



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –
Public Information Office
Contact: Sally Shutt, Communications Manager
Telephone: 910-437-1921
E-mail: sshutt@co.cumberland.nc.us

April 6, 2010

Commissioners Approve Separate County Department for Child Support Enforcement

FAYETTEVILLE – The Cumberland County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously this morning to establish a separate county department to conduct child support enforcement effective July 1 -- the date the state will cease funding state-operated Child Support Enforcement offices in Cumberland and 27 other counties.

The board followed the recommendation of county management and the county's finance committee. Two other options – privatization or having the Department of Social Services administer the program -- had been researched by DSS, which was appointed by the commissioners in September as the lead agency in investigating options for the county's takeover of the Child Support Enforcement offices. DSS created a task force that included representatives from the court system and various county departments to identify needs and research options.

The county-operated Child Support Enforcement office will have a proposed budget of \$3.9 million and a staff of 66. The current office has a staff of 47. The net cost to the county for the first year is projected to be \$1.2 million, which includes \$91,000 in transitional costs such as computer hardware, software and phone system expenses. The state is giving the county the furniture and equipment already in the office. Child Support Enforcement receives revenues in the form of incentives from the state and federal reimbursements for 66 percent of certain expenditures.

The projected net county cost for a separate county department over three years is approximately \$3.3 million, a \$400,000 savings over a bid received from a private company to take over the operation of the office for three years.

In her presentation to the board, Deputy County Manager Juanita Pilgrim said that county

-more-

management based its recommendation on the information received from all parties, including the current Child Support Enforcement supervisors. Management took into consideration the current economic situation and the unemployment rate, as well as not knowing exactly what the state will cut from the budget, including incentive payments to the county for the program.

Under the separate county department option, any funds not utilized during the fiscal year will be returned to the county's fund balance. In the case of the private contractor, the full amount of the contract would be due regardless of the outcomes, Pilgrim said.

Under the county's plan, all current Child Support Enforcement employees and legal staff will be offered employment effective July 1 at their current salary. In the event the salary is below the minimum salary in the county's classification pay plan, the employee will be brought up to minimum. All employees will be hired as new-hires with probationary status. Sick leave earned will be carried forward, but longevity will not be recognized.

"The first year as a separate County department will provide valuable information to management in order to make any further decisions regarding the administration of the Child Support Enforcement office," Pilgrim said.

-end-

2