

Leading by Results

VIEWPOINT 2

“Becoming a more results driven public organization... will help us identify our most critical issues, focus resources and as appropriate, seek community partners to improve benchmark success.”

WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 3

“The overwhelming majority of DSS foster parents and residential facilities ensure child safety and provide adequate services for children in their care...99% of children were not abused or neglected.”

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER ADULTS 4

“...Data indicates 99.6% of Forsyth residents were not abused or neglected while living in a licensed care facility.”

ECONOMIC STABILITY 5

“ ‘Changing welfare as we know it’ was accomplished. Our new challenge is to help low income families become more sufficient through employment that keeps families out of poverty.”

A REVIEW OF DSS BENCHMARKS 6

Each of the DSS benchmarks in the five goal areas will guide program focus and efforts in the future.

WHAT’S NEW AT DSS 7

“Forsyth County was awarded \$250,000 for one year to provide additional services to Work First customers to help meet new federal requirements for participation in work-related activities.”

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS 8

“Unofficial data indicates the high school completion rate to be approximately 71% for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.”

ACCOUNTABLE FOR PUBLIC RESOURCES 9

“Our organizational attitude is becoming one of continuous improvement. ...public reporting of our program performance ...will help us...be ‘publicly accountable for efficient use of resources and timely delivery of services.’ ”

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE KATE B. REYNOLDS CHARITABLE TRUST:
AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN MCNEIL-MILLER** 10

“Our new strategic direction ...broadens (our mission) to help people eliminate the circumstances of poverty or the societal driven effects.”



“Published to enhance the community’s knowledge of issues affecting children, families, older adults and the disabled in Forsyth County”

ViewPoint



*Joe Raymond,
Director*

**Department of
Social Services**

Welcome to the third edition of *Leading By Results*. **Leading By Results** discusses the measurable achievements that the Forsyth County Department of Social Services has accomplished and is trying to accomplish. In our last issue, we announced our selection of 25 measurable “benchmarks” or markers of achievement. This issue reveals our “baseline” information about these benchmarks and begins to provide performance information about them.

Internally, our evolution of becoming a more results driven public organization continues. First, we are about to start planning to set “targets” for these benchmarks for the fiscal year that will start next year on July 1, 2007. Second, we are developing the ability to track data that allows us to know whether we are making progress. Third, internal DSS “goal committees” are hard at work to develop short- and long-term recommendations about how we might achieve these benchmarks more quickly and efficiently.

This new way of doing business will help us identify our most critical issues, focus resources, and, as appropriate, seek community partners to improve benchmark success. For example, benchmark data tells us that only 37% of children who come into DSS custody achieve permanence within one year. There are many potential reasons why this is a challenging issue, but the bottom line is we must try to do better. Our new focus on this benchmark helped us decide to support our District Court’s interest in exploring the concept of a Court Improvement Project, as one potential solution. At our November 28, 2006 DSS Board meeting, Chief District Court William Reingold and Court Improvement

Project officials from Raleigh, along with other local stakeholders, met to discuss and explore this possibility.

Leading By Results is how we intend to define what constitutes success, gauge progress toward this success and increase service effectiveness. This quarter’s publication focuses on a benchmark from each of our five strategic goals. These benchmarks are:

- the annual percent of children in foster care who have not been maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff,
- the annual percent of older adults and adults with disabilities who are not abused, neglected or exploited while living in licensed care facilities,
- the annual percent of Work First participants who obtain employment,
- the annual percent of 9th graders who complete and graduate from high school, and
- the annual percent of DSS programs not in program improvement status.

Learning about these benchmarks of achievement will hopefully assist the reader to understand the importance of DSS services and how these services are performed in the public’s interest. Thanks go to Superintendent Don Martin and Assistant Superintendent Ken Simmington who write about the high school completion rate. Special thanks go to Karen McNeil Miller, President of the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation. Her interview profiles her exciting vision for KBR and its importance to Forsyth County.

Finally, we wish to welcome Mr. Nat Irvin as the newest member of the Forsyth County Board of Social Services. Mr. Irvin founded Future Focus 2020, a futurist research institute, and serves as a professor at the Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University, and Assistant Dean for MBA Student Development.

Leading by Results

Publisher-Editor-in-Chief

Joe Raymond, Director

Editor

Kay Albright
Human Services Planner

Contributors

Tamarian McIntyre, Social Worker
Gail Stewart, Social Worker
Susan Thompson, Supervisor
Diane Wimmer, Director, Adult
Services Division

Forsyth County Board of Social Services

John Sheldon, Chair
Florence Corpening, Vice Chair
Nat Irvin
Walter Marshall
Claudette Weston

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

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

Please direct all correspondence regarding this publication to Kay Albright, Forsyth County Department of Social Services, 741 N. Highland Ave., Winston-Salem, NC 27101 336-703-3403 e-mail: albrigt@forsyth.cc

Improve the Safety, Quality of Life, and Well-Being of Children and Families

Courts sometimes give the Forsyth County Department of Social Services (FCDSS) legal custody of children in cases of child abuse and/or neglect. If relatives are unavailable, the search for a suitable foster placement begins. Placement may be with a licensed family or therapeutic foster home, a large or small residential facility or a specialized family care home. Children are placed depending on the needs of the child and available resources.

Benchmark Spotlight On: *Annual percent of children in foster or facility care who have not been maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff member.*

What are the major types of foster care placements?

DSS had over 500 children (from infants to young adults under age 18) in its legal custody at some point last year. In June, 2006, FCDSS had 323 children in its legal custody. Some children return to their families, some are adopted, and some turn 18 and leave foster care. Ninety (90) of these 323 children were in DSS family foster homes, another 86 were in foster homes licensed by other organizations, 117 were placed with relatives, and another 30 were in group homes (multi-bed facilities).

While it is generally preferred for children to live with relatives or other families, some children need the structure of residential or group settings. Residential facilities are operated by both non-profit and for-profit organizations which may be a large institution or a smaller group home. Some residential facilities and specialized family care homes provide “therapeutic” care because the children placed there are medically fragile or have been emotionally damaged by their previous families. Children placed in these situations may have serious chronic medical conditions or be HIV positive. Some may be delinquents, drug users, or in trouble with the police, etc. These therapeutic facilities or specialized foster care homes have additional training (and additional reimbursement) to deal with these special children. In all, Forsyth County has 265 licensed facilities. These range from family foster homes to group

homes and include one large facility, the Methodist Home.

Residential facilities are designed to assist and provide services for children who have behaviors that surpass the abilities of licensed family foster homes. Residential staff are trained in working with behaviorally challenged juveniles. Additionally, staff is present 24 hours a day in these facilities. Often group therapy sessions are available and point systems are in place that provide natural consequences for behaviors.

Are children safe in foster care?

Maltreatment in foster/facility care can include the neglect of basic needs to a child being physically abused by a foster parent or facility staff member. FCDSS’s absolute expectation is that foster parents and residential facilities are expected to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children in their physical care.

The overwhelming majority of DSS foster parents and residential facilities ensure child safety and provide adequate services for children in their care. However, there is the sporadic occasion of a child being maltreated. Last year, one child was abused or neglected out of 535 children in foster care. Overall, this means that 99% of foster children were not abused or neglected. This is great news even though only one occurrence of abuse or neglect is too many.

What does DSS do to help ensure children are safe and what might be improved?

Foster parents and facilities staff are valuable assets in the foster care system. Issues that deserve more attention include the need for more foster parents, but especially parents who are willing to work with special needs children, medically fragile children and older children; more respite care for foster parents, and improved planning to meet the treatment goals for children in foster care.

Training is provided to prospective foster parents and respite care is available although more is always needed. DSS social workers visit all foster children on a regular basis and work with foster parents and institutions to ensure that the needs of children are met. Clothing vouchers are provided twice a year.

Foster parents and facilities are paid for the care they provide for children in DSS custody. North Carolina foster care rates vary by the age of the child. In 2004, according to a Child Welfare League survey of 40 states, NC’s payment rates for family foster care for all age children were below the national average by about 10%. North Carolina’s monthly payment ranges from \$390 to \$490 which most foster parents believe is not adequate to cover expenses. Protecting children is our community’s number one concern, but we must ensure that all caregivers have adequate resources to provide the best care possible while seeking permanent homes for children.

“Foster parents and facilities staff are valuable assets in the foster care system.”



Goal II Improve the Safety, Well-Being, and Quality of Life of Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities

It is widely held belief that older adults and adults with disabilities want to remain independent and in their own homes. Approximately 5% of older adults end up in nursing homes, and much of that cost is carried by Medicaid and Medicare. North Carolina is trying to make changes that allow people to remain at home and looking at such issues as support to family caregivers and improved access to home and community-based services.

Meantime, for those persons that require 24-hour care the families and individuals must rely on the state and county to ensure quality services will be offered and their loved ones protected from harm.

Benchmark Spotlight On:

Annual percent of older adults and adults with disabilities, who are not abused, neglected or exploited while living in licensed care facilities.

What are licensed care facilities?

Licensed care facilities refer to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult care homes, adult care centers and homes licensed to provide services to individuals with developmental, mental and mental health and substance abuse services which provide care for an individual.

- Adult Day Care Centers: these centers provide care and supervision for adults during the day (3 in Forsyth County);
- Adult Care Homes: residences for aged and adults with physical and/or developmental disabilities, which may include mental illness, who require 24-hour supervision and assistance with personal care needs. These homes vary in size from family care homes of 2-6 adult care homes of more than 100 residents. In addition, there are Group Homes for Adults with Developmental Disabilities, and persons with mental illness and/or substance abuse which are licensed by the NC Department of Facility Services.
- Skilled Nursing Facilities: are facilities that provide nursing or convalescent care for three or more persons unrelated to the licensee. A nursing home provides long term care of chronic conditions or short term convalescent or rehabilitative care of remedial ailments, for which medical and nursing care are indicated.

All nursing homes must be licensed in accordance with North Carolina State law by the state of NC. There are over 300 nursing homes in North Carolina (13 in Forsyth County).

Who is responsible for making sure adequate care is provided?

The Department of Social Services evaluates reports of abused, neglected or exploited disabled adults where ever they occur including in licensed facilities. DSS also has the responsibility of investigating complaints about the general conditions or standards in Adult Care Homes. The State responds to complaints in nursing homes and combination.

How can residents in facilities exercise their rights?

North Carolina's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program consists of state and regional ombudsmen who help residents of licensed care facilities to exercise their rights. They also educate the public and facility staff about rights and help resolve grievances between residents/families and facilities. DSS' Adult Home Specialists from DSS also provides monitoring of licensed assisted living facilities to ensure appropriate care, per state standards and adherence to resident rights.

What does our data say?

Only a small percentage of reports of abuse or neglect of persons residing in facilities is reported each year, but even one person is not acceptable. Families entrust the facilities to provide the care, they no longer can, and to provide care with the respect and dignity each person is entitled to.

In FY 05-06 in North Carolina, there were 6,667 reports of abuse and neglect of the elderly and disabled, and 1,043 (or 16%) were from facilities. Of these 1,043 cases only 67 of these reports were substantiated per the state statues that define abuse and neglect. Forsyth County investigated 16 such reports for the entire year, with only 1 report meeting the definition of abuse and/or neglect.

The Department decided to use the number of "beds" in facilities to calculate the rate and this makes the number appear even smaller. There are 4,085 licensed beds in Forsyth County. For FY 05-06, the data indicates 99.6% of Forsyth residents were **not** abused or neglected while living in a licensed care facility. This is great news, but it comes with a caveat. It is unclear whether the actual numbers are truly small. National studies agree that abuse and neglect in facilities may be more of a problem than statistics show.

What can be improved?

Increase funding for home and community-based services that provide more choices and decrease persons on waiting lists for services so they can remain in their home. Another need in the community is additional senior centers or adult day care centers that can serve those in the rural areas of Forsyth County.

Facilities need to ensure everyone's safety by carefully screening potential residents. Statewide there have been concerns over persons with mental illness and/or substance abuse being placed in facilities that provide care to older adults. Inappropriate placements have led to harm of vulnerable adults.

Facilities are typically understaffed, and staff are often over worked. Often, these jobs often offer low salaries and limited benefits. This impacts the care that families entrust the facilities to provide and with the respect and dignity to which each person is entitled.

“Only a small percentage of reports of abuse or neglect of persons residing in facilities is reported each year, but even one person is not acceptable.”

Enhance the Economic Stability of Individuals and Families

North Carolina's welfare program is called "Work First." It is built upon the premise that families are expected to work actively toward becoming self-sufficient.

Benchmark Spotlight On:
Annual percent of Work First participants who obtain employment.

Who receives Work First Cash Assistance?

As of September, 2006 Forsyth County's cash assistance program had 1,348 cases made up of 2,565 individuals (a 77% reduction in individuals receiving assistance since September, 1996). The average Work First recipient receives a monthly benefit of \$236. Most recipients are female, are likely to be between 21 and 30 years old and have one child. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of recipients are on cash assistance for two years or less. The largest segment receiving cash assistance is "child only cases" which make up 62% of the caseload. No adult is subject to the work requirement in these cases because the cash assistance is only for the child. In addition to the "child only" cases, there are a few other exceptions that do not have to seek work. These include single custodial parents with a child under 12 months of age, and a parent providing care for a disabled family member living in the home.

Other adults who receive a cash payment included in Work First cases are work-eligible. These families are subject to a 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of cash assistance. While all adults are encouraged to look for work and maintain employment, most adults receiving Work First Family Assistance are subject to work requirements.

Is Work First successful?

The primary measure of success is the number of adults who are subject to the work requirement that become employed. Forsyth County's goal, set by the State of North Carolina, was 418 job placements for FY 05-06 program year. Forsyth County DSS found employment for 448 individuals and exceeded the goal by 7%.

On its own and in addition to the state's goals, FCDSS has established even more challenging benchmarks that track the percentage of all Work First participants who are looking for work (i.e., the annual percent of Work First participants who obtain employment). During FY 2004-2005, 33% of Work First participants required to look for work found jobs. For the FY 05-06, the unduplicated number of people required to look for work was 1536. The total number who entered employment was 448 or 29%.

As the number of people receiving Work First assistance has declined, the challenges of the population remaining are more severe. Many Work First recipients have difficult and often multiple barriers to employment such as poor work history, lack of a high school degree or poor educational skills, substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, and a criminal record. All of these barriers negatively affect employment.

How might even more people become employed?

More emphasis needs to be put on obtaining long term job skills that will assist recipients to get better jobs. This is very difficult due to the Federal emphasis on getting a job (any job) rather than helping these young adults obtain long term job skills.

Even more importantly, federal and state law gives no credit or incentives for Work First recipients to improve their education. This is poor policy because we know that long-term wage progression correlates with education.

The availability of jobs that pay more than the minimum wage is a problem. Finding entry-level jobs for Work First recipients whose skills may not be as competitive is a serious challenge. The lack of daycare and transportation for 2nd and 3rd shift work continues to be an issue. Daycare for sick children to allow parents to work is not uniformly available.

Work First and other programs to help low-income wage earners move out of poverty cannot be accomplished by government alone. "Changing welfare as we know it" was accomplished. Our new challenge is to help low-income families become more self-sufficient through employment that keeps families out of poverty.

"As the number of people receiving Work First assistance has declined, the challenges of the population remaining are more severe."



FCDSS Benchmarks

January 2007

Goal I: Improve the safety, well-being and quality of life of children and families	
Benchmarks	
1.1	Annual percent of children in DSS custody who achieve permanence within one year through reunification, guardianship to a court approved caregiver or adoption
1.2	Annual percent of maltreated children who are not repeat victims of substantiated maltreatment
1.3	Annual percent of children who are adopted within a year of having a permanent plan of adoption
1.4	Annual percent of children who are adopted whose placement is not disrupted
1.5	Annual percent of children in foster or facility care who have not been maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff
Goal II: Improve the safety, well-being and quality of life for older adults and adults with disabilities	
Benchmarks	
2.1	Annual percent of older adults and adults with disabilities who request In-Home Aide Assistance and receive it
2.2	Annual percent of older adults and adults with disabilities served by DSS (Adult Services) who live in the least restrictive, most appropriate setting
2.3	Annual percent of older and disabled adults who are not abused, neglected or exploited while living in licensed care facilities
2.4	Annual percent of Adult Medicaid applicants whose applications are completed within the 45 day (Medical Assistance for the Aged) or 90 day (Medical Assistance for the Disabled) standard
2.5	Annual percent of older and disabled adults served who are not found to be repeat victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation
Goal III: Enhance the economic stability of individuals and families	
Benchmarks	
3.1	Annual percent of Work First participants who obtain a GED/High School diploma or vocational certificate
3.2	Annual Child Support Enforcement collection rate
3.3	Annual percent of Child and Family Medicaid applicants whose applications are completed within 45 days
3.4	Annual percent of Child Health Choice applicants whose applications are completed within 45 days
3.5	Annual percent of Work First participants who meet the Federal participation rate.
3.6	Annual percent of Child Support cases with court orders
3.7	Annual percent of Work First participants who obtain employment
3.8	Annual percent of Work First participants who obtain employment at a living wage (defined as \$8.50 per hour)
3.9	Annual percent of individuals potentially eligible for Food Stamp services and receive them
Goal IV: Increase public understanding of relevant social issues and build effective community partnerships	
Benchmarks	
4.1	Annual percent of foster youth who are in care at age 18 and who are employed or enrolled in post -secondary education from the ages of 18 – 23
4.2	Annual percent of children potentially eligible for the child care subsidy and receive it
4.3	Annual percent of residents who have access to private health insurance or publicly funded health care
4.4	Annual percent of children and adults in need of mental health services who have access to timely services
4.5	Annual percent of 9 th graders who complete high school
4.6	Annual percent of child abuse and child neglect
Goal V: Be publicly accountable for efficient use of resources and timely delivery of services	
Benchmarks	
5.1	Annual percent of preventable employee turnover
5.2	Annual percent DSS programs not in program improvement status
5.3	Annual percent of customers who report that they were treated with respect
5.4	Annual percent of available state and federal available dollars drawn down
5.5	Annual amount of dollars recovered through program integrity efforts

What's New at DSS



- ***Nat Irvin Joins DSS Board of Social Services:***

Mr. Irvin joined the Board in November, 2006. He founded Future Focus 2020, a

futurist think tank, is a professor for Future Studies at the Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University, and Assistant Dean for MBA Student Development. He is also a Sunday columnist for the Winston-Salem Journal.

- ***Guardianship and Adult Protective Services Now Two Units:***

The Adult Services Division has established a new unit to provide better service to customers. Formerly all one unit, the Division has split Adult Protective Services and Guardianship services into two separate units allowing the Department to provide more in-depth services to customers.

- ***Child and Family Team Meetings:***

The Family and Children's Division has initiated Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, the latest component to the Multiple Response System. CFT meetings are conducted with families when allegations of abuse, neglect, or dependency have been found. It is a planning and decision-making process that includes parents, caregivers, children, social workers, and other service providers. CFT's are an important component to the "family-centered" approach because it allows families to share in the process of addressing issues that impact their family. The Division began conducting CFT's in July, 2006. With the implementation of CFT meetings, families are expressing a significant change in the working relationship with their

Local Artist Helps DSS Become Child Friendly:

stop by the Family and Children's Services Division at DSS and see the mural on the ground floor. Local artist, Leo Rucker, designed and painted a mural for children and other customers of the Division. The mural was sponsored by the local chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. The mural took hours of work. Thanks to the Deltas and to Mr. Rucker for donating his time and talent!



social workers. Feedback from families indicates that they are feeling more included in the process and believe their voices are being heard with regard to decisions about their children.

- ***Meeting the Needs of***

Hispanic Families: The Family and Children's Division has seen a significant increase in the number of Hispanic families needing services in the past year. To address this growing need, the Division has focused its efforts on recruiting bilingual social workers and has established a bilingual unit to work exclusively with these families. To date, the Division has three foster care social workers who speak fluent Spanish and who carry Hispanic caseloads. The Division hopes to hire two additional child protective services social workers to complete the formation of this unit. While this unit is fairly new and is still forming, social workers across the Division have seen a positive difference with families when they can communicate directly with their social workers.

- ***DSS Receives Work First***

Demonstration Grant: Forsyth County was awarded \$250,000 for one year to provide additional services to Work First customers to help

meet new federal for requirements for participation in work-related activities. Funds will provide an on-site job search lab at DSS and contract staff to work with community employers to establish work experience opportunities for Work First participants.

- ***"Safe on Seventh" Recognized as a Best Practice in Community***

Collaboration: In 2005, District Attorney Tom Keith had a vision of integrating community services for victims of domestic violence. He joined with Family Services, law enforcement, the courts, and DSS to make a one-stop center a reality so that victims could get services from eight agencies. DSS submitted this project as a "best practice in collaboration" where DSS joins other community agencies to better serve customers. The project was selected as one of the best in the state.

- ***Associated Artists of Winston-***

Salem, Inc. Helps Improve Working Environment for DSS Customers and Staff: Under its Community Exhibits Program, Associated Artists is displaying visual art by local artists in meeting rooms on all floors of the Department of Social Services building. Exhibits will rotate every three months. Thanks to the artists who are making this possible.

Increase Public Understanding of Relevant Social Issues and Build Effective Community Partnerships

Benchmark Spotlight On:

Annual percent of 9th graders who complete high school.

What is the high school completion rate and why is it important?

The high school completion rate is the number of students who graduate from high school in four years. This is a related, but different, statistic than the dropout rate which is the number of students who stop attending school in a single year and do not return. The high school completion rate is extremely important. Most jobs today require students to have a high school diploma (military enlistment also requires a high school diploma or GED). In fact, students who do not graduate from high school are only eligible for about 12% of the jobs in today's economy. Also, individuals without high school diplomas will earn significantly less in the workplace than those with diplomas--to the tune of over one million dollars during a lifetime. Most importantly, high school completion prepares a student for life. In school, not only do you learn reading, writing, and math but you learn life skills such as decision-making, goal setting, time management, and self-discipline.

What is the Forsyth County high school completion rate now?

The official Winston-Salem/Forsyth County high school completion rate has not been released. No Child Left Behind requires that this information be reported, and the state of North Carolina will release the first set of official rates later in the school year. Unofficial data indicates the high school completion rate to be approximately 71% for WS/FCS. While we are interested in improving the current rate, the WSFCS rate is slightly higher than the state average.

What affects the high school completion rate?

There are many issues affecting the high school completion rate. Nationally and locally, as it relates to high school reform, the discussion has centered on the three "R"s --- rigor, relevance, and relationships. It is important to have students adequately prepared to enter into the workforce and other postsecondary opportunities, but unfortunately, the "rigor" issue cuts both ways. Increased rigor may also have the unintended consequence of causing some students to drop out who are overwhelmed by graduation requirements. Also, for many students, there is a disconnect between what they think they are learning in school and what they will be doing once they get a job. Increasing the "relevance" of school work has been recently highlighted as a significant factor in increasing the graduation rate. Locally, we are in the planning phase of creating a small career prep high school that will have as a point of emphasis early opportunities for students to have the relevance they seek; hands-on experience. The goal of this school will be to keep students engaged in relevant school work until they graduate from high school. Finally, and maybe most importantly, in many instances high schools have become too large. Large high schools result in students potentially falling through the cracks. To build "relationships," schools must be smaller. Every student must feel connected to at least one adult in the school.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is so committed to these reform efforts that it has committed more than \$1 billion towards high school reform. WS/FC Schools has two sites, Atkins High School and Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy, that are recipients of Gates Foundation grants and in the early stages of implementing the three "R"s.

How can Forsyth County increase the high school completion rate?

To increase the high school completion rate, the WS/FC schools are involved with several initiatives. Selected initiatives are listed below:

- A High School Reform Task Force that is studying the various issues to recommend new directions;
- Efforts at increased parental involvement and monitoring (with research showing that increased parental involvement results in increased positive student outcomes);
- A K-12 educational partnership with the Chamber of Commerce with a goal of high academic achievement for all students that results in high school graduation; and
- New and exciting is the community interest in helping to improve the high school completion rate. Those efforts include Forsyth Futures, United Way Impact Council on graduation, and Leadership Winston-Salem action learning projects. Each of these efforts engages the community, through its people and resources, to collectively seek resolution to this important topic.

The high school graduation issue is an important and complex issue. In the school district, we welcome the ideas of those in the community as we seek to reduce the number of students who leave school prior to obtaining a diploma.

"Students who do not graduate from high school are only eligible for about 12% of the jobs in today's economy."

Be Publicly Accountable for Efficient Use of Resources and Timely Delivery of Services

Benchmark Spotlight On:

Annual percentage of DSS “programs” not in program improvement status.

What is program improvement status? why is it important?

Public agencies must be accountable for use of the public’s resources. This awkwardly worded benchmark attempts to answer a seemingly simple, but important questions, like, “Are DSS Programs Meeting Minimal Program Standards?” DSS operates over 50 “programs,” each with very specific, and usually very complex federal and state rules, regulations, and criteria. These programs are constantly subject to state and federal reviewers, and it is likely that no public or private non-profit agency receives more scrutiny than the Department of Social Services.

Unfortunately, the question just raised is not straightforward because program audits are not “pass-fail.” Generally, these audits identify strengths, challenges, specific errors and, hopefully, have predictive value to the agency about how to improve performance overall. In fact, the audit’s findings may or may not be reflective of overall trends. They often reflect a point-in-time and indicate issues that have already been corrected. This is especially true if program challenges exist due to problems beyond the agency’s direct control.

How are DSS programs performing?

In our attempt to continually improve program performance, the following table attempts to answer these questions. It matters to our customers and to taxpayers whether our program performance is poor, average, or excellent.

What needs to be improved?

The overwhelming majority of DSS programs are performing well. There are 3 program areas that are in fundamentally good shape but need attention to improve performance in a few areas.

Program	Has the program met “minimum” performance standards?
Adult Services Division	
Adult Protective Services	Yes
Adult Medicaid	Yes
At-Risk Case Management	Yes
Enhanced Case Management	Yes
Special Assistance	Yes
Special Assistance-In-Home	Yes
Social Services Block Grant	Yes
Family and Child Services Division	
Child Protective Services/Foster Care/Adoptions/Foster Homes Licensing/LINKS Note: All services for children are reviewed together	No
Temporary Economic Assistance Division	
Work First	Yes
Family & Children Medicaid	No
North Carolina Health Choice	No
Energy Programs LIEAP/CIP	Yes
Day Care	Yes
Food Stamps	Yes
Child Support	No

For example, the child support program collected \$19,000,000 in child support money last year, which is a lot of money, but it was the first year we did not meet our collection goal. We intend to meet our goal this year. Our Child and Family Division that operates our child protective and foster care programs faced tremendous challenges for the past several years with high turnover rates, new leadership, changing programs, and re-organization of people and services. The future is positive for these programs, but they are still working on enhancing their performance. Our Child and Family Medicaid Program has been overwhelmed the past few years with rising caseloads, personnel freezes, and program, changes. In the last fiscal year, this program, did not meet its expectations to process applications as quickly as necessary, but that is being improved, and in the first quarter of the new fiscal year (July - September), these standards were met.

Our organizational attitude is becoming one of continuous improvement. Hopefully, this public reporting of our program performance and our growing focus on measurable benchmarks of success will help us achieve our goal of being **“publicly accountable for efficient use of resources and timely delivery of services.”**

“The overwhelming majority of DSS programs are performing well.”





Karen McNeil-Miller is the President of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust in Winston-Salem, NC.

Strategic Directions for KBR

An Interview with Karen McNeil-Miller

Leading by Results: What is the mission of KBR?

“The mission of KBR is to improve the quality of life and the quality of health for the financially needy of North Carolina. To accomplish its work, the Trust has two Divisions, the Health Care Division that provides grants across the state of North Carolina, and the Poor and Needy Division that focuses grant making solely in Forsyth County. The Poor and Needy Division seeks impact through two program areas: providing basic needs and increasing self-reliance.”

Leading by Results: How does KBR implement this mission in Forsyth County?

“In the past, this has been dealing with the effects of poverty. What our new strategic direction does

is to broaden that interpretation to help people eliminate the circumstances of poverty or the societal driven effects. We will put a greater emphasis on that.

We will do more than grants making. It is a means not an end. What we want to do is create change. The tools we will use to create change include:

Our grant making of course; capacity building: helping organizations become more robust, build their own capacity so they won't need KBR; participating on boards and community conversations; and convening our own discussions on specific issues.”

Leading by Results: What are the most important issues facing Forsyth County that concern KBR?

“On the side of **basic needs** this would include: homelessness: chronic homelessness --This is also a self-sufficiency issue. People need an address to get a job and become more self-sufficient. If they have mental health issues, help individuals learn to cope in their everyday lives and not be homeless. Food: People are trying to raise families on incomes that don't meet their basic needs. They can do this as long as nothing goes wrong. If the brakes don't go out on the car, or if gas stays below \$2.50 a gallon, or if no one gets sick, they can meet their basic needs. Lack of health care—here the issue is not that health care isn't available, but that it isn't accessible, particularly primary care. Education levels—a whole host of issues related to this—graduation rates, truancy rates, teen pregnancy rates, low birth weight babies, the growing

An Interview with Karen McNeil-Miller

Hispanic population which is often invisible.

All of these issues are of interest to us.”

Leading by Results: This is a long list of difficult problems, what will KBR focus on?

“Our focus will be on health care, education, job training, and supportive housing. Supportive housing is the notion of providing services along with the housing.”

Leading by Results: What changes will KBR’s new strategic plan bring to the grant making and what do these changes mean for Forsyth County?

“KBR will shift where the dollars go. In the past, about 85% of our funds went to basic needs. In the future, it will be about evenly divided between health care and basic needs. This may mean that receiving grants will be even more competitive.

We will move beyond the role of grant maker and lift up our voice with experts, government officials, and other funders to shed light on the root causes of poverty.”

Leading by Results: Making inroads into the root causes of poverty is very difficult work. How do you plan to do that?

“We will convene local experts, talk to non-profits, and try to really

look at causes not symptoms. For example, we know that low wages are a symptom of poverty. Certainly, education is key to almost everything. More education means you are more likely to access health care, better jobs, etc. It is a powerful lever to almost anything else you want to influence.

Once we identify some of these indicators, such as the dropout rate or financial literacy, we will ask grantees to track progress against these outcomes.”

Leading by Results: How would you describe KBR’s leadership role?

“KBR has a unique opportunity since so much of our funding is dedicated to Forsyth County. Everyone would love to have a KBR. In our relentless pursuit of issues, we want to continually challenge the community. The needs will always outstrip KBR resources exponentially. We will identify promising practices and take some chances. We hope to experiment without taking great risks.”

Leading by Results: How will KBR define success in the coming years?

“We are still in the process of defining benchmarks in some areas as well as our relationship with the school system, county government, other funders, and other partnerships. We will learn

with and from others. We have good anecdotal information about the benefits of KBR, but we want to be more definitive about what we do. We are committed to making that happen.

We will work closely with other community initiatives such as Forsyth Futures, the Mayor’s Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and medical providers who are looking at new ways to provide health care. We will join with others where we can add value.”

We will do more than grants’ making. What we want to do is create change.”



“In the Next Issue”

*In the next issue of **Leading By Results**, DSS will continue to report on specific benchmarks associated with each goal. The newsletter will also include an interview on a topic of interest related to these benchmarks.*



Department of Social Services
741 North Highland Avenue
Winston-Salem, NC 27101