

# Leading by Results

Volume II Number 3

Winter, 2008

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*“Published to enhance the community’s knowledge of issues affecting children, families, older adults and the disabled in Forsyth County.”*

# ViewPoint

Leading by Results



*Joe Raymond,*  
*Director*  
**Department of  
Social Services**

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Leading By Results*. This issue addresses our full spectrum of benchmarks, but it also focuses on the issue of economic security. This issue is especially timely as our state and county face the loss of manufacturing jobs and the increase in low income or low benefit service economy jobs. There is no doubt that this trend is partly responsible for the increased reliance on public supports that are necessary to “bridge the gap” between low income jobs and basic expenses of working families.

Economic security is a complex topic. To address this complexity, we have expanded *Leading By Results* by adding a national and state level perspective. Our appreciation goes to Shawn Fremstad and Liz Chimienti of the Center for Economic and Policy Research who have summarized their national “Bridging the Gap” research on page 14. Our thanks also go to John Quinterno and the N.C. Justice Center, who discuss basic economic security issues facing North Carolina. Locally, Deltra Bonner, Lead Organizer of *CHANGE*, discusses their work.

We have made a special attempt to outline many of the economic security issues facing DSS and our community as well as issues relating to the achievement of our performance targets on chosen benchmarks. In this issue, benchmarks discussed include:

- the annual percentage of children who have been in foster care more than one year;
- the annual percentage of older adults and adults with disabilities who receive Special Assistance services;
- the annual percentage of Work First participants who obtain employment at

- a living wage of \$8.50 or higher;
- the annual percentage of older adults and adults with disabilities who are not abused, neglected or exploited; and
- the annual DSS departure rate.

Since *Leading By Results* is evolving into a primary communication tool, it seems relevant that I share a few items that our Board of Social Services and I (and staff) are trying to address. First, we recently submitted our annual request for new positions to the County Commissioners. This year we have requested 13 new positions. These positions, which are 50% funded by state and federal monies, are needed because of the workload increases faced by the agency. The Food Nutrition Program (formerly named Food Stamps) caseload and workload has grown significantly. The Medicaid Program is also growing, as more children and older adults must rely on it for access to health care, often for the reasons spelled out throughout this publication. I am happy to share data about this program growth with anyone who is interested. We must also continue to provide quality services in our Child Protective Services and Foster Care Programs as we continue to see both an increasing demand for these services and cases that are more complex and require significant time to adequately address the needs of children and their parents.

In the coming years, we hope to develop significantly enhanced information technology that speeds up the experience for our customers and makes the job easier for our staff. Caseloads have risen by more than 25,000 since our facility was designed. We are pleased to announce that our first floor lobby will be “rebuilt” to relieve obviously overcrowded conditions.

Thanks for reading *Leading By Results* and for caring about the quality of life for all of Forsyth County residents.



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**Mission:** Forsyth County DSS will serve and protect vulnerable children and adults; strengthen and preserve families; and enhance economic stability while encouraging personal responsibility.

**“Serving Our Community with  
Competency, Compassion, and  
Commitment”**

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# Goal I Improve the Safety, Quality of Life, and Well-Being of Children and Families



Families are the best providers of safety, quality of life and well-being for children. However, when families cannot ensure the safety of their children, petitions to give DSS legal custody of children may be filed through the juvenile court system. At that point, DSS may place children with other relatives, licensed foster homes, or group homes while social workers continue to offer assistance to their parents so that the children can return home. When parents are unable or unwilling to make the necessary changes to provide safe, stable, permanent homes for their children, other sources of permanence are sought. These include giving legal guardianship to relatives or finding adoptive families who will offer permanent homes to the children. Our goal is to find a permanent home for a child in DSS custody within 12 months. This is not always possible.

**Benchmark Spotlight On:** *The annual percentage of children who have been in foster care more than one year who leave foster care will increase.*

## What does our data show?

Historical data is not available for this benchmark. However, between July - December, 2007, 79 children left DSS custody. Of these 79 children, 56 had been in DSS custody longer than 12 months (71%).

Of the 56 children who left DSS custody after more than 12 months:

- 25 returned to the home of parents or other relatives (44 %);
- 20 achieved permanence through

adoption (36 %);

- 2 had guardianship given to a non-relative (4 %); and
- 9 aged-out of foster care at 18 without finding a permanent family (16 %).

## Why do some children stay in foster care longer than others?

There is a direct relationship between the age of a child and his/her length of stay in foster care. The older the child, the longer they tend to stay in foster care. Among the reasons for this may be that older children have developed difficult and negative behaviors. If they have mental health issues, these may have taken longer to diagnose and treat. Behaviors may be more entrenched. Hope for finding a loving family may have been extinguished. Younger children may appear more appealing because they are more malleable, cute, and express love more visibly.

The longer children have been in DSS custody, the more services that have likely been offered to their parents. If parents have not been able to benefit from or find appropriate services, then their problems are likely to worsen by the passage of time. Untreated substance abuse, mental health, and/or domestic violence issues may have become greater barriers to providing safe, stable homes for children. By the time children are older, many families have “worn out” other family members, so fewer relative placement resources for older children may be available.

## What can be done to move children to a permanent home faster?

First, more adoptive homes are needed for children who have been in foster care a long time. Widening recruitment efforts within the communities of the foster children has worked well in some communities. Expanding these efforts requires additional social work time (and

more social workers to have manageable caseloads) as well as community support for birth and adoptive families.

A new approach of having four judges rotate through juvenile court in Forsyth County has allowed judges to retain jurisdiction in cases and come to know specific families and children. We anticipate quicker permanence for children. Some social workers find that it is helpful to report on the percentage of a child’s life he/she has spent in foster care in court reports. Others bring pictures of children or have foster teens come to court.

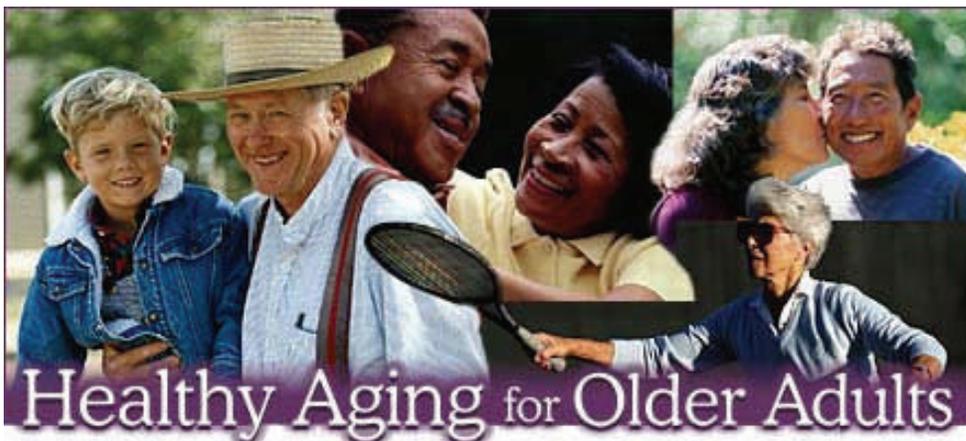
## What can the community do to help find permanent homes for children in foster care?

It truly does take an entire community to support children who are in foster care. DSS must help the community find appropriate roles that can include helping families meet basic needs; obtain food; participate in sports, music, and summer camp; obtain respite care, have access to mentors, etc. Obviously, more people becoming adoptive parents would help. Relatives can consider helping struggling parents by raising their children. Access to mental health resources is needed, including, but not limited to, substance abuse treatment programs.

Simply put, DSS and our community must increase the effectiveness of current strategies and find new strategies to help foster children grow up in healthy and stable families.

*“A new approach of having four judges rotate in juvenile court...has allowed (them) to come to know specific families and cases.”*

## Goal II DSS Makes Changes to Goals/Benchmarks for Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities



During this past year, the FCDSS has added new benchmarks to more fully describe and measure the work we do. In the Adult Services Division, we have added benchmarks based on programs that are particularly important in meeting the overall goal of assisting adults to remain at home rather than have to move to a higher level of care.

**Benchmark Spotlight On:** *The annual number of older adults and adults with disabilities who receive Special Assistance In-Home services will increase 16% (from 41 to 49). With the recent addition of slots awarded by the state this goal will change from 49 to 60.*

### What is the Special Assistance In-Home Services Program and how does this program contribute to the goal?

The Special Assistance In-Home Program (SA/IH) provides a cash supplement to help adults that receive full Medicaid (Blue Medicaid card) that are at risk of entering an Adult Care Home and **would like to remain at home**. Medicaid eligible adults with incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty level that meet all other eligibility criteria for Special Assistance are financially eligible for SA payments. The current federal poverty level (FPL) is \$851 and increases each year in April.

The payment is intended to help the adults to continue living at home and can be used for items and/or expenses related to achieving this goal. It can be used to cover items and/or expenses such as food, shelter, home repairs, home modifications, clothing, utilities, insurance premiums, health care, and other daily necessities. The payment may also be used to cover medical expenses and transportation not covered by Medicaid. Current Special Assistance (SA) recipients residing in Adult Care Homes are also eligible for the SA/IH payment if they choose to return to a private living arrangement and can do so safely.

### What is the growth trend for this program in Forsyth County?

Participation is voluntary on the part of the county departments of social services. Effective September 2006, there are 87 counties participating and 1500 authorized slots available statewide. The Adult Division began participating in October 2003 with an initial allocation of 20 slots. With continued growth and demand, as of November 2007 those slots have been increased to 60. Enrollment fluctuates in this program due to income limitations and yearly cost of living increases. This means that different people may occupy the same "slot" during a year.

### Is there a need for the program to serve more people and how can that be accomplished?

Due to fluctuations in enrollment, our goal has been to fill all slots. We need the help of the community in getting the word out to ensure that we reach persons in need.

Forsyth County realizes the benefits of the Special Assistance/In Home program, and there are not any additional costs to the County. The SA/IH Program uses the existing Special Assistance budget to provide SA/IH payments. There are cost savings, as the SA/IH payment is actually less than the SA payment for care in an Adult Care Home. Additionally, the program provides tangible benefits to adults and families. Adults who receive SA/IH payments rate their quality of life significantly higher in the areas of feelings/emotions, physical environment, social environment, and community access than those in Adult Care Homes.

Interested applicants can apply at the Department of Social Services, Adult Division. For more information you can contact: Tina Burns, In Home Supervisor at 703-3828.

*“Adults who receive Special Assistance/In-Home payments rate their quality of life significantly higher in the areas of feelings/emotions, physical environment, social environment, and community access than those in Adult Care Homes.”*

## Goal III Enhance the Economic Stability of Individuals and Families

North Carolina's Work First Program is the cornerstone of a redesigned welfare system that focuses on employment and self-sufficiency. Work First provides cash assistance for no more than 5 years while recipients assume the responsibility of becoming self-sufficient. Since January, 1997, cash assistance cases have declined from 3,766 to 1,093, an astounding reduction of 70%. However, this dramatic caseload reduction does not reveal the entire story of low income wage earners who are still struggling to become economically self-sufficient.



hour work week, to cover basic living expenses. The overwhelming majority of Work First participants become employed in jobs far below this standard.

**Benchmark Spotlight On:** *The annual percentage of Work First participants who obtain employment at a living wage of \$8.50 per hour or higher will increase from 3% to 10%.*

### What kind of wages and jobs do Work First customers get?

The Forsyth County Work First Program helps approximately 400 individuals per year obtain employment. This is true success. However, for the last fiscal year, 6.5% got jobs that paid over \$8.50 an hour. In addition, our new Work First Employment Lab (a partnership between FCDSS and the Employment Security Commission) has now served over 500 individuals and helped 149 individuals obtain jobs before even applying for Work First cash assistance. The average wage for the jobs obtained for the first six months was \$8.32 an hour. Both leave room for improvement.

Most Work First recipients are paid at or close to the minimum wage (\$6.15 per hour) which equals \$246 per week and \$948 per month. Despite working, these individuals are still unable to adequately support themselves or their families.

Research done by the N.C. Justice Center says that the statewide living income standard for N.C. is \$12.32 per hour (\$17.17 per hour in Forsyth County). It takes this amount per hour, working a 40

Work First participants obtain low wage jobs for many reasons including the fact that Work First is not a training program, but an “employment first” program. Individuals who lack competitive skills are not likely to obtain jobs that pay more than the minimum wage. Some Work First participants have criminal records or serious substance abuse challenges which also affect their ability to get a better job. The most critical barrier to economic security is that most Work First recipients do not have a high school diploma or GED. Since the federal and state government does not consider “education” a countable Work First activity, the Work First program does little to help these folks improve their education. This is extremely unfortunate since it is known that education levels correlate with wage progression.

Two national studies confirm that while many parents have left welfare and are working, former participants generally earn below poverty wages and see only modest income growth over time (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2002). This means these families must rely on other public supports to “bridge the gaps” between their low wages and the realities of meeting basic expenses.

There has been a shift in N.C. from a manufacturing economy to a service

economy. The shift eliminated many decent paying jobs and replaced them primarily with low wage and low or no benefit service and retail jobs. Now, many North Carolinians work in low wage jobs such as maintenance, nursing home attendants, childcare providers, and in fast food restaurants. These families cannot afford their basic expenses, despite adhering to our society's “work ethic.”

### How might Work First participants obtain higher paying jobs?

Helping Work First participants become economically self sufficient cannot be accomplished by public work supports alone. Private and public partnerships that help families and schools increase the high school graduation rate is absolutely essential. Unless this is done, providing temporary cash assistance and other work supports will remain a necessary but insufficient approach. More policy attention to the loss of manufacturing jobs and the creation of low wage, no benefit jobs is needed. Public and private sector involvement to create workable strategies to help young adults become literate, receive their GED or obtain a technical credential that will allow them to compete for higher wage jobs is necessary. Finally, we must match an under prepared potential labor force with the kind of jobs that are actually going to be created in the future.

*“Helping Work First participants become economically self sufficient cannot be accomplished by public work supports alone. ...helping families and schools increase the high school graduation rate is absolutely essential.”*

# FCDSS Benchmarks

All targets are to be achieved by 6/30/08

<b>Goal I: Improve the safety, well-being and quality of life of children and families.</b>			
	<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>Results to date (July-Dec.)</b>	<b>Data Story</b>
1.1	Increase % of children who achieve permanence within one year through reunification, guardianship, or adoption from 38% to 50%	12.5% (though Oct.)	Significant progress needed. Anticipate positive effects of the court improvement project.
1.2	Increase % of children who leave foster care who have been in foster care more than one year	Not available	Baseline and target being developed.
1.3	Increase % of maltreated children who are not repeat victims (within 6 mos.) of substantiated maltreatment from 95% to 96%	100% (through Oct.)	Excellent results, continued vigilance required.
1.4	Increase % of children who are adopted within one year of having a permanent plan of adoption from 45% to 50%	50%	Target being met at midyear. Seeking higher performance.
1.5	Percent of children whose placement is not disrupted or dissolved will be 100%	100%	Agency is providing quality adoption and post-adoption services to parents.
1.6	Percent of children in foster or facility care who have not been maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff will be 100%	Data due in July, 08	N/A
1.7	Percent of LINKS participants aged 18-23 who are employed or enrolled in post-secondary education (data not available)	Data due in July, 08	N/A
<b>Goal II: Older adults and adults with disabilities will be safe and healthy and live in the least restrictive, most appropriate setting</b>			
2.1	Increase % who request In-Home Aide Assistance and receive it by 4.8% (from 65.2% to 70%)	58%	Unlikely to meet target. 4-5 staff positions have been vacant or staff on medical leave. Expect improvement.
2.2	Increase number who receive Special Assistance In-Home Services 16% (from 41 to 49)	42	On pace to meet target.
2.3	Increase number who receive Enhanced Personal Care in Assisted Living Facilities 5% (from 122 to 128)	118	Close to baseline and last quarter. On pace to meet target.
2.4	Increase the number who receive Adult Day Care/Adult Day Health 7% (from 28 to 30)	34	Target exceeded.
2.5	Decrease the number of assisted living facility complaints 9% (from 72 to 65)	43	Quarter showed decrease from 24 to 17 but may not meet overall goal for year.
2.6	Increase the % of Adult Medicaid applicants whose applications are completed within the 45 day (MAA) or 90 day (MAD) standard from 93% to 95%	96.2%	Excellent performance.
2.7	Increase the % who are not found to be repeat victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation 1% (from 99% to 100%)	90.9%	Unlikely to meet target.
2.8	Increase the percent who are not abused, neglected or exploited while living in licensed care facilities 1% (from 99% to 100%)	99.99%	Low incidence continues.

### Goal III: Enhance the economic stability of individuals and families

	Benchmark	Results to Date	Data Story
3.1	Increase the Child Support Enforcement collection rate from 61.4% to 73.2%	61%	Aggressive improvement plan in place. Unlikely to meet target.
3.2	Increase the % of Child Support cases with court orders from 79% to 90.1%	79.1%	Increase this quarter to 81.1%. Expect to meet target.
3.3	The Child Support Enforcement Program will meet its total collections goal of \$21,599,570	\$10,041,745	At 46% of goal. Tax intercept in Spring, 08 should help to meet target.
3.4	Increase the percent of Child and Family Medicaid and NC Health Choice applicants whose applications are completed within 45 days from 90% to 91%	92.9%	Excellent performance despite many staff vacancies.
3.5	Increase the Work First Participation Rate from 37% to 50%	30%	Very unlikely to reach this target.
3.6	The total number of Work First participants who obtain employment will be 400	218	On pace to meet target.
3.7	Increase the % of Work First participants who obtain employment at a living wage of \$8.50 per hour or higher from 3% to 10%	6%	Some progress but unlikely to make target.
3.8	The % of Work First participants that obtain a GED/High School diploma or vocational certificate (no data, target yet to be set)	No data available	N/A
3.9	The % of individuals potentially eligible for Food and Nutritional services who receive them will be 60% or better	Due in July, 08	N/A
3.10	The monthly average of eligible children who request DSS's child care subsidy and receive it	54% (July-Oct.)	No target set. Limited funding.

### Goal IV: Increase public understanding of relevant social issues and build effective community partnerships

4.1	The % of residents who have access to private health insurance or publicly funded health care	<b>Data not available, no targets have been set.</b>
4.2	The % of children and adults in need of mental health services who have access to timely services	
4.3	The % of 9 <sup>th</sup> graders who start the 9 <sup>th</sup> grade and complete high school	
4.4	The % of child abuse and child neglect	
4.5	The % of older adults and adults with disabilities who are not abused, neglected or exploited will increase	

### Goal V: Be publicly accountable for efficient use of resources and timely delivery of services

5.1	The employee departure rate will decrease from 10.2% to 7.5% or less	8.33%	2nd quarter (2.19%) much lower than 1st qtr. Continue to monitor.
5.2	The number of 18 "core" DSS programs not in program improvement status will decrease from 3 to 0	Due in July, 08	Two programs in Program Improvement status.
5.3	The % of customers who report that they were treated with respect will be maintained at 90% or higher	90.1%	Survey data reveals good performance.
5.4	The amount of dollars recovered through program integrity efforts will be \$75,000 or more	\$19,461	Reviewing collections processes

# Goal IV Increase Public Understanding of Relevant Social Issues and Build Effective Community Partnerships

Our community is justifiably concerned with the safety of children; however the safety and health of older adult and adults with disabilities is also critically important. Probably even more than with children, the issues of abuse of older adults are often hidden or go unreported.

**Benchmark Spotlight On:** *The annual percentage of older adults and adults with disabilities who are not abused, neglected or exploited.*

The newly recast Forsyth Futures organization has a focus on the improvement of measurable community level benchmarks. This benchmark has been adopted by Forsyth Futures which is why it is a DSS benchmark in our Goal IV. Since DSS is not a prevention agency, it is appropriate that a broader community effort help address this fundamental issue of protecting older adults and adults with disabilities.

## What is known about the prevalence of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults and adults with disabilities?

There is little good data at the national, state or local level on the annual incidence of abuse, neglect or exploitation of this population. First, there is no uniform definition of abuse and neglect in all states. Second, the only national study that attempted to estimate incidence (the number of new cases of abuse and neglect in a given year) was in 1996. That study estimated that around 450,000 older people experienced abuse or neglect in domestic settings and that only 16% were reported to Adult Protective Service agencies.

In FY 06-07, 122 of 592 Adult Protective Service referrals met the legal criteria to be evaluated for abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation. Of these 122, 26% of these reports were confirmed. Compared to the entire population of

older adults and adults with disabilities in Forsyth County (approximately 60,000 people), this means that the “official” prevalence of abuse and neglect is small.

## What is FCDSS’s role in protecting older adults and adults with disabilities?

DSS provides APS to elderly & disabled adults who are alleged to be abused, neglected or exploited. For abused or neglected adults who are competent, DSS always attempts to provide voluntary services, but the adult’s legal right to self-determination must be considered.

DSS accepts reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation by telephone or in person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The intake process involves an assessment of the referral by the APS Unit to determine whether it meets criteria set forth by state statute. Of 592 cases assessed in FY 06-07, 363 did not meet the legal criteria for APS intervention. However, services were offered through APS Outreach or information was provided about other services available in the community.

For every APS call or case, services are offered. Services may be as minimal as connection to community resources the client or family isn’t aware of or may be very involved such as intense short-term social work services to stabilize the situation. Important to remember, however, is that as long as an individual is competent and has capacity to make decisions in his/her life, then he/she can choose to either accept services or refuse them. For those who no longer have capacity to make decisions for themselves and have no one in their lives to help them, then other venues such as guardianship may be pursued.

Currently, APS is using the clearinghouse model set forth by the state which ensures that any calls concerning APS are assessed and provided with either APS Information and Referral, APS Outreach

or APS Intervention. So far the legislature has not provided the necessary funding to ensure that anyone identified for being potentially “at-risk” receives some level of intervention. Forsyth County APS has utilized this model for the past two years, and, in addition, restructured the Intake Unit. There has been an 18% increase in referrals over the previous year due to the new intake process and developing more expertise within the APS unit.

## What can our community do to protect older adults and adults?

Education regarding abuse, neglect or exploit of older adults and adult with disabilities should increase. Such adults are especially vulnerable to financial exploitation from outsiders and from some relatives. Legal penalties for this type of crime need to be more effectively pursued.

More service options for those who want to live at home as long as possible are needed including strategies to fight the social isolation experienced by many older adults and/or disabled adults. Finally, Forsyth Futures must help the community develop a comprehensive approach to the support of older adults and adults with disabilities in order to assure that the rate of abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults and adults with disabilities will remain low.



*“DSS accepts reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation by telephone or in person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.”*

# Be Publicly Accountable for Efficient Use of Resources and Timely Delivery of Services

DSS has changed this benchmark from “preventable turnover” to “departure rate.” While the American Public Human Service Association defines preventable turnover as retirement, death, marriage, parenting, returning to school, military service, or a spousal job move, our change to “departure rate” more accurately reflects the agency’s loss of staff (retirements, promotions and death are excluded).

**Benchmark Spotlight On:** *The employee departure rate will decrease from 10.2% to 7.5% or less.*

## Why is this benchmark important?

This benchmark is critical since well trained staff are key to the agency’s success. High departure rates are costly and affect program performance, staff morale, and our capacity to deliver consistent high quality customer service. The true cost of turnover may be three times an employee’s salary or higher.

## What does the data show about the DSS departure rate?

The agency’s fiscal year 2006-2007 departure rate of 10.2% was quite acceptable especially considering that most DSS’s across the state and country experience much higher rates. In prior years, the rate was even higher (14.7% plus). The last couple of years have seen rates fall from 10.91% to our baseline of 10.2%. Accordingly, the target of 7.5% was selected for fiscal year 2007-2008. Given the historical departure pattern, this target may have been too ambitious.

Unfortunately, the departure rate in the first quarter of this year was a surprising 6.14%. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, the rate fell to 2.2%. Analysis of our data did not uncover any patterns to these departures, and they were spread across the program areas. Thus our 6 month rate is about 8%, making it impossible to reach our 7.5% target; however, improving on our



baseline is still achievable.

Staff leave the agency for many reasons. Many reasons are beyond the control of the agency and some are not. Typical reasons employees leave include: dissatisfaction with their supervision, workload stress, work assignments, finding a better job, etc. Some turnover may relate to hiring practices or inadequate screening. In the first 6 months, many staff left from the Child and Family Medicaid Program. We know that high caseloads, workload complexity and lack of information technology significantly contributed to the departure of some staff.

## What is the agency doing to reduce the departure rate?

A staff team is making specific recommendations to reduce the departure rate. Draft recommendations include:

- Integrate existing database and spreadsheets and other information into a set of more relevant and timely Human Resource Reports to aid in tracking trends and decision making.
- Use hiring pools to double fill vacancies in some program areas, thereby, increasing the capacity to reduce workload related stress and to allow for an overlap when a departure does take place.
- More closely monitor the recruitment and selection process and create standard operating procedures to ensure that this system operates smoothly, efficiently and that we are making good hiring decisions.
- Articulate a model of supervision and management practices and train our formal leadership staff to these

standards of practice.

- Assign a full-time staff development position to the professional development of our formal leaders thereby increasing the effectiveness of supervision and management.
- Develop a supplemental and individually-based rewards system that runs parallel to our current pay-for-performance system, thereby adding additional motivators.
- Increase communications regarding what transpires in our Leadership and Management Teams and encourage more communication between staff and their representatives on these teams, thereby increasing opportunities to participate in decision making.
- Increase the visibility and accessibility of information on available community resources, thereby putting more tools and information in the hands of staff in order to help them be more efficient and successful at their work.
- Implement a group-based retention rewards program and rewards based on the group’s ability to meet retention targets.

DSS is committed to being publicly accountable for our services. This can only be done with knowledgeable experienced staff. Staff retention is a critical measure of our progress.

*“High departure rates are costly and affect program performance, staff morale, and our capacity to deliver consistent high quality customer service.”*

# What's New at DSS

**Thank you** to all the individuals, businesses and organizations who sponsored children in foster care or in the Relatives as Parents (RAPP) program this holiday season to have a joyous holiday.

Generous individuals, church organizations, businesses, and community groups adopted a child or gave gift cards to these special children and their families.

Many people don't know that approximately 10% of children in our community live with grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts/uncles or other relatives because their parents are incarcerated, deceased, battling drug addiction or have mental concerns. Most relative caregivers are older, and have fewer resources to support these children. DSS sponsors a program called RAPP to provide encouragement, information, support, and networking opportunities for relative caregivers. RAPP is made possible by a grant from the Brookdale Foundation.

Special Thanks to:

## Churches

Anonymous Church groups  
Beck's Baptist Church  
Cedar Grove Baptist Church  
Clemmons Presbyterian Church  
Dreamland Park Missionary Baptist Church, Senior Choir  
Friedberg Moravian Church Youth Group  
Friedberg Moravian Church "Steel Praisin" Steel Drum Band  
Jefferson Church of Christ, the Soul Seekers Class  
Konnoak Baptist Adult Sunday School Class  
Mt. Pleasant UMC, Youth Group  
St. Andrews UMC, Outreach Ministry

United Metropolitan Baptist Church  
United Metropolitan Missions Baptist Church, Senior Missionary Group

## Community Groups

Atkins High School, Class of 1971  
Clemmons Rotary Club  
Forsyth Women Attorneys  
Golden K Kiwanis Club  
Kiwanis Club of Arbor Acres  
Legal Professionals  
National Youth/Junior Achievers of the Winston-Salem Chapter of National Women of Achievement  
Sisters Undivided  
Summit School, Kate Helm's Class  
The "Rust and Dust" Antique Club  
Toys for Tots-Marine Corps  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
YMCA of NWNC

## Businesses

Amarr Garage Doors  
Blue Rhino Propane Gas  
FHG Steele, Yadkinville  
GMAC Insurance  
Gold's Gym, Reynolda, Rd.  
Highland Industries, a Division of Takata Corporation, Kernersville  
Highwoods Properties  
His Healing Touch, Missy Renuart, Licensed Massage Therapist, Kernersville  
Main Branch Post Office, Patterson Ave.  
Medipack Pharmacy, Westpoint Blvd.  
Mud Pies Child Development Center, Parent Advisory Group  
NC Diagnostic Imaging  
North State Flexibles, Greensboro  
Piedmont Aviation  
Timeout Sport Bar, Kernersville  
Wachovia, AML Department, Linden St., Winston Salem  
Wal-Green's District Office, Roanoke, VA



Waste Management, Inc.  
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage  
Womble Carlyle

## Government/Human Service Organizations

City of Winston-Salem,  
Human Relations Department  
Forsyth County Animal Control  
Forsyth County Budget and Management (1 employee)  
Forsyth County Department of Social Services (7 employees)  
Forsyth County Environmental Affairs  
Forsyth County Library (20 employees)  
Forsyth County Parks and Recreation  
North Carolina Probation Parole  
NuDay Case Management, Inc.  
People Helping People of NC  
Senior Services, Inc. (3 employees)  
United Way of Forsyth County

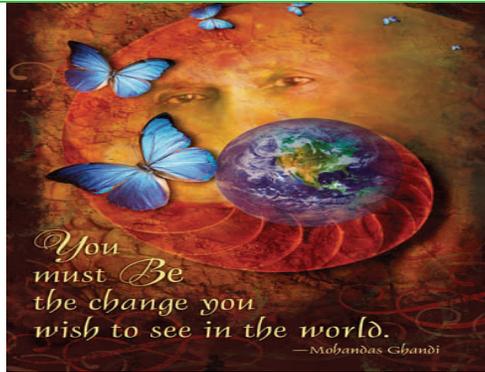
## Community Sponsors: Individual Sponsors and Families

Tracie Hunter Bowens  
Debbie Cauley and Connie Barber  
Detra Davis  
Holy Davis and Family  
Tom Dawson  
Jerry and Sherry Edwards  
Patricia Kindley  
Cherise King  
The Charles Paul Families  
Private Donors  
The Paul, Hill, Lewis and Families  
Velva Saunders  
James and Princess Shaw  
Dr. Tibbs and Monte Tuttle  
Celia White and Family



# CHANGE Discusses Their Work in Forsyth County

By Deltra Bonner, Lead Organizer  
*CHANGE*



*CHANGE* is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that is grassroots, nonpartisan, multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-faith. Participants come from all economic backgrounds and a variety of locations across Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Membership is comprised of 47 dues-paying congregations, neighborhood associations, and other interested groups; giving our organization an estimated network of 20,000 people.

*CHANGE* is committed to:

- Building a stronger community by developing relationships across racial, ethnic, economic, political, social, and religious lines;
- Cultivating the skills of leaders inside our member institutions;
- Identifying shared concerns and needs; and
- Acting together for the common good.

*CHANGE* is not a movement, a protest group, a political action committee, or a service organization. We do not run programs, endorse candidates, or take government money. *CHANGE* is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the oldest and largest community organizing network in the United States. *CHANGE* is a broad-based organization in terms of our membership and the kinds of issues we take on, including healthcare, public education, economic development, affordable housing, and accessibility to local governmental structures.

## How does *CHANGE* take action?

*CHANGE* has two paid full-time community organizers and an administrative organizer who work together with grassroots volunteer leaders to provide leadership development and lead action campaigns. We use organizing tools such as house meetings (small group meetings led by

trained leaders) to identify problems and challenges in our community and to create Action Teams focused on turning often overwhelming problems into specific issues that we can work on and win! Most importantly, at the heart of our work is the commitment of our leaders to build relationships across the many lines that divide us in order to foster trust and communication. Using community organizing tools, our goal is to build a sustainable vehicle for civic participation that can last for generations.

*CHANGE* believes not only in building relationships between people in our member institutions, but also with public officials, corporate leaders, and other constituents in order to effect significant transformation in our community. We have worked with local government officials to identify improvements needed in blighted neighborhoods, with school officials to address issues of health, safety, and equity in our public schools, and with local business leaders to guarantee that Forsyth County residents had equal access to the application process for Dell. In short, *CHANGE* is deeply committed to ensuring liberty and justice for ALL our community's residents.

## How has the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy affected families?

With low skilled, good paying manufacturing jobs no longer available, residents are finding some employment in the retail and service sectors but at much lower wages and often without

benefits. While retraining is commonly required to be eligible for certain jobs, people are not necessarily equipped to enter the classroom after 20+ years. The greatest impact has been on middle-income families who no longer have the financial resources to sustain their previous living standard. These families frequently face foreclosures and bankruptcies. These conditions can contribute to a decline in quality of life, ranging from health problems to depression to family violence.

## What other issues will affect the ability of working families to be self-sufficient?

Currently, families are experiencing a variety of pressures with rising food and fuel costs. Additionally, childcare and healthcare expenses continue to be a primary source of hardship for many families. Often, we hear stories from individuals who have to decide which family member will go to the doctor.

## How is *CHANGE* addressing these issues?

At present *CHANGE* is in the process of researching and developing strategies focused on ensuring access to affordable healthcare both locally and statewide. We are concerned with addressing the challenges not only confronting the economically disadvantaged, but also residents who are employed but without healthcare benefits. We continue to tackle other issues related to quality of life, including public transportation, affordable housing, and public education.

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*“...Our goal is to build a sustainable vehicle for civic participation that can last for generations.”*

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# Economic Security: An Elusive Concept for Many Families



This special issue of *Leading by Results* tackles the complex concept of economic security of working families. This is a vital issue because it cuts to the core of why a “safety net,” funded by taxpayers, is needed in the world’s most prosperous nation.

Economic security (whether a family has enough income to meet basic needs) is of vital interest to DSS, since without it families often turn to DSS and other public and nonprofit services. Helping children and older adults and adults with disabilities obtain a measure of economic security is a focus of much of the DSS mission. It is usually difficult for individuals to rely on public supports. The reality is by the time they need our services, they have exhausted other options.

## How does DSS increase economic security for low income families?

DSS administers most of the work support programs discussed in *Bridging the Gaps* (see page 14 of the report at [www.bridgingthegaps.org](http://www.bridgingthegaps.org)). But many people may still think of DSS as the organization that provides large amounts of cash assistance (welfare) to single mothers with children. But since “welfare reform” in 1996 (TANF), there are now only 300 cases of Work First cash assistance at any one time in Forsyth County. There are another 900 Forsyth County cash assistance cases where children live with relatives, but understandably these relatives (usually grandparents) are not expected to engage in Work First activities.

Statewide participation in this program has declined over 70% and in Forsyth County the number of individuals receiving cash assistance has declined over 80%. In today’s Work First Program, the parent must fully participate in mandated Work First activities which results in over 400 adults gaining employment each year.

Yet despite welfare reform, the need for other public supports remains great and has significantly grown in recent years. Low income parents need help with child care so they may work, they need help to buy food (Food and Nutritional Services), they need access to health care (Medicaid) or help with the collection of child support. DSS administers these programs. The reality is that low income individuals and families cannot make it on their own and need help from a variety of sources to bridge the gap between their low incomes and basic needs. The following table demonstrates recent program growth (including a waiting list of over 2,500 children whose parents need help with child care in order to work).

Forsyth County DSS Program Growth 1997 - 2008

Program	Jan. 1997	Jan. 2008	% Diff.
Food Stamp Households	8,839	13,302	50%
Family & Children’s Medicaid Cases	9,569	21,725	127%
Children Receiving Child Care Subsidy	1,740	3,408	96%
Work First Cash Assistance Cases	3,766	1,093	-70%

## Economic Security is about more than money

Economic security of families matters because data clearly shows that poverty is associated with a variety of bad outcomes for children. Children from poor families, especially children of color, are much more likely not to graduate from high school, be victims of child abuse or neglect, become parents as a teen, and experience poor health outcomes in their lifetimes. One national study (US Health and Human Services) found that families whose annual incomes are \$15,000 or less are 26 times more likely to be involved with child welfare services as compared to those whose incomes are \$35,000 or more. Economic security provides the basics so that families can then work on developing critical “human capital” (education and skills training for better jobs) that are the basis for a better life.

## What does our data tell us about how families are doing locally?

The data story for Forsyth County shows that a large percentage of Forsyth families consistently struggle to bridge the gap between their incomes and their basic needs. For example:

- Unemployment, while low, is 4.3%, up from 2.5% in 1998;
- The poverty rate in 2004 (the most recent year available) was 13.6 % up 21% from 1995;
- Child poverty in 2004 was 19% up 21% since 2000;
- Forty-seven percent of children in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools receive free school lunches (2006); and
- 2,559 children are on the waiting list for the day care subsidy (1/31/08).

# Economic Security (Continued)

## Changes in Our Economy Affect Low Income Families

It is also obvious that our economy has changed dramatically. In 1980, manufacturing accounted for 37% of all jobs. Today, only 13.3% of all jobs are manufacturing jobs. Historical reliance on textiles, tobacco, and furniture jobs is no longer the case. These types of jobs are now only a small percentage of jobs, compared to their once prominent place in the local economy. Low skilled jobs that pay a living wage are gone, probably permanently. Families are still making the adjustment.

As the economy changes and jobs that pay enough to support families are harder to find, more people need work supports. While the overwhelming % of people try to work in Forsyth County, many need help to make ends meet and provide basic necessities for their families. Changes in the local economy have devastated many families. While median family income has risen just under \$5,000 since 1998 to \$50,008 (2003), per capital income has remained flat. The poverty rate rose by 21% during that period.

## **What other programs in Forsyth County support working families?**

DSS is not the only governmental or community agency that supports working families in our community. There are far too many agencies that support working families in our county to name them all. Some that work closely with DSS include Goodwill Industries of NWNC, Inc., the Employment Security Commission, the Experiment in Self-Reliance (ESR) and many others.

The Forsyth Working Families Partnership provides free tax preparation and promotes the Earned Income Tax credit for working families and savings and asset building strategies. Last year, this coalition served over 2,000 low income taxpayers and recouped almost \$2.5 million in tax refunds for them. Interestingly, forty-five percent of Forsyth County taxpayers received the EITC and brought in over \$1.2 million to Forsyth County.

Another vital program is the Individual Development Account (IDA) program, run by ESR that promotes asset building. This IDA program helps low and moderate income families save money to become first-time homeowners. The program provides matching funds for home purchases for



families that can save regularly. Since its inception, 298 families have purchased homes.

## **How might economic security be improved for working families in Forsyth County?**

Our community and state needs serious long-term strategy to increase the economic security of working families. Basic approaches include:

- Increased understanding of the job market trends that face low income wage earners;

- More and high wage jobs that provide health insurance as a basic benefit;
- Increased access to education and training to improve skills for incumbent workers including work-based literacy programs;
- Better transportation to help workers reach better paying jobs (many jobs that pay more are not on the public transportation grid);
- A dramatically improved high school completion rate; and
- Access to more child care and other work supports for working families.

Work supports and public assistance programs exist to bridge gaps that the “free market” does not address. More higher wage jobs with benefits and a better educated and trained workforce are directions worthy of pursuit.



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*“The reality is that low income individuals and families cannot make it on their own and need help from a variety of sources to bridge the gap between their low incomes and basic needs.”*

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# Bridging the Gaps for Working Families: A National Perspective

By Shawn Fremstad and Liz Chimienti,  
*Center for Economic and Policy Research*

## What is the Bridging the Gaps project?

*Bridging the Gaps* is a national effort to provide data and analysis about the economic security of working families. Over the past three years, the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) and the Center for Social Policy have collaborated on the project with research organizations in ten states, including the North Carolina Budget and Tax Center. One aspect that makes the project unique is its examination of the role that “public work supports,” such as Food Stamps or Medicaid, play in enhancing the economic security of working families.

## What is the “hardship gap” for working families?

Bridging the Gaps found that 41 million people in working families in the United States fall into a “hardship gap.” This term means that, despite working, they still fall below the threshold of a “basic needs budget” for the area in which they live. This estimate takes into account their earnings as well as any public work supports they receive, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, Food Stamps, Child Care Assistance, and Medicaid/Health Choice. Unlike the outdated federal poverty measure, basic needs budgets are based on the local costs of the basic goods and services, including housing, food, and transportation, needed to have a realistic standard of living.

## What role do public programs play in supporting working families?

While public work supports do not eliminate hardship completely for all families, they do reduce it considerably. Among families who fall into the hardships gap based on their earnings alone, one in five families are lifted out of this gap by public work supports. Among families who



remain in the hardships gap, public work supports close about 44 percent of the gap.

One major limitation of public work supports is that many individuals living in the hardships gap are not eligible for any public work support. For example, nearly 70 percent of children living in the hardships gap have parents who are ineligible for child care assistance. They either earn too much or do not meet other eligibility criteria even though they are low income.

Public work supports respond to the prevalence of low wage work in the United States. Despite economic growth, and increases in the education and productivity of the labor force, low wage work that provides few or no health or retirement benefits has remained a central element of the American economy. About one in three jobs in the United States pays less than \$11 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, the wages paid to a typical low wage worker today is little different than the wage paid in 1979; however, workers are now less likely to receive health or retirement benefits.

Health care is a good example. As insurance premiums have risen, many employers have reduced or eliminated health insurance coverage for lower paid workers and their families. While the Federal State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) has made great strides, many children and their

working parents remain unable to afford health care. Across the ten states we studied, nearly half of people in the hardships gap were ineligible for SCHIP or Medicaid. By forcing people to go uninsured, we all pay the price through higher medical costs and premiums.

In the three decades following World War II, the U.S. experienced shared prosperity as defined by increases in economic growth and worker's productivity that led to widespread increases in wages and benefits. In fact, the lowest paid workers gained the most during this period. Since the early 1970s, there has been a reversal of this broadly shared prosperity.

Public work supports play an important role in countering this trend. In the short term, outreach efforts can help people receive the work supports for which they are eligible. Programs must be fully funded to reach more low-income families, and states must provide more out-reach to ensure families know about the programs. In the long term, state and national legislators must work together to fund work support programs and expand eligibility to low-paid workers.

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*“About one in three jobs in the United States pays less than \$11 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, the wages paid to a typical low wage worker today is little different than the wage paid in 1979; however, workers are now less likely to receive health or retirement benefits.”*

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# Bridging the Gaps in North Carolina

By John Quinterno, Research Associate  
NC Budget and Tax Center

To better understand the problem of low wage work, the NC Budget and Tax Center recently participated in the “Bridging the Gaps” (BTG) project, a 10-state study organized by two national research groups. BTG had three goals: 1) to document the gap that exists between the basic financial needs of working resources and the amount of money they earn; 2) to understand how families manage that gap; and 3) to learn how well six work support programs (Earned Income Tax Credit, public medical insurance or Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF, housing assistance and child care assistance) assist families grappling with low wage work.

The project involved two stages. First, the researchers conducted an analysis of the low wage job market and data for seven work support programs. Second, the BTC co-hosted community discussions in Raleigh, Rocky Mount and Greensboro with parents who have worked low wage jobs. The results were published in the study *Bridging the Gaps*, available at [www.bridgingthegaps.org](http://www.bridgingthegaps.org)

## **BTG found that North Carolina has a high percentage of workers in “bad jobs.” What is a bad job and why is this an important finding?**

The study found that 34 percent of all jobs in North Carolina are “bad jobs,” meaning that they pay less than \$16.50 per hour and lack health insurance and retirement benefits. This high proportion of bad jobs helps explain why 2.5 million N.C. residents work but earn too little to meet basic living expenses. Moreover, this suggests that economic hardships result not so much from the lack of jobs or from people being willing to work, but from the kind and quality of existing jobs.



## **What role do work supports play in helping families “bridge the hardship gap”?**

A second finding was that most families are ineligible to use the work supports designed to supplement low wage work and replicate the kinds of benefits commonly provided to better paid workers. For example, 58 percent of people earn less than a “basic standard of need” and are ineligible for Medicaid/ Children’s Health Choice. The “basic standard of need” comes from a family’s budget rather than the federal poverty thresholds. Moreover, relatively few people who are eligible actually receive benefits. For example, only 21 percent of eligible children actually receive childcare assistance.

## **Which work support programs are most essential to support working families?**

For the families that can access them, work supports make a vital difference. In North Carolina, the standard bundle of work supports eliminates half of the typical family’s monthly financial shortfall. Moreover, the most commonly used supports are the EITC and Medicaid, both of which directly address the poor pay and lack of benefits characteristic of low wage jobs.

## **What can be done to respond to problems of low wage work?**

In fits and starts, North Carolina’s leaders are coming to understand that economic hardships are linked to the growing problem of low wage jobs. In response, the General Assembly has recently taken such steps as raising the minimum wage, adopting a state EITC and working to strengthen health insurance for children. The legislature even is considering a paid sick day standard that would allow workers to take time off with pay if they or a close family member become ill temporarily.

Going forward, public leaders interested in addressing the problems of low wage work should pay attention to five broad areas. First, strong wage and benefit standards that ensure that hard work pays are needed. Second, to deliver more meaningful benefits to more families, eligibility criteria for work supports and program funding should be expanded when appropriate. The state EITC is one area ripe for such change. Third, social insurance systems, especially those related to healthcare, require strengthening. Fourth, tax policies that unfairly shift responsibilities onto working families must be avoided or ended. Finally, a more comprehensive view of the public workforce development system is needed if people truly are to become upwardly mobile and escape the trap of low wage work.

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*“...North Carolina’s leaders are coming to understand that economic hardships are linked to the growing problem of low wage jobs.”*

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# "In the Next Issue"

*In the Fall issue of **Leading by Results**, the Department of Social Services will report on specific benchmarks associated with each goal. The newsletter will also include an interview on a topic of interest related to these benchmarks.*



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