



### Responding to Our Neighbors in Need

The Department of Social Services has a critical role in our community to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors. I have been impressed with the work of the staff and our community partners during my first month in Durham.

This issue of our Quarterly Report to the community about our key indicators of success focuses on our Community Initiatives programs, Crisis Assistance and our Customer Information Center.

These areas of the agency are each witnessing the impact of the recession on Durham's families. Requests for help with utility and rent payments are at record levels. The number of people coming to the agency to apply for public assistance is at an all-time high. And

the children served by our school-based Social Workers are reflecting the challenges that face their families.

We expect our work to increase when our economy struggles. It is our role in the community to provide access to resources and services to help families maintain financial stability, to foster self-sufficiency, promote family safety and stability and to help children be ready for and succeed in school.

This agency has a legacy of strong community outreach, a commitment to being accountable for results and a willingness to work closely with our partners. I intend to build on this legacy and further strengthen our work in the community.

These are challenging times and we are in a strong position to



respond. Yet, we know we also have opportunities to improve our services.

Your support and feedback is critical. This community has a strong reputation for caring and volunteering to help our neighbors in need.

As the holiday season approaches, we hope you will consider how you can be part of our work to help families and individuals to achieve well being.

**Gerri Robinson, MSW**  
**Director**

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#### Board of Social Services

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#### Director:

Gerri Robinson, MSW



## DSS Customers are Healthy

Two programs in our Community Initiatives section specialize in prevention services. One works with adolescent parents; the other with high-risk youth with school related problems. Our primary indicators of success for these programs are the number of repeat pregnancies among the teen parents and the number of youth that have a mental health service plan.

The social workers assigned to these programs track this information.

The Youth Services Program works with at risk youth ages 14-17 who are having difficulty in school, many of whom have little family support and may have some gang involvement. He works to connect the youth with mental health services and coordinates closely with mental health providers, school personnel, family members and the juvenile justice system. Many students have now gotten involved in counseling through the Mental Health System.

The Adolescent Parenting Program continues a long

Youth Services		
	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number Active Cases	22	23
Number with mental health service plan	18	23
Percent with a Mental Health Service Plan	82%	100%

tradition of preventing a second pregnancy. In the past six years, only one participant has had a repeat pregnancy while in the program. The Program Coordinator maintains close contact with these young parents. She helps them to obtain regular health care for themselves and their child, coordinates group meetings on health education issues, and works closely with health care facilities.

Despite limited funding, both of these initiatives help us to achieve successful outcomes for

the youth served. The Adolescent Parenting Program receives some financial support from the Juvenile Crime Prevention Grant. Community support and advocacy for these programs will be required to increase the number of youth who could benefit from these services.

Youth served by these programs benefit from strong mentor relationships. See the box to the left for more information about how you can volunteer to mentor these youth.

Adolescent Parenting Program		
	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number Active Cases	16	18
Number of repeat pregnancies	0	0
Percent repeat pregnancies	0%	0%

### Be a Mentor!

The Volunteer Center of Durham recruits mentors who are matched one-to-one with Adolescent Parents for at least one year. Mentors may also be matched with Youth Services teens.

For more information, call the DSS Volunteer Program Coordinator at 613-5109 or go to [www.thevolunteercenter.org](http://www.thevolunteercenter.org) to learn more.



## DSS Customers are Self-Sufficient

The number of families able to remain in their home due to rental or utility assistance is one measure of self-sufficiency for our crisis services programs. It also is a primary means to prevent homelessness. With the recession, we have seen an increase in the number of requests for help with utility and rent payments.

This information is collected from our Community Assistance Data Base (CADB).

The number of families able to remain in their

homes due to rental and utility assistance provided by our department has grown to 9,881 from 8,092 — a 22% increase in one year.

The number of families we can assist is limited by the amount of funding available; all funding sources for emergency financial assistance have limits on the amount and frequency of the help. In FY09 we spent \$2.3 million on rent and utility assistance from a variety of sources. In FY10 we have only \$1.7 million budgeted.

Applicants are pre-screened by telephone to eliminate long wait times for this assistance. If someone is deemed potentially eligible, they are given an appointment for a full eligibility interview. Financial literacy education is provided to prevent future dependency on emergency assistance and to help families to manage their finances and build assets.

The agency is anticipating sharp demand this winter heating season due to the recession.



## Crisis Services

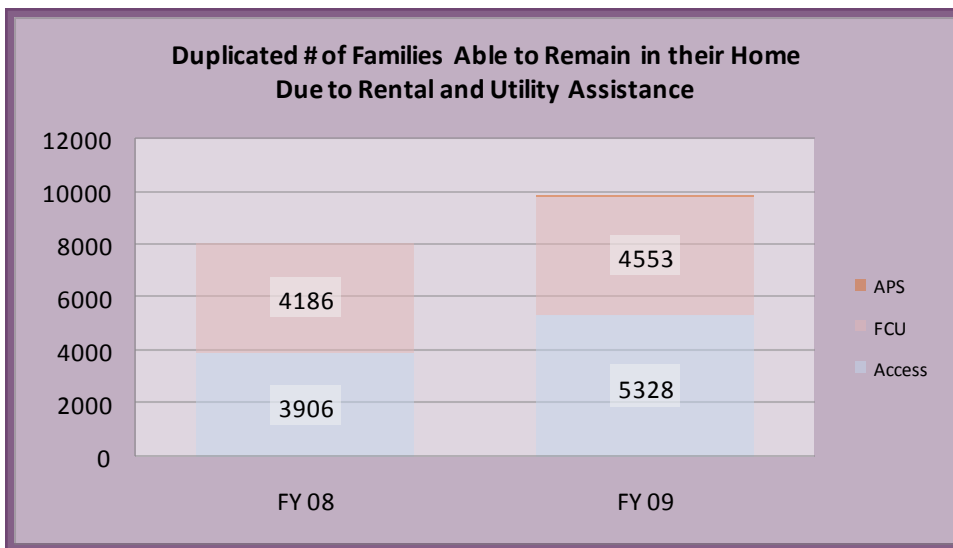
Crisis Services provide immediate help with food, rent, utilities, medical prescriptions & supplies and burials.

Crisis Services include:

- Financial help for rent, utilities and emergency medical needs
- Burial funds
- Water Hardship
- Traveler's Aid
- DATA or TTA bus tickets for medical appointments for those ineligible for Medicaid

Once eligibility is authorized, payments are made to the landlord, utility company or other vendor on behalf of the client.

Pre-screening is conducted over the phone. If you are potentially eligible, you will receive an appointment. If you have children under 18 call 560-8301; adults without children may call 560-8600.



## Donate to the Emergency Energy Fund

Financial support from the community through the Emergency Energy Fund at Duke Power is greatly appreciated. To make a donation, you can add money to your monthly Duke Energy payment and designate it for this purpose. You may also make a donation to the Emergency Energy Fund, c/o Durham County Department of Social Services, PO Box 810, Durham, NC 27702-0810.



## Children are Ready for & Succeeding in School

### School Social Workers & Youth Services

Teachers, counselors or principals refer at-risk students to school based social workers to overcome barriers to school achievement.

Youth ages 14-17 who are deficient in basic literacy skills and are in danger of dropping out of school or are homeless are referred to the Youth Services Coordinator by the school social worker.

The agency tracks two major indicators of school success in our Community Initiatives section: 1) the number of youth in Truancy Court who pass their grade and 2) the percentage of Youth Services Program students who stay in school (do not drop out).

There were 147 children involved with Truancy Court during the last school year in four schools with DSS social workers: Hillside High School, Southern High School, Jordan High School and Neal Middle School. Of those 147 students, 72.7% were promoted to the next grade before the start of the current school year.

Our school-based social workers focus on truancy because we know that children who attend

<b>Youth in Truancy Court Succeeding in School</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>
Number in Truancy Court	271	147
Number who Passed their Grade	216	107
Percent Passing	79.7%	72.7%

school have higher success rates. Social Workers follow up on all 6- and 10-day truancy notices. They also follow up with families on all drop outs. Over 400 students dropped out last year. School Social Workers contact parents of students who have excessive, unexcused absences. They attend Truancy Court to help at-risk student improve their school attendance and performance. They follow the progress of these students after Court and help to resolve family issues that contribute to poor attendance. This effort has contributed to the 14% drop in Durham Public School's overall drop out rate.

Of the 18 youth ages 16 and older who were engaged with our Youth Services Coordinator

during the last year, 67% re-enrolled in school for the current school year — there were six youth who dropped out.

The Youth Services Coordinator works with youth that are having difficulty in school and are at-risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Students are graduating in small numbers because of the challenges of working with them. Some have been suspended and are involved with the Juvenile Justice system. Many are being referred for counseling with the mental health system.

Mentors are needed for these youth. If you are interested in mentoring, contact The Volunteer Center of Durham at 613-5109.

<b>Youth Services Clients Who Do <u>Not</u> Drop Out of School</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>
Number of Youth Served Age 16 or Older	12	18
Number Who Did NOT Drop Out	12	12
Percent	100%	67%

## DSS Customers are Safe and Stable



A key indicator of family safety in our Community Initiatives section is the percentage of participants in the Adolescent Parenting Program who do not abuse or neglect their children despite being in a particularly high risk population.

Statistics on program participants are maintained by the program's social worker and the Child Protective Services data base.

Among the 18 teen parents enrolled in the Adolescent Parenting Program on July 1, 2008, there were no child abuse and neglect substantiations during the school year. These

results are consistent with program performance throughout the years.

Each teen parent is matched with a mentor who develops a strong relationship and provides social support. Monthly peer support group meetings are held to share information and to hold each other accountable for their goals. In addition, the social worker arranges for transportation, education, mental and medical support services as needed.

Teen parents need mentors. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, contact The Volunteer Center at 613-5109.

## Adolescent Parenting Program

Provides first time pregnant and parenting teens with support to prevent a second pregnancy, complete high school and strengthen parenting skills. APP targets teens experiencing problems that negatively affect their ability to function appropriately as a parent, and are at risk for experiencing one or more of the following conditions:

- Separation from family
- Interruption of schooling
- Identified health or emotional problems
- Receipt of public assistance
- A failure-to-thrive infant
- Existence of special needs (parent and/or child)
- Receipt of previous report of child abuse or neglect (parent or child)

Call 560-8124 for more information.



**Holiday Season is here!** Sponsors are needed for **Thanksgiving Dinners** and **Share Your Christmas**

For more information call 613-5109 or go to [www.thevolunteercenter.org](http://www.thevolunteercenter.org) to learn more.

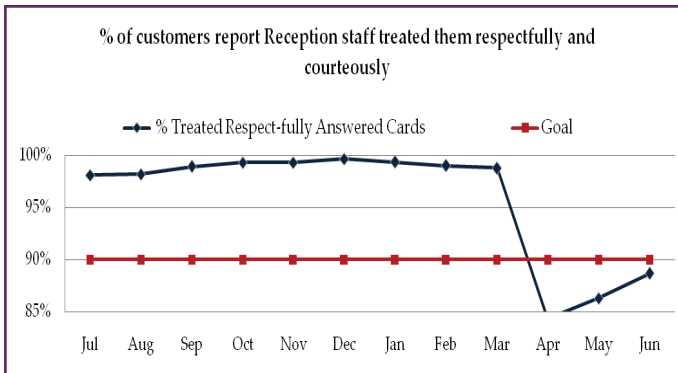


## DSS Customers Report Receiving Excellent Customer Service

Every customer that comes to the agency through our reception desks is given a customer service survey card. One of the indicators we review from that survey is the percentage of responses that indicate our staff treated the customer with respect and courtesy.

At our Reception Desks, we have received consistently high satisfaction ratings. Our average satisfaction rating last year was 98.9%. Our ratings have improved steadily the past five years. Reception Staff at Duke St. and Main St. served 66,374 clients for an average of 7,500+ clients/month in FY09.

In addition, wait times have remained under 20 minutes for clients to be seen at our back office intake. Most clients also report that they are able



**FY 08 average = 93.0**  
**FY 09 average =98.9**

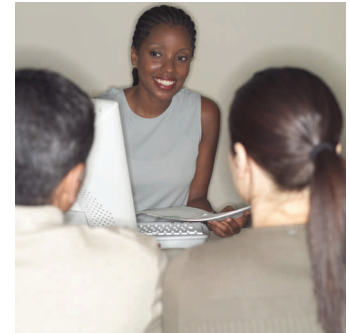
to talk to a receptionist within five minutes of entering the lobby.

Answering the thousands of calls that come through our Call Center is extremely important. Our goal is to have a person answer at least 95% of all incoming calls. In May and June 2009, we were able to reach that goal for the first time. In the past year we increased our Call Center hours to 7:15 AM—5:45 PM, which helped us to reduce the number of dropped calls. The Call Center accepted 76,028 calls from 5/1/09 to

8/28/09 (January – April 2009 data was purged when the call center reporting system was updated).

CIC staff are also piloting new software that assigns clients to the next available case worker, which speeds the process for clients. We intend to expand the use of this system agency wide this year.

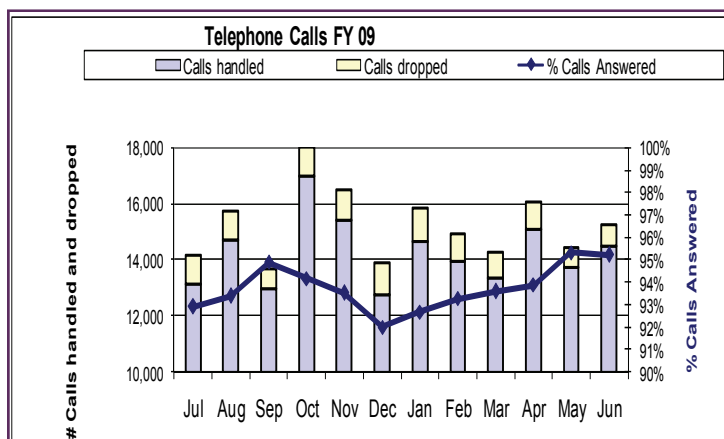
You can help by encouraging clients to complete their customer service survey cards. We review results monthly and make changes based on feedback.



### Customer Information Center

The Customer Information Center (CIC) is the “first face” of the Durham County DSS. Staff are responsible for greeting clients at Reception, opening cases in our Back Office, answering questions in our Call Center and managing the terminated records for our agency’s clients.

The Call Center number is **560-8000**. Staff at this number can answer your questions and transfer your call, if needed, to the right program or staff member.



(January – April 2009 data was purged when the call center reporting system was updated; therefore, the numbers to the left for those months is an average of previous years, 2006-2008)

## Durham County DSS

220 E. Main St. (Child Welfare, Child Support & Adult Services)

300 N. Duke St. (Public Assistance & Crisis Services)

1201 S. Briggs Ave., Suite 101 (Child Care)

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

email: [dss@durhamcountync.gov](mailto:dss@durhamcountync.gov)

### Investing in Human Capital



**Durham**  
*Social Services*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors  
Since 1918



We're on Facebook because everyone needs a little help from their friends! Search for Durham County Department of Social Services on Facebook and get connected.

### Vision

A community where families achieve well-being.

### Mission

Partnering with families and communities in achieving well-being through prosperity, permanence, safety and support.

### Upcoming DSS Events

#### October

**October 20**    **Community Reception for New DSS Director Gerri Robinson**, 4-6 PM, Commissioners' Chambers, County Administration Building, 200 E. Main St.

**October 21**    **DSS Partnership Series: Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid**, 3-5 PM, Room 609, 220 E. Main St. Call to register: 560-8082

## Contact Us

#### Director:

Gerri Robinson, MSW  
560-8038

#### Assistant Director for Communication, Development & Customer Information:

Sharon Hirsch, 560-8059

#### Assistant Director for Accountability & Program Support:

Antonia Pedroza, 560-8837

#### Assistant Director for Family Safety & Permanence:

Carol Hunt (Interim)  
919-560-8124

#### Child Protective Services:

Gail Angle, 560-8424

#### Foster Care and Adoption:

Jovetta Whitfield, 560-8467

#### Adult Services & Emergency Assistance:

Robert Wallace, 560-8600

#### Community Initiatives:

Carol Hunt, 560-8124

#### Assistant Director for Family Economic Independence:

Rhonda Stevens  
919-560-8338

#### Child Support:

Mary Fluonoy, 560-8980

#### Durham's Alliance for Child Care Access (DACCA):

Linda Hicks, 560-8472

#### Food & Nutrition Services:

Pinkie Davis-Boyd, 560-8761

#### Medicaid:

Cynthia Cason, 560-8740

#### Work First:

John Myklebust, 560-8331

