



Meeting the Challenge of the Economic Crisis



Durham County DSS is a big business, touching the lives of thousands of residents. We invest in people by putting food on families' tables, providing access to health insurance, helping to provide safety and stability for at risk children and vulnerable adults, helping children to be ready for and succeed in school, and providing emergency assistance to keep families from losing their utilities or becoming homeless.

The economic crisis is obvious when you visit our lobby and

see the number of people waiting to receive help. This presents a big challenge. The increases in public assistance caseloads have been dramatic - and we expect them to continue at this rate for some time. Some estimate that it will be at least 18 months before caseload increases will begin to level off again.

Our staff does extraordinary work to improve the lives of our most vulnerable residents. Our work influences children's school performance, health care outcomes for our residents, and safety and stability in our communities. Our business provides revenue to the medical community, grocery stores, utility companies and landlords.

In this quarterly report, we focus on telling the stories in our Crisis Services and Community Initiatives programs as well as overall results from our Customer Information Center. Each of these programs provide insight into the challenges we face as a community in this economic crisis.

We know we cannot solve our community's social and economic problems without the support of our partners—you. We welcome your feedback about our services and suggestions for improving. We cannot do it alone.

Sammy R. Haithcock
Director

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Sammy R. Haithcock
560-8038

DSS Customers are Healthy

Two prevention social workers with very specialized functions work in our the Community Initiatives section. One works with adolescent parents; one works with high-risk youth with school-related problems. A primary indicator of health for youth in our Adolescent Parenting program is avoidance of a second pregnancy. A primary indicator of health for our Youth Services effort is having a mental health provider and plan.

The social workers in these programs track this information.

In FY2008, there were 22 active participants in the Youth Services Program. 18 of those youth (82%) became connected with a mental health service provider and had a mental health service plan developed for them. Of the 16

young women in the Adolescent Parenting Program last year, none have had a second pregnancy.

In fact, over the last five years, only one participant in the Adolescent Parenting Program has had a repeat pregnancy while in the program. The Program Coordinator maintains close contact with these young parents. She helps them obtain regular health care for themselves and their child, coordinates group meetings on health education issues, and works closely with health care facilities.

The Youth Services Coordinator maintains close contact with 20-25 youth ages 14-17 at a time, 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 the mental health providers, school personnel, family members and the juvenile court system.

Despite successful outcomes, both of these initiatives have very limited funding. The Adolescent Parenting Program receives some financial support from the Juvenile Crime Prevention grant.

Community support and advocacy for these programs is critical to increase the number of youth who can benefit.

Youth served by both of these programs can also benefit from strong mentor relationships. See the box to the right for more information on how to volunteer.



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 Tasha Melvin at 688-8977 or go to www.thevolunteercenter.org to learn more.



DSS Customers are Self-Sufficient

The ability of a family to avoid eviction or utility disconnection is one measure of self-sufficiency. We have seen an increase in the number of requests that we receive for this type of assistance.

This data is collected from our Community Assistance Data Base.

The number of families receiving emergency financial assistance from our agency to avoid eviction or utility disconnection has grown to over 6,500 a 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.

Applicants are “pre-screened” by telephone to eliminate long wait times for this assistance. Financial literacy education is also being offered to help prevent future dependence on emergency assistance and to help families manage their finances and build assets.

The agency is anticipating a sharp spike in requests this winter due to the rise in fuel costs and the economic downturn.

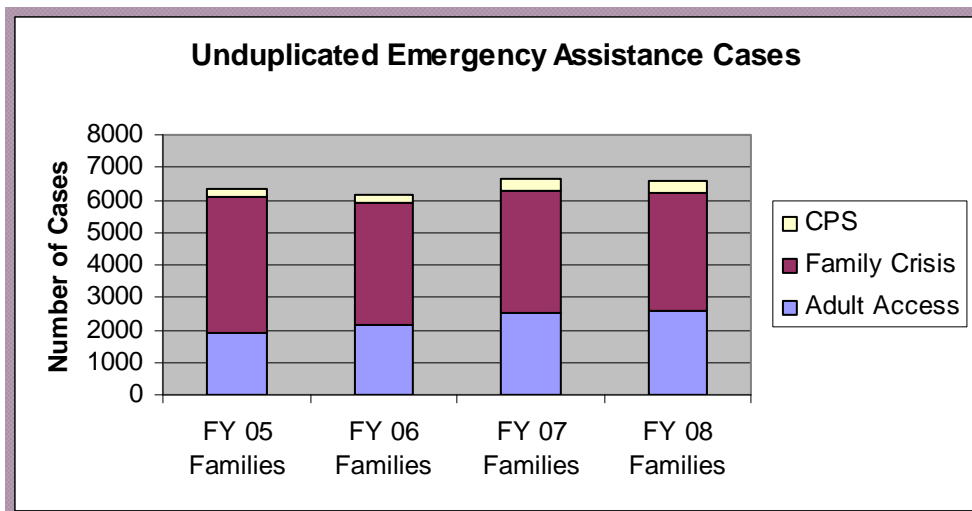
Financial support from the community through the Emergency Energy Fund at Duke Power is greatly appreciated. To make a donation, you can add money to your monthly Duke Energy payment and designate it for this purpose. You may also make a donation to the Emergency Energy Fund, c/o Durham County Department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



Crisis Services

Counseling and financial assistance are available to families and individuals to help with utilities, rent, food and emergency medical needs. Staff can also help with burials and Medicaid Transportation.

Pre-screening for eligibility 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 call 560-8600.





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.

Two major indicators of school success in our Community Initiatives section are: (1) the percentage of youth involved in Truancy Court who pass their grade; and (2) the percentage of Youth Services program students who do not drop out of school.

Information to track these indicators comes from Truancy Court Reports completed by DSS School Social Workers and data maintained by the Youth Services Social Worker.

There were 271 children involved with Truancy Court last school year in four schools with DSS social workers: Hillside High School, Southern High School, Neal Middle School and Lowes Grove Middle School. Of those 271 students, 216 (80%) were promoted to the next grade before the start of the current school year.

Of the 12 youth ages 16 and older who were engaged with our Youth Services Coordinator during the last school year, 100% re-enrolled in school for the current school year—there were NO drop outs.

The Youth Services Program Coordinator spends considerable time addressing the family support and mental health needs of the youth served. The Coordinator establishes positive relationships with the youth through counseling, trust-building and advocacy. He is able to connect the youth and their families with needed services in the community. Many of the youth are connected with services specifically designed to help them more effectively deal with issues of loss, rejection and poor self-concept.

School Social Workers contact the parents of students who have excessive, unexcused absences. They attend Truancy Court to help at-risk students 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.

They also arrange and facilitate Child and Family Team meetings that include immediate and extended family members, school personnel, and representatives of community agencies.

Youth in these programs need mentors. If you are interested in mentoring our youth, contact The Volunteer Center at 688-8977.



DSS Customers are Safe and Stable

Within our Community Initiatives section, a critical indicator of safety is the percentage of participants in the Adolescent Parenting Program who do not abuse or neglect their child 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 database.

Among the 16 teen parents enrolled in the Adolescent Parenting Program on July 1, 2007, there have been no confirmed reports of child abuse and neglect. These results have been consistent through the years that this program has been in

place. 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.

Our agency is exploring ways to expand the program and serve more teen parents.

Teen parents need mentors. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, contact The Volunteer Center at 688-8977.

Adolescent Parenting Program

Provides first time pregnant and parenting teens with support to prevent a second pregnancy, complete high school and strengthen parenting skills. The program 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 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 Tasha Melvin at 688-8977 or go to www.thevolunteercenter.org to learn more.

DSS Customers Report Receiving Excellent Customer Service

Customer Service is “Job 1” in the Customer Information Center. Indicators of success include customer service survey ratings, wait times, and the number of dropped calls in the Call Center.

Customer Service Survey cards are distributed to every client at Reception. Wait times are monitored through our Client Tracking System. Call Center data is tracked in our Cisco call center system.

Our goal is for 90% of customers to report Reception staff treat them respectfully and courteously. The average rating in FY08 was 93%, compared to only 65% in 2002. We also aim for 80% of customers to wait 5 minutes or less to see a Receptionist. In the past year, we exceeded 95% every month for English and Spanish speaking clients.

Our Back office wait time goal is 10-20 minutes. We sometimes met this goal, but not consistently.

CIC work processes have changed in the past five years. Customer Service is constantly reinforced

as “Job 1.” The Back Office collects demographic information and to open cases rather than at the Reception desk, reducing wait time and providing a private process for sharing personal stories, social security numbers and other identification information. All Duke St. reception staff are bilingual as well as one person at all times working on the Call Center.

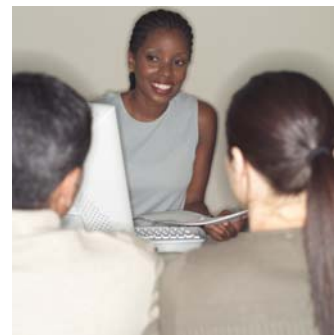
Call Center staff aim to have less than 5% of calls “dropped” or unanswered. The Call Center has accepted 213,973 calls between January 2 - September 22, 2008. While we are answering over 90% of our calls, we have not been able to meet our goal of less than 5% for dropped calls.

Many of our missed calls were occurring early in the morning and late in the day. The Call Center’s hours of operation were adjusted to 7:15am - 5:45 pm in May. Being open for extended hours resulted in a significant decrease in dropped calls.

In the next year, we will implement a new system that will assign

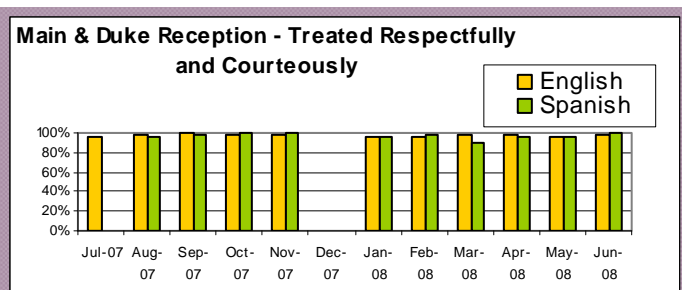
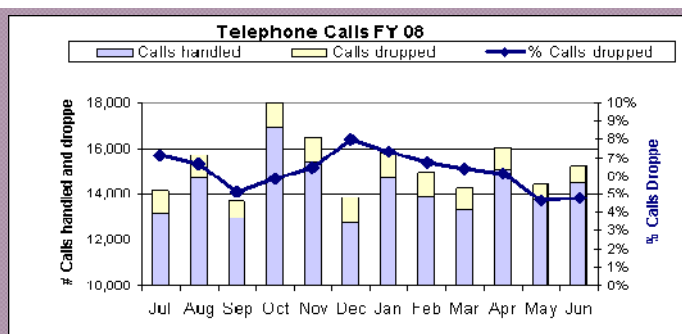
clients to the next available caseworker. This should decrease wait times further. The Call Center will also add a new feature to allow Spanish-speaking callers to be transferred to a bilingual representative.

You can help us to continue to improve our service by encouraging clients to complete our customer service survey cards – we review results monthly and make changes based on feedback. Continued support for technology improvements to make our work more efficient is always welcome.



Customer Information Center (CIC)

CIC is the “first face” of Durham County DSS, responsible for greeting clients at Reception, opening cases in our Back Office, answering questions in our Call Center and managing the records for our agency’s clients. The Call Center number is 919-560-8000.



Durham County Social Services

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

Investing in Human Capital



Durham
Social Services
Neighbors Helping Neighbors
Since 1918



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 Sponsorships Begins for Thanksgiving Dinner Program, call 433-0437

October 30 *DSS Staff Training Day* (DSS Closed)

November

** National Adoption Month **

November 10 Share Your Christmas Sponsorships Begins, call 433-0437

November 27 Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday & 28

December

December 24 Closed for Christmas Holiday 25 & 26

Contact Us

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560-8038

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919-560-8086

Assistant Director for Family Economic Independence:

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Assistant Director for Communication, Development and Customer Information:

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Gail Angle, 560-8424

Foster Care and Adoption:
Jovetta Whitfield, 560-8467

Adult Services & Emergency Assistance:

Clay Holloway, 560-8600

Community Initiatives:

Carol Hunt, 560-8124

Child Support:

560-8980

Durham's Alliance for Child
Care Access (DACCA):
560-8472

Food & Nutrition Services:
Pinkie Davis-Boyd, 560-8761

Medicaid:

Cynthia Cason, 560-8740

Work First:

John Myklebust, 560-8331

