

*Forsyth County Department  
of Social Services*



*2003-2004 Annual Report*

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***Forsyth County Department of Social Services  
741 N. Highland Ave., Winston-Salem, NC 27101***

## ***Vision***

*To partner with families and the community in achieving safety, permanence, and prosperity.*



**Dr. Ann Hamilton**

## ***Mission Statement***

*Our mission is to ensure that all people of Forsyth County receive quality assistance and services, to help them gain a more meaningful and independent life when possible, and to render these services efficiently.*

## ***Message from the Director***

April, 2004 marked the first time in decades that all of the staff of the Department of Social Services were located in one building. Our new facilities offer much more convenient services since people can apply for services at one location. Our staff is excited about the opportunities our new building provides to integrate services to families. We are committed to providing quality social services in an efficient and effective manner which leads to outcomes of financial independence.

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

**Ann Hamilton, Ph.D., ACSW  
Director**

# *A Message from the Board*

## ***From the Chairman of the Board***

This was a watershed year for the Department of Social Services and for the Board. The Board supports efforts in providing services through service integration, financial literacy, business practices that promote efficiency in use of public resources, and effectiveness in achieving financial independence for families.

The Forsyth County Commissioners had the foresight to envision a Human Services campus to provide one-stop access to health, social services, and mental health services for citizens of Forsyth County. We applaud their vision of service to our County.

The Board of Social Services is excited about the possibilities a new building provides to improve access to a wide range of services. We want DSS to always strive for continuous improvement that taxpayers expect from all governmental entities. We are committed to working closely with community partners to help our mutual clients, i.e., families who are most in need of human services.



**Forsyth County Board of Social Services**

L-R: Walter Marshall, Jean Irvin, Nigel Alston, John Sheldon.  
Not pictured: Cynthia Jeffries

Nigel D. Alston, Board Chair

# *Adult Services Division*

Elderly and disabled adults are provided a variety of services to preserve their independence for as long as possible.

## ***Vulnerable Adult Service Team (VAST)***

As the Department continues to strive to provide services focused on providing more comprehensive services to families, the Adult Division began a community assessment process called VAST in September, 2003.



VAST is a community team made up of permanent partners such as Senior Financial Care, Senior Services, and other partners as needed to address the

service needs of at-risk clients. Social workers select individual cases of individuals who are particularly at-risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The VAST team meets twice a month to review cases, develop community plans, and integrate services for better outcomes where individuals have multiple issues that need to be resolved.

## ***VAST in Action***

A recent case brought to the VAST community team involved a 77 year old gentleman with a heart condition and his 75 year old wife who also had health issues. The couple was exploited by paid care givers who spent money intended to pay bills, stole the couple's credit cards, and charged thousands of dollars in unauthorized purchases. The couple was persuaded to get a second mortgage on their home putting them in jeopardy of losing this asset and also compounding their financial situation.

The case was referred to DSS by Senior Services when the couple could not make their enormous house payment or pay other household expenses. Adult Protective Services contacted the



### **Part of the VAST Team**

Seated (L-R): Carol Poe, DSS; Bernice Harrison, DSS; Rachel Burrell, Downtown Health Plaza. Second row: Paul Lawrence, DSS; Jane Libke, Senior Services; Dana Wolff, DSS; Sara Carraway, student intern; Sherry Walker, DSS.

Winston-Salem Police Department about the identity theft issues and worked with the Better Business Bureau and the Attorney General's office. Senior Financial Care helped the family sort out their finances. Social workers helped them increase their Food Stamp allotment based on document expenses, and the Shepherd's Center's Handy Man services made essential repairs to the couple's home. The couple was so appreciative they had a party to thank all the community agency representatives who helped them.

### ***Adult Protective Services***

Adult Protective Services evaluates reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of citizens over age 18 who are unable to manage their own resources, carry out activities of daily living, or protect their own interests. Social workers provide access to a continuum of care and resources available in our community.

- 215 reports received, a 5 % increase over 2002-2003.
- 148 cases evaluated compared to 167 in the prior year.
- 53 cases were confirmed as maltreatment, about the same number as in FY 2002-03 when 51 cases were confirmed.
- 76 individuals received prevention services to preclude further issues compared to 70 in the prior year.
- 74 individuals received guardianship services, an increase of 17% over the prior year.

### ***In Home Services***

The Adult In-Home Services program provides counseling, case management and supportive services to disabled adults and frail elderly adults and their families. Social Workers assist individuals to live in the least restrictive environment consistent with their needs by providing home management and personal care services for these same individuals.

- 273 individuals received in-home services by social workers compared to 282 last year.
- 210 individuals were provided basic personal care and home management, a 20% increase in services due to a better scheduling plan.



### ***Adult Placement***

Adult Placement assists the aging and disabled adults who are unable to remain in their homes to find appropriate placement in an assisted living facility or nursing home. The program provides assistance to the caregivers in maintaining and improving the quality of care in their facilities. Adult Placement is responsible for licensing/monitoring assisted living facilities, Adult Day Care/Adult Day Health, Medicaid Enhanced Personal Care in facilities, and Guardianship in Forsyth County.

The County contracts with three adult day care facilities with two specializing in adult day health. The adult day health facilities are required to have a registered nurse available to meet with participants during the day.

- 53 adult care homes were monitored in Forsyth County this year as compared to 52 homes monitored last year.
- 152 clients received enhanced care in facilities, compared to 156 in the prior fiscal year. This program is for residents needing assistance with daily needs such as eating, toileting, and ambulation.
- Over 91 complaints were received and investigated within the fiscal year.
- Five changes of ownership in adult care homes were processed and approved for transfer. Ongoing technical assistance is provided by the NC Division of Facility Services Registered Nurse Consultant.



### ***Medicaid for the Elderly and Disabled***

Medicaid pays medical bills for low-income people who are elderly (65 years of age or older) or disabled (permanently and totally disabled for work for at least twelve months). Medicaid dollars are used to pay for the cost of care in a long-term facility, in an assisted living facility, or in private living arrangements.

In April, 2004, the Adult Medicaid Program moved toward more integrated services by allowing a client to see one worker for all Medicaid Services.

- 10,671 adults received Medicaid, an increase of 10% over 2002-2003.

### ***Seniors and Law Enforcement Together***

The partnership the community calls Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) continues to grow and make a difference in educating providers of services to seniors. The second biennial conference took place in June, 2004. The purpose was to educate seniors, their family members, and agencies involved with caring for the elderly about financial scams that target this vulnerable population. About 100 participants attended and heard from a fraud investigator for the North Carolina Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division. Jane Feather shared incidents of victims of in-home repair, sweepstake scams, and telephone fraud.

# *Family and Children's Services Division*

The mission of the Division is to encourage and provide for the safety, well being, and permanence of children by supporting and enhancing family systems.

## ***Working in our Community***



**Judge William Reingold, Chief District Judge**

When children aren't in school, they probably are not learning and may be involved in at-risk behavior. In order to reduce the truancy rate in Forsyth County, the Chief District Court Judge for Forsyth County, William Reingold, obtained a grant to begin a new way of dealing with children who are frequently absent from school. This is among the first projects of its kind in the state.

The project focuses on children in elementary and middle school. After 10 unexcused absences, children and the parents may be summoned to attend Truancy Court.

While the focus is on the relationship between the school and the family, Family and Children's workers have been attending Truancy Court regularly. It follows that children who are chronically absent from school may also have other issues. Since this project started in September, 2003, 98% of the families involved in Truancy Court have

been DSS clients. Families may be receiving Food Stamps or public assistance, but many are involved with the child welfare system.

The interaction among schools, the court system, and DSS supports the school system's goal of improving school attendance and their academic performance.

The collaboration with community partners and families once again points to the importance of integrating family-centered services to produce better outcomes.

## ***Child Protective Services***

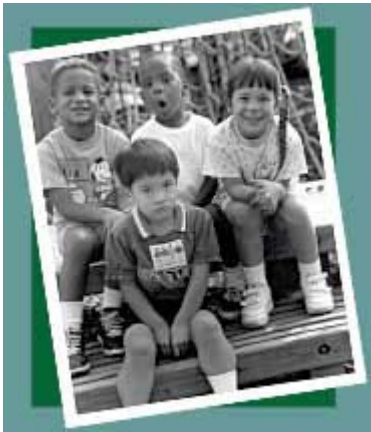
The Child Protective Services Program investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children under the age of 18. Social workers evaluate the degree of danger or risk to the child and the family's ability to provide care with a goal of keeping children safe but allowing them to remain in their homes if at all possible.

- Total number of reports of abuse or neglect received was 2,197, a 2% increase over FY 2002-03.
- 1,393 reports were investigated involving 2,838 children, 15% increase over the prior year.
- 20% reports substantiated, as compared to 18% last year.

## ***Case Planning / Case Management***

The Case Planning/Case Management Unit provides follow up and planning services to families in which child abuse and/or neglect have been substantiated and whose children are not in the custody of the Department of Social Services. These services are provided to a family for up to six months.

- An average of 84 families was served each month, up from an average of 79 last year.
- The repeat maltreatment rate was 5% for the most recent period, as compared to 13% for the State.



## ***Family Counseling***

The Family Counseling Unit provides intensive therapeutic counseling to children who have been victims of abuse or neglect, and to members of their families. In addition, it also provides group and individual counseling to juvenile sex offenders.

- 127 families were served, an increase of 18% over FY 2002-03.

## ***Foster Care***

Foster care provides for the care of children who have been separated from their families due to abuse or neglect. Our goal for children is a permanent placement for a child within 12 months of entering custody of the agency.

- 296 children were in the custody of DSS, an increase of 9% from the prior year.
- 121 children entered agency custody, a decrease of 7% over the prior year.
- 124 children left care during this period, as compared to 149 who left care in FY 2002-2003.
- The average length of time children were in agency custody was 28 months, a decrease of 10% from the prior year.

## ***Foster Home Services***

Foster Home Services recruits, licenses/re-licenses, trains and supervises foster parents in Forsyth County. Prospective foster parents are provided training on what to expect in fostering the emotional and physical health of a child who has been separated from their family. There are 110 foster care homes in the county at the end of the fiscal year, a decrease of 9%. Twenty-four (24) new foster care homes were licensed during the year, a decrease of 20%. Reasons for the decrease in the number of foster homes vary. In some instances, foster parents adopted the children in their care.



## ***Adoptions***

The Adoptions Unit recruits and assesses prospective adoptive families, counsels with birth parents regarding releasing children for adoption, works with children whose permanent plan is adoptive placement, provides services to families who are in the process of adopting a particular child, and provides supportive services to families once an adoption has been finalized. Forty-three (43) adoptions were finalized during this fiscal year, a decrease of 41%. Not as many children had adoption as part of their plan for permanency as in the past.

### ***Special Recognition for the Adoptions Unit***



Forsyth County was the recent recipient of Special Children Adoption funds set aside by the North Carolina General Assembly to provide incentives for counties who exceed their adoptions goal. Forsyth County had to exceed their target of 34 adoptions in FY 2003-2004 which they did by finalizing 43 adoptions.

The County will receive an additional \$81,000 for services that go above and beyond regular services. The County was also recognized for exceeding adoption goals in FY 2000-2001 and FY 2001-2002.

Funds received were used to hire a private attorney to assist in termination of parental rights and to contract with Adoptions Plus, a division of Professional Parenting, to recruit families for older children and children with special needs.

## ***Child Welfare Collaborative***



Like all child welfare agencies, Forsyth County DSS wants to improve the caliber of qualified social workers in the stressful field of child welfare.

The Jordan Institute for Families administers the statewide Collaborative and partners with six participating universities. The educational institutions offer BSW and MSW students special incentives and training, as well as field education. In turn, students are obligated to work in a North Carolina child welfare agency.

Forsyth County has been a site for field placements for students since the Collaborative's inception. In 2003-2004, the agency worked with four students from three participating programs. This included two students from the joint MSW program and University of North Carolina at Greensboro/ A&T State University, one BSW student from Appalachian State University, and one from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

# *Temporary Economic Assistance and Maintenance (TEAM) Division*

The TEAM Division provides a variety of programs to help support families in need of basic services such as food, cash assistance, and other support services to assist working families to remain employed.



To promote service integration, the TEAM Division has changed its work procedures to promote the agency's goal of making services more accessible. Now Work First clients are meeting with their Employment Service Social Workers the same day they sign up for Work First Cash Assistance, enhancing our Agency's delivery of the employment message. Clients with Child Support problems can begin to remedy these issues while in the agency for other services like Food Stamps and Medicaid. Clients in search of Daycare Assistance can be assessed for those services on the same day as well.

Changes are paying off. A Work First Employment Services social worker recognized a Work First cash assistance applicant who was experiencing a multitude of problems, including mental health issues and self-disclosed substance abuse. The client was applying for Work First

because she had just reunited with her 15 year old son who had been out of her life for many years. He was having problems in school, and the mother was self-medicating in order to try to deal with her mental health issues.

The social worker knew the client needed help immediately and arranged for emergency mental health/substance abuse services offered right in the DSS building. The worker helped the client apply for Food Stamps and set up counseling for the son through Child Protective Services. All of this was accomplished in the client's first visit and was made possible because of Service Integration cross-training that allowed staff to have knowledge of the various services available to their clients.

## ***Intake***

Over 9,980 individuals were provided services to determine eligibility for Work First Cash Assistance, Family and Children's Medicaid, and NC Health Choice, an increase of 4% over FY 2002-03.

An additional 761 children were served at the Downtown Health Plaza to determine eligibility for Medicaid, an 8% increase over last year.

## ***Work First Program***

Work First assists families with children in achieving self-sufficiency in order to support themselves and provide for their children. Work First promotes personal responsibility

and employment through the provision of family assessment, temporary financial assistance, employment services, and coordination with other supportive services.

- Served 1,834 families, a 5% increase over the prior year.
- 507 participants became employed, a decrease of 2% from FY 2002-2003.
- 93% of families remained off welfare, the same percentage as the prior year.
- 75% remained employed after six months, again reflecting no change from the previous year.

### ***Child Day Care***

Child Day Care provides subsidized Day Care for children from birth through ages 12 whose families meet income and program priority criteria. Availability of placements is dependent upon funding and service priorities. Due to funding constraints, a waiting list for services was established during this fiscal year.

- 6,419 unduplicated children were provided day care, a 5% decrease over the prior year
- \$15,520,804 was spent assisting families to obtain day care in FY 2003-2004, a decrease of less than 1% over FY 2002-2003.

### ***Food Stamps***

The Food Stamp program provides monthly benefits to eligible individuals and households, which are used to purchase food. Benefit amounts are dependent upon the number of people

in the household and the amount of monthly income of the household.

- Served 9,662 households with 21,229 participants—a 16% increase over FY 2002-03.
- Average monthly payment was \$212.

### ***Family and Children's Medicaid***

Medicaid provides doctors care and routine preventive care for children and families who meet income eligibility requirements. Inpatient and outpatient hospital care and some prescription drugs are also provided.

- 18,045 families were served, an increase of 7% over the prior year.



### ***North Carolina Health Choice for Children***

NC Health Choice provides low cost health insurance to children whose families are unable to afford private health insurance, but who do not qualify for Medicaid. Enrollment fees and co-payments, if any, are based on family income.

- 2,062 families served, 13% more than in FY 2002-03.
- 3,306 children served.

## **Child Support Enforcement**

The Child Support Enforcement Program requires all Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) recipients, whose eligibility has been established due to the absence of one or both parents, to assign all rights to child support to the State of North Carolina. The adult is responsible for providing information concerning the absent parent(s). Child Support provides the services of locating the absent parent(s), establishing paternity and support obligation, collecting support, and enforcing court orders for support. These services are available to non-public assistance recipients upon application and payment of a nominal fee based upon income.

- Served 14,563 families with over 75% of cases having a child support order
- Collected \$16,496,101 in child support for the children of Forsyth County, an increase of 7% over the prior year.

## **Energy Assistance**

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program provides a one-time cash payment to help eligible families pay their heating bills (if Federal funds are available).

- 15,883 families were served.
- \$409,530 was expended.

## **Personal Financial Success**

In January, 2004 the Department contracted with Consumer Credit Counseling of Forsyth County to offer a series of three-hour classes to Work First clients on money management. Work First clients are referred to the classes by their Work First Employment Services social worker.

The modules include the following topics:

- Goal setting and decision making,
- Budgeting,
- Record keeping,
- Banking,
- Credit,
- Protection against risk,
- Savings,
- Purchasing and spending,
- Taxes, Asset Building, and Public Benefits

Through the end of FY 2003-2004, forty Work First participants have participated.



Clients seem to love the classes. They say:

*“The classes that teach you how to interview and how to get a job are good, but this class is helping us learn how to take care of ourselves in the future.”*

*“I have been going to social services for help for years – I wish they had this class a long time ago. Not only has it taught me about money, but it is helping me learn how to make good decisions.”*

# A Look at DSS Staff and Projects

## Education



DSS staff are involved in special projects. Pictured are some of the individuals who provided assistance to taxpayers in 2004. L-R: Susan Thompson, Carla Holt, DaRhonda Morgan, Clem Withers. Second Row: Teresa Rouse, Helen Griffith, Shantele Williams, and Paulette Worthy.

The Forsyth County DSS promotes education. Almost sixty percent of the staff (58%) have continued their education beyond high school. Fifty-four percent (54%) have at least a four-year college degree.

The breakdown is as follows:

	2003	2004
Ph.D.	2	2
MSW	27	29
Other Master level	17	11
CPA	1	1
BSW	33	30
Other BA	141	144
Assoc. Degree	13	17

## Staff Composition

It is the goal of the Forsyth County Department of Social Services to employ a diverse staff to better serve all citizens in Forsyth County. As of June, 30, 2004, 402 individuals were employed in fulltime positions with the Forsyth County DSS. The following numbers provide a total race and gender breakdown of Forsyth County DSS staff:

	2003	2004
Black females	187 (47.6%)	192 (47.7%)
White females	168 (42.7%)	172 (42.7%)
Black males	15 (3.8%)	16 (3.9%)
White males	19 (4.8%)	18 (4.4%)
Hispanic females	1 (.02%)	1 (.02%)
Asian females	1 (.02%)	1 (.02%)
Nat. Am. Females	2 (.05%)	2 (.04%)

## Recruitment

The Forsyth County DSS follows federal and state laws and local policy governing the recruitment, selection, and hiring process. The department regularly recruits at local universities with BSW and MSW programs. Furthermore, to ensure a diverse social work staff that reflects the diversity of the families we serve the department's recruiting efforts include predominately African American out-of-state universities with MSW programs. By attracting the most qualified employees, minority and non-minority, with the necessary education and training we strengthen our organization and plan for future leaders of the agency.

During FY 2003-2004, the Department hired 72 external applicants. The race/gender breakdown is as follows:

- 32 Black Female (44%)
- 4 Black Male (5%)
- 33 White Female (46%)
- 2 White Male (3%)
- 1 Hispanic Male (1%)



**Meeting of Family and Children's Service Division staff**

### ***Promotions***

The Department has been attentive to diversity in the workforce. Of the 18 promotions this past year, 16 were women (the majority of the employees are women). Of the 16 women who were promoted, seven were minorities. The minority women promoted averaged 5.9 years with the agency. White women who were promoted had been with the agency much longer, on average, 8.6 years. This is the second consecutive year in which minorities were promoted faster than whites, based on the number of years experience in the agency.

### ***FOCUS***



**James Orrell, Computing Consultant explains features of FOCUS to Lydia Wilborn.**

FOCUS is the automated system under development in Forsyth County that provides an integrated approach to data collection and services.

The first module of the FOCUS system, the Central Client Index (CCI), was launched in May, 2004. It enables staff to determine if clients are already DSS customers and to see what services they have received. New clients will also be entered into the system. The CCI will mean that families do not have to provide the same identifying information to each program for which they apply.

Work has begun on the next module of FOCUS. This will automate the records and reception function. The "records" function will allow tracking of physical case folders as they move from worker to worker. Workers will be notified when they have been assigned an intake. FOCUS will allow staff to know how many people are waiting to see them and how long they have been waiting. This aspect of FOCUS will be a valuable tool for case management.

# *A New Era for the Department of Social Services*



**741 North Highland Avenue**

In April, 2004, the Department completed the move from five locations to a newly renovated building located at North 741 Highland Avenue. The location formerly served as the Reynolds Health Center and is conveniently located between the Department of Public Health and HopeRidge (formerly CenterPoint Human Services).

For the first time in decades, the Department of Social Services staff is located in one building instead of five. This has meant changes to the way the agency does business that will result in better services to the families of Forsyth County.



County Commissioner Walter Marshall, who also serves on the DSS Board of Social Services, speaks at the dedication of the new building in 2004.



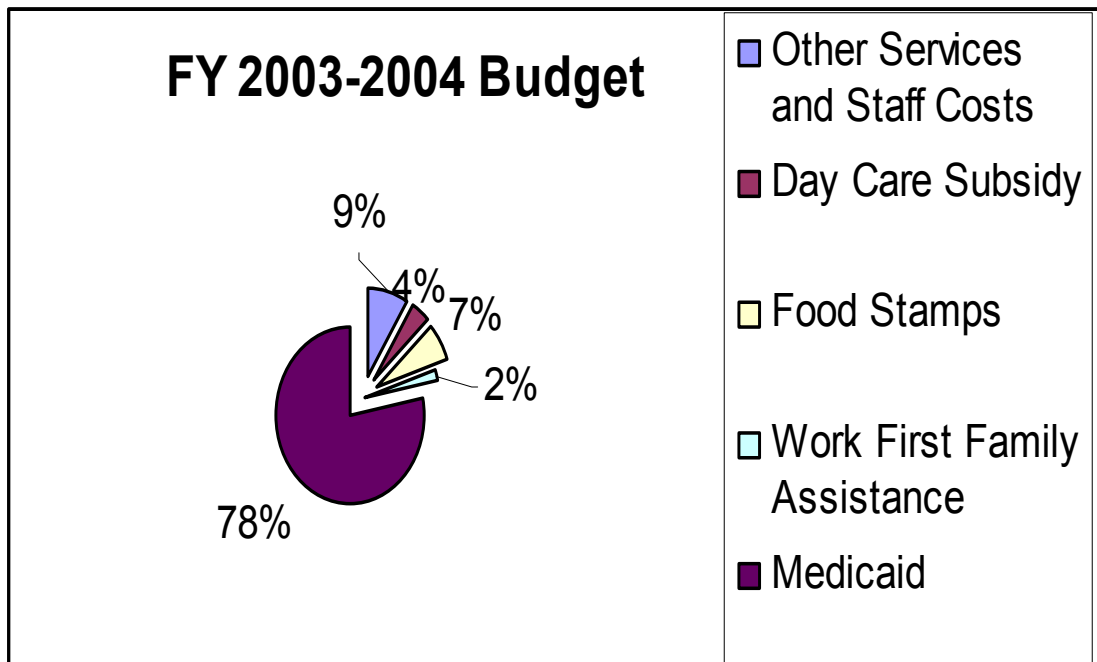
Ribbon cutting: L-R: Nigel D. Alston, DSS Board Chair; Walter Marshall, County Commissioner; Earlene Parmon, NC House of Representatives; and Gloria Whisenhunt, County Commissioner.



County Commissioner Chairman Peter S. Brunstetter speaks at DSS building dedication.

# *Department of Social Services Budget*

## *2003-2004*



The total budget for 2003-2004 was \$321,331,104. Most of the funds budgeted 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. Most of the funds are federal funds for transfer payments such as Medicaid. The County's cost share varies with different programs. Final expenditures information was not available at the time of this report.

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