



Office Locations:

County Office Building
1717 West Fifth Street
Greenville, NC 27834

- Administration
- Child & Adult Protection
- Early Education
- Employment Services
- Foster Care & Adoption

www.pittcountync.gov/DSS

PHONE: 252-902-1110 FAX: 252-413-1299



ANNUAL REPORT July 2017 - June 2018

Stronger Families.
Safer Communities.

A better future for all of Pitt County.



October 2018



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Human Services Center
203 Government Circle
Greenville, NC 27834

- Child Support
- Medicaid
- Nutrition Services
- Workfirst

A Letter from DSS Director Jan Elliott

Most citizens of Pitt County know that their Department of Social Services helps people. But have you ever thought about what DSS does, not just for individuals and families, but for everyone in Pitt county?

We help to provide something that just about everyone wants: To live in a community where anybody – no matter what their circumstances may be – has somewhere to turn if their family is in urgent need of food, medical care, protection from abuse, or other critical problems.

If people cannot meet these needs directly, most rely on family members, churches, or private charities. That is almost always the best approach. When that isn't available, DSS steps in.

Our job is to make sure that no one is left helpless in the face of serious adversity, and to help them get back on their feet. The tools we use include Child and Adult Protective Services, Foster Care, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, our Employment and Training division, and other services. You can read about them in this report.

Our goal is not just to help the direct users of these services. We want to make Pitt County a safer, healthier, better place for all of our fellow citizens.

But here's something more: DSS also provides an important economic role in the county. Each year, Pitt County citizens pay millions of dollars in state and federal taxes. Part of DSS' job is to bring some of that money back to our communities.

And we do bring it back. Each year DSS helps to reclaim about a third of a billion dollars from Washington and Raleigh. That money goes to local healthcare, grocery stores, child care centers, and other businesses. Then it recirculates to support Pitt County's economy.



Although we are focused on helping Pitt County to become an even better place to live, we also want to become a better agency. That's why we recently developed a strategic plan to:

- **Make our operations more efficient and streamlined;**
- **Improve our communication with partner agencies and with the community;**
- **Find more effective ways of helping families to build stable homes;**
- **Provide more safety and support for vulnerable adults; and**
- **Promote greater self-sufficiency for those who use our services.**

Do we do it alone? Absolutely not. Our efforts would be impossible without the organizations and individuals who share our concerns and work in partnership with us. To all of them, we say thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Elliott".

How the Money is Spent

The Department of Social Services spends a lot of money – mostly on healthcare and food for people living in poverty. But DSS also deals with some of the problems that are aggravated by poverty – for example, the protection of abused children and vulnerable adults, the collection of child support payments, and the management of foster care and adoption.

Why does this need to be done?

Sadly, Pitt County has one of the highest poverty rates of any metropolitan county in North Carolina. Much of the poverty is chronic.

In fact, Pitt County is the only metropolitan county in the state – and one of only 48 in the US – to have been identified by the federal Economic Research Service as suffering from both Persistent General Poverty and Persistent Child Poverty. That means more than 20% of both the general population and the child population have been in poverty over the past 30 years.



Protecting Kids

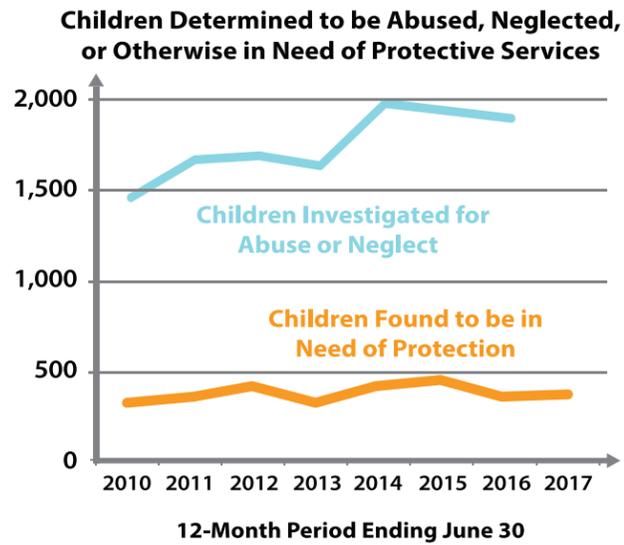
Children are fragile.

But they are also – literally – the foundation of our society, because they will be our society in the future.

So when kids are abused or neglected, the foundation of our society is damaged. This makes child abuse and neglect unique among our society's problems.

It contributes to most of the major physical and psychological illnesses that abused kids will experience throughout their lifetimes. It is also a major contributor to crime, homelessness, poverty, and just about every other social problem.

The Department of Social Services has a very simple responsibility: It works to stop abuse and neglect. But that role is complicated and difficult. Wherever possible, the agency helps families to overcome their problems and build better homes for their children; our goal is to help kids have safe homes.



Note: Complete 2018 data is not yet available.

Spotlights: Innovations in Foster Care

Foster kids need lots of help and support. How can they be sure to get it?

DSS social workers ask themselves this question every day, and they pay careful attention to answers that have been found by other communities. By identifying new strategies that have proven to be effective elsewhere and adapting them to Pitt County, DSS social workers find new ways to help children and families.

In recent months, DSS has launched:

Permanency Roundtables:

Focused meetings in which all of the professionals involved with the family identify barriers to the development of a stable, permanent home. Together they can offer more promising strategies for children and families.

Supervised Parent Visitation:

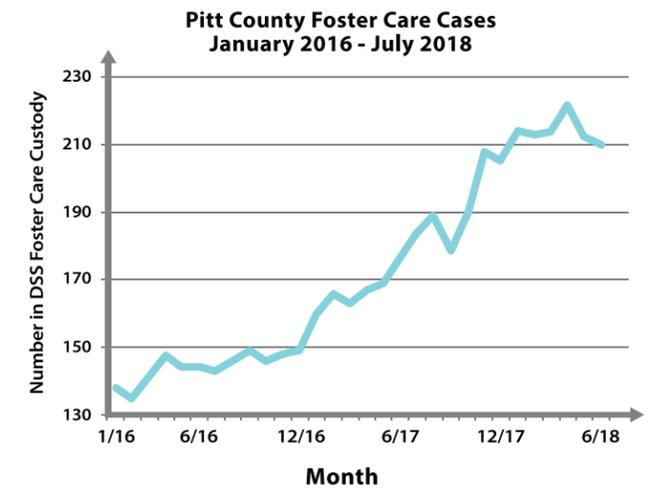
A service sponsored by Casey Family Programs that allows foster kids and their birth parents to reconnect, and where social workers can provide advice about healthy interactions. The service is provided in cooperation with Easter Seals.

The Pitt County Foster Parent Association:

An organization that provides information and support for our local foster families. The Association gives foster parents learning opportunities, understanding friends, and – most important – a voice.

Transitions to Adulthood:

Services for older foster kids who are approaching adulthood. These include specialized programs for promoting employment and post-secondary education, and for providing ongoing support for those with physical, psychiatric, or intellectual disabilities. These programs are provided cooperatively by the agency's Child Welfare and Adult Services Divisions.



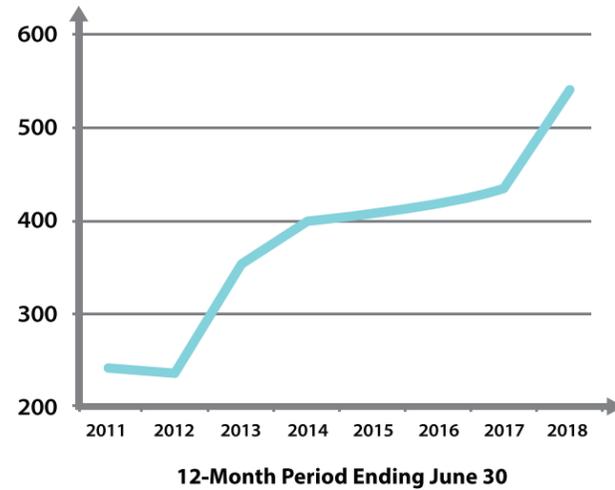
Protecting Vulnerable Adults

Where can disabled adults turn if they are being abused or financially exploited? What about those who simply cannot care for themselves and must live in nursing homes or other facilities?

Unfortunately, not all disabled adults have family members who can be counted on to help. That's why DSS' Adult Services division investigates reports of possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation. If necessary, the agency responds by working with law enforcement and facility regulators.

DSS also provides longer term solutions, including guardianship services for those most in need. Others might just need some extra help at home to allow them to continue living independently, or assistance with heating or cooling bills in order to prevent a health crisis.

Reports of Elderly or Impaired Adults Being Abused, Neglected, or Exploited



Food, Healthcare, Heating & Cooling

Whenever possible, DSS likes to build long term solutions – for example, helping vulnerable children and adults find permanent supportive homes, and helping families become more stable and self-sufficient.

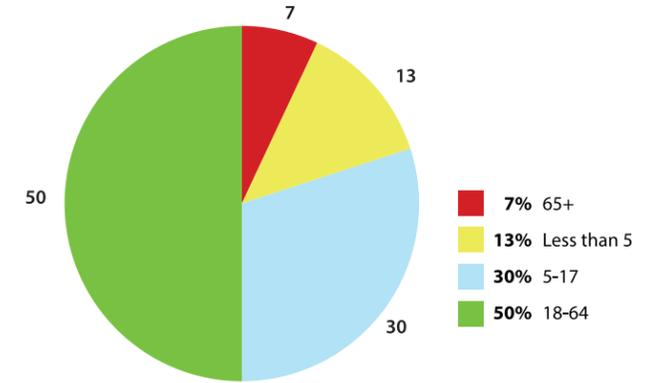
But long term solutions often need to be accompanied by short term efforts. Short term approaches are needed when families don't have enough food, can't afford medical care, can't keep warm during the winter, or need cooling assistance during the summer to prevent a health crisis.

That's why many of DSS' responsibilities involve food, healthcare, and energy assistance. For example, roughly 15,000 Pitt County families receive Food & Nutrition Services. Most receive less than \$200 in assistance each month.

The agency also approves and disapproves applications for Medicaid, although Pitt County does not directly make Medicaid payments. About three quarters of Medicaid dollars are used for the elderly, the disabled, and children.

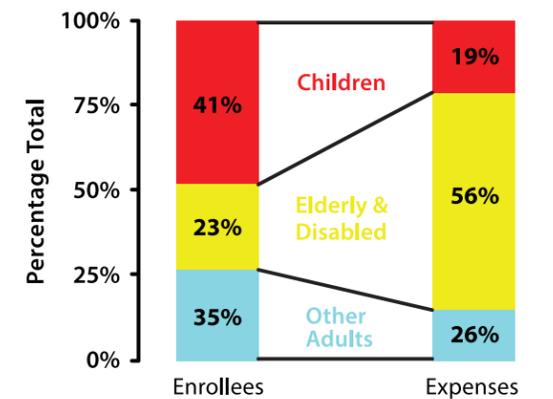
Finally, DSS approves and disapproves applications for emergency energy assistance. About 7,000 families received energy help during the most recent fiscal year.

Ages of Food and Nutrition Clients

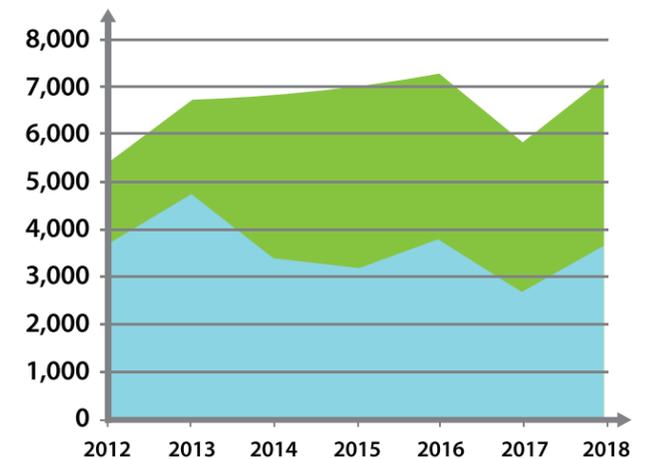


12-Month Period Ending June 30, 2018

Proportions of US Medicaid Enrollees & Expenses October 2014 - September 2015



Households Receiving Energy Assistance



12-Month Period Ending June 30

Low Income Energy Assistance
Crisis Assistance for Heating or Cooling Emergencies



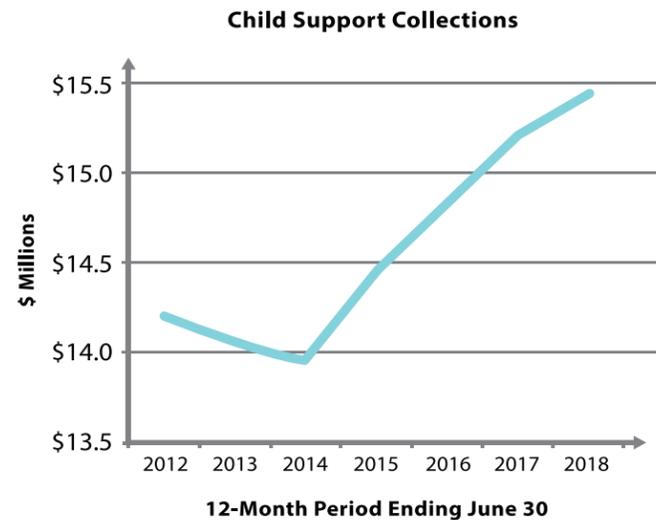
Child Support & Early Childhood Education

Parents need to support their kids whether they live together or not. It's not just the responsible thing to do. It's the law.

One of the ways that DSS helps children is by collecting support payments from non-custodial parents. Last year we collected about \$15.5 million. This not only helps the kids and the families with whom they live, it also helps reduce the public assistance that taxpayers may otherwise be asked to provide.

But children need more than money. So DSS cooperated with the court system, a private foundation, the National Fatherhood Initiative, and LIFE of NC on a pilot project to help non-custodial dads become better fathers.

DSS also managed nearly \$9 million in state funds to help low-income families place their kids in early education programs. This makes it easier for children to learn, and for their parents to maintain employment.



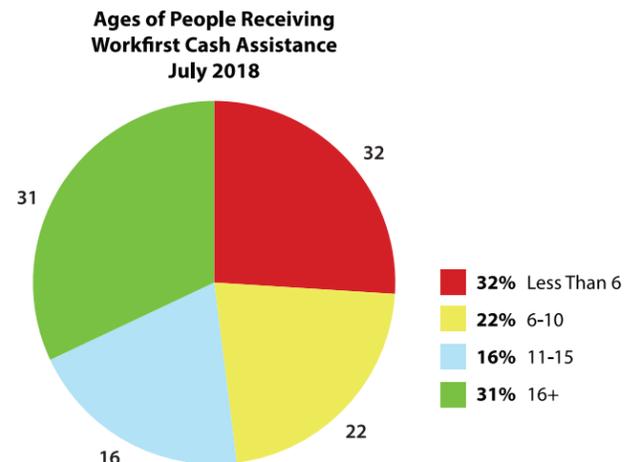
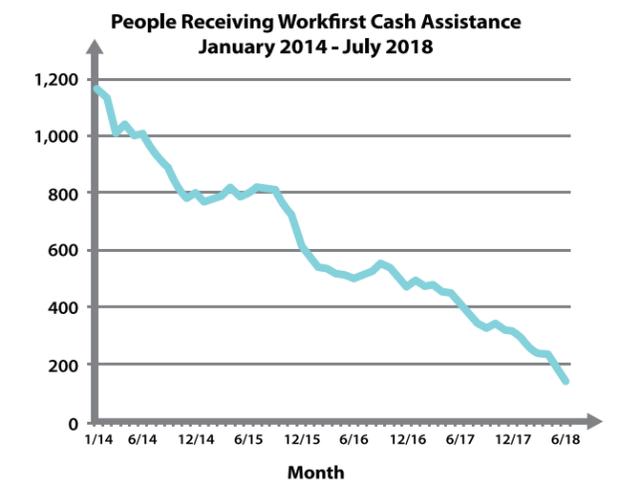
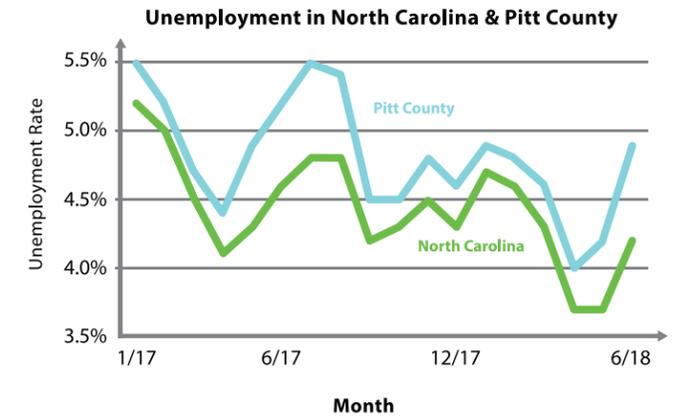
Spotlight: Employment Collaboration

If no one in a family has a job, it will be almost impossible for that family to be independent.

That's more of a problem for Pitt County than for many other counties. While unemployment has recently declined, it is still consistently higher in Pitt County than in most other parts of the state. The Pitt County Department of Social Services is committed to helping the unemployed and underemployed to become more self-sufficient. The ultimate goal of social services is to help families reach a point at which they no longer need social services.

Toward that end, the agency provides two coordinated job readiness programs: FNS (i.e., "food stamps") Education & Training; and Work First. The agency also works with several organizations including:

- The NCWorks Career Center
- Pitt Community College
- The Eastern Carolina Vocational Center
- The Region Q Workforce Development Board
- Literacy Volunteers of Pitt County



Resources for Education, Employment Training, & Job Placement

There are two keys that everyone needs in order to avoid or escape poverty: education and employment. If you or someone you know needs education or employment – or maybe needs a better job than the one they have now – here are some good places to start, or to find help along the way:

Where Can I Get Information or Help With...?



Type of Goal	Where to Go	Phone Number	Website
Education Completion	Pitt Community College, Transitional Studies	252-493-7439	pittcc.edu/academics/academic-programs/transitional-studies/
	Literacy Volunteers	252-353-6578	pittliteracy.org
Job Training	Pitt Community College, Continuing Education	252-493-7388	pittcc.edu/community/continuing-education/
Job Placement	NCWorks	252-862-1257	ncworks.gov
	Pitt County DSS (for Food & Nutrition & Work First clients)	252-902-1151	pittcountync.gov/pittworks
Disability Support	Vocational Rehabilitation	252-830-8560	ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs
	Disability Advocates & Resource Center	252-355-6215	darcnc.org

Board Members



Melonie Bryan
Chair



James Cox
Vice-Chair



Mary Perkins-Williams



Cathrine Nelson



Sheila Bunch

Staff Leadership



Jan Elliott
Director



Gwendolyn Burns
Deputy Director

Additional Services

Economic Support Services Program Administrator
(including Medicaid, Nutrition Services, and Workfirst):
Bryan Averette • bryan.averette@pittcountync.gov

Adult Services Program Manager
Cynthia Ross • cynthia.ross@pittcountync.gov

Child Welfare Administrator
Tammy Lewis • tammy.lewis@pittcountync.gov

Family Support Services Program Administrator
(including Child Support, Early Education, and Employment Services):
Michele McCorkle • michele.mccorkle@pittcountync.gov

Department of Social Services

2019 Televised Meeting Dates

Jan	N/A	Feb	12	Mar	12	Apr	9
May	14	Jun	11	Jul	9	Aug	13
Sep	10	Oct	8	Nov	12	Dec	10

Meetings can be watched LIVE on



PittTv (Suddenlink Cable Channel 13)

Or Online at



www.pittcountync.gov/LIVE

