

Item Title: Child Welfare Transition into North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST)

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners authorizes the establishment of 9.00 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions in the Human Services department within the General Fund to support additional staffing needs related to Child Welfare's NC FAST preparation and implementation.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners authorizes new positions, including this requested addition of nine full-time positions to the Child Welfare Division.

Background: The State launched the NC FAST initiative in 2008. The initiative meant to standardize services, outcomes, data collection and reporting of such child welfare and social services as Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). The implementation of a statewide automated case management system enables staff to monitor contacts and consumer engagement in a timely manner and better ensures the safety of children.

Wake County currently has custody of over 570 children and completes over 5,000 Child Protective Assessments each year. The number of positions in the Child Welfare division has grown from 239.5 in FY 2015 to 293.2 in FY 2019, an increase of 53.7 positions (22%). This increase includes some positions from reorganization. Based on the County's experience implementing a prior NC FAST module, anticipated turnover, and experiences of "pilot" counties, staff request nine additional full-time positions to help implement the system.

Board Goal: This action complements initiatives in the Community Health and Social and Economic Vitality goal areas.

Fiscal Impact: Sufficient funds are currently appropriated in the FY 2019 Human Services budget to cover the additional personnel and operating expenses. Wake County is anticipated to receive about \$23,000 in State revenues to partially offset these expenditures. The FY 2020 budget would incorporate the full-year costs of these changes, roughly \$667,000.

Additional Information:

On August 22, 2018, after the start of the current fiscal year, the State informed Human Services that the Child Welfare Division will launch the NC FAST system in May 2019. Based on this updated timeline, Wake County Human Services requests 9.0 FTEs for the Child Welfare Division to address identified needs related to implementation. These positions include six Child Protective Services Investigator/Assessors, one Human Services Supervisor II, and two Human Services Trainers.

This request is based on:

1. The County's experience from the prior transition to NC FAST, which began in 2014. Although the NC FAST initiative began in 2008, there were multiple delays in implementation which resulted in Wake County's 2014 start.
2. Anticipated high turnover based on previous turnover when Medicaid and FNS were transitioned into NC FAST, and
3. The experiences of other North Carolina pilot counties with their implementation of child welfare.

Wake County learned many lessons in the last 10 years transitioning Economic Services (Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Services) into NC FAST. Dedicated and ongoing staffing is needed for training, quality assurance, and system administration. It is critical that supervisors, program managers, and directors understand how to use NC FAST, data and reports from the system and how to support their teams. Training must be more in-depth than the training offered by the State and training and quality assurance will be ongoing.

With the Economic Services' transition over the last several years, Wake County has experienced up to a 40% staff turnover rate. High staff turnover is also anticipated in the Child Welfare transition because a percentage of staff who have experience working under prior systems may not be able to make the transition. Child Welfare staff will use the system in the field as well as the office and will not be able to suspend statutory responsibility to assess child welfare reports, work with families, and move children to permanency to deal with the complexities of same time data entry.

The anticipated staffing need is also based upon reports from "pilot" counties that have already implemented NC FAST. They have reported staff turnover of up to 50% and a 30% reduction in productivity.

Additional Detail on New Positions: The OSS staff will: coach and respond to problems related to NC FAST; work trouble ticket requests; monitor and convey staff learning, comfort, and implementation needs; create NC FAST job aids, FAQs, and tips/tricks; provide onsite and remote on-the-job and over-the shoulder support; and communicate and operationalize NC FAST changes, upgrades, and fixes. These are new positions.

The Supervisor will: analyze data entry, work output and productivity; assess staff technical assistance and support needs; advocate for NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) technical assistance and support; coach, monitor, and

supervise a team of 6 OSS; conduct performance reviews of staff; and recruit, interview, and recommend applicants for selection. This is a new position.

The Trainers will: utilize OSS and Quality Assurance Reviewers' feedback and observations to inform curricula development; deliver training and coaching in the office and in the field for new and existing staff; survey staff training experiences; and incorporate feedback into future training approaches. There are two existing Child Welfare trainers.

FY2019 Partial-Year Costs and FY2020 Annualized Costs: The table below summarizes the net impact (County Share) from this requested action by listing Human Services Child Welfare expenses and revenues by fiscal year.

Description	FY2019	FY2020
	April 2019 – June 2019	July 2019 – June 2020
Personnel Expenses	211,953	635,858
Operating Expenses	61,170	31,041
Total Expenses	\$273,123	\$666,899
State Revenues	23,151	29,425
Total Revenues	\$23,151	\$29,425
Total County Share	\$249,972	\$637,474

State Reimbursements: Reimbursement for Child Welfare expenses are less than reimbursements for Economic Services, which the County implemented in NC FAST in 2014. Economic Services programs, such as Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), are 50%-75% federal pass-through funds. Reimbursements to Counties are driven by actual expenses and not capped.

In Child Welfare, however, the State has setup a different structure. The State allocates a capped amount of funding to Counties. Wake County has already reached its capped allocation for the current fiscal year FY2019 and will again in FY 2020. Due to the State's financial approach, and the limits of the reimbursement schedule, the actual reimbursement rate beyond the capped allocation does not exceed 25% and is frequently a lower percentage. Thus, County staff anticipate minimal reimbursement for these nine positions because the expenses are above the cap.

Attachment:

1. Budget Memo