



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Social Services

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEV DUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services, Child Support, Economic Services, Aging and Operations

LISA CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services, Child, Family and Adult, Regional Support

DREW PLEDGER • Chairman, Social Services Commission

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Social Services Commission Quarterly Meeting**  
**December 10, 2025**

**I. Call to Order**

1. Chairman Pledger called the Social Services quarterly meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Meeting was virtual using Go-To-Webinar and in-person at the new DHHS headquarters.
2. Social Services Commission roll call:
  - a. **Commissioners in attendance and constituting a quorum were:** Chairman Drew Pledger, Samantha Branch, Brandie Walser, Jeanne Lindquist, Margie Christopher, Tanisha James, Robert Simmons, Rebecca Andrews, Wixie Stephens, Kelsey Crowe, Jill Austin, Brandon Williams and Ernestine Taylor
  - b. **Commissioners absent:**
  - c. **DHHS Staff Present:** Paris Penny (DSS), Danielle Upchurch (DSS), Tom Grecco (DSS), Ben Rose (DSS), Carla West (DSS), Misty Piekaar-McWilliams (DAS), and Jay Pontier (NC FAST)
  - d. **DOJ Staff Present:** Adrian Dellinger, Collen Crowley, and Tom Campbell
  - e. **Others:**
3. Chairman Pledger read the ethic statement/conflicts of interest statement; being that there were none, Danielle Upchurch proceeded to call the role.
4. Motion by Commissioner Simmons to move and approve the meeting minutes from September 10, 2025. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Stephens and carried without dissent.

**II. New Business**

1. Appointments to county boards of social services to fill the seats. Applications voted upon as follows:
  - a. Congressional District 1:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner Branch to appoint William Freeman to Bertie County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Simmons and carried without dissent.
    - ii. Motion by Commissioner Branch to move to not recommend Arlene Midgett due to a conflict of interest with Tyrrell County Department of Social Services. Mrs. Midgett's husband has a transportation

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- contract with Tyrrell County Department of Social Services. Motion seconded by Commissioner Pledger and carried without dissent.
- iii. Motion by Commissioner Branch to appoint Linda Cobb to Vance County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Christopher and carried without dissent.
  - iv. Motion by Commissioner Branch to appoint Anna Godwin to Wilson County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Lindquist and carried without dissent.
- b. Congressional District 6:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner -Walser to appoint Caleb Sink to Davidson County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner - Christopher and carried without dissent.
  - c. Congressional District 7:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner Simmons to appoint Richard Everett to Cumberland County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Branch and carried without dissent.
    - ii. Motion by Commissioner Simmons to appoint Stephen Gwaltney to Henderson County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Lindquist and carried without dissent.
  - d. Congressional District 9:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner Williams to appoint Memory Dossenback to Chatham County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Branch and carried without dissent.
    - ii. Motion by Commissioner Williams to appoint Alexis Coleman to Randolph County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Andrews and carried without dissent.
    - i. Motion by Commissioner James to appoint James Allen to Hoke County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Simmons and carried without dissent.
  - e. Congressional District 11:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner Christopher to appoint Alisha Friday to Lincoln County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Andrews and carried without dissent.
  - f. Congressional District 14:
    - i. Motion by Commissioner Lindquist to appoint Lynn Hobbs to Rutherford County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Simmons and carried without dissent.

### **III. Presentations**

1. Carla West provided an update about the federal government shutdown and impacts of federal funding on local county DSS offices. North Carolina does not have a state budget and did not have a federal budget during the shutdown. Several block grants that support the work of county DSS have been impacted by

Federal delays. The LIEAP program, priority group for households age 60 or older or someone in household with disability that is receiving FNS. Sent payment to priority group and determined if received payment last year, then went ahead and sent a payment for this year which took all available funds. Received notice of award on LIEAP six days ago and as of today, LIEAP opened for applications for priority groups to apply for those that did not receive automatic payments. Approximately 11,000 households applied that did not receive auto payment last year. Expect same amount this year. On January 2, 2026, applications open to non-priority groups. North Carolina has not received any notice of awards for TANF. Counties are asked to spend MOE funds whenever possible until NC receives notice of awards. Federal government continuing resolution was extended until January 31, so North Carolina is unsure of award amount. AAA's provide congregate meals and home delivered meals and transportation. Did receive notice of award from feds on 12/09/2026. Still going to cautiously spend federal funds in the event there is another federal shutdown after Jan. 31, 2026, expires. SSBG was received but not sure if funding is for a quarter or one month, so North Carolina is seeking clarification from feds.

2. TANF State Plan FFY2026-2028 update presented by Tom Grecco, Section Chief for Economic and Family Services. State plan submitted to federal partners for review and shared with North Carolina General Assembly subcommittees. Staff continue to monitor spending and are receiving federal grants. All payments have been made. Mr. Grecco shared that North Carolina is seeing a decline in caseloads and applications and that any comment stating why there is a decrease would be speculative.
  - Caseloads:
    - 9,840 for November 2025
    - 12,091 for November 2024
    - 14,770 for November 2023
  - Applications
    - 3,337 for November 2025
    - 3,964 for November 2024
    - 4,563 for November 2023
  
3. Paris Penny serves as a rulemaking coordinator to the Social Services Commission. Ms. Penny stated there are several sets of rules including 10A NCAC 10, 10A NCAC 70A-C, 10A NCAC 70E-L and 10A NCAC 71 which were posted for comments regarding initial determinations. The Social Services Commission determined all rules to be necessary at the June 11, 2025, meeting. Since that time, all rules have been posted for public comment regarding the initial determination of the above-mentioned rules, and no comments have been received. Ms. Penny asked for a motion to be made that all rules before the Commission, 10A NCAC 10, 10A NCAC 70A-C, 10A NCAC 70E-L and 10A NCAC 71, be submitted to the Rules Review Commission with their original initial determination designations. Motion by Commissioner Simmons to submit 10A NCAC 10, 10A NCAC 70A-C, 10A NCAC 70E-L and 10A NCAC 71 to the Rules Review Commission with their original initial

determination designations. Motion seconded by Commissioner Andrews and carried without dissent.

4. An update about the work of regional directors and regional support for county department of social services as provided by Ben Rose. Refer to PowerPoint for topics covered.

**IV. Staff Comments**

**V. Commission Comments**

- Commissioner Branch thanked the attorneys assigned to the Social Services Commission for answering her questions as she was vetting applicants.
- Commissioner Christopher wanted to know if the Commission had a role in communicating with legislators. Chairman Pledger said that it could be done individually, but not a role of the Commission.
- Commissioner Pledger shared Commissioner Simmons is resigning at the end of the month and expressed appreciation for Commissioner Simmons service to the Commission.

**VI. Adjournment**

Motion by Commissioner Branch to adjourn the quarterly meeting at 11:48 a.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Andrews and carried without dissent.

**Social Services Commission meeting dates for 2026: June 10, September 9 and December 9**