**Carteret County**

**Department of Social Services**

**2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan**



*“Our People, Our Purpose”*

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# **THE Department OF Social services Mission**

The Carteret County Department of Social Services is here to improve the quality of life for all citizens of our county by providing a broad range of quality services in the most cost-effective way to meet the financial, medical, and social needs of our people. We strive to make human services and humane services synonymous, treating people with dignity and respect. We believe that our mission is:

* To help people obtain the basic necessities of life;
* To assist and protect our elderly and disabled adults;
* To protect children and strengthen families;
* To promote self-sufficiency through employment.

## **Overview of SErvices provided**

In 1868, the NC Constitution stated that “beneficent provisions for the poor, the unfortunate, and orphaned are one of the first duties of a civilized and Christian state.” The General Assembly of NC created the Board of Public Charities to supervise charitable institutions. Since that time, services offered through the Department of Social Services have expanded to address most areas affecting an individual’s life. When describing these services, it is best to visualize the agency as a house (see Figure 1).

The left side of the house symbolizes social work services and are generally considered “without regard to income”—Child Protective Services, Foster Care and Adoption, Adult Protective Services, and Guardianship. The right side symbolizes our economic services that are “with regard to income”—Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services, Work First, and Child Support. The foundation of the DSS house consists of a legal team and administrative support personnel who strengthen the operation of the organization. At the top, the Human Services Director, DSS Director, and agency Leadership Team oversee all programs and functions of the agency.

**Figure 1. Structure of DSS**

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|  |  |   | **ADMINISTRATION** |   |  |  |
|  |   | **(Leadership Team)** |   |  |
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|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   | **SOCIAL WORK** |   |   | **ECONOMIC SERVICES** |   |   |
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|   | **LEGAL / ADMIN. SUPPORT** |   |
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Funding for Social Services programs and services comes from county, state, and federal sources. Carteret County Department of Social Services is governed by a 24-member Human Services Board; members are appointed by the Carteret County Board of Commissioners.

# **Overview/Concepts of Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning allows the Department of Social Services leadership and management to focus on long-range goals and objectives and link goals to future budgetary requests. Additionally, strategic planning presents an opportunity to examine any internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing our services.

Human Services leadership and the DSS Leadership Team used several sources to guide the development of the strategic plan, including, but not limited to: state/federal policy, pending legislation (HB-630), and identification of unmet needs.

# **Timeline**

This strategic plan outlines the major goals and objectives for Social Services for the next five years (July 2018 – June 2023). Changing state/federal policies, funding cuts, unfunded mandates, and competing social priorities will require the Department of Social Services to consistently review and update strategic plan goals and objectives.

At a minimum, Social Services will review this plan on an annual basis and make changes as needed. The Department of Social Services will inform the County Administration, Human Services Board, and the Board of Commissioners of changes and progress made on an annual basis.

# **Programmatic Objectives**

The Department of Social Services has121 full-time positions and seven (7) part-time positions. Carteret County Department of Social Services provides the following programs and services:

## **ECONOMIC SERVICES**

**Work First Family Assistance –** Work First shifts the focus of welfare from a money payment to a plan to help families with children under age 18 to progress to employment and self-sufficiency. Eligible families are offered temporary cash assistance, Medicaid benefits, and assistance in locating and maintaining employment. Households with one or both parents in the home must be income and reserve eligible. If a child is residing with a relative, they must be deprived of parental support and care because of the absence of the parents from the home and be income and reserve eligible. Parents are required to accept responsibility for their families and work toward economic independence.

**Emergency Assistance (EA)** – Emergency Assistance provides limited short-term financial assistance to eligible families with children under age 21 who are in an emergency situation.

**Food & Nutrition Services (FNS)** – The Food and Nutrition Services Program (formerly Food Stamps) is designed to help prevent hunger and malnutrition by increasing the food purchasing power of low-income families. Eligibility is based upon certain income and reserve requirements.

**Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)** – The Low Income Energy Assistance Program provides a one-time cash benefit to help eligible households with heating costs.

**Child Support Enforcement (CSE)**-- The NC Child Support Services Program works to ensure that both parents are responsible for the support of their children to the best of their ability.

## **MEDICAID PROGRAMS**

**Medicaid for the Aged, Blind, or Disabled** – This program is for individuals 65 years of age or older or, if under 65, be disabled based on the Social Security Administration’s definition of disability. Blind persons of any age who meet the required definition of blindness may also receive Medicaid

**Medicare Qualified Beneficiaries (MQB)** – MQB provides payment of the Medicare premium for those beneficiaries who have Medicare B and who meet program income and reserve guidelines. Under this program, Medicare recipients who meet the income limit for Medicaid but are over reserve can receive a MQB card which will pay the deductibles and co-payments for Medicare covered services.

**Long Term Care (LTC)** – LTC helps pay the cost of care for eligible individuals who are in a nursing facility or received extended care in a hospital setting.

**Community Alternatives Program (CAP**) – CAP provides an alternative to nursing home placement by allowing individuals to remain in their home with support services. The program does not provide 24-hour support but works in conjunction with existing caretaker support. Unlike other Medicaid programs, CAP considers the income of only the person who is receiving services.

**Special Assistance (SA)** – The Special Assistance Program provides a cash supplement and medical assistance to low-income, aged, blind, or disabled persons who reside in a rest home or family care home.

**Special Assistance In-Home (SA-IH)** – The Special Assistance In-Home Program provides an alternative to placement in an Adult Care Home for individuals who desire and are able to live home safely with additional supportive services in the form of a cash supplement.

**Medicaid for Pregnant Women (MPW**) – The MPW Program provides Medicaid to help with prenatal care, delivery, and postpartum care for women with income at or below 185% of the poverty level.

**Medicaid for Infants and Children (MIC**) – Medicaid for Infants and Children is a program for infants and children to age 19 who meet income and eligibility criteria. There is no reserve limit and no deductible for children who qualify for assistance under MIC.

**Medicaid for Families with Dependent Children (MAF)** – MAF provides medical assistance to low income families with children under 21 who meet the eligibility requirements. There is a reserve limit, and families with income exceeding the required limits must meet a deductible before Medicaid will pay.

**NC Health Choice** – NC Health Choice is an insurance program to provide medical coverage for children up to age 19 who are not eligible for Medicaid but whose families cannot afford private health insurance. Eligibility is based on an income of up to 200% of poverty level.

## **ADULT SERVICES**

**In-Home Aide Services** – In-Home Aide Level II Services are provided to eligible agency clients through a private contractor who supplies aides trained to do home management and personal care tasks. Services focus on assisting clients with daily living activities to enable clients to remain in their own homes when they are not able to care for themselves without help.

**Adult Protective Services –** Services are provided to prevent or correct abuse, neglect, or exploitation of elderly, disabled, or handicapped adults.

**Services for the Blind** – Services are available to enable blind and visually impaired individuals to maintain the highest level of functioning possible and to prevent or reduce dependency.

## **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SERVICES**

**Child Protective Services** – The purpose of this service is to identify, evaluate, change, and/or prevent conditions causing child abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

**Foster Care Services** – This service provides substitute care appropriate for children’s needs once removed from situations of abuse, neglect, dependency, and/or exploitation.

**Adoption** – Adoption services are provided for children who are not able to live with their parents or other relatives and for families wanting to adopt a child. Children become available for adoption through natural parent’s voluntary surrender of the children or by court order.

**Child Care** – Child care is needed by families and children for various reasons: (1) children whose parents are working or in school; (2) children who are in need of protection; (3) children with disabilities or developmental needs. Eligibility is based on need and income, unless the purpose is child protection. A fee may be charged, according to a sliding scale.

## **WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE**

The Work First Family Assistance Employment Program provides employment counseling and assistance, short-term training, and supportive services to enable eligible Work First Family Assistance recipients to secure and maintain employment as quickly as possible with the goal of leaving public assistance.

## **CRISIS INTERVENTION**

Crisis Intervention services help individuals and families who are faced with a crisis or emergency situation. Services include emergency financial assistance, crisis counseling, budgeting assistance, and information and referral services.

# **SWOT Analysis**

The Social Services Leadership Team and Human Services Director conducted a SWOT analysis to determine any internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Input from staff, proposed legislation, day-to-day operations, and the inability to plan for the unknown were points for consideration during this analysis. Figure 1 shows the results of the SWOT analysis.

**Figure 2. Department of Social Services SWOT Analysis**

# **Social Services Goals and Objectives**

The Department of Social Services chose the following goals and objectives to address over the next five years. Figure 3 includes the strategic framework, including the five strategic goals and corresponding objectives.

**Figure 3. Social Services Strategic Framework**

|  |
| --- |
| Department of Social Services |
| **Strategic Goal 1**Promote knowledge and positive perception of DSS services and assistance | **Strategic Goal 2**Maximize state/federal funding and guidance to support local funding/ resources | **Strategic Goal 3**Protect vulnerable populations and strengthen families | **Strategic Goal 4**Identify opportunities for Human Services co-location and collaboration | **Strategic Goal 5**Recruit and retain qualified workforce |
| **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** |
| **Strategic Objective 1A:** Annually participate in at least 12 events geared towards promotion of DSS services by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 2A:** Achieve consistent spending of state-allocated subsidized child care funds to 100% by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 3A:** Develop and implement quality assurance activities that specifically address required contacts for child welfare cases by June 30, 2020 | **Strategic Objective 4A:** Implement a Human Services-oriented social media and website presence by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 5A:** Provide monthly leadership training to DSS Management Team by June 30, 2019 |
| **Strategic Objective 1B:** Annually provide customer service training for all staff by June 30, 2019 | **Strategic Objective 2B:** Pursue 1 grant opportunity by June 30, 2020 | **Strategic Objective 3B:** Increase utilization of Adult In-Home support slots to 95% by June 30, 2021 | **Strategic objective 4B:** Partner with the Health Department to implement an evidenced based parenting program by June 30, 2020 | **Strategic Objective 5B:** Increase the number of interns (associate, bachelor, and master level) from 4 to 6 per year by June 30, 2020 |
| **Strategic Objective 1C:** Implement a Service Feedback system (surveys, comment cards, etc.) by June 30, 2019 | **Strategic Objective 2C:** Annual training and education to DSS staff on funding sources and maximization of funding sources for their specific programs by June 30, 2019 | **Strategic Objective 3C:** Collaborate with community partners in creating a Child Advocacy Center by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 4C:** Develop one program with Health Department and Court for health education (Court ordered participation) with target of 25% respondent parents participating by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 5C:** Implement creative recruitment activities that target critical retention areas by June 30, 2021 |
| **Strategic Objective 1D:** Identify/create/ implement one program targeted to develop increased collections of child support by June 30, 2023 |  | **Strategic Objective 3D:** Fully implement the state’s automated case management system (NCFAST) by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 4D:** Achieve maximum level of co-location of DSS and Health Department for improved service provision by June 30, 2023 | **Strategic Objective 5D:** Explore opportunities for shift work and or alternative work schedules that improves work flow and addresses burn-out by June 30, 2021 |
| **Strategic Objective 1E:** Quarterly submit positive DSS outcomes to media outlets by June 30, 2023 |  | **Strategic Objective 3E:** Create a multi-disciplinary team for Adult Service cases by June 30, 2020 |  |  |
|  |  | **Strategic Objective 3F:** Investigate the need for an Adult Day Care by June 30, 2021 |  |  |

# **Staffing/personnel impacts**

**REQUESTED POSITIONS**

Over the next five years, as the Department of Social Services works towards completing strategic goals and objectives, it is expected two (2) additional staff will be needed—Quality Assurance Specialist I for Economic Services and Quality Assurance Specialist II for Social Work Services. These are in addition to the Human Services Planner and Social Worker III positions requested in the FY 2018-2019 DSS Budget. In 2018, county departments of social services will enter into a performance contract with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). To ensure compliance, constant monitoring of cases and training of staff will be necessary by quality assurance staff. Failure to comply with mandated outcomes will result in financial penalties for the county.

**RECLASSIFIED POSITION**

DSS will reclassify a current position from Administrative Officer (AO) to Business Officer (BO) to ensure better financial outcomes. Believing that a targeted approach to fiscal accountability will maximize federal and state reimbursement and decrease county costs, the BO will be responsible for training and monitoring all staff. Additionally, the BO will work with all service units to evaluate and seek appropriate service-related grants. As Federal and State participation continues to decrease, this source of revenue will become necessary to ensure the continuity of services.

**NC FAST and the “UNKNOWN”**

DHHS continues to implement various phases of NC FAST (State software case management system). Current implementations include Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid, Child Care, and Crisis Intervention. Currently, phase 4 (P4) for Child Welfare is being piloted among six (6) counties and problematic areas continue to be identified. To support the forms administration associated with P4, pilot counties are increasing the number or administrative support personnel. Based on current projections, Carteret County will implement NC FAST P4 beginning June 25, 2018. The impact on agency support personnel is unknown and additional staff might be necessary. Prior to making this request to county administration, DSS will assess the efficiency of NC FAST P4 and maximize current support personnel.

# **Succession Planning**

Succession planning involves identifying key positions where there may be staff changes, including anticipated retirements, gauge staff potential, and ensuring line/field staff receive the needed knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to apply for a promotion. While succession planning involves identifying internal candidates who may be eligible for a promotion, the Department of Social Services will not pre-select staff for positions.

Key positions included in succession planning include all supervisors, leadership team, and the Social Services Director.

## **Anticipated retirements/staff changes**

In the next five years, the Department of Social Services anticipates two directors, one program manager, and two supervisors may be eligible for retirement. Positions potentially eligible for retirement (full or early) represent the following divisions/units: Administration, Social Work, and Medicaid.

Additionally, the Department of Social Services anticipates 11 non-supervisory staff who may be eligible for retirement. Non-supervisory staff potentially eligible for retirement (full or early) represent the following divisions/units: Child Welfare, Child Care, Adult Services, Medicaid, and Administrative Support.

Attachment 1 shows the current state of the Department of Social Services organizational chart. Vacant positions are shown with red lettering. Attachment 2 shows where proposed positions would be located within the agency organizational chart. Reclassified and proposed positions are shown in pink squares.

## **succession planning key steps**

Over the next five years, the Department of Social Services will implement the following key steps to assist with succession planning:

* Provide annual training to non-supervisory staff who would like to apply for potential supervisory position
* Identify supervisor backups and cross-train staff
* Recruit for key positions where internal candidates may not be eligible
* Provide leadership training for all staff
* Capture knowledge from outgoing positions using a formal retirement interview process

# **budgetary impacts**

**Figure 4. Projected Requests**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget Item** | **Projected Amount** | **Linked Goal/Objective** |
| 1. Reclassification from Admin Officer to Business Officer
 | $13,725 increase annually | Objective 2C  |
| 1. Quality Assurance Specialists for Social Work
 | $47,000 (w/o benefits) | Objective 3A |
| 1. Quality Assurance Specialist for Economic Services
 | $42,000 (w/o benefits) | Objective 3A |
| Renovation of office space to expand DSS at HD | $30,000 | Objective 4D |
| Training Materials for Leadership Training | $5,000 ($1,000 annually) | Objective 5A |

# **Summary**

Carteret County Department of Social Services has many factors influencing the services provided to the citizens of Carteret County—state/federal mandates, local/state/federal funding, and staffing turnover. Additionally, current legislative actions (HB-630) and DHHS initiatives (Performance Agreement) add to the changes that will affect DSS operations and outcomes. This five-year strategic plan describes the current state of the Department of Social Services operations and identifies the measures needed to meet the challenges for the next five years.

The Department of Social Services Management Team and Human Services Director will review this plan on an annual basis to track progress made towards strategic objectives, update to include an relevant information, and will update the Human Services Board and Board of Commissioners of any changes.



