



**FY 2022 – 2023**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

# THE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*From Delores Hunt*



We are pleased to present the Rutherford County Department of Social Services (DSS) Fiscal year 2022-2023 Annual Report. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the achievements, challenges, and impact of our social services programs within our county.

Over the past fiscal year, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of individuals and families in need, striving to create a more inclusive and equitable community for all. With the support of our staff, community partners, and your guidance, we have made considerable progress in addressing critical social issues and achieving our mission of enhancing the well-being of our residents.

Throughout this report, you will find detailed information on accomplishments, program highlights, and data that showcase our impact. It includes the outcomes of our various service areas: child and family services, adult protective services, economic services, child support, Medicaid, and emergency assistance programs. Additionally, we provide an overview of our budget to promote transparency and accountability in the allocation of resources.

We have implemented innovative strategies and partnerships to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs while responding to the evolving needs of the community. We are proud of the progress we have made, but we must also acknowledge the ongoing challenges. The past year has brought forth new obstacles, such as the impact of natural disasters, economic uncertainty, and the continued effects of the global pandemic. Nevertheless, our dedicated staff and community partners have demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of these challenges, which is a testament to their unwavering commitment to serving our community.

As we reflect on the past fiscal year, we are immensely grateful for the steadfast support and guidance provided by the County Leadership Team, Commissioners, and Board of Directors. Your dedication, collaboration, and commitment to social services have been instrumental in our collective success.

We hope that this report serves as a valuable resource for understanding the impact of our programs and the value they bring to the lives of our residents. Moreover, we believe it will provide a foundation for ongoing dialogue and collaboration as we collectively work towards a stronger, more prosperous community.

Thank you for your continued support, trust, and advocacy for the important work of our Social Services Department.

*Delores S. Hunt*

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**MRS. BARBARA THOMPSON, CHAIRPERSON**

**MR. BRYAN KING, VICE CHAIRPERSON**

**MR. JOSEPH MAIMONE**

**MR. DAVID HERNDON**

**MS. GEORGIA STEELE**

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## **MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**DELORES HUNT, DIRECTOR**

**KANDI BRIDGES  
INCOME MAINTENANCE ADMINISTRATOR**

**TIFFANY DODD  
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR**

**KAYLA FOX  
ADMINISTRATION OFFICER**

**JOSHUAL HOWELL  
STAFF ATTORNEY**

**PAM PRICE  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION UNIT SUPERVISOR  
/ACCOUNT SPECIALIST**

**RHONDA RUPPE  
CHILD SUPPORT SUPERVISOR**

# OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To support, protect, and enhance the quality of life in Rutherford County by partnering with families and the community to provide needed services and meaningful opportunities for our citizens.

# OUR VISION STATEMENT

Rutherford County DSS is an agency that partners with all county citizens to promote a safe, healthy, self-reliant, economically secure community where citizens are empowered to improve the quality of their lives.

# CORE VALUES

**Service:** To provide services in a prompt and respectful manner that are responsive; ethical; effective; fair; and consistent with governing laws, rules and policies while utilizing county resources in a most effective manner.

**Flexibility:** To always look forward and adapt service to the ever-changing needs of the community and provide consumers with the information to better serve those needs.

**Accountability:** To accept responsibility for our actions and behaviors and be accountable to each other, consumers, and to the community for professional conduct and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

**Integrity:** To always serve the community and employees with honesty, fairness, and respect.

**Diversity:** To recognize and respect differences and values among all people without regard to race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation or disability.

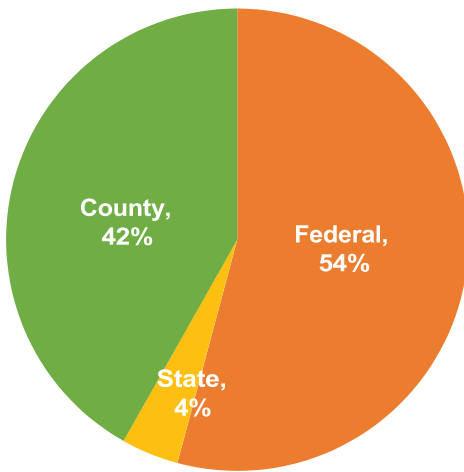
# GOALS

1. Ensure the highest quality of services to clients while developing and adhering to best practice standards.
2. Exercise sound fiscal management, develop and implement a long-term strategic plan, and establish meaningful performance metrics to measure success.
3. Increase agency visibility through public speaking engagements, local events, and collaborative partnerships.
4. Foster a safe, secure, and welcoming workplace environment that supports agency staff and encourages professional development.
5. Champion social services with policymakers and other stakeholders, granting organizations, and the public to promote increased access to services.

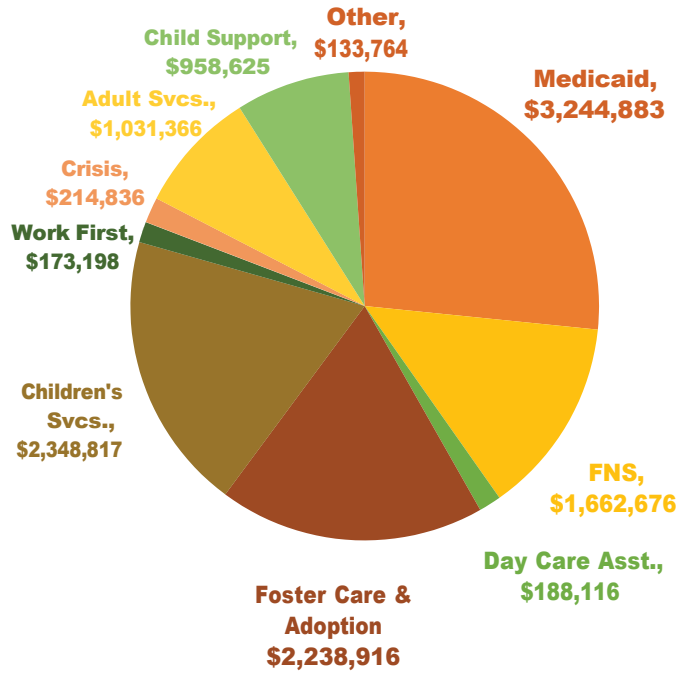
6. Expand access to services and resources to underrepresented and underserved populations.
7. Advocate our mission and the rights and well-being of the client served by the agency.
8. Promote interagency collaboration to strengthen service delivery throughout the community.
9. Create an agency culture of accountability and transparency throughout all aspects of operations.
10. Oversee the development and implementation of sound policies and procedures.

## FY 2022-2023 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

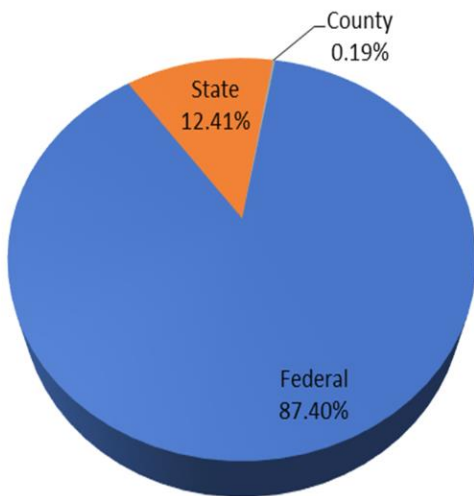
**TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVENUES**



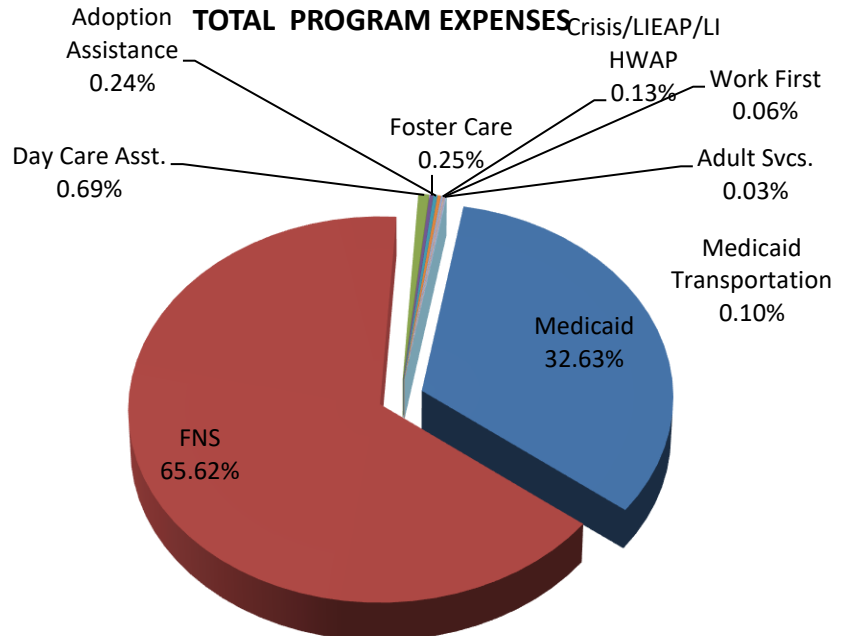
**TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES**



**PROGRAM REVENUES**



**TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES**



**Rutherford County Department of Social Services  
Total Program Revenues and Expenses (Numeric)  
Fiscal Year 2022-2023**

**Total Program Revenues**

<b>Federal</b>	<b>\$ 427,817,348</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>\$ 60,753,576</b>
<b>County</b>	<b>\$ 925,828</b>

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**\$ 489,496,752**

**Total Program Expenses**

<b>Medicaid</b>	<b>\$ 159,720,154</b>
<b>Food and Nutrition Ser.</b>	<b>\$ 321,231,425</b>
<b>Day Care Assistance</b>	<b>\$ 3,378,507</b>
<b>Foster Care</b>	<b>\$ 1,203,329</b>
<b>Adoption Assistance</b>	<b>\$ 1,183,735</b>
<b>Special Assistance</b>	<b>\$ 1,074,691</b>
<b>Crisis/LIEAP/LIHWAP</b>	<b>\$ 623,289</b>
<b>Work First</b>	<b>\$ 278,364</b>
<b>Adult Services</b>	<b>\$ 123,316</b>
<b>Medicaid Transportation</b>	<b>\$ 480,190</b>
<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>\$ 199,752</b>

**\$ 489,496,752**

**Rutherford County Department of Social Services**  
**Total Administrative Revenues & Expenses 2022-2023 (Numeric)**  
**Fiscal Year 2022-2023**

**Total Revenues**

<b>Federal</b>	<b>\$6,606,138</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>\$ 490,247</b>
<b>County</b>	<b>\$5,098,812</b>
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	<b>\$12,195,197</b>

**Total Expenses**

<b>Medicaid</b>	<b>\$ 3,244,883</b>
<b>Food and Nutrition Ser.</b>	<b>\$ 1,662,676</b>
<b>Day Care Assistance</b>	<b>\$ 188,116</b>
<b>Foster Care &amp; Adoptions</b>	<b>\$ 2,238,916</b>
<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>\$ 2,348,817</b>
<b>Work First</b>	<b>\$ 173,198</b>
<b>Crisis</b>	<b>\$ 214,836</b>
<b>Adult Services</b>	<b>\$ 1,031,366</b>
<b>Child Support</b>	<b>\$ 958,625</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>\$ 133,764</b>
	<hr/>
	<b>\$ 12,195,197</b>

# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Child Protective Services (CPS) responds to abuse, neglect and/or dependency to ensure the safety of children in Rutherford County. CPS aims to protect children from further maltreatment and to support and improve parental/caregiver abilities to assure a safe and nurturing home for each child.

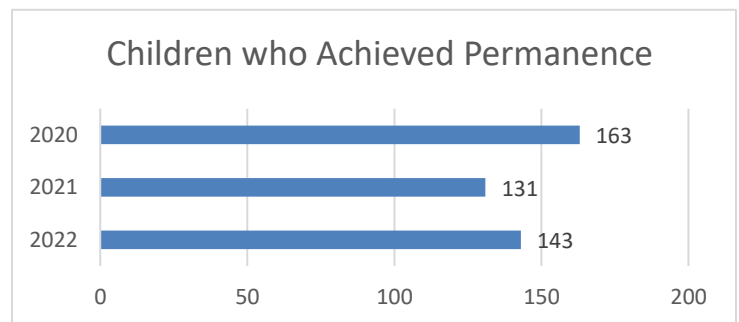
- Received 1,275 reports of abuse, neglect, or dependency
- Accepted 845 reports for assessment

## IN-HOME SERVICES & PERMANENCY PLANNING

The primary goal of CPS In-Home Services is to support families to safely maintain their child(ren) in their own home by eliminating identified safety and risk concerns and reducing risk of future child maltreatment.

Through the provision of In-Home Services, 34 children per month received in-home (mandatory) services during FY 2022/2023.

Permanency Planning services consists of children that have been placed in the Department's custody through a court order. When a child comes into the Department's custody, the primary goal is reunification.



Within the Permanency Planning section of the Department, there is one unit specifically designed to license foster parents. To become a licensed foster parent, you must attend a 30-hour course as well as go through interviews, records checks, and home inspections. Our need for foster parents is critical. The Department averaged 149 children in custody each month and has 30 licensed foster homes. Due to the low number of foster homes, Rutherford County children are being placed outside their community. It is our goal to keep all children within our community, but we must have more licensed foster homes. During FY 2021/2022, the Department licensed 7 new foster homes. To find out more about becoming a Rutherford County foster parent, please call 828-287-6165.



# ADULT SERVICES

Adult Services offers a range of mandated and voluntary supportive services which intervenes and advocates on behalf of disabled adults who are at risk of mistreatment. **Adult Protective Services (APS)** assists adults with disabilities who may be abused or neglected by a caretaker, may be neglecting themselves, or may be exploited.

Guardianship involves the provision of services to adults deemed incompetent. It includes legal proceedings when an adult is declared incompetent by the Court and when no other adults or family members are willing or able to take responsibility for duties relative to the adult's personal affairs and/or property; the Department assumes responsibility. The nature and scope of a guardian's responsibility are determined by the Court, based on applicable provisions of the law and the circumstances of the individual case.

- The Department served as legal guardian to 66 adults during FY 2022/2023
- Received 258 reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults
- 49 reports were accepted and investigated in FY 2022-2023
- Out of the 209 screened out reports, 176 adults were served via Preventative Outreach
- 14 Adult Care Home Providers in Rutherford County served up to 421 residents
- Served an average of 8 adults per month on Special Assistance In-Home
- Served an average of 16 adults per month with In-Home Aide services
- Served an average of 4 adults per month with Adult Day Care services

## **To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult:**

During business hours of 8:30am-5:00pm please call **828-287-6165** to speak with an intake worker. After 5:00pm and on weekends, please call **828-229-7205** and ask for the emergency duty social worker.

# ECONOMIC SERVICES

The Economic Services Division of Rutherford County Department of Social Services provides income-based economic services including Food and Nutrition, Medicaid, Subsidized Daycare, Work First Family Assistance, and the Energy Programs.

## FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

The Food and Nutrition Services Program (FNS) strives to end hunger, improve nutrition and health, and assist low-income households to buy the food they need. Benefits are issued through Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (EBT cards). FNS benefits are 100% federally funded; however, positions to support the eligibility and maintenance of cases are funded by local, state, and federal dollars.

- \$321,231,425 was issued to an average of 7,440 households per month in Rutherford County in fiscal year 2022-2023
- New applications averaged 344 per month
- In FY 2022-2023, there was a 7% increase in average number of recipients and an 8% increase in average number of cases

## SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE

The Subsidized Child Care Program uses state and federal funds to provide financial assistance to eligible families. During FY 2022-2023, \$3,378,507 in daycare subsidy payments were distributed to local childcare facilities to assist families with the cost of care. There were 542 children who benefitted from daycare assistance. Nineteen childcare providers in Rutherford County received subsidy.

## ENERGY PROGRAMS

The Rutherford County Department of Social Services administers federally funded emergency financial assistance programs to assist families with heating or cooling crises. The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), Low Income Energy Assistant Program (LIEAP), and Low Income Water Assistance Program (LIWAP) programs pay directly to local utility companies.

In FY 2022-2023, the amount of LIEAP funds issued increased by \$15,168. The Department was issued additional funds to ensure eligible citizens could receive financial assistance with utility bills. The State issued automated LIEAP payments to prior recipients, which reduced the number of applications to LIEAP.

## MEDICAID

**Medicaid** is a health insurance program for income eligible individuals who cannot afford healthcare costs. This benefit ensures the disabled, elderly, children, pregnant women, and families get the medical attention they need. The Department administers **22** different Medicaid and sub-categories which requires evaluation of eligibility for each program.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provided continuous beneficiary Medicaid enrollment throughout the public health emergency period regardless of changes that might otherwise affect eligibility. The public health emergency ended on 04/01/2023. During FY 2021-2022, there were **21,162** Rutherford County Medicaid recipients. In FY 2022-2023 Medicaid recipients increased to **22,162**, and increase of Rutherford County Medicaid providers were paid **\$76,350,592** during FY 2022/2023. (DHHS Medicaid Dashboard)

Of the Rutherford County Medicaid recipients, **62%** are children, **23%** are aged, blind, or disabled, and **15%** are Family Planning only, limited service.

- An average of **21,699** recipients per month were authorized for Medicaid in FY 2022-2023
- New applications averaged **271** per month

## MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is provided to Medicaid beneficiaries who need assistance in accessing transportation to and from medical appointments. In FY 2022/2023, the Department arranged for 23,348 transports serving an average of 410 recipients per month. A total of \$480,190 was paid to the transportation providers.

## WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE

This is a cash assistance, employee-based program. Families found eligible receive a monthly check. Eligibility is based on household income and reserve. The program's purpose is to enable citizens to become self-sufficient by linking them with resources and skills that help them secure and maintain employment. Families that receive a monthly check must cooperate with Child Support Enforcement, register with the Employment Security Commission, complete a substance abuse screening, and actively participate in work-related activities leading to self-sufficiency.

- Average of 21 new applications per month
- Served an average of 116 families per month
- Average monthly payment was \$236.00
- Total expenditure for FY 2022-2023 was \$278,364
- Work First Emergency Assistance helped 114 families with shelter and utilities, totaling \$46,386.6464 was paid to assist clients in finding and keeping employment

## CHILD SUPPORT

The Rutherford County Department of Social Services is responsible for the provision of Child Support Services. Services can be provided to any North Carolina parent or custodian regardless of income level. Available services include location, establishment of paternity, establishment of legal obligations, collection, and enforcement.

- \$5,018,174 was collected for children in fiscal year 2022-2023
- Administered 3,761 total cases
- 3,452 children benefitted from Child Support efforts
- 79.37% of cases were under a court order

## OUR EMPLOYEES

The Rutherford County Department of Social Services has **146** employees who serve the citizens of Rutherford County. We have **52** social work staff positions providing services in the areas of Child Protective Services, In-Home Services, Permanency Planning, and Adult Services. We have **69** economic services staff positions determining eligibility and arranging services in the areas of Food & Nutrition Services, Family and Children's Medicaid, Adult Medicaid, Transportation, Emergency Assistance, Work First, and Program Integrity. We have **10** Child Support positions and **3** Legal support positions. Our operational support and administrative staff include **12** employees.

# NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. The agency is implementing strategies to improve our service delivery and increase the effectiveness and access to services.
2. The agency practices data-driven decision making.
3. Our workers are up to date on training and committed to professional development.
4. Our fiscal management team is sound and passed their recent audit.
5. The agency is committed to collaborative relationships with various community partners including United Way, Dogwood Health Trust, Isothermal Community College, Mosaic Hope, Rutherford Regional Health System, Mosaic Hope, and Peace in the City, Rutherford County Senior Center, and various churches.
6. The agency implemented a new program, **Share 4 Foster Care**, to recruit foster parents which included a kick-off banquet for prospective foster parents.
7. We implemented a quarterly all-staff meeting to ensure that all staff in our three buildings can meet regularly to receive agency, county, state, and federal updates.
8. Our agency was awarded a grant to build a home on our campus to temporarily house foster children awaiting placement.

## CHALLENGES

1. Children awaiting placements
2. Placement shortages for foster children
3. Legislative demands
4. Fiscal constraints
5. Limited resources
6. Staffing shortages
7. Dental and healthcare providers who do not accept Medicaid
8. Mental health services for families
9. Cybersecurity
10. Aging population

## FINAL THOUGHTS

*Looking back on this past fiscal year, we are filled with gratitude for the dedication and hard work of our team. As we navigate the future, D&B faces various challenges that require our attention and innovative solutions. We remain committed to building strong partnerships, working with our community partners, county team, board of directors, and state team to meet the needs of the communities we serve. We are determined and confident in our ability to overcome challenges and make a positive impact in Rutherford County in the years ahead.*

*Your D&B Leadership Team*

