

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

KODY H. KINSLEY
SECRETARY

September 11, 2023

Ms. Amy Hamlett, Social Services Director
Mr. William Hill, Health and Human Services Director
Ms. Stacie Shatzer, County Manager
Mr. Robbie Davis, Chair, County Commissioners

Dear Ms. Hamlett, Mr. Hill, Ms. Shatzer, and Mr. Davis,

On February 8, 2023, The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) became aware of a fatality in Nash County. After investigating the circumstances of that case, Nash County Department of Social Services (Nash County DSS) was placed on a Corrective Action Plan due to inadequate safety planning and supervision to assure the protection of children. In August 2023, NCDHHS followed up with an enhanced plan due to a near fatality and several serious abuse cases where Nash County DSS' lack of thorough safety planning and strong decision-making continued to leave children unprotected.

Since that time NCDHHS has engaged with the Nash County DSS to put protocols in place with Nash County DSS staff to assist with decision making to assure safety. Recent developments during our involvement with Nash County DSS have revealed that while the county has added additional contracted resources, it does not have the governance structure to manage the day-to-day work and address significant deficiencies in the provision of protective services to children. Nash County has been slow to respond in critical situations, even when provided direct guidance and resources which include intensive intervention by NCDHHS staff over the last three weeks. Concerns about safety planning have continued, creating a substantial risk to children, and have led to children being harmed.

In light of this additional information, I have determined that the Nash County Department of Social Services is not providing child welfare services in accordance with law, rule and policy, and further, the failure to provide these services poses a substantial threat to the safety and welfare of children in Nash County. Accordingly, pursuant to my authority under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 108A-74(h), NCDHHS will begin assuming direct operation of the child welfare services in Nash County effective September 12, 2023.


When NCDHHS assumes operations, the Nash County DSS Director shall be divested of her service delivery powers under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 108A-14 and all other powers under state law that pertain to child welfare services.

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There is a lot of work to be done to protect children and bring Nash County DSS into compliance with our state laws and policies. Given the critical work performed by our child welfare system, and the urgency we face, NCDHHS is taking this action to help stabilize Nash County. It is our hope that NCDHHS and Nash County can work collaboratively to ensure that the families and children of Nash County are provided with appropriate services, in accordance with law, rule and policy. Prior to our arrival on September 12, 2023, we will provide you with additional details and information so that we all can be prepared to move forward, together.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lisa Cauley, Senior Director of Human Services, at (919) 527-6401.

Sincerely,

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Kody Kinsley

Cc: Susan Osborne, Deputy Secretary for Opportunity and Well-Being
Lisa Cauley, Senior Director of Human Services
Julie Cronin, NCDHHS General Counsel