



Social Services

Social Services Board

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DSS Director

December 11, 2017

To: Durham County Board of Social Services

Gayle Harris, General Manager

Wendell Davis, County Manager

Kathy Everett-Perry, Human Resources Director

From: Ben Rose, Director

Re: Mid-Year Request for Child Protective Service Positions

A. Introduction

The Durham County Department of Social Services is requesting additional FTE's within the Child Welfare Division to help address critical staffing needs within the Child Protective Services area. Due to the critical nature of the work and the sensitive issues surrounding Child Protective Services, the Department is seeking an additional unit to help address a burdening level (or overwhelming level) of cases currently found within the area.

The Department is requesting to add an additional five (5) Child Welfare Investigators and one (1) Social Work Supervisor to start to address the shortage of staff found within Child Protective Services.

Summary of Costs: This document reflects the breakdown of costs for (5) Child Welfare Social Worker positions and (1) Social Work Supervisor III position as follows:

I. 4-Month cost projection

	Cost for (5) New Positions	Reimbursement (15%)	County Cost
Child Welfare Social Worker	\$ 487,725.30	\$ 73,158.80	\$ 414,566.50
Social Work Supervisor III	\$ 105,608.07	\$ 15,841.21	\$ 89,766.89
Total (annual)	\$ 593,333.37	\$ 89,000	\$ 504,333.37
4 month cost	\$ 195,800.01	\$ 29,370.00	\$ 166,430.01

II. Annual Cost projection

	Cost for (5) New Positions	Reimbursement (15%)	County Cost
Child Welfare Social Worker	\$ 487,725.30	\$ 73,158.80	\$ 341,407.71
Social Work Supervisor	\$ 105,608.07	\$ 15,841.21	\$ 89,766.86
III			
Total (annual)	\$ 593,333.37	\$ 89,000	\$ 504,333.37

The total cost to the county to fund all requests is (after reimbursement)

****note *total costs* will need to be budgeted with projected revenues**

➤ **4-month cost: \$ 166,430.01**

➤ **Annual cost: \$ 504,333.37**

Associated Equipment Cost:

	Per employee	Total cost (X6)
Laptop	\$ 1,304.00	\$ 7,824.00
Docking station	\$ 175.00	\$ 1,050.00
Monitor	\$ 172.00	\$ 1,032.00
Monitor arm	\$ 278.06	\$ 1,668.36
Scanner	\$ 897.60	\$ 5,385.60
Laptop bag	\$ 30.00	\$ 180.00
Desk phone	\$ 359.90	\$ 2,159.40
Total	\$ 3,216.56	\$ 19,299.36

***Please note revenue streams in this area are capped. Therefore, additional revenue will not come with these positions. They will draw down from the available grants allocated to Durham.

B. History

Child Protective Services is mandated by state law to be administered by each county. The Director of Social Services is responsible for the provision of these services and must ensure under Chapter 7B that services can be delivered within policy and mandates.

Child Protective Services is charged with responding timely to all screened-in reports of child abuse, neglect, and dependency. The Department is charged to investigate/assess each report that meets the criteria for abuse/neglect/dependency, assess the risk, and determine the service level required to resolve the identified issues. In some instances, no services may be

required. At other times, the Department may arrange for services through the In-Home unit or in the event of imminent danger, the Department may be required to take custody of a child to protect their safety.

Child Protective Services is one of the most critical services delivered by the Department in that failure to properly act may put a child at risk of harm or even death. Based on the nature of the work, the state has both mandated certain educational and training levels for staff that conduct these duties. In addition, Child Protective Services is one of the few areas that the state actually mandates staffing caseload ratios due to the nature and sensitivity of the work. Counties are expected to be staffed within these caseload sizes.

C. Justifications

Durham County Department of Social Services understands seeking new positions mid-year is not a traditional practice. However, based on the seriousness of our staffing capacity and the current and potential impacts, we believe this is a needed request at this time. This request is to start the process of reaching a better place within Child Protective Services to enhance the safety and well-being of the Children in Durham County. Child Welfare is a business of human capital and it takes trained staff to develop the services required.

Below are justifications for requesting these new positions at this time:

1. Required Caseload Standard: North Carolina General Statutes require a ratio of 10 cases per worker within the CPS area (policy attached). This standard was adopted by the state as part of a concern that workers were carrying a high caseload and creating gaps in services, placing children at risk. Currently, Durham County is well outside this standard (assuming full employment) as our ratio of workers to cases is approximately 1:15 (based on approximately 311 open cases and 22 assigned FTE investigators). This figure is actually higher due to turnover within the area, creating more of a 1:30 level (or greater). Therefore, we are potentially placing children at risk due to the overwhelming caseload size currently being experienced. If a fatality with an open case was to occur, this is an area that the state will first assess.
2. 2017 Rylan's Law: North Carolina recently passed HB 630/Child Protective Services Accountability Act (Rylan's Law) that will establish specific performance measures within Child Welfare that the Department must be able to meet to continue to receive funding. The performance measures will be a part of a required contract between the state and the agency and will measure certain safety, permanence, and well-being measures. Failure to adhere to standards can create a situation that the county could actually lose

potential funding or the program be assumed by the state. In order to effectively meet performance standards, having appropriate and adequate staffing FTE's will be vital.

3. Retention: The inability to maintain reasonable staffing and caseload ratio has resulted in a critical staffing shortage. Having met with CPS staff, this is the number one issue they have identified as a source of concern and major reason for the high turnover rate. As soon as new staff are hired the existing staff are leaving and they consistently cite the overwhelming caseload. It is important to note, how this lack of adequate FTE's is playing a role in the constant vacancies seen in CPS. Not having adequate FTE's to maintain a caseload size of 1:10 is creating hardship for existing workers, and causing a higher turnover rate than the normal attrition seen in CPS. We can't successfully combat this issue if we don't address the need for adequate staffing.
4. County Comparisons: Attached is a chart showing a comparison to like counties regarding open cases to staff ratios. As you can see, Durham County lags behind comparable counties for staffing levels.
5. NC Fast: The Child Welfare Division is transitioning to NC Fast over the course of the next year, which will place extra burdens on existing staff. The entire division will be faced with conversion, training, and implementation of a complex case-management system that will hopefully long term give staff more tools and abilities to be effective. It is noted that NC Fast for Child Welfare is experiencing system performance issues and may be delayed.
6. Safety/Liability: Recent high profile media cases within CPS have created a new degree of liability for counties conducting child welfare services. In many of these cases, staffing capacity was the primary issue, along with best practices. In addition, the primary concern for staff is being able to ensure the safety of a child in their caseload. This primary driver is the reason the state established the mandatory caseload size law, making Child Welfare the only area to have a mandated caseload size.

The agency is working hard to address issues in both recruitment and retention within Child Welfare. Strategies being assessed and implemented include:

- Perpetual posting of Child Welfare positions, leading to the quicker hiring of staff.
- Group/Mass interviews to hire staff upfront and ongoing.
- Using realistic preview videos to educate applicants regarding the job and requirements.
- Establishing competency-based hiring practices to ensure the most effective decision when making selections of staff.
- Creating opportunities for existing staff to engage in mentoring/peer reviews/training.
- Assessing more flexible work schedules and work from home opportunities.
- Enhancing training to ensure a qualified workforce.
- Assessing utilization of internships and creating an opportunity for existing and potential staff.

Conclusion:

Durham County Social Services finds itself in a staffing shortage within Child Protective Services, creating several impacts and potential liabilities. To address this issue, the Department is looking at both practice and procedures as well as recruitment/retention. However, the staffing shortage itself can only be addressed through new full-time positions dedicated to the investigation and determination of child abuse and neglect.

The Department is out of compliance with state-mandated caseload requirements, creating a potential risk and liability issue. In addition, upcoming new laws and policies will put additional strain on Child Protective Services, especially considering the current staffing capacity.

It is our mission to protect children from abuse and neglect. I applaud the staff for their hard work and dedication during this crisis period as they have shown themselves to be truly dedicated professionals. We appreciate the consideration of this request in an order for us to start to address the staffing capacity and bring us into compliance with required standards. We also appreciate the support of our county management, DSS Board, and Board of Commissioners in our mission and goals.

Submitted by,

William B. Rose, Director