



Forsyth County Department of Social Services

2005-2006 Annual Report



741 North Highland Avenue
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

A Word from the Director



Joe Raymond, Director

Vision

Forsyth County residents will be safe, self – sufficient and live in stable healthy environments.

Mission Statement

Forsyth County DSS will serve and protect vulnerable children and adults: strengthen and preserve families: and enhance economic stability while encouraging personal responsibility.

To the Citizens of Forsyth County:

We are pleased to present the FY 05-06 Annual Report of the Forsyth County Department of Social Services. This report which marks the completion of my first year with the Department has been characterized by growth and

change. It has defined our accomplishments and challenges while identifying our future vision.

This vision is being expressed through new strategic goals and measurable benchmarks of progress which will guide our work in the years ahead. These goals and benchmarks are presented in our quarterly publication, **Leading By Results**, which may be found on the web at www.forsyth.cc/dss.

This year, the Department made an enhanced commitment to customer service that includes monthly customer feedback surveys that consistently reveal that the overwhelming majority of our 70,000 customers are treated with respect and courtesy.

We have also made a conscious effort to enhance our public visibility and to highlight our work with multiple community partners; including law enforcement, public schools, non - profit organizations, public agencies and work with United Way on several projects.

Each of our three major service divisions have enjoyed success and have made many program improvements. Our Adult Services Division has been active with the Forsyth County Aging Services Planning Committee which develops new ways to serve older and disabled adults. We continue

to see increasing service needs as more adults require adult protective services and a full spectrum of supports to continue to live in their own homes or as they transition into rest or nursing homes.

The Family and Children's Services Division has virtually rebuilt itself. Moving to blended teams has allowed foster care services and child protective services to operate within the same units. This helps everyone and has helped implement the "multiple response system," a new way to assess most cases of child abuse and neglect.

Our Temporary Economic Assistance and Maintenance (TEAM) Division has been extremely busy. Faced with huge program growth, several programs developed new methods to improve the application process for customers while saving staff time. The Work First Planning Committee, made up of representatives of community agencies, has taken on the task of going beyond the state-mandated goals for the Work First program and establishing additional outcomes designed to help recipients improve their education.

This year's report avoids an emphasis on statistics and instead introduces the reader to the variety of Forsyth County residents that DSS serves. Many DSS services assist families who have fallen on hard times, but it is also true that DSS provides services to children, families, older adults, and adults

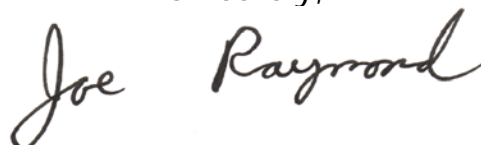
with disabilities from all walks of life regardless of income or their zip code. DSS' work to protect children and adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation is an obvious example. Other examples include our child support enforcement program (that collected over 18 million dollars) which serves parents "without regard to income," our adoption program (48 adoptions last year), our monitoring of the quality of rest homes in Forsyth County, etc.

We proudly provide access to Medicaid (our nation's health care program for low income children and adults over age 65), NC Health Choice and to Food Assistance. These programs help alleviate the reality that approximately 20% of Forsyth County children live in poverty.

Cash assistance "welfare" has virtually disappeared. It has fallen 78% since 1995. TANF provides an average of \$220 per month for a single parent with two children while demanding that the parent "work first" for a minimum of 30 hours per week.

Forsyth County DSS appreciates your attention to this report. We look forward to continuing our critical public service mission with "competence, compassion, and commitment."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Raymond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

A Word from the Board



From the Chairman of the Board of Social Services

In FY 05-06, I had the privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Board of Social Services. It was a time of fundamental change at DSS – the arrival of a new Director after 8 years. With the new director on board, the Board continued the work of ensuring that the agency was meeting the current needs of the community and preparing for the future. I am pleased to say it was a good experience for the Board.

The Board was instrumental in leading the way for a new way of doing business. We began a journey this year that I believe will provide for a new future for DSS in our community. Focusing on outcomes and with the introduction of a new newsletter that says it all – *Leading By Results*, the Board and staff of DSS began a process to identify strategic goals for the important work that DSS does. Measurable goals and benchmarks were established that will enable everyone to know how we as a community are changing lives for the better.

As this work moves forward, I hope everyone will ask how they can join with DSS to achieve these goals since I truly believe it will take a community-based focus.

The Board, DSS leadership, and staff are off to a great start in establishing goals and benchmarks that will take us through the next several years. However, establishing goals and benchmarks is a first step. It will serve our community well if DSS and collaborating agencies and individuals can take a hard look at what works and make systematic changes when required. I worked with a committed team of Board members and I know they will continue to make a difference in our community.

It has been a pleasure serving on the DSS Board for the last six years and I look forward to participating in any way I can to continue the work that Board and staff are starting. We will only be better as a community!

All the best!

Cynthia W. Jeffries



Board of Social Services: L. to R. John Sheldon, Florence Corpening, Claudette Weston, Walter Marshall

Supporting and Protecting Older Adults and Adults With Disabilities

Who am I?

I am a disabled individual over 18 who may need health insurance, or an older adult who may need help with managing



the tasks of daily living. Sometimes people take financial advantage of me or abuse me physically. Perhaps my issues center around my health and how to ensure that I am getting the care I need.

I might be a 70 year-old retired man in poor health who has been living alone. My son comes to see me occasionally and sometimes he borrows money from me. I can't work anymore, and I sometimes forget to take my medicine. My income is limited, and I often chose between eating or taking my medicines. My neighbor found me out in the back yard the other day very confused and called DSS. The money I saved for my retirement seems to have disappeared. DSS is helping me get the medication and services I need to stay at home.

Safety for Adults

Forsyth County Department of Social Services received 504 Adult Protective Service (APS) reports of possible abuse or neglect of adults of the disabled for the Fiscal Year 2005-2006. Of the total, 251 received APS Information and Referral Services as these reports did not meet the legal criteria for APS Evaluation. These services were focused on preventive strategies. Another 89 of the total received APS Outreach Services where an APS social worker visited the adult to offer preventive services and supports and further assess the situations for possible interventions.

Finally, 146 reports of abuse and neglect of older adults or disabled adults were accepted for evaluation of possible abuse or neglect by DSS. Most reports involved adults who lived alone, were women (73%), were Caucasian (59%) and most had some type of disability – usually some type of illness. The majority of reports were about adults who were between the ages of 60-84. Reports of possible abuse or neglect concerned adults from all walks of life. Maltreatment was confirmed in 52 cases.

Keeping Adults Healthy

I struggle with chronic health problems. I have been laid off from a job and have no health insurance.

I have tried to work but have been declared disabled. I am too

young for Medicare but can't pay for health insurance on my own. I came to DSS for help in paying my health bills.



Over 11,000 Forsyth County adults aged 65 or over or who were disabled received Adult Medicaid in FY 05-06. Adult Medicaid pays for nursing home care for the elderly, prescription drugs, doctor visits, and routine eye and dental exams and medical transportation.

For me, my family got worried about whether I could really continue to live alone as I got older. A social worker came into my home to assess what services I needed and helped to develop a plan to figure out if I was eating well, and if I was safe in my home. They helped to get Meals on Wheels and made a plan for other things I needed to allow me to live on my own. They got me an In-Home Aide to help me with light house keeping and taking me to my doctor's appointments. I even went to Adult Day Care for a few

days a week so I could meet some other people.

Keeping Adults In Their Homes

Social workers worked with, on average, 308 people each month, in FY 05-06. They assessed the services older and disabled adults needed and arranged for those services whenever possible. This sometimes included arranging for In-Home Aide services. About 200 older adults were able to stay in their homes because of the services of paraprofessionals who offer home management tasks and provide transportation.

In some cases, social workers helped to arrange for Adult Day Care. The County contracts with three Adult Day Care facilities. They provide social interaction,



meals, gentle exercise programs, and mental stimulation. The centers are monitored monthly.

Higher Levels of Care for Adults

Eventually, my family and I decided I needed help in finding an assisted living facility or nursing home that would meet my needs. DSS staff helped me to get a medical evaluation and fill out the financial applications. They told me about the counseling that was available to help me to adjust to new surroundings. I like it pretty well now.

DSS helps families with applications for assisted-living facilities and monitors the safety of the 49 adult care homes in the County. DSS conducted over 500 monitoring visits in FY 05-06. DSS staff investigated 86 complaints.



At some point, if I am not able to make decisions on my own about financial matters or what is best for me, and I have no family or a friend who can take on this responsibility for me, I may need to have a court-appointed guardian.

In some cases, the Court orders that DSS become the legal guardian of the person. This means that under court supervision, DSS became responsible for 115 individuals as their guardians.



Summary

Overall, the Division of Adult Services served over 14,500 customers during the year. The needs of older adults and adults with disabilities are increasing. It is critical that DSS continue to serve in its role to support this population.

Every Child Deserves a Family

Who am I?

I am the children of Forsyth County and their care givers. I didn't plan on coming to DSS and only came here because my family has challenges they could not solve by themselves.



I am a 7-year old child whose parents are having a bad time right now. I don't like it when Mom and Dad argue and that has been happening a lot since Dad lost his job. Even though they think I am asleep, I hear them. The other day, Dad got really mad at Mom and me too. They both yell a lot, and sometimes Dad hits me really hard but usually where nobody can see the bruises.

I think they have both been drinking or taking something. I don't know what they take, but sometimes they forget to feed my brother and me after they use that pipe. I try to get really small and hide in the closet when they fight, but that doesn't always work. Mom really got mad when that lady from DSS called and then came by my school. The lady talked to me and asked me a lot about being safe. I love Mom and Dad, but I

worry sometimes that I can't take care of my baby brother and keep Dad from hitting him. The lady from DSS says I will have to go live with another family for a while.

Protecting Children

Last year, there were 2,895 reports of child abuse or neglect in Forsyth County involving almost 4,000 children. About 20% of these reports were confirmed as child abuse or neglect.

In severe cases, DSS may petition the Court for the protection and/or the removal of the child. In all cases, DSS seeks to stabilize the family or unify the children with parents before moving toward other permanent plans for the child.

I am a 10-year old girl. My mother's boyfriend started taking a real interest in me last year. At



first I liked the attention. But then it changed. He touches me where he shouldn't. I tried to tell my mom, but I was afraid she wouldn't believe me. I used to like school, but I am really not doing too well in school these days. My

teacher has noticed. I finally told her a little and she called DSS, and a social worker came to talk to me. I just want it to stop.

Last year, 31 children were found to have been sexually abused in Forsyth County. DSS offers intensive therapeutic counseling



services to children who have been the victims of sexual abuse. In FY 05-06, almost 300 children were provided counseling.

I am a child whose parents leave me alone a lot. There's no one to look after me and sometimes they just don't think about whether I am really old enough to be left alone while they run errands. Our neighbor called DSS because they saw me down the street late one night alone. DSS worked with my parents to help them work through the stress they are under and think about their responsibilities as a parent. They took parenting classes and I heard them say they had learned a lot. It is a big responsibility being a parent.

The majority of cases reported to DSS are for neglect. DSS works with families to develop a plan to keep children safe and in their homes. DSS uses community resources to assist families and

develop a plan with the family to ensure the safety of children.

Foster Homes for Children

Forsyth County had 323 children in foster care at the end of June, 2006. However, 514 children were in foster care at some time during FY 05-06. One hundred and sixty-one (161) entered foster care during the year. The average age of children in foster care was just over nine and a half years. The average length of stay in foster care is 26 months. The majority of children in foster care were African-American (54%) while 27% were Caucasian; 13% were Hispanic; and 2% were another ethnicity.

We are a married couple who heard about a child who was abused by her parents. We thought we might want to adopt her. After learning more and taking the DSS training, we decided to become foster parents first. We were interested in a young child who was diagnosed with mental illness at age four. It breaks your heart. She has been in our home for 5 years now. Her brother was physically abused and severely injured by their parents and he joined her in our home this year. The children have really



improved, and our "daughter" no longer needs medication.

We have had many other foster children over the years. Many have been reunited with their parents. My husband and I both like to meet with the parents and try to provide support for them. I hope we are good role models for the young parents we see. We try hard to provide a nurturing, structured environment for the children who live with us.

DSS has 116 licensed foster care homes in Forsyth County. Everyone in Forsyth County owes these foster parents a tremendous debt of gratitude for the work they do. Nineteen (19) new homes were added in FY 05-06. There are never enough foster parents to meet the need.

Adoptive Homes for Children

I am a child who left foster care because I was adopted. I lived with my Mom, but she just couldn't take care of me. She had too many problems. My Grandmother took care of me for a while, but it was a strain on her. I moved in with some nice people who are my new parents. It was really scary at first. But now I am glad they adopted me because I know my new parents really want me and provide a good place for me to grow up.

DSS finalized 48 adoptions last year. The majority of

children were females (32). Seventeen children ages birth to five were adopted, 14 children were ages 6 to 12; and 17 were ages 14-18.



From Foster Care to Adulthood

I am a child who has lived with foster parents for two years. I am 16 years old. I still miss my family although I wouldn't tell my social worker

that. I want her to think I can take care of myself. I get scared and excited at the thought of being on my own which I will be when I turn 18. Is that weird or what? DSS has services to help me get ready to be on my own. It is called LINKS. I want to learn how to manage my money, get a job, and live on my own.

The LINKS program serves youth age 13-21 helping to prepare them for adult life. In FY 05-06, there were 125 young people in this program.

Summary

There are many compelling and heart wrenching stories to tell about children and families served by DSS. Unfortunately, child abuse and child neglect are a reality and strengthening families while protecting children is one of

DSS' core jobs. Sometimes this is difficult role when DSS is expected by some to intervene more frequently and by others to intervene less often. Our decision whether to become involved is guided by NC law and ultimately our recommendations are accepted or amended by a court of law. The reality is that DSS cannot do this job alone and our many partners are a critical part of the process.



Forsyth County DSS does not want any child to be "at-risk" or to need our services. Rather, we want all children and families to be safe and resilient. Safe children and healthy families are a shared responsibility of everyone in our community.

Economic Security for Children: Helping Parents Work First

Who am I?

I am a family. I might be a single Mom with one three- year old child. I try to work but can only find minimum wage jobs. Even when I work, I struggle to make ends meet. I need help to pay for health care and to provide enough food for my children, or to pay for child care so I can continue to work.



children, or to pay for child care so I can continue to work.

Day Care is Essential for Working Parents

We are a young couple with two children ages 3 and 7. We both work and have jobs. Our youngest child is cared for in a day care center while Thomas just started school. Our neighbor picks him up and takes care of him. Last time I figured it, about 27% of the family budget went for child care expenses. We applied for the child care subsidy at DSS over a year ago which will help out a lot. We were put on a waiting list. We can't keep working without child care, but it sure is expensive.

This couple is typical of many of the over 2,000 families who used the child care subsidy in Forsyth County in FY 2005-06. An average of 3,455

children were provided child care each month with the subsidy. The waiting list for services at the end of the year was 1,763 children.

Parents Must Provide Financial Support For Their Children

I am a divorced mom who needs help making ends meet. I have tried to get my ex-husband to help support our two children, but it has been hard. I finally came to DSS to get help in collecting child support for my children. The Child Support Program helped me collect \$5,000 in back child support and worked out regular payments for the future. This money goes directly to help feed and cloth my children. It has made my life much easier.

In 2005-06 over \$18 million was collected to support families in Forsyth County. Over 15,000 cases were active at any one time.

Temporary Financial Support for Children While Parents Learn to Work



I am an 18 year old single parent family with an infant. I need child care while I look for a job. I just started getting \$236 a month in

cash assistance. I also get Medicaid and Food Assistance. I have started going to a program at Goodwill Industries, a contractor for the Work First Program. I have heard that they are good at teaching skills that will help me find and keep a job. I have had plenty of jobs before but just can't seem to keep them. Now that I am a mom I want to stop this cycle of short-term jobs. I would like to enter the health care field. I have heard there are lots of jobs in the area in health care. I hope to enroll in the Certified Nursing Assistant program at Goodwill as a first step up the career ladder in health care.



As of June, 2006, 3,529 individuals were receiving

cash assistance. Of those, 57% were receiving assistance only for a child and therefore were not required to work. Over 1500 (1,536) individuals received cash assistance for themselves and their children in FY 05-06 and were required to participate in the Work First Employment Services program in FY 05-06. Of that number, 448 got jobs. The emphasis is on work. Cash assistance is temporary.

Many Work First recipients seek and find a job on their own. Over 360 individuals were referred to one of DSS' community partners, Goodwill Industries or Temporary Resources. They provided training on how to get and keep a job, job search assistance, and job-specific training.

Benefit Diversion

I had a crisis in my family. I just got laid off from my job and thought I would have no trouble finding another one since I have a good work history. I had some saving, but not enough to pay all the bills. They told me I was not eligible for unemployment insurance. I really did not want to go on cash assistance. DSS helped me with a program called "benefit diversion" where I was able to get a one-time payment equal to three months of cash assistance. Soon, I had a job and never returned to DSS.

Benefit diversion is a one time cash assistance payment available to people who have a strong attachment to the labor market and are likely to return to work soon. Five hundred and ninety-nine (599) people received benefit diversion in FY 05-06. Many families who receive cash assistance need and can receive other work supports to help them stay employed or provide for their families. Other working families also need these supports to help them stay employed or provide basic care for their families.

Health Care Access

I work full time at a minimum wage job to provide for my two children. My employer offers health insurance, but



my paycheck is stretched pretty thin as it is, and I can't afford it. I finally went to DSS to apply for Medicaid. I was not eligible, but at least I will be able to take care of my children's health needs.

One of the most common needs of a family is for health insurance. In 2004, 16.3% of individuals in Forsyth County did not have health insurance. Just over eleven percent of the uninsured were children under age 18 (11.2%).

UNC's Institute of Medicine says that most uninsured are connected to the workforce, however most of the uninsured are poor. Data also indicates that in NC, only 12.7% of North Carolinians living below the poverty level get health insurance from their employer while 80.8% of those above 300% of the poverty level do.

When families cannot purchase insurance through work for whatever reason, they look for alternatives. Many turn to DSS Medicaid programs. Medicaid payments go directly to health care providers and pay for pre-natal care, hospital care, doctor's visits, and prescriptions. In some cases, they will pay for eye exams/glasses as well as hearing aides.

Families with children or pregnant women may be eligible. Some families who do not qualify for Medicaid may qualify for a low-cost health insurance for children called NC Health Choice. Over 30,000 individuals (31,593) in Forsyth County received Family and Children's Medicaid in FY 05-06;

3,377 children received NC Health Choice.

Food for Children, Low Income Families, and Older Adults

I ran into hard times when I lost my job. My wife still has a pretty good job, but I am worried about paying the bills and keeping food on the table. I came to DSS to apply for Food Stamps.



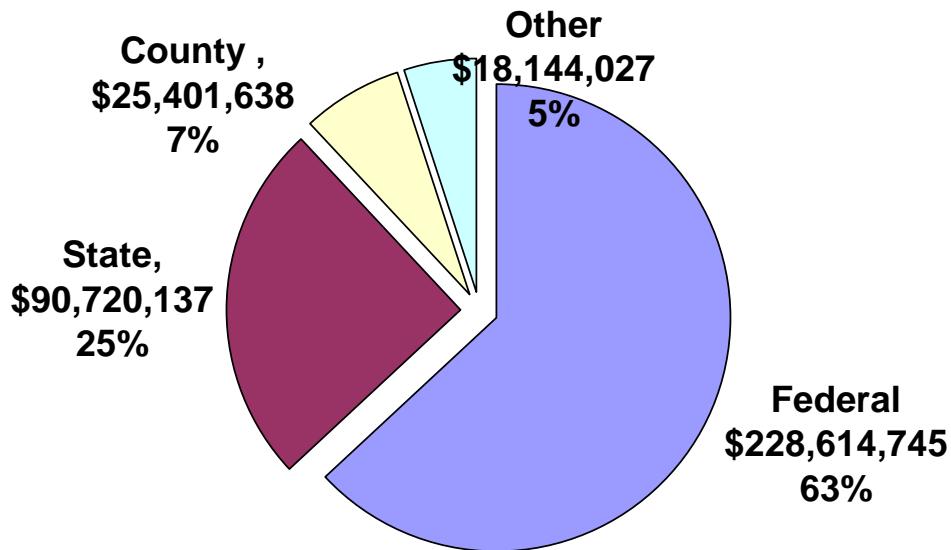
The Food Assistance program helps assure a standard of nutrition for families. The average value of food assistance is \$219 per month in food assistance per household. Over 12,500 households received this benefit.

Summary

Families will always face economic uncertainty from time to time. DSS provides temporary financial support for those willing to "Work First" and access to health care and food assistance for low income children, and older adults and adults with disabilities who have nowhere else to turn.

FY 2005-06 PROGRAM ACTUAL EXPENDITURES

**FY 05-06 Expenditures by Source
Total \$362,880,548**



Most of the funds are in the form of payments to individuals and families, payments to service providers, and subsidized payments for services such as child care for eligible families. Monies are primarily federal funds for transfer payments such as Medicaid (78%).

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