



JANUARY 2015



## Social Services

# ANNUAL REPORT FY2014

OUR MISSION IS TO PARTNER WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY TO HELP OUR RESIDENTS ACHIEVE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL WELL-BEING.



# Setting Goals and Moving Forward



MICHAEL A. BECKETTS, MSW, MS, DIRECTOR

*It is my pleasure to share with you the 2014 Annual Report for the Durham County Department of Social Services. Having served as director of the Durham County Department of Social Services for the past two years, I am thankful for the leadership and support of the Durham County Board of Social Services, the Board of County Commissioners, the County Manager, and the DSS staff.*

The Department of Social Services Board has worked to establish a strategic direction for the agency. The product of their work led to the development of the five strategic priorities that will lead DSS into its next chapter. The Board considered the question, "If you could be transported in time to five years in the future and DSS was the best performing Social Services department in the state, what would it look like?" The board's discussions led them to define five goals which are helping determine the priorities of the department:

- Every child has access to quality **early childhood education**. We envision a time when no children/families are on waitlists for the vital resource of subsidized child care.
- Every senior, age 55 or older, has access to quality **support for aging adults** through services that address health, safety and financial well-being. We envision a community where there is a collaborative

approach to addressing the growing needs of the increasing aging population.

- Everyone has a **safe home and housing**, a living wage, employment and financial stability. Durham County Department of Social Services envisions a community that is free of homelessness.
- Everyone has access to **affordable healthcare** which provides a way in which people can attend to their physical well-being. The Department of Social Services envisions a community where each member has the ability to attend to their physical needs.
- We will **engage youth as a vital resource in our community**. Durham County Department of Social Services has a vital role in the protection of children in our community through child welfare services. DSS supports a broader view of the need to engage youth so that they develop into responsible adults.

It was important that our agency priorities are correlated to the Durham County Strategic Plan. To this end, our goals are aligned with strategic plan goals "community and family prosperity and enrichment" and "health and well-being for all." While DSS board members acknowledge that the five goals are visionary, these intentions are providing a direction for our agency.

These goals cannot be quickly or easily achieved, nor can they be reached solely by the Department of Social Services. We will continue to develop partnerships and act in collaboration with other community agencies to reach these aspirations, which are broad in scope. This report updates you on the strides we made in the 2013–14 fiscal year toward these goals. ●

Sincerely,  
Michael A. Becketts, MSW, MS  
Director

# Message from the DSS Board

*With the dedication of our agency staff and community partners, we are ready to work hard to ensure that Durham County individuals and families receive the services necessary to enhance their quality of life.*

The 2013–2014 fiscal year has been one of great challenge for the board and staff as we have continued to implement the North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) Program. This computer system processes applications for economic independence programs such as Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid. Board members are sincerely grateful to agency director Michael Becketts and every staff member involved in program implementation for their dedication and commitment to excellence.

Specifically, Durham County should be proud of the agency's ability to implement this program with minimal errors and small backlogs because of the preparedness and professionalism of agency staff. As a result, individuals and families in need of agency services received the benefits for which they were eligible in a timely manner. DSS staff—You are the best!! Thank you for your service! And, thanks also go to the Durham County Board of Commissioners, the Durham County Manager's Office and our community partners for helping us continue to help others in the midst of these technology changes.

Internally, the board held a goal-setting retreat in November 2013 and began discussion of potential strategic goals for the next three years that are in alignment with the agency's mission and the goals of the Durham County Strategic Plan. These goals will be unveiled in the 2014–2015 fiscal year, so, stay tuned.

And, at the end of this year, we bade farewell to long-time board member Newman Aguiar. Newman has been a steadfast advocate over a number of years for the Department of Social Services and the individuals and families served by the agency. Thank you, Newman, for setting the standard for volunteer service to the Durham Community. You will be missed!

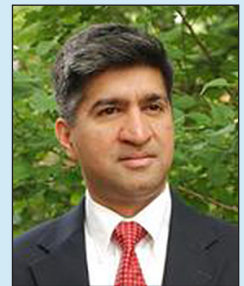
We are certain there will be more challenges in the coming year as we see a new Congress and North Carolina General Assembly convene in January 2015. But, with the dedication of our agency staff and community partners, we are ready to work hard to ensure that Durham County individuals and families receive the services necessary to enhance their quality of life. ●

Dr. Tara L. Fikes, Board Chair

## Durham County Social Services Board Members



Dr. Tara L. Fikes, Chair



Newman Aguiar, Vice Chair



Helen J. Berry



Commissioner Wendy Jacobs



Jane Volland

## Volunteer Opportunities

Please join with us to improve the lives of children and families in our community. A few of the many ways you can help are listed below. To find out more, please call the Volunteer Center of Durham at 919-684-9690.

- **SPONSOR** a family for a Thanksgiving Dinner or for Share Your Christmas. Each year more than 1,000 Durham residents rely on these programs to make their holidays bright.
- **PROVIDE** companionship or assistance with light tasks or duties to a disabled or elderly community member through the Friendly Visitor Program.
- **DONATE** school supplies to the Back to School Supply Drive. ●

# Touchpoints *A Strengths-Based Approach for Children and Families*

With a commitment to being active in comprehensive improvements in working with the most vulnerable families in Durham, Durham County Department of Social Services became an inaugural member of the Durham Touchpoints Collaborative during the 2013–14 fiscal year.



Touchpoints, which is based on the research of internationally renowned pediatrician Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, was brought to Durham by Durham’s Partnership for Children. “The Collaborative aims to enhance effectiveness and

time in this training and for being part of the training team,” says Benson. “Their involvement not only gives the Collaborative credibility, but it also means that the Touchpoints approach will saturate the places in the community where very important work is happening with families with young children, many of whom are on the margins.”

Catherine Williamson-Hardy, MPH, Assistant Director of Customer Accountability and Program Development at DSS, says, “Touchpoints offers a paradigm shift that strengthens and empowers the family.” Paulette Stephens, Touchpoints Coordinator, notes that between November 2013 and June 30, 2014, 10 organizations and 45 practitioners in Durham were Touchpoints trained and between 500 and 750 Durham families came into contact with a Touchpoints-trained provider.

Randy Rogers, DSS Staff Development Specialist, traveled to Boston in March 2014 for a five-day training to become a Touchpoints certified trainer and is now part of a multi-disciplinary team delivering

individual training to partner agencies working with children and families in the Durham community.

“It’s great being able to utilize common language from a strengths-based approach when working with Durham County families that come through various portals of entry in accessing services,” says Rogers. “Whether they initially access the system of care through DSS, Partnership for a Healthy Durham, Welcome Baby, Head Start, Durham’s Partnership for Children or another agency, families are being supported around the development of their child.”

“We anticipate the impact to be that parents will have more positive, enduring, and effective relationships with providers in Durham—including DSS—and thus parents will have more faith in using their own skills and resources to solve problems and address challenges,” says Laura Benson of the Partnership. “Most importantly, children will benefit; they will be better prepared for success in school and life!” ●



provide support to professionals as they deepen their understanding of child development and approach relationships with families through a strengths-based, culturally competent framework,” says Laura Benson, executive director the Partnership.

“We are especially grateful to the DSS leadership for investing so much

## Working Together to Support Children and Families *East Durham Children’s Initiative and Durham County Department of Social Services*

Knowing that research shows that children engaged in high quality child care and preschool programs have a greater chance of success in school, Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS) and the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) are working together to prioritize families within the EDCI Zone target area. A memorandum of understanding, noting that children from birth to kindergarten whose parents are

employed would be prioritized, was signed between DSS and EDCI.

The long-term vision of EDCI, which focuses on a low-wealth community within a 120-block area east of downtown Durham, is to help alleviate the impact of poverty in the Zone and ensure that its children graduate from high school ready for college or a career. “Our goal is to provide wraparound supports for children in the community and ensure



### EAST DURHAM CHILDREN’S INITIATIVE

they are ready for success at school,” said Mary Mathew, EDCI Program Director. “Child care subsidies remove a significant barrier for working families and help ensure that their children have formal childcare or preschool experience.” EDCI is extremely appreciative that DSS is prioritizing childcare subsidy recipients in the EDCI Zone. **continued on page 5**

## Duke: A Community Partner in Health

Thanks to the partnership of Duke Medicine, in FY 2013-14, our agency continued to increase our impact on community health.

In December 2013, Duke donated \$25,000 to Durham's Department of Social Services to help during hard fiscal times. Glitches with NC FAST, the state's new computer system, caused big delays in benefits for folks who receive food assistance. Because of this, our agency has had to spend more money than usual for emergency food assistance.

Similarly, NC Tracks, a state computer system which provides payments to pharmacies for prescriptions, has also had problems during the fiscal year. This caused some pharmacies not to fill prescriptions because the pharmacies had not been reimbursed. Durham DSS overspent the amount of money in our emergency medicine fund because we were making sure people

were able to meet one of their most basic needs—medicine.

During conversations DSS leadership had with Duke about other projects for the next year, Duke learned of the shortfalls faced by DSS. Duke reached out and offered \$25,000 to replenish our coffers so we could continue providing much needed emergency services for food and medicine. We are grateful for their initiative, leadership and generosity.

Duke also partnered with DSS to create a medical clinic especially for kids in foster care, among our most vulnerable populations. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children entering foster care receive a comprehensive medical assessment and that medical recommendations from the screening and assessment be incorporated into social services case plans. Thanks to our partnership with Duke University, particularly the Child Abuse Neglect

Medical Evaluation Clinic (CANMEC), on October 1, 2013, we opened a foster care clinic to do just this.

Once children enter into foster care, they are referred by DSS to this clinic where they are seen within seven days. The children receive a comprehensive medical screening from medical professionals who have trained in medical treatment for children who have suffered abuse and neglect. After receiving this screening, something that isn't available in a traditional primary care setting, each child can continue being seen at the Duke foster care clinic or the clinic will provide a treatment plan to the child's primary care physician.

We anticipate positive outcomes for children in Durham County thanks to this clinic since we know that children's health is critical to their overall well-being. Durham DSS is a leader among counties in the state working to ensure that children in foster care have a medical home. ●

### EDCI, continued from page 4

Between December 2013 and June 2014, 56 children in 48 families received prioritized subsidy. Based on its success, the collaboration's partners have signed an MOU to continue the program for at least one more year.

As in most low-wealth communities, access to high-quality childcare presents a significant barrier for many children and families residing in the EDCI Zone. EDCI partners with several community agencies to offer high-quality, early childhood services targeting EDCI Zone children and families. The intent is to have these services build upon one another to provide comprehensive

supports to families with young children to ensure the greatest likelihood of success over time.

"DSS staff and board have been very cooperative and open to ideas that would make this unique partnership possible," says Mathew. "DSS is excited about this partnership, one of many successful community collaborations," says Linda Bauer, DSS childcare subsidy program manager. "We are pleased that children and families in the EDCI Zone are able to more easily access early childhood education which is so critical." ●



## Coordinated Intake



## Working with Community Partners to House Families without Homes

In an ideal world, every family would have a place to call home. Yet homelessness impacts families and children throughout the country, something that is sadly true in Durham.

Durham's Department of Social Services (DSS) works in close collaboration with community partners both to prevent families from becoming homeless and to help those who are homeless access permanent housing.

One way that DSS supports homeless families is through our coordinated intake and assessment service. While in past years,

coordinated intake was handled by one person, this year, DSS began utilizing the Crisis Services team for more effective delivery.

With coordinated intake, a DSS employee is responsible for conducting the intake process for homeless families in our community. After completing an assessment for each family, the DSS worker enters the information into a shared database system—which community providers can review—and makes a referral to the appropriate family shelter. In the 2013–14 fiscal year, 201 referrals were made.

This coordinated intake system—recommended by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—has multiple benefits. Homeless families have one central place they can go for help. "The primary impact this new well-coordinated system has is that families only have to get in line in one place and tell their story one time," says Matt Schnars, Project Manager with the City of Durham's Department of Community Development. "Being able to address this logistical challenge has reduced duplication of the work being done by the providers and enables them to find the best fit options for each client right there." ●

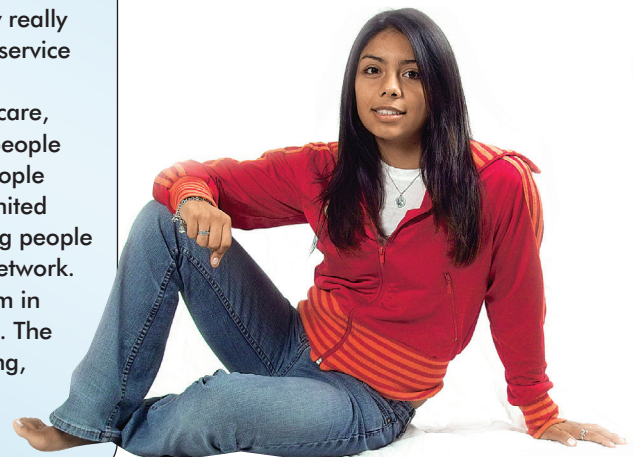
## We will engage youth as a vital resource in our community.

### Supporting Emerging Adults: Fostering Youth Opportunities

It's difficult enough at the age of 18 to make your way in the world. But for children in foster care, who age out of the system, the challenges are immense. Recognizing this, Durham DSS began planning throughout the 2013–14 fiscal year with a variety of community partners to create Fostering Youth Opportunities. This United Way of the Greater Triangle-funded collaboration—which counts DSS, Community Partnerships, Inc., Carolina Outreach, Genesis Home, and Dress for Success as its partners—began July 1, 2014.

"It's important for us to make sure that these young people have the right connections in the community so that they can be successful and self-sufficient," says Sharyn Flood, MA, DSS Child Welfare Special Services Supervisor. "We provide services and education to make sure that each young person has at least five people in their support network for help." Ms. Flood says that the connections for these young people are systems rather than family or people who they really know. "It's hard to raise a child as a system," she says. "We look to these service providers to be as much family as a system can be to these kids."

Building on DSS's LINKS program, which works with children in foster care, the new program brings together service providers to support the young people aging out of care. "This program improves the efficiency of how young people experience the system," says Stan Holt, VP of Community Impact at the United Way of the Greater Triangle and a former DSS board member. "The young people get together in a room with diverse providers who can begin to be their network. They only have to tell their story once. The group problem solves with them in the room and they can see how problem solving can occur across systems. The young people receive support in diverse areas including education, housing, and employment. This also helps service providers understand each other in a new way which leads to better results for clients." ●



# DSS's Commitment to Being Green

In addition to being dedicated to the well-being of clients, Durham County's Department of Social Services is also dedicated to being good stewards of the environment. During the 2013-14 fiscal year, we promoted environmental stewardship in a variety of ways including:

- Recycling batteries, packing materials, printer and fax machine toner, drum cartridges, and imaging units, in addition to cardboard, paper, glass and metal
- Returning wood pallets to vendors
- Reusing cardboard packing boxes
- Ensuring that new vehicles purchased are flex fuel vehicles
- Using electronic service request forms instead of paper forms
- Donating old computers and peripherals to community partners so the machines can be refurbished
- Employing network printers/copiers and computer monitors with an automatic "sleep" or "turnoff" mode that kicks in after a period of no use which conserves energy
- Having tech staff turn off computer monitors when they are not in use by staff
- Purchasing networked printers and creating a print release system which requires staff to send print jobs to these printers. By using networked printers and reducing the number of individual desktop printers on staff members' desks, DSS is reducing waste and cost. Print release also offers the option to delete a print request before it is printed, saving paper and ink. (Before October 2013, there were more than 200 staff members with a printer on their desk and more than 75 old network printers that required a great deal of ongoing maintenance. Now there are 45 networked printers and only 25 desktop printers.)
- Refilling printer and fax machine toner cartridges instead of purchasing new cartridges
- Creating an ongoing project helping all DSS departments to use Laserfiche to store and retrieve documents, rather than keeping the original paper document. This has drastically reduced the amount of paper needed for existing and new client case files. ●

## Productive Partnerships: Lincoln Community Health Center



Lincoln Community Health Center and Durham County Department of Social Services share a strong commitment to innovation and to the health of the community. Lincoln CEO Phil Harewood notes that the populations served by his organization and DSS are quite similar. So, it's no surprise that the organizations are working closely to implement innovative care.

To help community members understand and enroll in the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, in October 2013 Lincoln hired certified application counselors and embedded them in DSS's offices. "We convened a meeting of our community partners, including DSS, to see where these counselors could best serve the Durham community," says Harewood. They quickly realized that a DSS/Lincoln collaboration would be ideal. Thanks to

this collaboration, nearly 1,400 Durham residents enrolled in the ACA or were provided education about it during the 2013 open enrollment.

"While DSS has no role in the ACA outside of its statutory role in processing Medicaid applications, we have taken it on in Durham to engage the community differently," says Michael Becketts, DSS director. "Co-location isn't happening in the other 99 counties in North Carolina."

Becketts serves on the board of Lincoln Community Health Center whose mission is to provide high quality primary and preventative care services to all regardless of ability to pay. In 2013, 18% of Lincoln's patients received Medicaid, 84% were at or below the poverty level, and 70% were uninsured.

Becketts and Harewood serve together on other boards, creating a

close working relationship which results in better services for clients.

Lincoln clients also benefit from having a DSS eligibility assistance worker co-located at the health center, helping pregnant women and children who are eligible for Medicaid. And while Lincoln provides its patients with social work, mental health services and some case management, Harewood says, "Any time we work with patients who could be helped by DSS, we refer them over to DSS."

"Durham DSS offers a best practice model for how social service agencies can work with federally qualified health centers, such as ours," says Harewood. "And in the end, the community benefits." ●

# Leveraging Technology, Improving Efficiency

During the 2013–14 fiscal year, the Durham County Department of Social Services took a huge stride forward in utilizing technology, leading to improved customer service. Child Protective Services and Medicaid Transportation—which arranges rides for medical appointments for clients receiving Medicaid—are just two of the programs which leveraged technology to improve efficiency.

Before Child Protective Services (CPS) developed its call center in December 2013, a community member who had a concern about a child or wanted to make a child abuse report called and spoke to a clerical worker. The clerical worker then had to transfer the call to the Intake Social Worker to take the report. If the worker were on the phone, then the caller would be placed on hold or the contact information was taken to receive a call back.

Now the call center enables CPS's three intake workers, three back up workers and all the supervisors to receive any calls regarding a child safety concern. When a CPS worker is on a call, the next incoming call rolls to one of the 12 people able to handle the concern, resulting in better efficiency and timeliness in receiving calls about abuse and neglect.

CPS also changed its intake system from an antiquated database to a more accessible system which allows employees to more easily track data and access abuse and neglect reports. The system, which went live in June 2014, replaces a paper log that required employees to count the type and number of reports manually.

Medicaid Transportation also improved its database and phone call protocols. Prior to implementing its new database in October 2013, Medicaid Transportation workers used an archaic and problematic paper-based system which was time consuming and cumbersome. With a vision toward streamlining, Medicaid Transportation leaders asked the County IT department if it were possible to create a way to fill out client information from a database and then have that information populate forms that Medicaid requires be maintained.

IT then developed a database that has simplified the process of applying or recertifying for Medicaid Transportation services as well as for scheduling trips to medical providers. The database is secure, only accessed by DSS employees. The change to the database cut the time to fill out forms from 30 minutes to 15 minutes or less, allowing clients to be served more quickly and easily.

In March 2014, Medicaid Transportation implemented a call center to facilitate communication with clients. Before that, there were only two phone lines available for clients to access Medicaid Transportation Coordinators, requiring many of the 600 Transportation clients to leave voicemail messages or to progressively



**Improved phone call protocols and database have resulted in more efficient service to Medicaid Transportation clients.**

call up the phone tree, hoping to reach someone who would answer the phone. Thirty to 100 voicemails a day were common, leading to backlogs and frustrations for staff and clients alike.

Since the implementation of the call center's line, which now supports all six Medicaid Transportation unit employees, the maximum number of voicemails received was three and calls up the supervisory phone tree are virtually non-existent. The use of the new database and call center in the Medicaid Transportation unit has been very much appreciated by clients and employees in streamlining services to clients. ●

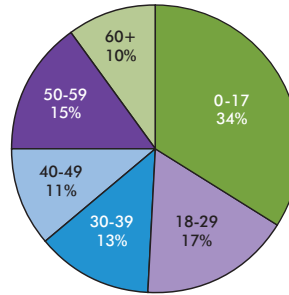
*Child Protective Services and Medicaid Transportation are just two of the programs which leveraged technology to improve efficiency.*



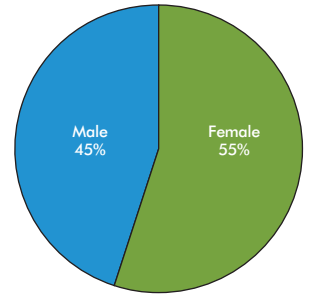
# Client Demographics

DSS aims to have our staff demographics reflect our clients. DSS clients tend to be younger than staff since 34% of our clients are under the age of 18. While there are more women on the staff as compared to our client population, the racial composition of our staff closely matches that of our client population.

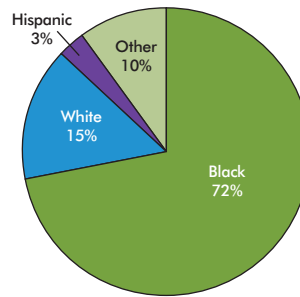
Client Age Ranges



Client Gender



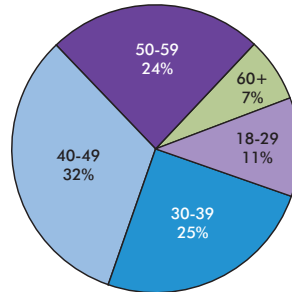
Racial Composition



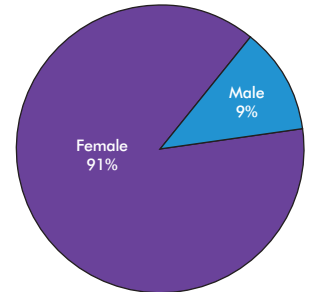
# Agency Staff

Durham DSS employs a diverse, well-educated, professional staff dedicated to providing excellent service to our neighbors in need. In Fiscal Year 2014, there were 437 full-time equivalent positions in the agency, in such diverse positions as processing assistants, child support agents, income maintenance caseworkers, social workers, trainers and administrators.

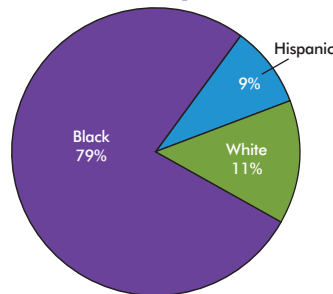
Staff Age Ranges



Staff Gender



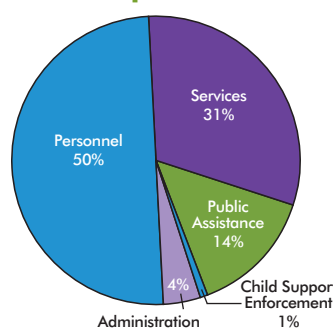
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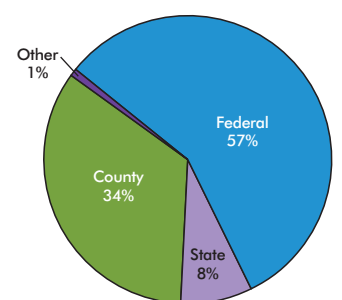
# Agency Budget

In Fiscal Year 2013–2014, the agency’s General and Benefits Funds expenditures were \$414,707,448. Of that, operational expenses totaled \$55,243,121 while benefits paid directly to citizens totaled \$359,464,327. Revenues collected were \$36,050,286. Durham County taxpayers contributed \$19,192,835.

FY14 Expenditures



FY14 Revenues



# It Takes a Village

Collaboration is the key to success for DSS. We work in partnership with a variety of individuals, groups and organizations to better serve Durham’s families. Some of our partnerships are formalized, while others are more casual. Regardless of the form they take, all of these relationships support DSS in our mission to partner with families and

communities to achieve well-being through prosperity, permanence, safety and support.

This list of our agency partners—notable for its breadth and depth—reflects DSS’s commitment to our community and the community’s commitment to individuals and families in need. ●

## LOCAL DSS PARTNERS: CONNECTED TO OUR COMMUNITY

### Economic Stability

- City of Durham, Office of Economic and Workforce Development
- Durham County Cooperative Extension
- Durham Economic Resource Center (DERC)
- Durham Housing Authority Program Coordination Committee
- Durham Prisoner ReEntry Resource Roundtable (DPRRT)
- Durham Technical Community College
- Durham’s Economic Prosperity Results Based Accountability Committee
- Durham’s Workforce Development Board
- Division of Workforce Solutions
- End Poverty Committee
- NC Works Career Center Partner Support Team
- North Carolina Child Support Council
- Regional Initiatives Task Force/United Way of the Greater Triangle
- Strong Couples/Strong Children

### Health Care

- Access to Healthcare Committee
- Durham Community Health Network Medical Management Committee
- Duke University Medical Center
- Alliance Behavioral Healthcare
- Durham County Health Department
- Health Service Advisory Committee
- Local Access to Coordinated Healthcare (LATCH)
- Mental Health Advisory Committee
- Obesity & Chronic Illness Committee
- RX Team Network
- SHIPP (Medicare D)
- Lincoln Community Health
- Durham County Wellness Team

### Child Welfare

- Center for Child and Family Health
- Child Fatality Task Force
- Durham Connects’ Community Advisory Board
- Durham’s System of Care (and various associated workgroups)
- Infant Mortality Task Force
- DUMC—Child Abuse Neglect Medical Evaluation Center (CANMEC)
- Welcome Baby
- Durham Public Schools

### Child Care and Development

- Child Care Services Association—Resource and Referral, Smart Start Scholarship Program
- Durham Early Head Start Policy Council
- Durham Public Schools
- Durham RBA Children Ready for and Succeeding in School
- Durham’s Partnership for Children
- East Durham Children’s Initiative
- NC Pre K/School/Readiness Committee
- Operation Breakthrough Policy Council

### Housing/Emergency Needs/Homelessness

- Council to End Homelessness in Durham
- Durham’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness
- Emergency Energy Fund Committee
- Housing for New Hope
- Salvation Army Advisory Board
- Special Needs Disaster Shelter Committee
- Urban Ministries of Durham

### Seniors/Adult Services

- Adult Foster Care Committee
- HIP Seniors Initiative
- Local Interagency Coordination Council
- Senior Consumer Fraud Task Force
- Transportation Advisory Board Committee

### Universities

- North Carolina Child Support Council Scholarship Committee
- NCCU Social Work Advisory Board
- NCCU School of Social Work Field Placement
- NC Child Support Committee

### Community-wide

- Court Case Managers
- Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Committee
- Durham County Attorney’s Office
- Durham County Court
- Durham County District Court Improvement Committee
- Durham County Fire Marshall and Emergency Disaster Team
- Durham County Green Team
- Durham County Sheriff’s Department
- Durham Crisis Response Center
- Durham Mayor’s Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Durham Police Department
- Durham Public Information Officers’ Council
- Guardian ad Litem
- Homeless Connect
- Opening Doors
- United Way of the Greater Triangle Certification Committee
- The Volunteer Center of Durham

# Faith, Love, and Family: The Mangum Family Grows through Adoption

The home of Martie and Heather Mangum overflows with love, faith, and family. The Mangums are parents to eight children: Taylor, age 17; Aaliyah, 11; Ethan, 9; Naomi, 8; Andrew, 8; Tabitha, 6; Carissa, 4; and Seth, 2. Aaliyah and Naomi moved into the Mangum home in August 2013 and were legally adopted three months later.

"Having the girls become part of our family has been a very natural process," says Heather, who home schools her children. "The children just get along and play so wonderfully together." She says that there have been some hard adjustments but none that the family regrets. "We are modeling to these children who haven't seen any kind of healthy family how it's supposed to work," adds Heather. "Having normal family interactions and not living in fear is something that all kids need. There are some hard times but it's worth it...they are worth it."

Martie, who pastors Parkwood Baptist Church, says that he and his wife are passionate about their city and foster care and adoption. "We desire to see the kids of Durham cared for and loved," he says. "Even though there are going to be struggles, we encourage people to adopt or foster because these kids need love and stability."

The Mangums first pursued adoption in 2011 when they took The MAPP (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting) class through the Durham County Department of Social Services. The MAPP curriculum is designed to enable participants to develop knowledge and skills that lead to successful foster and adoptive



**Martie and Heather Mangum adopted two biological sisters through Durham's Department of Social Services to create their loving family of eight children.**

placements. "We wanted to foster but regulations don't allow more than five children in the home for foster care so we moved forward with adopting through the foster care system," says Heather.

Once they were assigned a DSS adoption social worker, the process moved quickly. All foster parents receive four days of respite care each month which the Mangums provided for Aaliyah and Naomi. "Within the first week of having the girls here, we knew we wanted to pursue adoption of them," says Heather. Before being placed with the Mangums, the girls had told their social worker that they wanted a family with two parents, other children, including an older sister, and a dog. "It's as though they were describing our family," says Heather.

"In adopting, we wanted to help

fill the biggest needs," says Martie. "Older kids are the least likely to get adopted and finding families for sibling groups is a big need. Our girls are black, older, and a sibling group." Martie adds that he and Heather are passionate about racial reconciliation. "Having a multiracial family, I see a lot of barriers broken down," he says. "When we're out in the community, or in the grocery store, people, especially from the black community are excited and open about what we are doing. This is an opportunity for us to teach others that everyone is worthy of dignity and respect."

"There are so many things that our children bring to our lives," says Heather. "And the girls enjoy having consistency and love having a mother and a father. They have adjusted well and seem to like it here!" ●

*Change your life and the life of a child!* Become a foster or adoptive parent. For more information, Foster/Adoptive Parent Recruiter at 919-560-8000.

# Contact us

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## Social Services

**Durham County DSS**

414 E. Main St.

1201 Briggs Avenue, Suite 101 (Child Care Subsidy)

**Phone:** 919-560-8000 (English & Spanish)

**Email:** dss@dconc.gov

**Vision:** A community where families achieve well-being.

**Mission:** Our mission is to partner with individuals, families and the community to help our residents achieve physical, social and financial well-being.