

ALAMANCE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Human Services Board
November 18, 2025

The Alamance County Human Services Board met on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at the Alamance County Health Department. The following board members were present: Mr. Richard Blanchard, Dr. Ann Riley-Caldwell, Commissioner Kelly Allen, Dr. Caitlin McArthur, Dr. Roslyn Crisp, Mr. Dan Paist, Mr. Brian Pierce, Ms. Cindy Brady, Mr. Clif Carter, Ms. Sonya Blackwell, and Dr. Jim Ryan. Human services staff present included Dr. Tony Lo Giudice, Dr. George Ackall, Ms. Ariana Lawrence, Ms. Amy Widderich, Ms. Skye Sullivan, Ms. Tammy Thompson, Dr. Cate Lynn, Ms. Becky Rosso, Ms. Ashley Barber, and Alamance County Manager, Ms. Heidi York.

1. Call to order

Mr. Richard Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. Introductions/establish a quorum

Staff and board members present introduced themselves. A quorum was established, having eleven members present.

3. Swearing in of board members

Board members in attendance were sworn in to the human services board by Ms. Linda Pinyatello.

4. Approval of the agenda

Commissioner Allen made a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Riley-Caldwell seconded the motion. The board approved the motion unanimously.

5. Approval of October 18, 2025 minutes

Dr. Riley-Caldwell made a motion to approve the October 18, 2025 meeting minutes. Ms. Brady seconded the motion. The board approved the motion unanimously.

6. Veteran's department overview

The Director of the Alamance County Veteran Services Department, Tammy Thompson, provided an overview of the office's mission, services, impact, and current challenges.

She highlighted that the ACVSO was established in 1945 and continues to serve a significant veteran population, with Alamance County ranking 10th in North Carolina. The office operates with a five-person staff and assists approximately 800 veterans or dependents each month. In FY 2024-2025, the office served 9,589 individuals, resulting in more than \$169 million in VA benefits paid out. Staff filed 983 claims ranging from compensation and pension to survivor benefits, appeals, and CHAMPVA. The presentation reviewed wartime service definitions and outlined the full scope of services offered, including disability and pension benefits, medical enrollment assistance, burial benefits, and support with military documents. Requirements for compensation, pension eligibility, and income thresholds were summarized.

An overview was provided of North Carolina's five state veteran nursing homes and their role in supporting long-term care needs.

Ms. Thompson explained the role of veteran service officers (VSOs), including accreditation standards, continuing education requirements, and core responsibilities such as claims assistance, documentation support, appeals representation, and outreach. She emphasized the expertise and compassion required of VSOs and the positive impact they have on claim accuracy, timeliness, and veteran well-being.

Key challenges identified included high caseloads, complex and evolving VA regulations, emotional demands related to veterans' trauma, and resource limitations.

The presentation concluded by reaffirming the critical role VSOs play in connecting veterans with earned benefits and supporting the broader veteran community. Staff biographies were shared to highlight the team's experience and training.

Ms. Thompson shared that she is retiring in December after working with Alamance County with 13 years of service.

7. FY 24/25 opioid settlement report

Ms. Ashley Barber, Behavioral Health and Substance Use Division Director, detailed the planning and implementation of the county's Opioid Settlement funds for fiscal year 2024-2025. These funds are dedicated to mitigating the opioid crisis by investing in sustainable, evidence-based strategies aligned with the North Carolina Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The division's efforts are guided by the following goals identified from community feedback:

1. Decrease fatal and non-fatal overdoses.
2. Decrease the number of incarcerated individuals with opioid and substance use disorders.
3. Expand evidence-based treatment options.
4. Expand recovery support services.
5. Increase connections to care to improve the overall health and well-being of the community.

Ms. Barber shared overdose data from 2021-2025 that shows suspected overdoses reported, suspected fatal overdoses, and Naloxone administered by law enforcement. She shared that although numbers are improving, efforts will not slow down in Alamance County.

Ms. Barber reviewed the progress on the seven funded strategies, which were collaborative strategic planning, evidence-based addiction treatment, recovery support services, early intervention, Naloxone distribution, post-overdose response team, and reentry programs.

Collaborative Strategic Planning (\$53,013.77) : This funding supported a portion of county staff responsible for planning, implementation, and monitoring, including professional development and training in evidence-based strategies for opioid abatement activities.

Evidence-Based Addiction Treatment (\$299,999.50): This strategy focused on expanding Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), supporting treatments like Suboxone and Methadone in residential treatment programs. Residential Treatment Services of Alamance (RTSA) served 133 unique participants who have OUD.

Recovery Support Services (\$799,279.43): This initiative supported Peer Support Specialists (PSS) and Care Navigators, including a PSS at the Alamance County Detention Center and a Recovery Court Coordinator. Across all agencies funded, 394 unique participants who use opioids and/or have OUD were served.

Early Intervention (\$59,949.60): Funds supported programs aimed at identifying and addressing substance use and/or mental health issues in children and adolescents, with the provider being Crossroads Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center. A total of 160 unique children/adolescents were served.

Naloxone Distribution (\$72,749.50): This expanded access to Naloxone, a life-saving overdose reversal medication, through distribution to high-risk populations, community partners, and first responders. The Health Department also supported the installation of Naloxone vending machines. A total of 2,333 intranasal Naloxone kits were distributed.

Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT) (\$200,000.00): Funding was allocated for implementing a PORT to provide timely follow-up care to individuals who experienced non-fatal overdoses, connecting them to treatment, harm reduction resources, and recovery support.

Reentry Programs (\$78,832.25) : This strategy supported individuals reentering society after incarceration, funding Benevolence Farms for housing, treatment connections, and peer support. Funds also supported transportation for formerly incarcerated individuals linked with treatment. 50 unique participants who use opioids and/or have OUD were enrolled.

8. Family Justice Center department director report

Ms. Sullivan shared that the Family Justice Center (FJC) received two federal grants from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) in 2024: the Improving Criminal Justice Response (ICJR) grant and the Abuse in Later Life grant. Due to the federal government shutdown, grant-related activities and approvals were temporarily paused while OVW staff were furloughed. With the government reopened, all grant activities have now resumed. Ms. Sullivan reported that the kickoff event for the Abuse in Later Life grant will be held on November 20, 2025, from 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at the Alamance County Dream Center. The event will convene partner agencies to strengthen a coordinated community response to abuse in later life.

Ms. Sullivan shared that in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), the FJC held its annual candlelight vigil to honor victims lost to domestic violence. In 2025, North Carolina has reported 61 domestic-violence-related homicides and 17 DV-related suicides. The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence released a five-year report showing a concerning rise in DV homicides statewide. She reported that strangulation remains the strongest predictor of potential homicide. In 2025, 370 clients reported experiencing strangulation within the previous five days, yet only 12% sought medical care beforehand. With ICJR funding, the FJC will host a countywide strangulation institute for law enforcement, medical providers, advocates, and other professionals. The goal is to develop a countywide protocol for responding to strangulation cases.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the FJC has partnered with all local law enforcement agencies to implement the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP). Officers complete an 11-question screen on scene and immediately connect high-risk victims with an advocate. Alamance County is the only county in North Carolina with 100% law enforcement participation in LAP. The FJC has been working with the NC Department of Justice to support other communities in implementing this model and presented alongside the Burlington Police Department at the NC FJC Conference.

Ms. Sullivan shared that FJC continues to serve an average of 200 clients per month, with approximately 300 in-person visits. Client volume and case severity have steadily increased, placing added pressure on staff and partner agencies.

Ms. Sullivan discussed that the FJC became a Camp HOPE America affiliate in 2024 and launched programming for youth ages 7–17 impacted by trauma. In October, the FJC held a fall festival for participants and their families. Special recognition was given to Tony, who serves as a program mentor, for running the cookie-decorating station while dressed as an Oreo.

Ms. Sullivan requested feedback from the board regarding what information they would like included in her monthly reports.

9. Health and Human Services Director report

Dr. Lo Giudice provided an overview of the recent federal shutdown and its anticipated local impacts. On October 1, WIC received notice regarding potential interruptions. County HR, WIC leadership, and budget staff collaborated to develop a contingency plan. SNAP also prepared for possible disruptions beginning November 1. The Family Justice Center supported community needs by posting available food resources, and Veterans Services requested an estimate from DSS, identifying approximately 800 veterans receiving SNAP. The Veterans Department prepared resource information in advance, and the Health Department readied staff and shared resource updates through social media.

Dr. Lo Giudice shared that Congress ultimately ended the shutdown by adopting a Continuing Resolution. As a result, several key programs received full funding for the next federal fiscal year, including approximately \$133.2 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, roughly \$263.7 billion in mandatory veterans' benefits, and \$8.2 billion in full-year funding for WIC. SNAP benefits were also funded through FY2026. The remaining appropriations bills for the federal budget bills have until the end of January to be passed by Congress. The Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Agriculture and FDA appropriations have already been enacted for the full year.

Dr. Lo Giudice provided a state Medicaid update, noting that the legislature is not expected to meet again until next year to address unresolved budget matters needed to balance the State Medicaid program. The state budget remains incomplete. Agencies anticipate a 3% reduction in Medicaid reimbursements, though approximately 1.5% to 2% of that reduction may be offset through cost settlement or the Annual Utilization Review and Budgeting Process (AUBP).

Dr. Lo Giudice shouted out to the Veterans' Services Department for a job well done for the Veteran's parade. It was a successful event and it was great to see so many supportive community members in attendance.

Dr. Lo Giudice shared his thanks to the Family Justice Center for coordinating Camp Hope.

Dr. Lo Giudice gave a shout out to Jonathan Hodges, Becky Rosso, Will Roske and Rob Snow who assisted in an after-hours call from Alamance Emergency Management requesting our ground penetrating radar (GPR). Rob Snow and Will Roske were quick to answer the call to respond to run the GPR. Environmental health purchased the GPR to use when trying to locate hard to find septic systems. Law enforcement was provided training they received on how to use and read the GPR and was very helpful to them and Emergency Management.

Dr. Lo Giudice thanked Marlene Norway, Grace Snow, and Kelsey King for putting together a Halloween event for staff.

Dr. Lo Giudice gave a shout out to Rhonda Spruill who he witnessed providing wonderful customer service and assisting a mother in nurse clinic who was very overwhelmed and needed help getting into the room with her baby.

10. Closed Session N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(2) (2) To prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award.

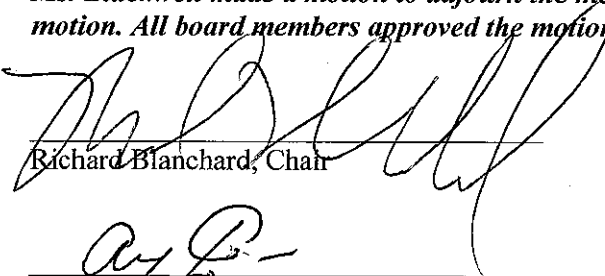
Mr. Blanchard made a motion at 7:31 pm to move into closed session pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(2) (2) To prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award. Mr. Carter seconded the motion. All board members approved the motion unanimously.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion at 8:09 pm to end the closed session. Dr. McArthur seconded the motion. All board members approved the motion unanimously.

Winners of the human services agency awards were selected during the closed session and will be invited to the December human services board meeting to receive their award.

11. Adjournment

Ms. Blackwell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 pm. Dr. Riley-Caldwell seconded the motion. All board members approved the motion unanimously.



Richard Blanchard, Chair



Tony Lo Giudice, Secretary