Overview

Internship Program Update

With the creation of the Operations, Strategy, & Innovation Division, the Internship Program was moved under the ownership of this division and is led by the Training & Development team.

The purpose of the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services Internship Program is to provide a high-quality learning experience for undergraduate and graduate level students from various educational institutions and degrees of interest. The Internship Program provides students the opportunity to put into action the mission, goals and objectives of DSS. Interns are able to experience firsthand how mandated social services are provided to the community through Economic Services, Services for Adults and Youth & Family Services. For DSS, the Internship Program provides assistance to field supervisors, and allows those individuals to grow as leaders in their supervision and coaching of interns. Most importantly, a key benefit of the Internship Program, as articulated in the DSS strategic business plan, is that it provides a pipeline for recruiting and hiring highly qualified individuals for job openings who have already had direct experience working in the department.

Professional partnerships have been established with various educational partners, including UNC Charlotte, Johnson C. Smith University, Winthrop University, and Queens University. The T&D team has been meeting with partners to identify internship interest, align on capacity for interns, and to share our vision for expanding the program over time.

Throughout the history of the program, most interns have completed their internship within the Youth and Family Services Division, driven by both student interest, department need and field supervisor interest. The goal for FY21 is to place 15 to 20 interns, primarily in YFS but expanding to include a few placements in the Economic Services Division. The vision of the T&D team is to expand the internship program over time to include partnerships beyond just schools of social work, so that we can bring in interns from a diversity of educational backgrounds that can add value and capacity across all Divisions within DSS, as well as expand our talent pipeline for positions beyond YFS.

2020-2022 Strategic Business Plan Update

Goal 1: Stabilization-
The Department of Social Services Clinical and Contractual Services (CCS) is a multi-functional, integrated division supporting DSS human-servicing divisions and other County Departments. Currently, CCS provides the following core functions as an interdisciplinary team:

1. Behavioral health clinical consultation and care coordination services related to the following populations:
    a. Children in DSS/YFS custody between ages 0 and 17
    b. Transition-age young adults (ages 18-21) who have signed voluntary placement agreements (VPAs) and receive ongoing monitoring by DSS/YFS
    c. Adult wards in DSS/SFA's adult guardianship program (Adult Protective Services)
    d. Families under CPS investigation or receiving Family In-Home services

2. Nurse care management, medication review, and limited direct nursing services for/related to the following populations:
    a. Children in DSS/YFS custody between ages 0 and 17
    b. Transition-age young adults (ages 18-21) who have signed voluntary placement agreements (VPAs) and receive ongoing monitoring by DSS/YFS
    c. Adult wards in the adult guardianship program (Adult Protective Services)
    d. Families under CPS investigation or receiving Family In-Home services (limited)
3. Contract management and oversight of the following:
    a. Roughly $12 million in behavioral health contracts (substance use services; peer support; psychological and clinical assessments; and services for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and intellectual/developmental disabilities)
    b. $20 million contract for Child Care Resources Inc. (childcare subsidy programs); and
    c. $7 million in residential/foster contracts managed on behalf of Youth and Family Services

In FY20, under new leadership, the division began scribing processes related to each operation; capturing metrics for the nursing team; analyzing operations and contract language; and ensuring contracted providers are committed to and incorporating trauma-informed care and services. Further, the division began offering direct training and support to short-term placement providers serving children and youth in the care of Youth and Family Services (YFS).

CCS has continued implementation of incremental changes to help transform the Department of Social Services into a trauma-informed department (as part of the Mecklenburg County Mental Health Taskforce's partnership with the National Council on Behavioral Health). Further, CCS has been actively involved in supporting YFS foster parents during the COVID-19 pandemic; launched an internally managed foster care program for girls with multisystem (i.e. YFS & DJJ) involvement; and is assuming an integral role in enhancing prevention and early intervention services available to children and families served by Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services Departments.

Key Performance Indicators

Food & Nutrition Services – MOU*

A federal food assistance program that provides low-income families the food they need for a nutritionally adequate diet. Benefits are issued via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. Eligibility determinations are based on income, household composition, citizenship/immigration status, and resources. The state will not issue formal corrective actions related to MOU performance during FY20.

Figure 1.
Application Timeliness Rate: FNS Expedited

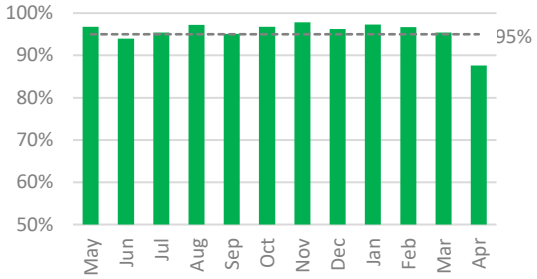


Figure 2.
Application Timeliness Rate: FNS Normal

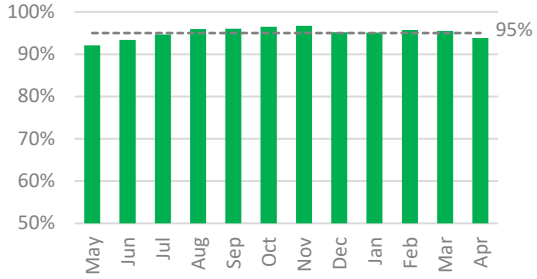


Figure 3.
Recertification Timeliness Rate

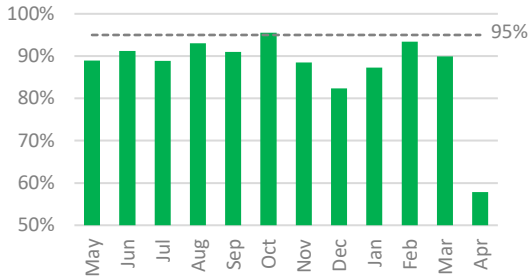
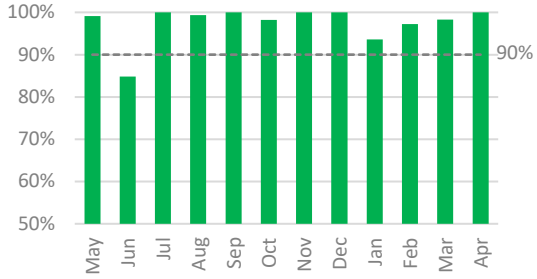


Figure 4.
Timeliness Rate- Program Integrity Claims Established



---- Performance Target

* These performance indicators are established by the FY19-20 North Carolina-Mecklenburg County Memorandum of Understanding.

Performance Notes

There were 123,928 active FNS recipients in April 2020; up seven percent from previous year (115,300). The increase in recipients coincides with the COVID-19 event and the state's decision to waive eligibility requirements to minimize barriers to assistance.

Fig 1. There were 3,344 expedited FNS applications processed in April 2020, a 164 percent increase from the previous month (1,263). The timeliness rate was 87.59 percent.

Fig 2. There were 4,142 normal FNS applications processed in April 2020, a 122 percent increase from the previous month (1,866). The timeliness rate was 93.84 percent.

Fig 3. There were only 83 FNS recertifications processed in April 2020 because the State automatically recertified the vast majority of FNS cases due to Covid-19. April's result includes just those cases that were not automatically extended by the State at the start of the pandemic, so the timeliness rate of 57.83 percent is not reflective of the number of FNS cases actually recertified.

Performance Notes (cont'd)

Fig 4. The Claims Established timeliness rate was 100 percent during April 2020. In advance of the new fiscal year, Program Integrity focused resources on reducing its case backlog, which caused the June 2019 timeliness rate to fall below the performance target.

[†] The Program Integrity unit investigates claims that a household is ineligible for the Food & Nutrition Services benefits which it receives. Upon receipt of a claim, the unit has 180 days to determine (or "establish") if an overpayment condition exists.

Key Performance Indicators

Work First – MOU*

Provides parents with services such as short-term training to help them become employed and move toward self-sufficiency through the Employment & Career Services programs. Other families, where grandparents and other relatives are caring for their relative children, are able to receive services and support that also prevents children from entering the foster care system unnecessarily. Eligibility determinations are based on living arrangements, age, kinship requirements, citizenship/alien status, social security enumeration verification, income, and resources.

Figure 5.
Application Timeliness Rate- Work First

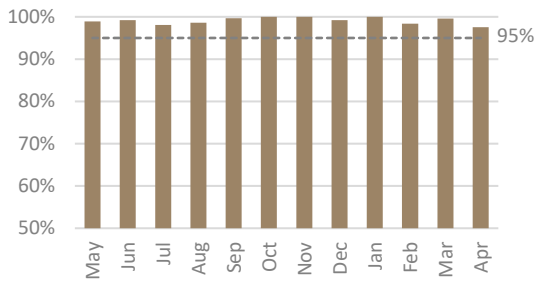
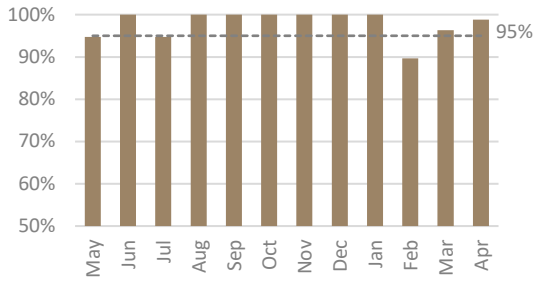


Figure 6.
Recertification Timeliness Rate- Work First



---- Performance Target

* These performance indicators are established by the FY19-20 North Carolina-Mecklenburg County Memorandum of Understanding.

Performance Notes

There were 2,602 active Work First recipients in April 2020; down 12 percent from last year (2,987). Prior to the pandemic, applicants were required to complete an in-person interview. While that policy was waived on March 23, and applicants can now apply for assistance through a phone interviews via the Customer Connections call center. COVID-19's impact on participation rates is not yet clear.

Fig 5. There were 203 Work First applications processed in April 2020. The processing timeliness rate was 97.54 percent.

Fig 6. There were 84 Work First recertifications processed in April 2020. The processing timeliness rate was 98.81 percent.

Key Performance Indicators

Energy Programs – MOU*

Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) is a federally funded program that assists individuals and families who are experiencing a heating- or cooling-related crisis. Applications are accepted beginning July 1, ending June 30 the following year, or until the CIP funding allocation is exhausted, whichever comes first. Eligibility determinations are based on citizenship/alien status, income, presence of an energy-related crisis, and possession of a utility statement that demonstrates the amount owed to alleviate the crisis. Energy programs are provided through Crisis Assistance Ministry (CAM).

Figure 7.
One-Day Application Timeliness Rate- Crisis Intervention Program ǂ

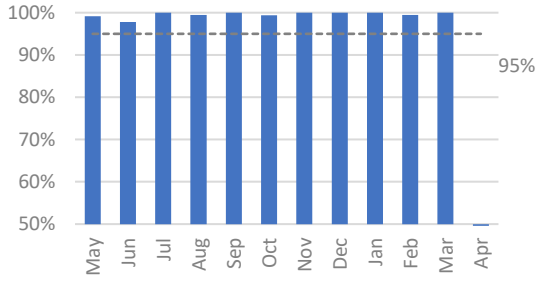
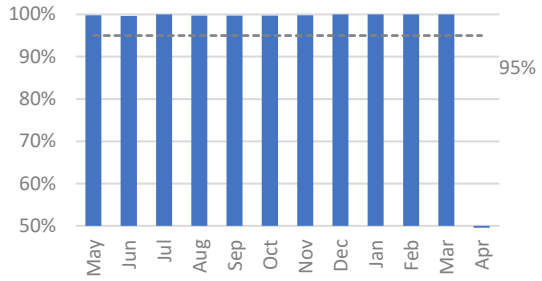


Figure 8.
Two-Day Application Timeliness Rate- Crisis Intervention Program ǂ



---- Performance Target

* These performance indicators are established by the FY19-20 North Carolina-Mecklenburg County Memorandum of Understanding.

ǂ April data was not available by the report date.

Performance Notes

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Crisis Assistance Ministries closed service to the public on March 17. No service was provided during April. As of June 10, 2020, $2.4 million in energy funds remain available.

Key Performance Indicators

Medicaid*

A health insurance program for aged, disabled, and low-income individuals and families who cannot afford health care costs. Eligibility determinations are based on age, disability status, income, necessity of long-term care, Medicare status, citizenship/immigration status, residency, and income. Beneficiaries who receive Supplemental Security Income, Work First, or Special Assistance for the Aged or Disabled are automatically eligible for Medicaid.

Figure 9.
Average Processing Time- Medicaid for Disabled Applications ǂ (days)

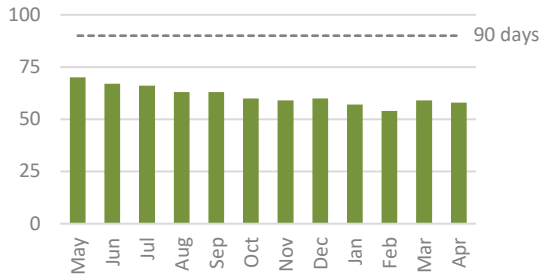


Figure 10.
Processed Timely Rate - Medicaid for Disabled Applications

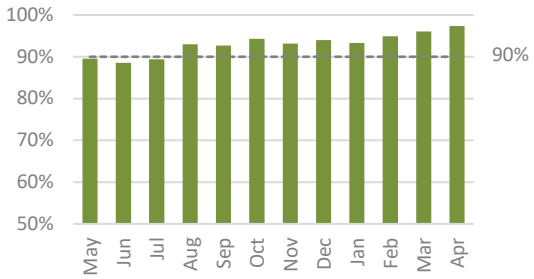


Figure 11.
Average Processing Time- Other Medicaid Assistance Applications ǂ (days)

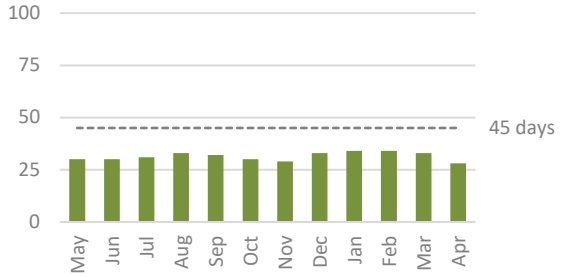
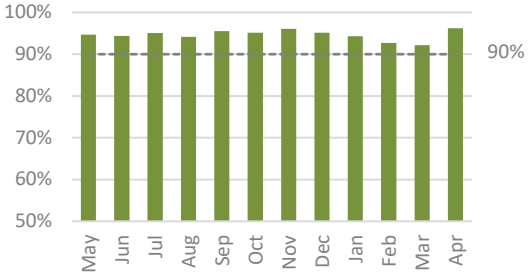


Figure 12.
Processed Timely Rate- Other Medicaid Assistance Applications



ǂ Desired performance outcome is *below* the target line.

---- Performance Target

* These performance indicators are established by the FY19 Joint State-County Timeliness Action Plan.

Performance Notes

There were 241,881 active Medicaid recipients in April 2020; down four percent from previous year (251,979).

Fig 9. During April 2020, Medicaid for the Disabled applications were processed on average in 58 days, surpassing the state standard.

Fig 10. The Medicaid for the Disabled application timeliness rate was 97.34 percent in April 2020, surpassing the state target.

Fig 11. During April 2020, other Medicaid Assistance applications were processed on average within 28 days, surpassing the state standard.

Fig. 12. The other Medicaid Assistance application timeliness rate was 96.22 percent in April 2020, surpassing the state target.

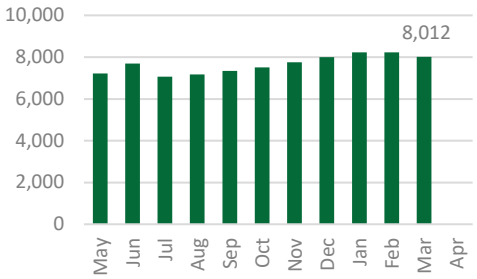
After meeting all Medicaid timeliness requirements for seven consecutive months, the County successfully completed the Corrective Action Plan in December 2019.

Key Performance Indicators

Childcare

Provides subsidized childcare for low-income working parents, parents engaged in workforce preparedness training, Work First participants, Child Protective Services cases, and Smart Start parents (working poor and teens). If a family meets the eligibility criteria, the state of North Carolina pays a portion of the cost of childcare. Parents are free to choose a childcare arrangement that best fits their needs as long as the provider chosen participates in the Subsidized Childcare Program. Eligibility determinations are based on income, cost of care, and situational criteria such as the family's employment status, student/vocational training status, the developmental needs of the child, and the involvement of child protective services or child welfare services.

Figure 13.
Childcare Served*



* Empty data fields indicate the data is not yet available.

Figure 14.
Childcare Waitlist: All Ages

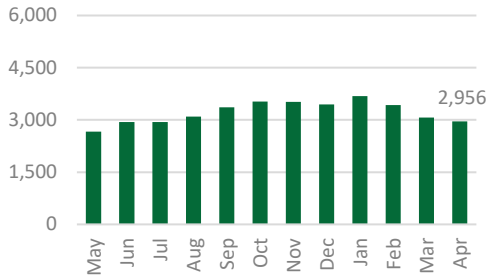
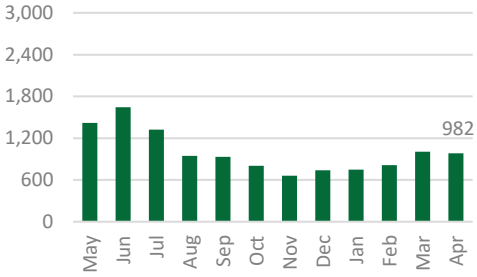


Figure 15.
Childcare Waitlist: Birth to 5 Years Old (Pre-K)



Performance Notes

Fig 13. During March 2020, 8,012 children received subsidized childcare, a 12 percent increase from the previous year (7,164). The increase coincides with an increase in the frequency of waitlist screening. The state has not yet released April children served counts.

Fig 14. During April 2020, there were 2,956 children on the state childcare waitlist, down 14 percent from the previous year (3,468). Additional waitlist screening contributed to the reduction by identifying families who were no longer interested or were determined to be ineligible to receive services.

Fig 15. During April 2020, there were 982 children (birth to Pre-K five-years old) on the County childcare waitlist, down 51 percent from the previous year (2,005). The decrease coincides with a funding increase from the county's Waitlist Reduction Initiative introduced in July 2019 and an increase in the frequency of waitlist screening by the program administrator. The additional screening aided in identifying families who were no longer interested or determined to be ineligible to receive services.

Key Performance Indicators

Service Demand

This section presents the number of customers served by selected programs. It differs from the previous sections which focus on the timeliness and efficiency which services are provided. Service demand can provide useful context for changes observed in the quality of service delivery.

Figure 16.
Medicaid Cases

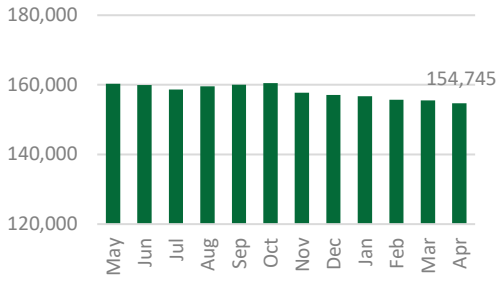


Figure 17.
Food & Nutrition Cases

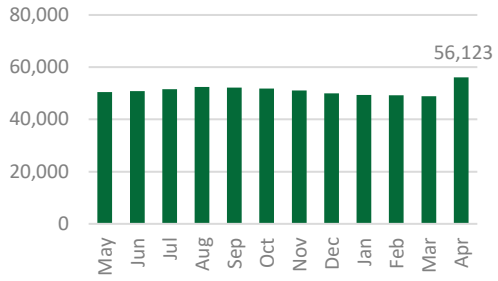


Figure 18.
Work First Cases

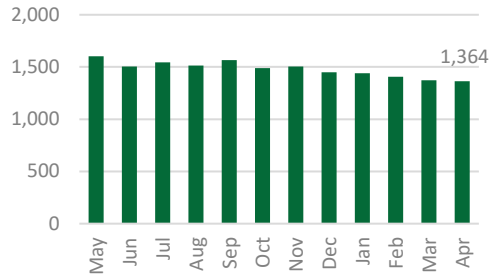


Figure 19.
Children in Custody

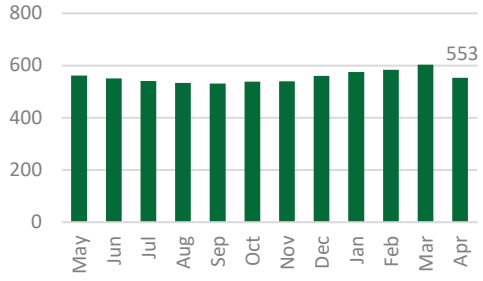
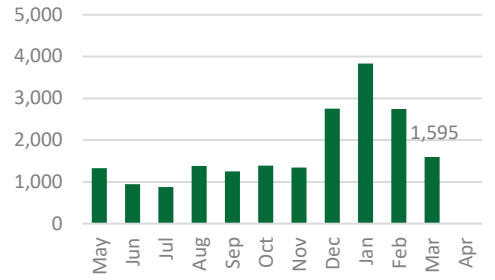
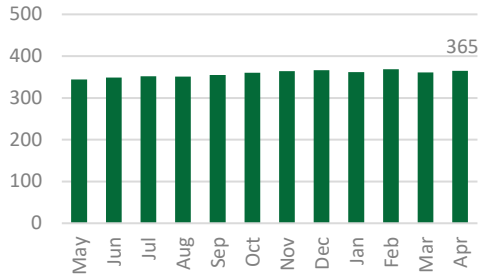


Figure 20.
Households Receiving Emergency Assistance



* Crisis Assistance Ministries suspended service during April in response to the state Stay-at-Home order. No households were served during April.

Figure 21.
Adult Guardianship



Service Demand Notes

Fig 16. After peaking at 162,229 in April 2019, the number of Medicaid cases declined five percent to 154,745 in April 2020.

Fig 17. There were 56,123 Food & Nutrition cases in April 2020, a nine percent increase from the previous year (51,420). The increase coincides with the state's decision to waive eligibility requirements to minimize barriers to accessing assistance during the pandemic.

Fig 18. There were 1,364 Work First cases in April 2020; down nine percent from previous year (1,498). COVID-19's impact on participation rates is not yet clear. The observed decline in recipients may, in part, be the result of the county's suspension of in-person contact with the public at the start of pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, applicants were required to complete an in-person interview. While that policy was waived on March 23, and applicants can now apply for assistance through a phone interviews via the Customer Connections call center.

Fig 19. There were 553 children in DSS custody in April 2020; a two percent decrease from the previous year (563).

Fig 20. Data not available by the report date.

Fig 21. DSS was responsible for 365 wards in April 2020, a seven percent increase from the previous year (342).