

Handbook for County Social Services Boards

2009

John L. Saxon



UNC
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

The School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill works to improve the lives of North Carolinians by engaging in practical scholarship that helps public officials and citizens understand and improve state and local government. Established in 1931 as the Institute of Government, the School provides educational, advisory, and research services for state and local governments. The School of Government is also home to a nationally ranked graduate program in public administration and specialized centers focused on information technology, environmental finance, and civic education for youth.

As the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States, the School of Government offers up to 200 courses, seminars, and specialized conferences for more than 12,000 public officials each year. In addition, faculty members annually publish approximately fifty books, book chapters, bulletins, and other reference works related to state and local government. Each day that the General Assembly is in session, the School produces the *Daily Bulletin*, which reports on the day's activities for members of the legislature and others who need to follow the course of legislation.

The Master of Public Administration Program is a full-time, two-year program that serves up to sixty students annually. It consistently ranks among the best public administration graduate programs in the country, particularly in city management. With courses ranging from public policy analysis to ethics and management, the program educates leaders for local, state, and federal governments and nonprofit organizations.

Operating support for the School of Government's programs and activities comes from many sources, including state appropriations, local government membership dues, private contributions, publication sales, course fees, and service contracts. Visit www.sog.unc.edu or call 919.966.5381 for more information on the School's courses, publications, programs, and services.

Michael R. Smith, DEAN

Thomas H. Thornburg, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN

Frayda S. Bluestein, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR PROGRAMS

Todd A. Nicolet, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR OPERATIONS

Ann Cary Simpson, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Bradley G. Volk, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ADMINISTRATION

FACULTY

Gregory S. Allison

David N. Ammons

Ann M. Anderson

A. Fleming Bell, II

Maureen M. Berner

Mark F. Botts

Joan G. Brannon

Michael Crowell

Shea Riggsbee Denning

James C. Drennan

Richard D. Ducker

Robert L. Farb

Joseph S. Ferrell

Alyson A. Grine

Milton S. Heath Jr.

Norma Houston (on leave)

Cheryl Daniels Howell

Jeffrey A. Hughes

Joseph E. Hunt

Willow S. Jacobson

Robert P. Joyce

Kenneth L. Joyner

Diane M. Juffras

David M. Lawrence

Dona G. Lewandowski

James M. Markham

Janet Mason

Laurie L. Mesibov

Christopher B. McLaughlin

Kara A. Millonzi

Jill D. Moore

Jonathan Q. Morgan

Ricardo S. Morse

C. Tyler Mulligan

David W. Owens

William C. Rivenbark

Dale J. Roenigk

John Rubin

John L. Saxon

Jessica Smith

Karl W. Smith

Carl W. Stenberg III

John B. Stephens

Charles A. Szypszak

Shannon H. Tufts

Vaughn Upshaw

A. John Vogt

Aimee N. Wall

Jeffrey B. Welty

Richard B. Whisnant

Gordon P. Whitaker

Eileen R. Youens

© 2009

School of Government

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Use of this publication for commercial purposes or without acknowledgment of its source is prohibited. Reproducing, distributing, or otherwise making available to a non-purchaser the entire publication, or a substantial portion of it, without express permission, is prohibited.

Printed in the United States of America

13 12 11 10 09 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN 978-1-56011-601-1

♻️ This publication is printed on permanent, acid-free paper in compliance with the North Carolina General Statutes.

♻️ Printed on recycled paper

Contents

	Preface	v
Chapter 1	Social Services in North Carolina	1
Chapter 2	History of County Social Services Boards	17
Chapter 3	The Board’s Role, Size, Composition, and Legal Status	23
Chapter 4	Appointment of Social Services Board Members	29
Chapter 5	Terms, Term Limits, and Removal of Board Members	41
Chapter 6	Ethical Standards for Social Services Board Members	47
Chapter 7	The Board’s Legal Authority, Powers, and Duties	57
Chapter 8	The Board’s Responsibilities Regarding the Social Services Director and Employees	63
Chapter 9	The Board’s Responsibilities Regarding Social Services Policy, Administration, and Funding	87
Chapter 10	Social Services Board Meetings and Procedures	103
Chapter 11	Working Together to Improve the Board’s Effectiveness	119
Chapter 12	Legal Liability and Immunity of the Social Services Board and Board Members	129

Preface

Each year more than 400 citizens across North Carolina volunteer their time, energy, and talents to participate in county government as members of county social services boards. They come from almost every walk of life but have in common an unselfish commitment to public service. An invitation to serve on a county social services board is an honor and an expression of confidence, but it is also a request for a substantial commitment of time and energy.

This *Handbook for County Social Services Boards* provides board members with the information that they need to perform their public responsibilities lawfully and effectively, including information regarding the social services board's legal powers and duties; the roles and responsibilities of the board of county commissioners, the county social services director, the North Carolina General Assembly, the state Social Services Commission, and the state Department of Health and Human Services with respect to social services; the legal rules that govern the board's meetings and procedures; and the laws governing the administration and financing of public assistance and social services programs in North Carolina.

This handbook replaces a loose-leaf *Handbook for County Social Services Board Members* that was produced and distributed by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute (now School) of Government and the North Carolina Division of Social Services in 1992.

This handbook is supplemented by *Social Services in North Carolina* (published by the UNC School of Government in 2008). *Social Services in North Carolina* provides more detailed information on North Carolina's state-supervised and county-administered social services system; the roles and responsibilities of the federal, state, and local governments for the creation, administration, and financing of public assistance and social services

programs; the organization and structure of state and county social services agencies; and related issues.

A shorter pamphlet, *Serving on the County Board of Social Services* (available on the School of Government's website at www.sog.unc.edu/pubs/electronicversions/pdfs/socservbds.pdf), is available for people who have been asked to serve on, or are seeking appointment to, the county social services board.

I would like to thank Janet Mason, my faculty colleague, mentor, and friend, who read the entire manuscript for this handbook and offered a number of valuable comments and helpful suggestions, as well as the other UNC faculty members—David Lawrence, Fleming Bell, Diane Juffras, Vaughn Upshaw, and Peg Carlson—and Drake Maynard and Keita Cannon in the North Carolina Office of State Personnel for their advice and assistance in reviewing particular parts of the manuscript. This handbook is better and more accurate because of their contributions.

It is my sincere hope that this handbook will be a useful resource for those civic-minded citizens who serve on North Carolina's county social services boards and that it will contribute to the School of Government's long and proud tradition of practical scholarship that seeks to improve the lives and well-being of North Carolinians by helping public officials and citizens better understand and improve state and local government.

John L. Saxon
Professor of Public Law and Government
School of Government
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
May 2009