



Rutherford County DSS Annual Report

July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025

A year defined by resilience, compassion,
and unwavering service to our community.

Responding in Crisis: Hurricane Helene

- DSS opened and staffed emergency shelters within hours of landfall.
- Supported over 160 displaced residents during widespread devastation.
- Staff served while facing personal loss—demonstrating extraordinary dedication.



A Historic Achievement: No Children Sleeping on Office Floors

- The Lighthouse at Building D opened in June 2025.
 - A safe, trauma-informed temporary home for children entering custody.
 - A milestone made possible through community partnership and compassion.

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing a grid of streets, numerous houses with varying roof colors, and green lawns with trees. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down on the community.

Child Welfare: Protecting Our Children

CPS received and assessed hundreds of reports to ensure safety.

Average of 182 children in custody — demonstrating growing community need.

- Persistent shortage of foster homes: only 25 licensed homes for entire county.
- Foster parent recruitment remains critical: 'Be the Village'.



Supporting Families: Prevention & Healing

- 21 families prevented from entering foster care through Pisgah Legal partnership due to the Duke Endowment grant.
- 86 family members received Family-Centered Treatment-Recovery services through Opiate Settlement Funding grant.
- The goal is to reduce the requirement for out of home placements, when possible, to give children better health outcomes and to increase community safety.

Economic & Emergency Support

- Processed 4,517 DSNAP applications after the hurricane.
- Over \$4 million in food assistance delivered during disaster response.
- Ongoing administration of FNS, Medicaid, childcare assistance, and energy programs.

Medicaid Expansion Success

- State identified 4,054 eligible residents; DSS enrolled 5,236.
- \$3.19 million in Medicaid dollars paid to providers.
- Expanded access means healthier families, fewer crises, and stronger communities.

Child Support & Adult Services

- Child Support collected over \$4.8 million for local children.
- Adult Services protected vulnerable adults and managed guardianship responsibilities.
- Increasing elderly needs signal growing demand on services.



Accomplishments Worth Celebrating

- USDA praised Rutherford County's DSNAP site as a statewide model.
- Agency passed all audits with no findings.
- Staff maintained service delivery despite extreme stress and workload.

Challenges Ahead

- Severe staffing shortages and competition from higher-paying counties.
- Newly developed Healthy Blue jobs took six workers including two supervisors.
- Growing substance misuse driving child welfare involvement.
- Shortage of foster homes causing placement delays.
- Increasing senior population with complex needs.

A Vision for the Future

- Strengthening partnerships and expanding service access.
- Fostering transparency, accountability, and data-driven improvement.
- Continuing leadership in statewide innovation and collaboration.
- Bring the Kids Back Home Initiative.

A Message to Commissioners & Our Community

- Your support sustains the services that protect children, families, and seniors.
- Investment in DSS is an investment in safety, stability, and hope.
- Together, we can build a stronger Rutherford County where every resident thrives.