes County

Scott Showell

Stoney Blevins, Buncombe County

Takishia McMiller

Tracie Murphy, Randolph County

Tracie Downer, Ashe County

Velvet Nixon, Robeson Cunty

Yvette Smith, Iredell County

LaVerne Bennett, Administrative Assistant, NCACDSS

Sheila Brosier, Administrative Assistant, Richmond County

**WELCOME**

Geoffrey Marett opened the meeting and welcomed everyone via virtual Zoom.

**APPROVE MINUTES (November 3, 2021)**

The meeting minutes for November 3, 2021, were sent to everyone with the agenda. Mr. Marett asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

* + - **Motion Offered By:**  Tracie Murphy
    - **Motion Seconded By:**  Christine Dowdell
    - **Motion Carried:** Yes

**RECAP ADVOCACY CALL (November 22, 2021)**

The budget was passed on November 18th. In the last advocacy call, we discussed monitoring the budget and we will continue to look at some of the things that directly impact our agency.

* **CPS Statewide Hotline Advocacy Efforts**

The executive board committee observed there was language in legislative Senate Bill 105 regarding the CPS state hotline, which included having a study completed to determine feasibility and an operation plan for what would be needed for a CPS hotline. When the budget passed that language was amended to develop a plan for implementation. Ms. Ransome stated the bill took out language that implied the implementation of a plan; however, it still included the concept of a workgroup and what it would look like. She has been in conversation with the executive board and will come together as a group to develop plans based on what is needed (i.e., staffing, cost, administrative rules, etc.). They are willing to discuss a plan because it will require them to engage with their stakeholders and attorneys. They are aware of the tasks assigned to the workgroup and will require statutory changes that address CPS intake cases. This will also require additional staffing, finances, legislative change, liability issues, etc. The executive board committee will look at assigning people to the workgroup. It does not look like it will be in effect and implemented by 9/1/2022.

Stoney Blevins noted there was no funding included in this bill. We need to be careful with one more layer of oversight that our state will not fund. If the CPS hotline is implemented, we need to be prepared to provide more oversight over the CPS cases. Our initial response to a CPS hotline is a safety concern and calls should not be screened. In addition, a hotline system may not work well between CPS and law enforcement. We need to partner with them to ensure the system is consistent and efficient. We have an opportunity to remake CPS to where we want it to be and can appoint speakers to advocate for the safety of children.

Geoffrey Mann stated the language is clear when it talks about an operational plan and implementation, which means they are moving forward with the bill. If this is so, we need to be clear and transparent on what our concerns are. We need to explain and show how moving to this hotline does not have the best interest in child welfare. We must develop a multi-prong approach because a CPS hotline will have an impact on more than just DSS. We need to let stakeholders know what our position is.

Tracie Murphy commented that after seeing the language and additional communication with state partners and their plan to study and find out what fiscal feasibility is, how will this be implemented by 9/1/2022. She added when we begin to advocate, we should not appear to be divided. We need to find those common areas and advocate on those collectively and we will appear to be powerful and united. Our message and focus should be on keeping children safe in our communities, not opposition. She suggested to collaborate with CPS and adult services in a joint committee meeting and come up with specific strengths and weaknesses in a CPS hotline system under the lens of safety for children. Develop talking points with input from the three committees on how we can create a better system to best serve our clients and citizens; then develop a plan on how and who to communicate this with. Our most powerful advocacy is at our local level—county commissioners, local and state representatives. Be sure to educate and talk to local representatives and legislative partners about how this will impact our clients both positively and negatively, placing emphasis on the safety of children.

Brandy Mann reported the Child Welfare Transformation Design Team group had to vote on priority levels for a list of 13 strategies. The three directors on this group reached out to the Children's Services Committee Chairs to get their input on which should be top priority. We received the results at our last meeting and the CPS hotline was not voted "high priority" by the transformation team.

Several other suggestions developed from the discussion. Consider making phone calls and putting together a research project to see how effective the state hotline works. Perhaps polling all 100 counties regarding their thoughts on the hotline would provide some idea on the opinion of the majority first. It was noted that the agency has not initiated a survey lately. If we do a survey, it would be beneficial to include a comment section. It is difficult to respond to a “yes” or “no” survey currently without knowing exactly what the intentions are for a statewide hotline system.

Ms. Ransome indicated it is important to keep our eye on the issue---doing the best job we can. Keep our focus on providing the best services for children and families and force the state to give us the resources we need. We need to develop our position and talking points to put on the table for the state. When they fail to do so, we have leverage. We can use consultants to deliver our message and make sure they are clear on our position to express our concerns. Also, make sure legal liabilities are addressed. We must bring child welfare up to date; it is antiquated but requires adequate resources across the board. We must be forward-thinking and force the state to be the supervisor they should be.

* **Budget Document Review**

Although Medicaid expansion was not approved, there is message in the budget to have a committee to discuss Medicaid expansion. If Medicaid expansion does occur in the future, DSS should be proactive in having plans in place to make it successful. Ms. Ransome inferred Medicaid expansion is off the table for the next three years.

Charles Lycett stated we should work with the state to begin automating the application process for Medicaid, which will free up time and allow us to put more efforts into long term care and other programs. Also, consider incorporating electronic waivers for FNS and focus on keeping those programs that are currently automated effectively.

**COMMITTEE PROPOSAL**

* Collaborate with CPS and adult services in a joint committee meeting to discuss the impact of a CPS hotline and identify specific strengths and weaknesses in utilizing the hotline as it relates to the safety for children. Develop talking points with input from the joint committees on how we can implement this or other options to best serve our clients and citizens.
* Continue discussion on the automation of Medicaid application process and other programs offered through DSS.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**: With nothing else to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:30am.

**NEXT MEETING:**

**DATE:** TBD

**TIME:** TBD

**LOCATION:** ZOOM webinar