



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

JOSH STEIN • Governor
DEVDUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary
CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services
DREW PLEDGER • Chairman, Social Services Commission

Meeting Minutes
Social Services Commission Quarterly Meeting
September 10, 2025

I. Call to Order

1. Chairman Pledger called the Social Services quarterly meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Meeting was virtual using Go-To-Webinar. NC DHHS is in the process of moving to a new location in September.
2. Social Services Commission roll call:
 - a. **Commissioners in attendance and constituting a quorum were:** Chairman Drew Pledger, Brandie Walser, Jeanne Lindquist, Margie Christopher, Tanisha James, Robert Simmons, Rebecca Andrews, Wixie Stephens, Kelsey Crowe, Jill Austin, and Ernestine Taylor
 - b. **Commissioners absent:** Brandon Williams and Samatha Branch
 - c. **DHHS Staff Present:** Paris Penny (DSS), Danielle Upchurch (DSS), Adrienne Rice (DSS), Ben Rose (DSS), Tracy Turner (DSS), Misty Piekaar-McWilliams (DAS), and Jay Pontier (NC FAST)
 - d. **DOJ Staff Present:** Adrian Dellinger and Tom Campbell
 - e. **Others:** David Richmond (Moore County DSS), Chuck Lysette
3. Chairman Drew Pledger shared two new commissioners; Brandon Williams and Jillian Austin have joined the Social Services Commission.
4. Chairman Pledger read the ethic statement/conflicts of interest statement; being that there were none, Danielle Upchurch proceeded to call the role.
5. Motion by Commissioner Wixie Stephens to move and approve the meeting minutes from June 11, 2025. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Tanisha James and carried without dissent.
6. Motion by Commissioner Wixie Stephens to move and approve the meeting minutes from August 5, 2025. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Tanisha James 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 Rebecca Andrews to appoint Dante Pittman to Wilson County Department of Social Services Board.

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- Motion was seconded by Commissioner Robert Simmons and carried without dissent.
- ii. Motion by Commissioner Robert Simmons to appoint Javan L Leach to Pasquotank County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Kelsey Crowe and carried without dissent.
 - iii. Motion by Commissioner Rebecca Andrews to allow more time to vet Arlene S. Midgett to Tyrrell County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Jeanne Lindquist and carried without dissent.
- b. Congressional District 6:
- i. Motion by Commissioner Brandie Walser to allow more time to vet Caleb Sink to Davidson County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Ernestine Taylor and carried without dissent.
- c. Congressional District 7:
- i. Motion by Commissioner Tanisha James to allow more time to vet Richard Everett to Cumberland County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Margie Christopher and carried without dissent.
- d. Congressional District 9:
- i. Motion by Commissioner Rebecca Andrews to allow more time to vet Memory Dossenbach to Chatham County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Commissioner Brandie Walser and carried without dissent.
 - ii. Motion by Commissioner Ernestine Taylor to allow more time to vet Alexis Coleman to Randolph County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Rebecca Andrews and carried without dissent.
 - i. Motion by Commissioner Tanisha James to appoint Carl Pevia to Hoke County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Wixie Stephens and carried without dissent.
 - ii. Motion by Commissioner Tanisha James to allow more time to vet applicant James Allen to Hoke County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Brandie Walser and carried without dissent.
 - iii. Motion by Commissioner Tanisha James to appoint Stephen Phillips to Moore County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Wixie Stephens and carried without dissent.
- e. Congressional District 11:
- i. Motion by Commissioner Kelsey Crowe to appoint Lisa Wright to Avery County Department of Social Services Board. Motion seconded by Brandie Walser and carried without dissent.

- f. Congressional District 13:
 - i. Motion by Commissioner Rebecca Andrews to appoint Leroy Hartsfield to Franklin County Department of Social Services Board. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Jeanne Lindquist and carried without dissent.

III. Presentations

1. TANF State Plan FFY2026-2028 was presented by Adrienne Rice. The presentation will be posted on the Social Services Commission website.
2. Misty Piekaar-McWilliams is the rule-making coordinator for the Division of Aging. Misty provided information as there are new commissioners. The Commission approved the initial determination of the rules known as 10A NCAC 06 which determined the rules necessary or unnecessary in winter of 2024 and subsequently the Rules Review Commission approved in March and April of 2025. Since that time, the NC General Assembly had the ability to take action on whether to agree or disagree with the initial determinations of these rules. They did not take any action. The Rules Review Commission proposes that these rules be submitted to them by August 1, 2028, in which any proposed amendments to these rules will be voted upon by the Social Services Commission prior to their June 2028 meeting. For newer commissioners, this may seem like a long time but rule-making can be a multi-year process in which counties and regional governments must locate additional funding that is required for new additional amendments to rules. Because the cyclical budget cycle tied to the State fiscal calendar, it can often take a year to locate these funds. There are no action items for the Social Services Commission to take at this time but again, since the 10A NCAC 06 rules were one of the first sets of rules approved for initial determination by the SSC (also known as step 1 of the periodic review process), Paris and I thought it would be beneficial to share the timeline of what can be expected for you as commissioners as more rules come through the SSC.
3. An update about the work of regional directors and regional support for county department of social services as provided by Ben Rose. Below is a brief high-level summary of the topics covered.
 - a. Continuous Quality Improvement Peer Pods: Region 1 and Region 6 are running the CQI Peer Pods, which brings the entire regional support team together to strategically implement CQI within the counties. It is a guiding principle that quality is best done holistically as a team as well as individually with the programs. The second meeting will be held in October. This program is in partnership with Public Knowledge.
 - b. HR1/Food and Nutrition: HR1, or the “One Big Beautiful Bill”, has provisions regarding the Food and Nutrition Program that are critical and urgent for both counties and the state to address. This bill will shift as much as \$400 million to states and counties in costs. In addition, the Food and Nutrition

Payment Error Rate (the rate at which benefits are issued in error) is over 10%, which can add an additional cost to the state of 15% of benefits issued. Therefore, North Carolina is at a critical juncture regarding the SNAP program. It is the state's priority to immediately start to address the payment error issue and to improve the accuracy of benefits issued so that the state will not face the level of penalties based on our status. A work group has been meeting to review this situation and there is also collaboration with the North Carolina Association of County Directors to review and quickly address quality and accuracy issues in the state. Failure to address these issues could put 1.4 million recipients at risk for benefits. In addition, Medicaid is facing a current budget shortfall so there are potential cuts being introduced by the state to help cover this shortfall. These cuts will receive further review by legislators upon their return.

- c. NC House Bill 612: HB 612 was the "Fostering Care in NC Act" passed by the General Assembly that brings sweeping changes in reforms to child welfare, especially in permanence. Currently, the state is drafting policy to reflect this legislation, including:
 - i. Conflict of Interest Policy for County DSS agencies
 - ii. Reviews of Screening Decisions by County DSS agencies
 - iii. Reviews of Cases in which a petition was not filed
- d. These are some of the pressing changes that will occur October 1, 2025, that require policy updates and shift some of the work in this space to the state as the supervising authority. Mr. Rose encouraged Commission members to speak with their DSS Directors regarding the HB 612 provisions and the positive impact it will have on child welfare.
<https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2025/H612>
- e. Path NC: Path NC continues to roll out, with this week being group 4. Counties have been very welcoming to Path NC, and the technology is receiving strong praise for its usability and data dashboards. We are excited as regional directors to be on the ground supporting the implementation and receiving feedback from counties.
- f. Child and Family Specialty Plan: Work continues in the county to prepare for the CFSP to become effective December 1, 2025. This will provide behavioral and medical coverage for children in custody of a local DSS. The plan is through Healthy Blue and will also provide managed care services. Counties have been cleaning up their data and doing readiness activities. Many counties will have care managers collocated in their buildings as well.
- g. Child and Family Services Plan: This is the federal review of performance factors within child welfare services. The state is having to enter a program improvement plan and is working in partnership with region 3, 7, and Wake County to act as implementation zones for the program improvement plan. Once the plan is approved by the feds, the state will have one year to demonstrate improvement through these counties by incorporating various strategies. We are excited to be working with these counties to support improving our overall system.

IV. Staff Comments

NC DHHS is moving to a new location this month. Staff support will send out information about the new location and where to park prior to the December quarterly meeting.

V. Commission Comments

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Rebecca Andres to adjourn the quarterly meeting at 11:13 a.m. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tanisha James and carried without dissent.

The next quarterly meeting is December 10, 2025.