Work and Performance Plan FY2022 (DSS)

John Eller, Social Services

SECTION 1: DEPARTMENT KEY INITIATIVES

Key Initiative #1 -- Early Childhood Education

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Foster equal opportunity among children to learn, grow and thrive, as well as to promote economic opportunity regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or income. The Early Childhood Education initiative is an important focus for the County as it fosters economic mobility and prepares children to learn and be ready to succeed upon school entry.

Rationale:
For many households, childcare serves as an early learning program for the child while also helping parents participate fully in the workforce. This makes the provision of childcare assistance a two-generation strategy: supporting children's early education and economic opportunity for the family through parents' engagement in the workforce.

The goal of the Early Childhood Education initiative is for the County to provide effective leadership, management, and advisory support for the County's third year of MECK Pre-K implementation and identify strategies to support the development of children from prenatal through age five.

Completion Date:
June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Increase Meck Pre-K programming by adding 16 classrooms for a total of 105 operational county-funded Meck Pre-K classrooms.
• Complete a parental to age three landscape analysis and develop actionable recommendations to allocate resources to improve outcomes for children and their families.
• Contract with a consultant for a Meck Pre-K program evaluation and SWOT analysis to prepare for future expansion.
• Finalize and implement the Meck Pre-K enhanced online management system which will include integrated invoicing capabilities along with enhanced eligibility and student management functionality.
• Partner with Child Care Resources Inc. to monitor state and county childcare subsidy funding to prevent overspending and ensure the maximum number of children are served by available funding.
• Expand utilization of NCCARE360 across the County's early childhood referral programs and data systems.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #2 -- MCO Realignment & Medicaid Transformation

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Mecklenburg County is realigning with a new Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) which provides publicly-funded behavioral health services under the direction of NCDHHS. NCDHHS approved Mecklenburg County's request to realign with Alliance Health from, Cardinal Innovations, the County's previous LME/MCO. Alliance will assume responsibility as LME/MCO for Mecklenburg County by Dec. 15, 2021, according to a timetable established by NCDHHS. LME/MCOs manage behavioral health (including mental health and substance use disorder) and intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) services for residents who are insured by Medicaid or who have no health insurance. Alliance currently manages these services for residents in Durham, Wake, Cumberland and Johnston counties. Orange County will also be transitioning from Cardinal to Alliance. Ensure Mecklenburg County HHS is prepared for the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Medicaid Transformation. Ensure the HHS Agency continues to provide quality services to all Medicaid-eligible customers across its departments.

Rationale:
On June 1, 2021, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted unanimously (with one abstention) to disengage from Cardinal Innovations Healthcare and realign with Alliance Health. This vote came after many years of efforts by Mecklenburg County staff and community stakeholders to address systemic issues related to Cardinal's oversight of behavioral health services. It is the intent of Mecklenburg County, working in partnership with Alliance Health and NCDHHS, to ensure an effective transition and prevent any disruption in services for community members and providers.

Completion Date:
TBD (based on State's implementation timeline)

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Partner with the LME/MCO during and following the realignment process regarding network adequacy, timely authorization/approval, and access to services while identifying any service gaps and unmet needs that impact residents.
• Develop and implement a communication plan to keep consumers, families, providers, and advocates informed about the realignment process.
• Engage community partners, consumers, and other stakeholders through work-group meetings, listening sessions, and townhalls to maximize their input during the realignment process.
• Respond to the breadth and scope of changes during realignment by providing input and solutions to the County Manager to address the behavioral health needs of our residents.
• Assess federal recovery dollars and provide solutions/recommendations to the County Manager regarding how they may further the county's strategic behavioral health goals to address more timely placements, behavioral health services, and community-based wrap around supports for residents of Mecklenburg County.
• Monitor and develop plans for the impact of Medicaid Transformation on HHS budget and operations (i.e., transportation services, call centers, three health plans, behavioral health, assess of the NEMT Broker contracts, etc.).
• Engage professional transportation planning/consultation services to study MTS and help develop long-term strategies for MTS operations to ensure residents have access to behavioral health, physical, and social supports.

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #3 -- Community Aging and Disability Services Collaborative

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Age-Friendly Mecklenburg is an initiative that aligns nonprofit, private, and governmental partner organizations in a coordinated effort to improve the livability of the community for senior residents. There are 8 Domains of Livability in the Age-Friendly Mecklenburg (AFM) Plan. They are: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, and Community and Health Services. The recent designation of Mecklenburg County as an Age-Friendly community will support the community-wide action plan to address the existing and future needs of Mecklenburg's aging population.

Rationale:
The existing aging and disability services networks do not have a shared overarching strategy for serving Mecklenburg County residents. The development of a coordinated strategy to address the needs of the County's aging population will help close gaps in services and unequal access to basic livability needs.

Completion Date:
June 2022 (for year 1 work)

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Facilitate the collective planning of not-for-profit, higher education, faith-based, private, and governmental organizations along with community residents to improve the quality of life for older adults and develop strategies to help seniors stay: 1) Active-by promoting senior activities and wellness as well as facilitating senior employment and civic engagement; 2) Informed-regarding programs and services available; 3) Supported-by helping individuals who care for seniors as well as helping seniors to age-in-place; & 4) Connected-by both technology and transportation to/from support services, community activities, and employment/civic activities.
• Provide the County Manager, HHS Committee, Board of County Commissioners, and AARP an update outlining year one implementation.
• Host Aging Summit (on or before 6/30/22-contingent upon the pandemic).
• Assess federal recovery dollars and provide recommendations regarding how they may further the county's strategic aging goals.

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #4 -- Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Mecklenburg County Youth and Family Services must meet the needs of children and families leveraging the Family First Prevention Services Act, 2018 (FFPSA), which will go into effect nationally in October 2021. This legislation offers opportunities for states and counties to be responsive in supporting the complex needs of the entire family unit. This initiative will also embed a Racial Equity and Inclusion lens in all facets of the work and align with the states programming, which is forthcoming.

Rationale:
The delivery of child welfare services in alignment with the FFPSA is intended to prevent children from entering foster care by offering more prevention services to parents and kinship providers (both formal and informal) while the child is in the home to avoid out-of-home placement. The FFPSA creates reimbursement pathways of federal funds for specific prevention services. These services must be trauma informed and evidence-based programs offered by qualified clinicians in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, kinship navigator, and parent skill. Increasing the evidence-based service offerings for Mecklenburg County families will reduce the high cost of out of home placements and serve children and families better while achieving better outcomes.

Completion Date:
June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Develop a comprehensive inventory of trauma informed, evidence informed/based treatment programs in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, kinship care, and parent skill-based programs in Mecklenburg County.
• Review data and partner with providers to increase early access to evidence-based treatment services while highlighting the importance of racial equity and inclusion.
• Complete an assessment of kinship services and develop a Kinship Care Work Plan.
• Create a refreshed foster parent recruitment process.
• Partner with UNCC to begin crafting a Countywide Child Abuse Prevention Plan in collaboration with the Child Fatality Prevention Protection Team (CFPPT) encompassing prevention and interventions that are more upstream.
• Attend and host meetings with law enforcement, school, and medical systems stakeholders to discuss reporting practices and also assessing data regarding disproportionality.

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #5 -- Youth & Family Services (YFS) Capacity Study

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
YFS will complete a capacity study using proven methodology designed for government human services that makes the work visible and develops approaches to increasing organizational capacity.   This work will identify opportunities and efficiencies to improve organizational capacity.

Rationale:
The capacity study will complement the BPM Staffing Analysis, AECF Engagement, the Eckerd Study and the UNCC School of Social Work Study. These pieces of work identified current and projected staffing needs across the division. The capacity study will be used to identify efficiencies that can be used to determine the true staffing needs within the division.

Completion Date:
Approximately June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Complete a comprehensive assessment of current case management process to identify and achieve capacity improvements through realignment to improve service delivery, efficiency and implement recommendations.
• Develop process redesign for the following teams: Intake, Investigation/Family In-Home, including after hours, Post Custody, Resource Development.
• Implement process redesign using change management and a detailed training plan.
• Deliver roll-out support to division leadership.
• Conduct post implementation review.

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #6 -- Equity and Inclusion Initiative

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Continue the implementation of the County's Equity Action Plan.

Rationale:
Mecklenburg County is committed to addressing its racial inequities through an intersectional analysis. In order to become a more equitable institution, strategies must be implemented and enforced that enhance the work Mecklenburg County has already completed to promote equity and inclusion. The County has partnered with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to create both a racial equity training curriculum for County staff, an Equity Action Toolkit and a three-year enterprise-wide Equity Action Plan. To continue to build the capacity of the organization, it is critical that the County continue to implement the agreed upon action items identified in the Equity Action Plan despite COVID-19.

Completion Date:
This is a multi-year project (FY2020-FY2022).

Updates/Project Milestones:
Continue implementation of the County's Equity Action Plan that were postponed due to COVID-19:
• Continue rollout of "Advancing Racial Equity Training" for all County employees to enhance abilities to advance racial equity.
• Re-establish Department Equity Action Teams (DEAT) for select Departments to begin training and to initiate development of department specific equity action plans (pending further guidance from the County Manager's Office); and
• Provide training on Racial Equity Tool usage to County mid-senior management.

Implementation of FY22 Equity Action Plan items for those departments with specific accountabilities.
• Implement pre and post training workshops.
• Develop racial disparity performance indicators to ensure mechanisms are in place to track and collect critical data.
• Assess REI data to help inform conversations about disparities.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #7 -- ESD Transformation

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
A new business model was introduced called "One and Done". This philosophy focuses on staff processing cases as timely and efficiently as possible by obtaining all required information needed for multiple programs to provide a more holistic service delivery system for customers. This new process will require a continuous quality improvement process to ensure timely and efficient delivery of programs and services.

Rationale:
Transforming Economic Services business practices will allow a more efficient and effective delivery of services to internal and external customers. This new process will also get benefits processed more timely for customers.

Completion Date:
June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Refine the Current Workload Management system to ensure more timely processing of public assistance benefits for residents.
• Assess strategies to reduce ESD Call Center wait times and call abandonment rates and provide more qualitative measures that support the one and done process to ensure more timely response for residents.
• Work with Mecklenburg County Business Process Management (BPM) to initiate post implementation project of ESD Transformation and address action items needed to improve the customer experience and more timely processing of public assistance benefits for residents.
• Continue outreach and marketing for the All Access mobile application to assist residents through technology who may have transportation barriers.
• Ensure compliance with the minimum performance standards outlined in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Memorandum of Understanding for Economic Services Division (ESD).

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #8 -- Work Culture, Communication & Collaboration

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Strengthen the department's organizational capacity with a focus on work culture, communication, and collaboration. Develop and implement plans to increase operational efficiencies. Implement a systemic approach to improve communication and disseminate information within the department and division to better meet the needs of its staff and residents.

Rationale:
The Operations, Strategy & Innovation division was created to provide coordinated organizational support and service delivery across the department. The division is responsible for creating and maintaining systems, processes, and initiatives to streamline operations and ensure consistency throughout the department. The department has a wide range of organizational pressures and priorities related to programs and service delivery to the community. It is important to have a strong organizational structure, culture, and foundation that supports operational efficiencies. As a result, promoting a culture of being proactive rather than reactive. Effective communication will provide staff with clear direction to help the department achieve its annual goals.

Completion Date:
June 2022

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Develop strategies and interventions and establish program operations to assist divisions with improving North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Memorandum of Understanding compliance.
• Build capacity and provide consultation to divisions to improve quality assurance in mandated program areas.
• Identify process improvement strategies to improve service delivery in our operations.
• Continue implementation of department's culture work highlighting the areas of management relationships, commitment to professional development and growth, elevating staff voice, communication and transparency, and valuing staff.
• Develop and implement a comprehensive internal and external communications strategy/plan, ensuring alignment with department vision, mission and key priorities that improves communication and collaboration among key stakeholders.

Outcomes/Measures:

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)

Key Initiative #9 -- Health and Human Services Integration

Link to Strategic Business Plan:
Yes

Description:
Health and Human Services (HHS) Integration seeks to better coordinate service delivery across Mecklenburg County's Consolidated Human Services Agency which includes the Department of Community Resources (DCR), Community Support Services (CSS), Department of Social Services (DSS) and Public Health (PH). HHS Integration will be achieved by:

• Connecting data software systems across HHS departments to help customers receive information and/or referrals for needed services regardless of which HHS department they first interact with.
• Fully expanding usage of the Single View of the Customer technology platform that streamlines HHS programming to help customers easily access services.
• Ensuring Mecklenburg County residents can receive HHS services as close to their homes as possible through Community Resource Centers.

Rationale:
Many residents receive services from multiple HHS departments, but efficient coordination of these services is difficult because of operational, policy and technology constraints.

HHS Integration takes a broader look at how the HHS Agency can be best organized to serve Mecklenburg County residents. HHS Integration is important because the initiative will:

• Enhance collaboration across HHS departments to offer programs and services in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner.
• Expand the functionality of the Single View of the Customer technology platform to improve customer experience when seeking or receiving services across HHS departments.
• Help HHS customers have a clearer path to independence and stability through greater access to HHS benefits and programs.

Completion Date:
This is a multi-year plan with the final completion date yet to be determined. (The updates or milestones below will be completed during FY22.)

Updates/Project Milestones:
• Revise the Community Resource Center governance charter to ensure appropriate staffing levels and performance expectations for each HHS department.
• Develop and implement standardized integrated Health & Human Services policies and procedures designed to holistically assess customer needs across CSS, DCR, DSS and PH.
• Develop and implement a project plan for the full implementation of the Single View of the Customer and NCCARE 360.
• Develop a communication strategy outlining how HHS Integration will affect each HHS department, specifically the implications for staff and customers.
• Create and utilize a survey tool to assess staff understanding of HHS integration.

Outcomes/Measures:
End of Year Reporting

Director Comments: (Year-end)

Executive Team Comments: (Year-end)