

Mecklenburg County
Department of Social Services



A Change Has Begun



2009 Year in Review

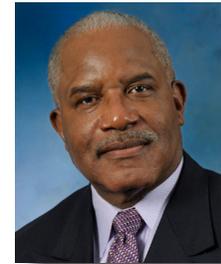
Mary E. Wilson, Director

Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners



Front row (from left): Vilma Leake, Harold Cogdell Jr. (Vice-Chairman), Jennifer Roberts (Chairman), Dan Murrey and Karen Bentley
Back row (from left): George Dunlap, Dumont Clarke, Bill James and Neil Cooksey

County Manager
Harry L. Jones Sr.



Department of Social Services Senior Executive Team

Front row (from left):

Tabitha Carnes, Public Information Specialist
Judi Wilkins, Human Resources Manager
Mary E. Wilson, Director
Angela Myers, Fiscal Management Director
Samara Foxx, Business Affairs Director

Back row (from left):

Darrell Cunningham, Community Resources Director
Rodney Adams, Services for Adults Director
Paul Risk, Youth and Family Services Director
LaCinda Benson, Director of Strategic Management & Training
Brian Sturgill, Information Services & Technology Manager



Our Mission and Vision



Our Mission

To provide economic and social services to sustain and/or improve the quality of life for our citizens.

Our Vision

To be an involved and recognized leader in human services, valued by our stakeholders because of our needs-based customer focus in the delivery of services. We will help to create a resilient community by proactively investing in our employees, operations and services and by developing impactful relationships for the benefit of our customers.



A Message from the Director

The residents of Mecklenburg County have experienced unprecedented challenges over the past year. Bank failures, mass layoffs and shrinking home values have hit our community especially hard: The unemployment rate in Mecklenburg County continues to hover above the national average. The Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (DSS) is on the front line of the economic crisis, administering public assistance to almost one in five County residents. Many of them are receiving assistance for the first time. **Just last year, the number of visitors to DSS grew by 26 percent.**



We quickly recognized the need to approach this crisis as a unified organization – one team – in order to continue being the community’s safety net. The department reorganized in order to focus on the five key areas featured in this Year in Review: **Fiscal Responsibility, The Race to Permanency, Community Social Work, Promoting Self-Sufficiency and Service Delivery.** Each of these areas presented unique challenges, and we spent the last year developing innovative solutions.

We moved 300 people into different positions or divisions to maximize their skills where there was greatest need. We created two new divisions to build collaborative partnerships with community partners, provide centralized business support to all DSS divisions and ensure compliance with local, state and federal requirements. We created the Strategic Management and Training Division to evaluate each division’s processes, oversee the department’s change program and build a strong technical training core competency. To meet growing demand, we opened a second location in west Charlotte for customers to apply for services, and we expanded our service hours at both locations to Saturday mornings. We partnered with community organizations to provide services at 16 satellite locations.

As part of our FY10 budget cuts, we reduced our budget by \$11.8 million and defunded 56 positions. Because of our reorganization, we were able to continue to meet the needs of our customers and the community.

DSS continues to embrace change! We are dedicated to helping our community’s most vulnerable residents meet their basic needs and guide them toward self-sufficiency with dignity and hope.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary E. Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary E. Wilson



What We Do

The Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services acts as an agent for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to do the following:

- Administer programs of public assistance
- Investigate reports of child abuse and neglect and take appropriate actions to protect children at risk
- Investigate reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of seniors and disabled adults and take appropriate actions to protect these individuals

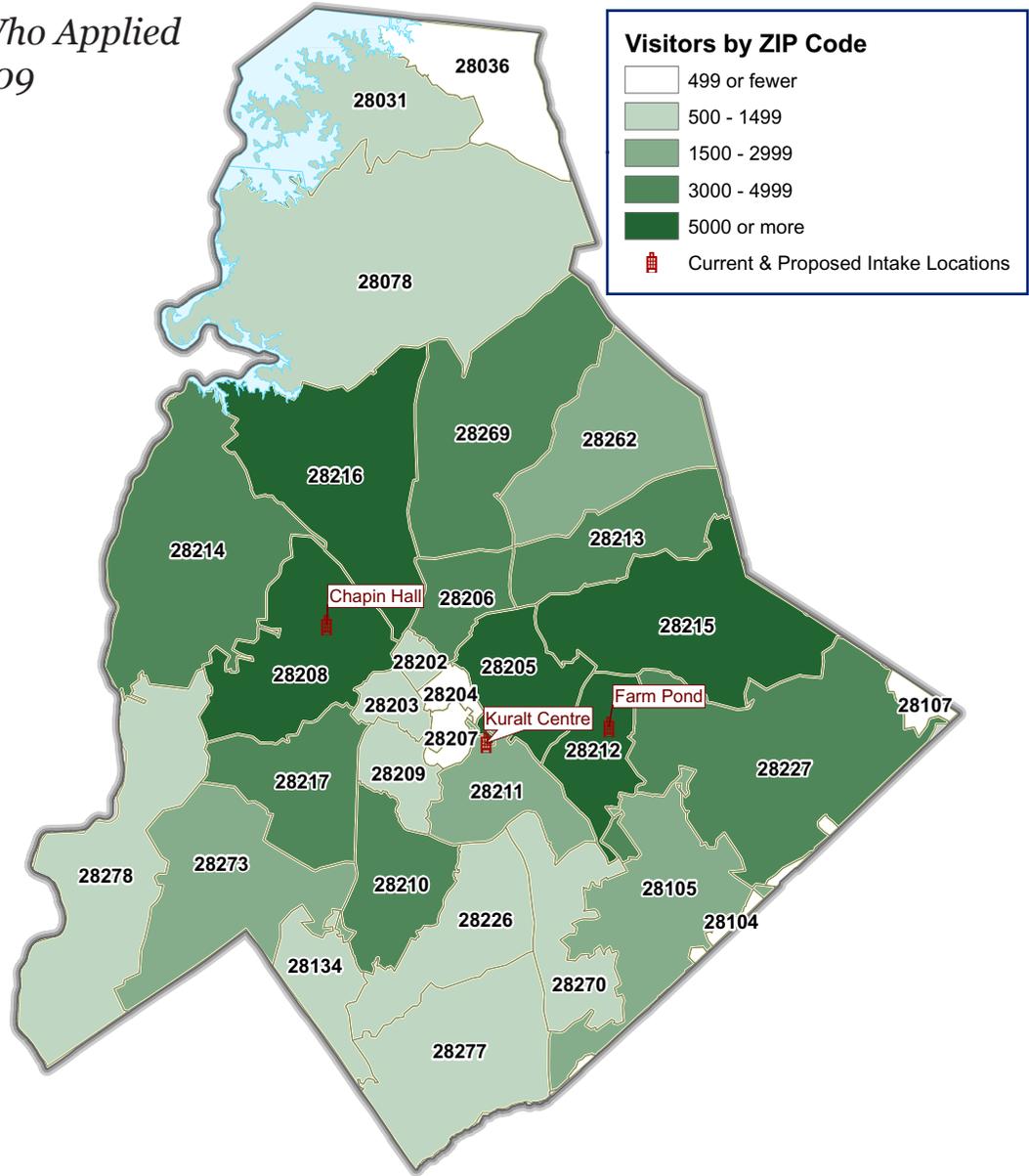
We do more than administer public assistance and protect the community's most vulnerable citizens. We are reaching outside the walls of government to forge strong, effective partnerships with the community to provide a holistic approach to human service delivery.



Who We Serve

- Almost one in five Mecklenburg County residents (172,714) receives some form of public assistance, such as Food & Nutrition Services, Medicaid, Work First or North Carolina Health Choice.
- Approximately 54 percent are under 18 years old.
- About half have no high school diploma or GED.
- Our customers represent all races, ethnic backgrounds and more than 100 languages and dialects.

Visitors by ZIP Code Who Applied for DSS Services in FY09



Who We Touch

92,410 Medicaid cases
(up 12% over last year)

49,766 food stamp cases
(up 37.5% over last year)

1,668 referrals to Adult
Protective Services
(up 13% over last year)

*We touch one in five
Mecklenburg County
residents.*

205,529 visits to DSS
(up 26% over last year)

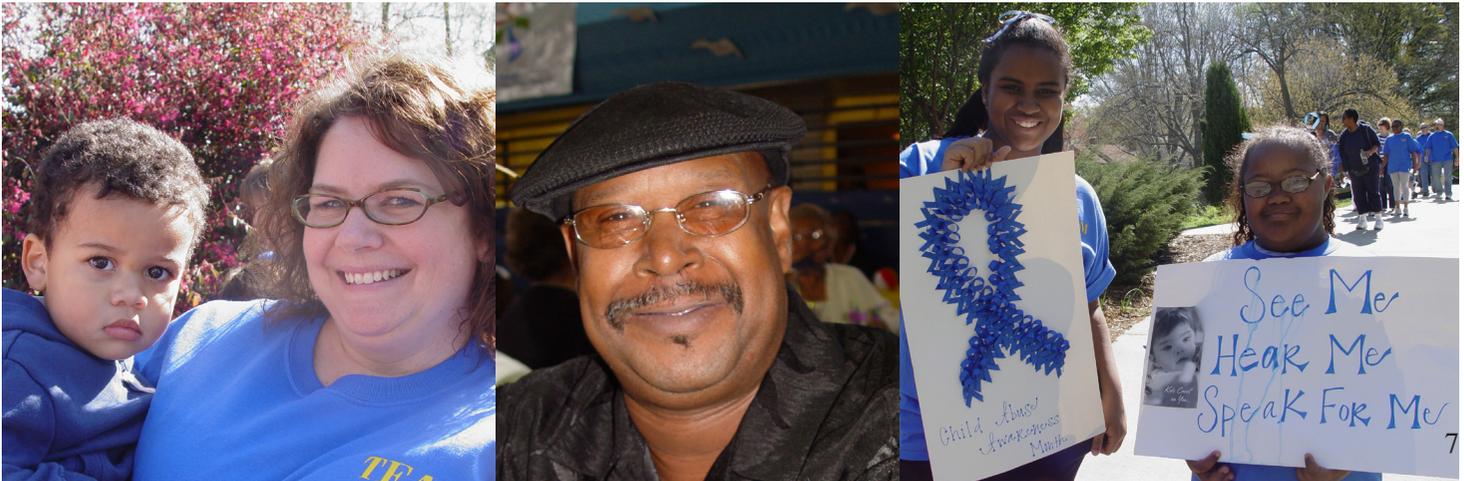
604,782 total calls to
DSS Call Center

109,937 new applications
for assistance
(up 18% over last year)

11,847 referrals to Child
Protective Services
(up 11% over last year)

172,714 public assistance recipients
(up 19% over last year)

57,802 customers served by
Mecklenburg Transportation System
(up 11% over last year)

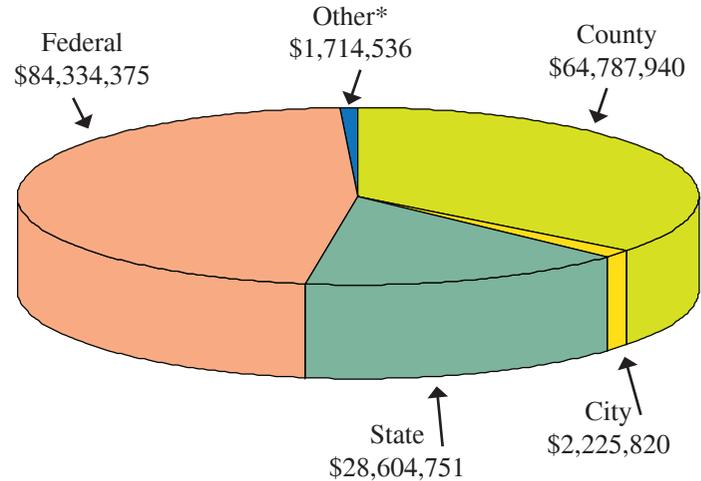


Fiscal Responsibility

Rising demand, combined with almost \$11 million in budget cuts, created a challenging year for the Department of Social Services. A highly publicized audit of DSS accounting practices revealed an urgent need to ensure proper controls and accountability throughout the entire department. The department enters a new fiscal year as a stronger organization, with the right fiscal controls in place and a stronger focus on fiscal accountability.

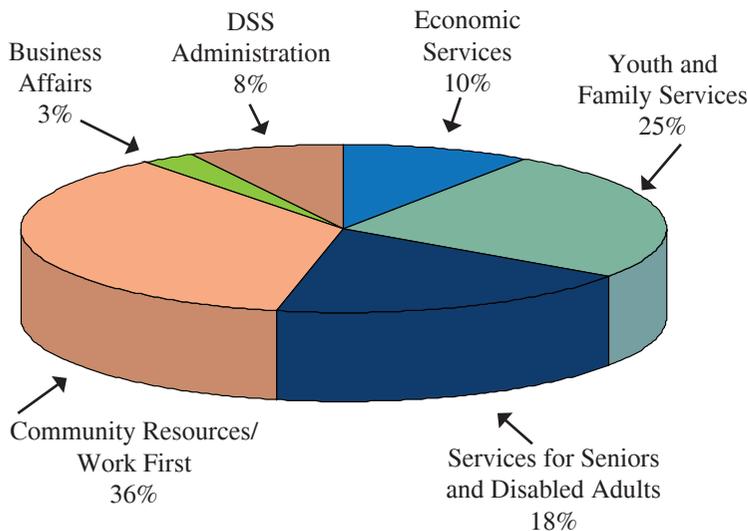
FY09 REVENUE BY SOURCE

Total \$181,667,422



FY09 EXPENSES BY DIVISION

Total \$181,667,422



*Other includes reimbursements and fees.

Our Impact on the Local Economy

Program	\$ in FY09
Medicaid	\$707,043,859
Food & Nutrition Services	\$139,509,884
Work First Cash Assistance	\$ 8,448,477
Total	\$855,002,220

Ensuring Program Integrity

Fraud Prevention \$7.8 million
Recovery of Benefits \$1.0 million



The Race to Permanency



The Race to Permanency means that we take fewer children into custody. When it is necessary to take children into protective custody, we will exhaust every option and utilize every available resource — both within DSS and with our community partners — to either reunite them with their parent(s) or a family member or to find a permanent, adoptive placement for them within 12 months.

- As of July 2009, there were 961 children in Mecklenburg County DSS custody while services were being provided to their parents, helping them to reunite the family.
- 455 children were brought into DSS custody last year.
- As of July 2009, there were 86 children available for adoption. All of them are individually special and need a forever home.
- We completed 130 adoptions last year.

How we are changing:

- We believe the most desirable place for children to grow up is in their own safe and caring families.
- It is our job to instill hope by focusing on strengths.
- We are listening to teens talk about their experience in foster care and acting on what they tell us.
- We are linking with community partners to provide ongoing family support early on and throughout our involvement with the family.



Changing lives, transforming families.

Community Social Work



Community Social Work is a new focus area that places social workers in the communities where there are naturally occurring high numbers of citizens who may need our help. Following are some of the challenges facing our community partners:



- The Urban Ministries brings van loads of homeless residents to our doors to apply for services. Last year, they served 110,000 lunches.
- The Salvation Center of Hope Shelter is overflowing with women and children. Last year, it provided food, shelter, clothing and training to more than 3,000 women and children.
- The C.W. Williams Health Center provides comprehensive, community-oriented healthcare to medically underserved individuals. In 2008, they helped 11,466 patients.



How we are changing:

A woman who was raising her twin 6-year-old granddaughters by herself came to the C.W. Williams Community Health Center for a medical appointment. She noticed that a DSS community social worker was on site to answer questions. She tearfully shared her frustration over not being able to make ends meet. The children needed supplies and uniforms for school and she needed help paying her utility bills.

Doing a holistic assessment on site allowed us to connect this grandmother with Food & Nutrition Services and Medicaid. We were also able to identify resources within the community for the following:

- School supplies and uniforms for her grandchildren
- Utility assistance to reconnect her gas service, which had been disconnected for more than a year
- Housing that would save her more than \$200 each month and accommodate her family's space needs
- Holiday meals and gifts for her grandchildren
- The services of a community social worker to assist her with budgeting



Community social workers: crossing silos... connecting the dots!

Promoting Self-Sufficiency



The Work First program provides cash assistance and job training to adults with dependent children. In 2008, customers seeking Work First benefits had to wait an average of 90 days and visit DSS multiple times to apply for benefits.

Each day, 700 senior citizens come to our 18 congregate meal sites for food, activities and social interaction. There are, however, more than 127,000 residents over the age of 60 in Mecklenburg County, many of whom could benefit from the Senior Citizens Nutrition Program.

Less than 50 percent of teens in foster care graduate from high school. Teenagers who age out of foster care are at higher risk for unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse and incarceration because they often do not learn independent living skills.

How we are changing:

We have removed the barriers to enrollment in Work First. Now, customers are interviewed on the spot and approved in the program within two weeks. In part, this change has enabled us to realize a 15 percent increase in our capacity to provide services to Work First customers.

We have merged the services to maintain independence unit with our community social workers, maximizing our ability to seek out and serve more seniors and disabled adults.

We are developing a comprehensive plan for teenagers in foster care, including renewed focus on educational achievement, locating family connections, developing life skills for teens, vocational readiness and better placement options for adolescents coming into custody.



Aligning resources to keep residents safe and independent.

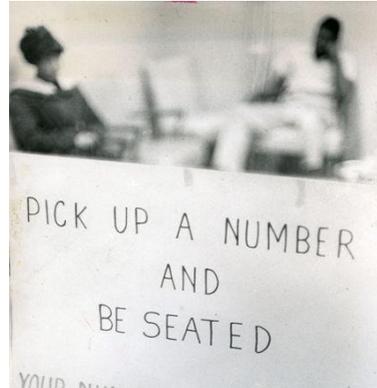
A Focus on Service Delivery

Customers faced...

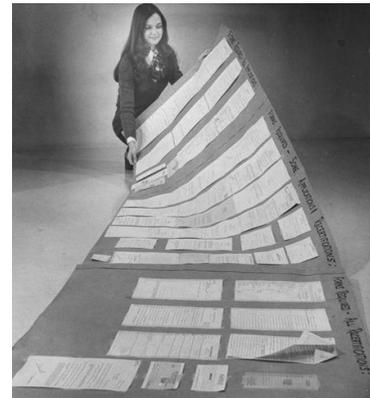
Long lines

Just one location

Paperwork



Courtesy of The Charlotte Observer



Courtesy of The Charlotte Observer

How we are changing:

Easier access:

- We are now open Saturdays from 8 a.m. until noon to serve customers who work or attend classes during the week.
- We have satellite offices at 16 community partner locations.

More locations to come:

- Last year, Kuralt Centre was the only location where people could submit applications for public assistance.
- By March of 2010, we will have expanded locations from one to three:
 - **Kuralt Centre** on Billingsley Road, **Chapin Hall** on Freedom Drive and **Farm Pond** off Albemarle Road

Improved customer service:

- We cross-trained administrative, quality and training staff to better serve our customers. In part, this change has increased our capacity to provide case management services to our customers receiving Food & Nutrition Services and Family & Children's Medicaid by 13 percent.
- We partnered with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) to identify more than 1,000 children who were automatically eligible for free and reduced lunch because they were receiving food stamps, which helped CMS save more than \$163,000 in just four months.
- Customers applying for Medicaid now have the ability to mail in their applications instead of having to apply in person. In part, these changes have resulted in a 10 percent increase in our capacity to provide intake services to customers.



Increasing our capacity to serve customers efficiently and effectively.

Strategic Management and Training

This division leads organizational change and strategic initiatives for DSS, providing leadership, guidance and direction to the DSS Senior Executive Team for all organizational and strategic change programs.

Change Process

- Our first staff training and recognition event put all DSS employees under one roof to learn about which internal and external resources are available to help our customers. This is where our “One Team, Many Services” slogan was adopted. This training will be a yearly event.
- The first Leadership Summit gave 175 DSS supervisors, managers and directors the opportunity to focus on leadership skill development. Leaders participated in a poverty simulation to help them better understand customer barriers.
- Town Hall Meetings and Brown Bag Luncheons with the director provided an open forum for DSS employees to learn more about organizational changes, ask questions and provide feedback.
- The Blueprint 2010 was developed to provide a roadmap for change.



Divisional Action Teams

- Reviewed, consolidated and decreased the number of eligibility forms for a more efficient use of resources.
- Ensured more efficient utilization of County cars.
- Improved the effectiveness of communication between management and line staff.
- Improved the effectiveness of the onboarding process of new staff.
- Defined expectations and clear objectives to include outcome measures.

Business Affairs

Business Affairs provides centralized business support services to other DSS divisions in the following key areas:

- Removing barriers in partner relationships while strengthening accountability for contracted services
- Identifying best practices nationally
- Developing customer service feedback and corrective action to improve performance
- Leading internal monitoring and quality assurance to ensure performance objectives are met
- Initiating policy analysis, research and advocacy to improve service to customers



Technology

We recognize that technology is an important opportunity for us to do more with less. We are continuing to aggressively review our service delivery and programs to determine how we can leverage technology in order to be more efficient and effective.

Paperless Intake

We are working with Information Services & Technology to streamline the intake process and make it virtually paperless, which will result in shorter customer wait times, increased employee productivity and potential savings of \$2.3 million each year in paper savings, productivity gain and cost avoidance. Elements of this project include the following:



- *Document Imaging*: Scanners have been installed and are used by all intake staff, enabling workers to store documents in a much more efficient and cost-effective electronic library rather than using expensive paper files.
- *Automated Forms Module*: Similar in nature to TurboTax® tax preparation software, this technology identifies the appropriate resources available for each customer based on information entered, auto-populates information across those forms for multiple programs, and stores them electronically for all DSS employees handling their cases to access easily.

Communication

We have more than 1,300 employees, six offices executing numerous programs and more than 300 community partners. Communication is key! Public Service & Information has developed a comprehensive communication strategy that addresses the following needs:

Internal Communication

- Weekly Team DSS E-News electronic newsletter
- Intranet and team sites

Marketing and Outreach

- Community Newsletter
- Web site
- Proactive media relations
- MeckTube online videos

DSS collaborated with Area Mental Health to create a refrigerator magnet families could refer to when in crisis.

Helping Families in Crisis
MECKLENBURG COUNTY
Area Mental Health and the Department of Social Services

Adult Abuse or Neglect 704-432-0059
Report instances of abuse, neglect or exploitation of an older or disabled adult. On holidays, weekends or after 5 p.m. call 704-336-2273.

Child Abuse or Neglect 704-336-CARE (2273)
If you have questions or concerns regarding child abuse or neglect call this 24-hour hotline.

DSS Call Center 704-336-3150
Speak with social services staff regarding eligibility requirements for Food & Nutrition Services, Medicaid and Work First Family Assistance. Specialized staff can assist with community resource referrals for emergency need.

MeckLINK 704-336-6404
Area Mental Health's 24-hour mental health, substance abuse and developmental disability call center. No insurance is necessary.

MeckCARES 704-432-4593
Our community coming together for families. Visit our Web site @ MeckCARES.charmeck.org.

Mobile Crisis Team 704-566-3410
24-hour crisis intervention service.

child abuse developmental disabilities mental illness intervention resources substance abuse medical counseling adult abuse

www.MecklenburgCountyNC.gov

Departamento de Servicios Sociales
Condado de Mecklenburg

¿Qué servicios puedo solicitar?
Los Servicios de Alimentación y Nutrición (FNS), anteriormente conocido como Estampillas de Alimentos, provee asistencia a los hogares con ingresos y recursos limitados.

Asistencia Médica (Medicaid) para Familias y Niños, ayuda con el pago de facturas médicas; tales como, consultas, recetas, pagos de hospital y cobertura dental.

North Carolina Health Choice provee cobertura de salud para niños, sin seguro médico, que viven en hogares con ingresos familiares menores al 200% del nivel de pobreza federal.

Asistencia Médica (Medicaid) para Adultos provee cobertura médica para adultos mayores de 65 años de edad, y las personas ciegas o discapacitadas. Asistencia también está disponible para Hogar de Cuidados para Adultos, Clínicas de reposo, y Asistencia en vivienda privada.

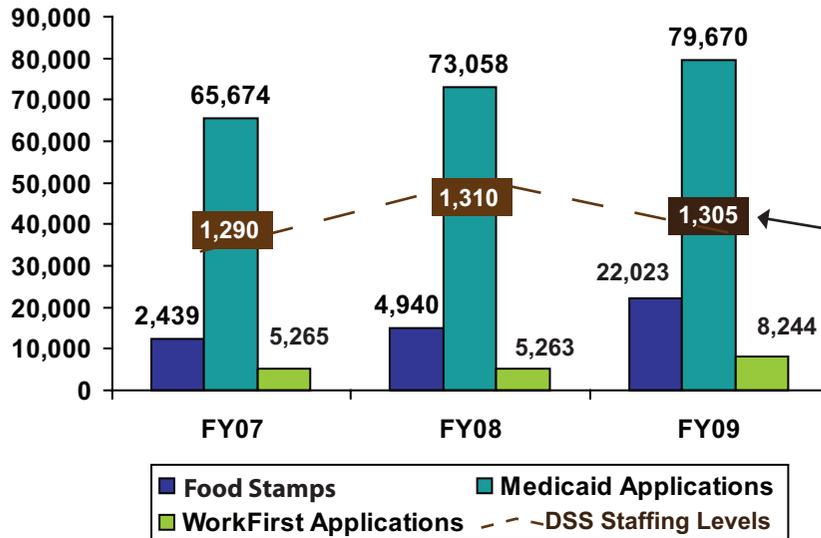
Asistencia para la familia Work First (el cheque)/ Asistencia Temporal Para los Necesitados (TANF) provee ayuda económica a las familias que tienen niños menores de 18 años de edad. Los Trabajadores Sociales de los Servicios de Empleo ayudan a los clientes, que solicitan el cheque, a conseguir trabajo y mantenerlo.

El Trabajo Social para Adultos provee programas y servicios para los adultos discapacitados, personas que tengan de 18 años o sean mayores, para que sean más independientes.

Nota: Cada programa tiene requisitos específicos de evaluación/ calificación. El trabajador encargado de entrevistarle trabajará con usted para determinar cuál es el programa que mejor se adapta a sus necesidades.

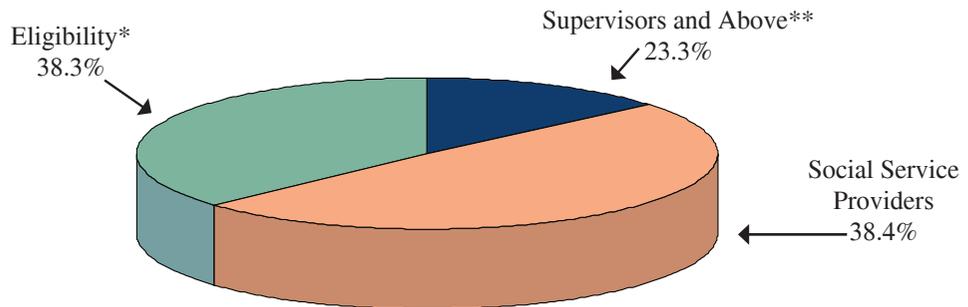
We created a quick reference guide to DSS programs and services to help customers identify needs and expedite the intake process.

Human Resources



In spite of increased demand for our services, staffing levels have remained constant over the past three years, forcing DSS to think creatively about how to do more with less.

COMPOSITION OF DSS STAFF



*Eligibility staff includes intake specialists and case managers.

**Supervisors and Above includes administrative staff.

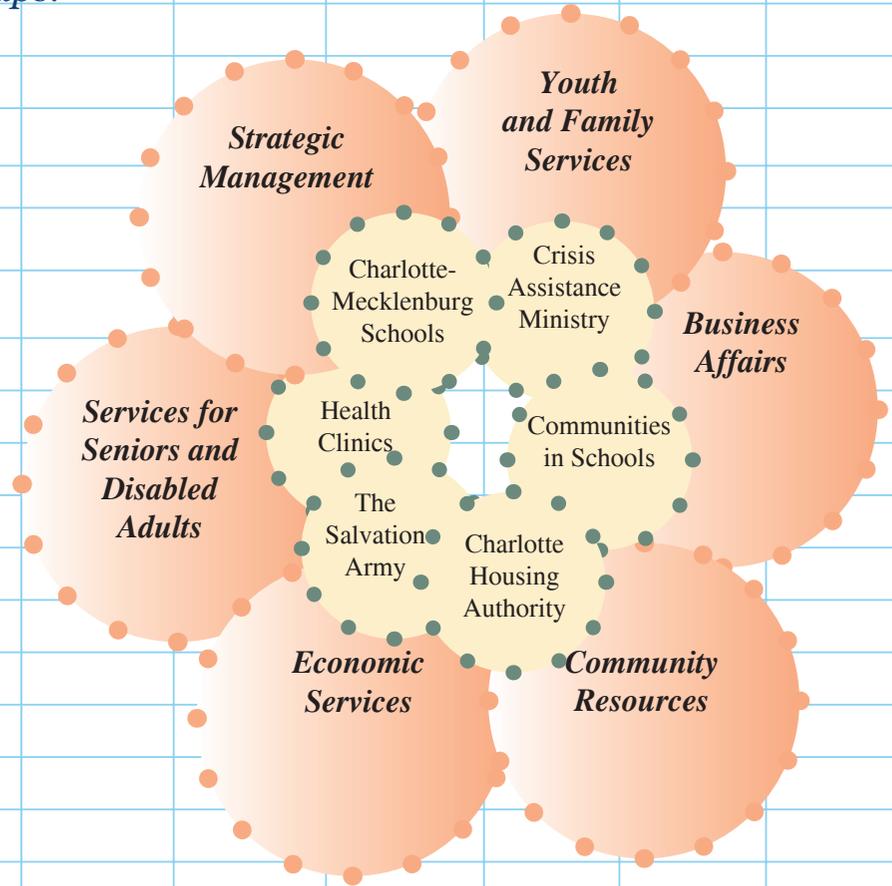
DSS Blueprint 2010

Connect the Dots, Fill the Gaps!

We are poised to meet the challenges that will continue facing us in the coming years. Our strategic plan for FY10 builds in efficient service delivery with a needs-based focus on our customers, improves customer service through decentralized services and enhanced technology, and develops talent within the organization through training, accountability and enabling staff to navigate change.

Our Key Focus Areas

- Improve Customer Service
- Improve Internal Processes
- Strengthen Leadership Capability
- Build Community Collaborations



DSS Blueprint 2010

Following are highlights of what we plan to accomplish next year, listed by division:

Community Resources

- Move customers to self-sufficiency through Work First and Community Social Work Services
- Expand child care subsidies
- Support affordable housing opportunities
- Expand community collaborations

Economic Services

- Cross-train and reorganize intake services to reduce customer wait time
- Review the case management process to improve accuracy and timeliness
- Improve the communication flow to ensure seamless delivery of multiple services

Services for Seniors and Disabled Adults

- Develop and execute a strategic plan for aging services
- Improve coordination and the delivery of transportation services
- Identify partnerships and opportunities to expand congregate meal sites
- Increase the capacity of staff to provide services through technology and process improvement

Youth and Family Services

- Increase accountability in the race for permanency among children in our legal custody
- Effectively operate in blended teams to address the needs of in-home family services
- Prepare older youth in custody for adulthood
- Improve the outcomes for children while they are in foster care

DSS Blueprint 2010

Business Affairs

- Provide centralized business support services to achieve performance goals on government audits and on the balanced scorecard

Fiscal Administration

- Maximize funding and revenue streams and strengthen internal controls

Human Resources

- Develop work plans that set expectations appropriately

Information Services and Technology

- Streamline services to decrease the time a customer spends in the agency

Public Service and Information

- Develop and execute a comprehensive communication plan for internal communications, media relations, marketing and outreach

Strategic Management and Training

- Develop a centralized training unit to execute the DSS Change Program



DSS Service Directory

(704) 336-3150

General information for the following programs:

- Adult Guardianship
- Adult Medicaid
- Adult Protective Services
- Adult Social Work Case Management
- Caregiver Support
- Child Protective Services
- Citizen Information & Referral Call Center
- Community Social Work
- Family Intervention
- First Floor Customer Service & Information
- Food and Nutrition Services
- Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruitment
- In-Home Aide
- Just1Call
- Low Income Energy Assistance
- Mecklenburg Transportation System
- Medicaid for Families and Children
- North Carolina Health Choice
- Partnership Services
- Permanency Planning for Children
- Resource Specialists
- Senior Citizens Nutrition Program
- Volunteer Services

DSS Facilities and Satellite Offices

Kuralt Centre

June 1975 – present

Valerie C. Woodard Building-Chapin Hall

February 2009 – present

Farm Pond Lane

Opening March 2010

Satellite Offices

2009 – present

- Access
- Ada Jenkins Center
- C.W. Williams Health Center
- Charlotte Correctional Center
- Friendship Community Development Corporation
- Greenville Combined Youth Organization
- Hope Haven (two locations)
- Jacob's Ladder
- Latin American Coalition
- Matthews Help Center
- Mecklenburg County Jail Case Management
- Solomon House
- The Salvation Army Center of Hope Women's Shelter
- Uptown Men's Shelter
- Urban Ministry Center



