Opening Message to Our Community

We invite you to read the following pages which we believe will provide you with insight into the important role the Department of Social Services (DSS) plays in our community. We are grateful for our dedicated staff for the services they provided to our residents during these challenging and unprecedented times. During the pandemic, we were challenged to find new, innovative ways to provide mandatory services. We were also challenged to provide necessary, discretionary services to connect the gaps which exist in our service continuum. We are appreciative of the many community members, businesses, and other organizations who have stepped up to help us with many of the unmet needs in our community. Finally, our work could not be achieved without the support of our Board of County Commissioners and County Administration.

Thank you for helping us to make a difference in our community!

Our Strategic Areas of Focus

At DSS, we’ve had a successful year focusing on our key priorities, which were built based on the County’s goal areas, community priorities, and the Board of County Commissioners’ FY21 Priorities; all of which support the well-researched “Social Determinants of Health.” As noted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Social Determinants of Health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

Social Determinants of Health

- Health Care Access and Quality
- Economic Stability
- Education Access and Quality
- Social and Community Context
- Neighborhood and Built Environment

DSS Alignment with Our County Priorities

County Goal Areas

Accountable Government

Healthy Community  |  Economic Opportunities  |  Connected Community  |  Safe Community

DSS FY22 Priorities

- Family First Prevention Services Act, Medicaid Transformation, Behavioral Health Services, Community Aging & Disability Collaboration
- Access & Recovery, All Access Point App, SNAP Employment & Training Programs
- Early Childhood Care & Education Initiatives, Customer Engagement & Outreach
- Community Violence, Raise the Age, Family Justice Center, Emergency Preparedness

In response to COVID-19, DSS implemented and enhanced several of our benefits and programs to support Mecklenburg County families in need whose challenges intensified due to the pandemic. Through these programs and initiatives, we worked to build more viable and thriving communities across our county. Learn about the progress DSS made in each of the following areas.

**MeckHope Behavioral Health Initiative**

MeckHope is a time-limited, multiagency approach to address the behavioral health needs of Mecklenburg County residents in the wake of COVID-19. The MeckHope initiative officially launched in September 2020. The services offered by MeckHope include a 24/7 Resource and Referral Line; COVID-related mental health screenings and treatment; trainings for community professionals to help address increases in behavioral health issues related to the pandemic; and access to short-term behavioral health services for Mecklenburg County residents. Through July 30, 2021, there were roughly 11,000 episodes of service, serving at least 6,000 unique individuals. Further, financial contributions were used to purchase technology to improve virtual telehealth services and to train professionals and laypeople in skills-based courses, including Mental Health First Aid.

**Grab & Go Sites**

Senior citizens have been disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic with decreased ability to safely gather to access food and other physical and recreational facilities. When senior nutrition sites closed in March 2020, home-delivered meals were offered to congregate customers and seniors in the community who needed nutrition support. The department decided to start “grab and go” drive through meals at six locations in the community and collaborated with two community organizations to meet the nutritional needs of seniors.

**Pandemic-EBT (PEBT) Benefits**

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the federal government launched the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program. The program was created to help families purchase food for children whose access to free or reduced-priced meals at school was impacted by COVID-19 due to students learning virtually.

The P-EBT card functions like a standard EBT card. The P-EBT card can be used to purchase food items at EBT authorized retailers, including most major grocery stores.

Eligible families already receiving Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits automatically received additional benefits on their existing EBT cards without needing to apply for P-EBT. Eligible families who did not have an FNS or P-EBT card were mailed EBT cards. During FY21, more than 18,000 families received P-EBT benefits.

**Supporting Our Students**

During the 2020-2021 school year, DSS connected 241 youth and caregivers to SYDKIMYL who provided the following services:

- Virtual tutoring services
- Weekly social-emotional learning support focused on student well-being
- Empowerment for youth and caretakers to take control of their academic success
- Virtual “ePOD” academic sessions led by Educational Facilitators

The facilitators (college students) very easily connected with youth and encouraged youth to work hard and to do their best every day.

In August 2020, DSS and key community stakeholders formed a partnership with the YMCA of Greater Charlotte to provide virtual back to school programs for children in foster care. This collaboration was formed because of a need identified by foster parents and kinship caregivers to promote placement sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic while supporting caretakers through the experience of remote learning.

**MeckHope**

Quote from callers to the Warm Line: “Out of all the years of psychiatric care and hospitalizations that were often dehumanizing, the warmline is better than any kind of therapy I ever received. It gives me hope to one day work in peer services and open a peer respite center because this kind of care is that important. The warmline really hears me and supports me in ways I have never been supported and reminds me I am not the stigma, but a human being. I prefer PRN warmline to any warmline or crisis line I have ever called.”

Photos of persons without masks or social distancing were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
All Access App

In 2020, DSS implemented a mobile application to ensure that customers were provided a digital option to submit information to us. Customers are able to use the app 24 hours a day including holidays and weekends from the safety of their homes. This allows them the ability to communicate with us while remaining safe and socially distant. The landing page is now more user friendly. DSS was recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) in 2021 for this effort.

Medicaid Transformation (Managed Care)

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) officially rolled out Medicaid Transformation on July 1, 2021. NCDHHS transitioned most beneficiaries to the new NC Medicaid Managed Care. This transition changed the way some Mecklenburg County residents receive Medicaid services, as these services are now administered and reimbursed by health plans. Beneficiaries can choose from one of five health plans that best suit their needs.

One & Done

“One and Done,” also known as the Economic Services Division (ESD) Transformation, was implemented to overcome challenges of increased demand and expectations. “One and Done” is the process of employing all efforts to bring the eligibility case to resolution at first touch or interaction with the customer. The focus shifts from case actions and touches to full resolution and case completion. The goal was to complete 60% to 80% of all eligibility determinations during the initial interaction or contact with the case. The Transformation involved process changes, implementation of the Current Workload Management System, and reorganization of staff. While this is still a work in progress, it has created the foundation needed to ensure timely processing of benefits to our residents.

Early Childhood Education & Care

MECK Pre-K

MECK Pre-K, in collaboration with Smart Start, continued its annual expansion, maintaining the vision of moving closer to universal Pre-K in Mecklenburg County by adding 20 new classrooms in FY21. The program led the way in providing critical services to children and families by opening all 89 classrooms for in-person learning. However, public health and safety remained paramount and thus a decision was made, based on the input of all stakeholders including families, that classrooms would operate at 50% enrollment capacity to allow for less crowding and greater social distancing. Community interest in MECK Pre-K was strong, with childcare providers lining up to host new classrooms and student enrollment consistently at approximately 97% of allotted classroom seats throughout the school year.
Families are at the core of who DSS serves. We provide services that support the entire family, understanding that could look different for each individual household. That family unit could include two parents, a single parent, grandparents and extended family members, caregivers or guardians, individual adults or seniors, or couples with no children. We aim to ensure that whatever social, financial, career, health or other wraparound services are needed, that a family knows the options and resources available for them in Mecklenburg County. Here is a highlight of the work we have done in FY 2021 to support families.

Highlights:

**Online Purchasing Now Available to EBT Card Users at Select Grocery Retailers**

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants can now purchase groceries online using their EBT cards at seven authorized online retailers: Publix, ALDI, Amazon, BJ’s, Carlie C’s, Food Lion, and Walmart. North Carolina currently has the most authorized online retailers in the entire country.

**RISE2Work**

FNS’s Employment and Training Program, called RISE2Work, is designed to assist customers who are looking for work or need training for a better job. RISE is available to most residents of Mecklenburg County age 16 and above who receive or are included in an FNS case, are able to work, and are not receiving Work First Employment Services. DSS serves as a resource connection to, and sometimes a funder of, vocational training, transportation, child care, and other supportive services that address barriers to employment. In addition, DSS has Education Navigators at Central Piedmont Community College to assist people with connecting to further education opportunities, nine official workforce partnerships, social workers located around the community to assist with anything getting in the way of career progression, and a rapid employment track to assist those only interested in a job. RISE has continued to offer services throughout the pandemic and adapted successfully to the virtual environment.

**Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) & Crisis Intervention Program (CIP)**

DSS is committed to serving our residents by reaching out to the community to bring an increased awareness of the county’s available energy programs. These programs are designed to assist the most vulnerable in our community. While LIEAP helps to warm homes during the cold winter months, CIP provides security and assistance with prevention of utility disconnections throughout the year for those who are experiencing a heating or cooling related crisis, a life threatening or health related emergency, and have a final notice or past due utility bill. LIEAP provides eligible households with a one-time payment to their heating vendor to offset the high cost of heating during the cold-weather months. Depending on the household’s primary heating source, the payment could be $300, $400 or $500. The goal of these programs is to reduce the risk of health and safety problems such as illness, fire, or eviction by helping families stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
Family Justice Center Collaboration

Over three years in the making, the first phase of Mecklenburg County’s Family Justice Center (FJC), which includes the Survivor Resource Center (SRC), officially launched on February 16, 2021. The SRC is located in the Children and Family Services Center at 601 E. 5th Street, Suite 530.

FJC’s are a collaborative approach to ensure survivors of domestic violence do not have to retell their story multiple times, thus reducing trauma. Additionally, within FJC’s, several services are housed and available at one location. Representatives from the following agencies are currently housed at the SRC: Pat’s Place Child Advocacy Center, Safe Alliance, Community Support Services, DSS, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. Other nearby and engaged partners are the District Attorney’s Office and the Sheriff’s Office.

Photos of persons without masks or social distancing were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
DSS is committed to being an advocate for children. Our youth are our most vulnerable population and it's our duty to make sure they are safe, healthy, and under the best care for their overall wellbeing. Our employees work day and night to protect and care for our county’s children who may not have guardians. DSS manages childcare programs as well as violence prevention programs to provide youth with education and guidance.

Highlights:

**In-Home Services/Prevention**

The primary goal of In-Home Services is to support families to safely maintain their child(ren) in their own home by eliminating identified safety and threat concerns, and reducing risk of future child maltreatment. This is achieved through engagement of the family, their support system, and other service providers.

In-Home Services are legally mandated and are provided to:

- Address child safety, threat factors and protection
- Preserve families (maintain child(ren) safely in their home)
- Prevent further abuse or neglect by strengthening the family’s capacity to protect and nurture their children

**Permanency Planning (Foster Care)**

Permanency Planning Services (Foster Care) is intended to serve as a temporary substitute of care provided to children who must be separated from their own parents or caretakers when the parent and/or caretaker is unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection and care. When safety and risk concerns are paramount and removal is necessary to safeguard a child’s care and well-being, then it becomes the responsibility of DSS to ensure that the child is in foster care placement for the shortest time possible. Placement of a child in foster care requires a comprehensive assessment of the child’s and family’s needs, and careful planning prior to and throughout a child’s placement.

**Adoption**

DSS’s Resource Development Unit is comprised of the Adoptions team, Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) team, and Licensing and Placement team. These teams collaborate to provide the following services: recruit and license individuals as foster parents, oversee and supervise interstate foster care, relative and adoptive placements, as well as establish permanency for children and/or youth cleared for adoption.

Our annual National Adoption Day celebration was held on November 21, 2020. During the event, we celebrated the accomplishment of permanence for the 68 children adopted in Mecklenburg County during the previous year (November 2019 to October 2020).
Community Violence Prevention
To combat and/or minimize risk factors that led to or are associated with a child’s death as a result of suspected abuse or neglect, DSS is a key contributor on the Mecklenburg County Community Child Fatality Prevention and Protection Team. CFPPT is a multidisciplinary group charged to review all child fatalities in Mecklenburg County occurring between the ages of birth through 17.

Practice Model Partnership with Annie E. Casey Foundation
Child Welfare systems throughout the country are strengthening their approaches to improve practice outcomes for children and families. Mecklenburg County DSS partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to develop the Division’s Practice Model: “Moving from Good to Great!” The Practice Model identifies the values, beliefs, and skills necessary to assure child safety, permanency, well-being, and improve the desired outcomes.

One example of the Core Practice Model Interventions that was implemented to achieve desired outcomes and is integrated throughout the department’s involvement with a family is Child and Family team meetings which aim to improve the agency’s decision-making process, encourage the support and buy-in of the family and community, and develop individualized interventions for children and families.

Child Care Subsidy Programs
Mecklenburg County contracts with Child Care Resources, Inc. (CCRI) to provide child care subsidies for eligible households, those in workforce preparedness training, and eligible parents of Work First and Child Protective Services cases. In FY21, CCRI realized several accomplishments. Despite operating challenges due to COVID, CCRI re-engineered multiple subsidy administration processes to support remote operations, achieve efficiencies, and reduce/eliminate barriers to subsidy access.

CCRI’s most notable child care subsidy administration accomplishments are outlined below:

- FY21 State childcare subsidy funding was fully obligated
- Due to Mecklenburg County’s contribution, 1,582 additional children were able to be served who otherwise would have been on a waitlist
- Mecklenburg County’s childcare subsidy waitlist was eliminated for all children ages birth through five
- The elimination of the waitlist was publicized to increase awareness about the availability of childcare subsidy (resulting in receipt and processing of a record number of childcare subsidy inquiries)
- 8,364 birth to preschool five-year-old children and 3,180 five through twelve-year-old children were served (totaling 11,544 children served)
- 705 children were transitioned from FY20 County child care subsidy into State subsidy
- The reinstatement of a waiting list for birth to preschool five-year-old children was avoided
- 149 children (ages five through twelve) were on the waitlist at the end of FY21

Pediatric Nursing
One thing the Pediatric Nursing Team has accomplished over the last year is being able to work with foster families and biological families to keep medically fragile children in the home setting instead of having to go to a medical hospital setting. The Nursing Team cared for several children who were totally dependent on getting their nutrition through a feeding tube. By supporting the foster parents and by working with the biological parents at visitations to educate them, the team achieved several successful stay at home situations. The children have thrived and have learned, with feeding therapy, how to eat and have begun eating by mouth. Through Zoom, the team provided a virtual way to learn what the feeding therapists are teaching the foster parents.
DSS has a wide variety of programs to support our county’s adult and senior populations. From social work, to alcohol and substance abuse counseling, to nursing, to training programs, as well as food and nutrition, DSS offers services to support the diverse needs of our local residents. In this section, you will see some of the year’s highlights and how DSS has pivoted during the pandemic to continue to support these populations.

Highlights:

- **397 guardianship wards**
- **24,039** J1C information & referral calls
- **1,025** screened Adult Protective Services reports
- **278,089** MTS trips

Investigations/Adult Protective Services/Guardianship

The right to self-determination is a basic tenet of Adult Protective Services (APS). DSS believes that all residents should be treated with honesty, care, and respect. In 2021, Just 1 Call (J1C) received a total of 24,039 calls. The total number of APS reports received was 2,751. A referral is appropriate for APS and becomes a report when the person is a disabled adult who has been abused, neglected or exploited, and is need of protective services. There were 1,025 APS reports screened in, 489 reports confirmed, and 217 reports substantiated. The emphasis in APS is always on the need for protective services rather than the investigation of incidents.

Community Social Work

The Community Social Work (CSW) unit is a combination of case management, prevention, and advocacy. Staff assess the needs of the community and work collaboratively with social workers, community leaders, professionals, and other committees/organizations to address the identified needs. From October 2020 to April 2021, CSW distributed over 4,000 cloth masks, 3,200 surgical masks, 3,000 gloves, and 400 bottles of hand sanitizer to homebound seniors and their family caregivers, as well as Adult Day Care participants.

Mecklenburg County Achieves Age-Friendly Designation

Being known as a community that continuously works to improve the quality of life for older adults helps to make Mecklenburg County a more attractive place for people to relocate, retire, and remain active, supported, and connected.

Many of the recommendations in the Age-Friendly Mecklenburg Action Plan are similar to recommendations that have been successfully implemented elsewhere. Thus, we will be able to learn from other communities how to more quickly and effectively implement improvements.

Transportation

During FY21, Mecklenburg Transportation System (MTS) direct services demonstrated strength, compassion, and resiliency. Unforeseen circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic brought on various obstacles for MTS. These obstacles also gave the community an opportunity to learn more about the services MTS offers and its impact to the community. To ensure that MTS remained operational, limited services were provided primarily to individuals with life essential needs. Residents in need of nutritious meals received home delivered box meals or trips were provided to grocery stores. Such trips required additional safety and protection for the vehicle operator and passenger(s). MTS was one of the first community transportation systems to equip all vehicle driver and passenger seats with safety shields. Services were provided through community partnerships with SCNP and Loaves & Fishes to ensure shelf stable food was packaged and provided to those in need. MTS participated in a large collaborative effort with other agencies such as Hearts Beat as One Foundation and Mecklenburg County Public Health Department to relocate multiple displaced residents to safer shelter locations. MTS’s ongoing efforts to remain proactive and initiate a plan of action resulted in 1,230 trips to vaccination sites, serving 621 from January - June 2021. MTS provided 278,089 trips FY21.
Employment and Training Programs

Access to skills training and securing employment are some of the most effective means of ensuring a family’s stability. DSS administers two employment and training programs which offer skill-building and work experience opportunities to help individuals and families achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Work First Employment Services (WFES) is a mandatory program that requires all able-bodied adults receiving Work First Family Assistance benefits to perform work or work-related activities.

Rise2Work is a voluntary service available to all eligible FNS recipients. Rise2Work contracts with community organizations to provide workforce services across the Charlotte region.

Adult Nursing

Historically, Mecklenburg County DSS’s Adult Nursing Team has provided various services to meet the needs of adult clients served through DSS. In FY21, this two-person team continued to maintain operations despite limitations imposed by COVID-19 restrictions.

Some of the services rendered in FY21 include:

• Making approximately 330 home visits to consult on the various needs of adult clients
• Providing support and medical consultation to the guardianship social workers to ensure that adults in the program have their medical needs met
• Accompanying social workers to home visits where there are concerns
• Reviewing, summarizing, and sharing medical records with social workers to help understand clients’ diseases, medications, and more
• Helping to coordinate care and referring customers to community resources
• Providing education and training, as requested
• Participating in court hearings
• Collaborating with local pharmacies to remove barriers for clients by packaging medications for better compliance and setting up home delivery

Adults & Seniors

Highlights:

2,515
Work First participants

167,396
FNS recipients

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DSS employees are the heart of our organization. The outcomes and results we are sharing wouldn’t be possible without them. Ensuring employees are properly trained and informed, particularly as programs evolve during the pandemic, is critical. We worked diligently in FY21 to provide innovative virtual training and connection options and continued building an engaged and supportive staff culture. We believe that those who serve as a safety net to others also need support themselves.

Staff Training & Development

We launched a department-wide staff culture initiative in early 2020. The initiative included creating department-wide goals that would assist us in charting a path forward to strive for the vision we aspire to for staff culture. We engaged managers and supervisors to develop strategies with their teams aligned to the key culture levers. To help monitor our progress, an “organizational health index” survey was also developed and implemented in order to measure the extent to which we are on the path to reach our vision.

One of the key components of our culture work is striving to become a trauma-informed, trauma-responsive, and resiliency-focused agency. On this journey, we are proud to have reached the Sustainability Phase of ReCAST Mecklenburg. As part of their work with the National Council, ReCAST has requested that DSS receive consultation to develop a Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Supervision Model. This model will help support our journey to becoming a trauma-informed learning agency.

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Lakiesha Torrence, a supervisor in the Economic Services Division, has been with Mecklenburg County DSS for more than 20 years. She has been considered as one of the agency’s culture rock stars. When asked about the agency’s culture work, she stated, “I think the DSS culture work is excellent... I’m looking forward to us moving forward in this new culture where there’s more accountability, there’s more opportunity for growth, and there’s more focus on the staff we have and being able to develop them within the agency.”

When asked what she is hopeful for, Torrence said:

“We have a lot of caring people that work for DSS... I’m looking forward to people feeling valued and heard and looking forward to seeing people grow. One thing I tell people on my team, my goal is for them to grow and go. If they want to stay on my team that’s great, but for the people who aspire to do other things, I desire to see them grow and go. So, I want to see people have those opportunities for growth and feel like they don’t have to be stagnant where they are.”

Internship Program Graduates & Awards

On April 23, 2021, an appreciation event was held for the DSS 2020-21 interns and their field supervisors. This year’s interns were faced with the challenge of operating virtually throughout the pandemic. Yet, they adapted with the support of their field supervisors and completed successful internships. The 2020-21 cohort included 25 interns from Johnson C. Smith University, UNC-Charlotte, Queens University, and Winthrop University.

Staff Profile

Lakiesha Torrence on Her Tenure at DSS

Staf Profile

Lakeisha Torrence on Her Tenure at DSS

Intern Profile

DSS Internship Program Q&A with Emily Seeley

What did you learn about yourself and about a career in social services?

I learned that I am a lot stronger than I thought I was and I am able to push myself and reach outside of my comfort zone in order to become a better social worker and do my job to the best of my ability.

What made you want to take on a full-time role at DSS following your internship?

I just knew after my internship that this was going to be a job that I loved doing. I feel as social workers we have to do a job that we love and that we are passionate about, because if we aren’t, it’s going to cause burn out to happen more rapidly.

What has been the most rewarding thing about working at DSS?

The most rewarding thing about my work is to be able to see the change and the growth within the children and parents I work with.
APHS/A Share Our Strength Hunger Grant

Mecklenburg County is one of six entities in the country selected to participate in a grant sponsored by Share Our Strength in collaboration with APHSA (American Public Human Services Association) to address food insecurities. Hawaii, Kansas, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Michigan are the other agencies participating. Mecklenburg County DSS will participate in a cohort with these states along with APHSA and Share our Strength in an 18-month pilot to address food insecurities targeting those aging from birth to 17.

- The initial phase will include a thorough analysis of current food and nutrition data and other related benefit systems
- The second phase will utilize the data to address and define service and process gaps and to explore the best practices as a mitigation strategy
- The third phase will lend opportunity to begin the implementation of the service enhancements selected
- The fourth and final demonstration phase will be the development of an evaluation plan that clearly outlines the impact of the interventions and outcome metrics

DSS partnered with Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays to hire three navigators through a subcontract with United Healthcare.

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) is designed to enhance services to help children remain at home, reduce use of institutional placements, and build community capacity to support families. The law focuses on prevention services, including evidence-based mental health programs, substance abuse prevention and treatment, in-home parent skill-based services, and kinship programs.

Mecklenburg County is evaluating how best to introduce evidence-based practices into our work.

The County is also striving to become a KinFirst agency by focusing efforts to meet the needs of children in custody placed with kinship caregivers. We are partnering with Children’s Home Society for training.

FY22 Priorities

- Early Childhood Education/Meck Pre-K
- Medicaid Transformation & MCO Disengagement
- Community Aging and Disability Services Collaborative
- Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation
- YFS Capacity Study Page
- Racial Equity & Inclusion Initiative
- ESD Transformation
- Work Culture, Communication & Collaboration
- Health and Human Services Integration Initiative

WHAT’S NEXT

Racial Equity & Inclusion Focus

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is a top priority for Mecklenburg County DSS. During FY21, the County’s Office of Equity & Inclusion began offering a one-day “Advancing Racial Equity” workshop for all county staff. The workshop focused on understanding the role government plays in advancing racial equity, helping employees understand and define equity, inequity, implicit bias, explicit bias, as well as individual, institutional, and structural racism. We are excited that 86% of DSS employees completed the training by the end of June 2021.

DSS is also one of the founding organizations that comprises the Race Matters for Juvenile Justice (RMJJ) Collaborative. RMJJ is a collaborative leadership group working to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color through institutional organizing, education, and workforce development. In FY21, approximately 60 DSS staff attended the two-day Racial Equity workshop offered by RMJJ. DSS is excited to continue growing this partnership in FY22 by serving on the leadership team, continuing our work with the RMJJ Practice Change committee, and through our internal efforts to continue leading strategy and development, implementation, and progress of our DEI initiatives.

Medicaid Transformation

In 2015, the NC General Assembly enacted Session Law 2015-245, which directed the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) to transition Medicaid and NC Health Choice from fee-for-service to managed care (Medicaid Transformation) in July 2021.

Going into FY22, a small number of people will remain in the older fee-for-service model due to the type of medical services they need. All others will be enrolled in Medicaid services which will be administered by Preferred Health Plans (PHPs). Beneficiaries will be able to choose their health plan and primary care provider (PCP). Eventually, all beneficiaries will be able to enroll in a Standard Plan, Behavioral Health Tailored Plan, or Foster Care Plan. Non-Emergency Medical Transportation will also begin to be provided via health plans. Please visit https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/transformation for more information.

Behavioral Health Managed Care Organization Realignment

Near the end of FY21 (June 1, 2021), the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously voted to disengage from Cardinal Innovations and realign with Alliance Health to improve behavioral health services in Mecklenburg County. Moving into FY22, DSS will continue to partner with Alliance Health to assist with this transition.