



MACON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Invites Your Interest in the Position of

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR



Harrison Keely



Devin Holland





Position Closes July 24, 2026

- ✓ Are you a thoughtful problem solver who demonstrates emotional intelligence, empathy, and sound judgment, someone who avoids knee-jerk decisions while also acting quickly when needed?
- ✓ Are you an engaged and approachable communicator and an active listener who builds relationships across communities and understands how to balance diverse needs in a rural setting?
- ✓ Are you a knowledgeable and steady leader, motivated to serve, calm in the face of crisis, and able to navigate complex challenges such as those associated with Federal laws and regulations that have resulted in changes in the last year?

If so, Macon County, NC, is seeking a collaborative and diplomatic professional to serve as its next **Department of Social Services Director**. The ideal candidate will bring strong leadership skills—not just management ability—and a clear commitment to serving the community. The next **Director** will understand and respect the distinct needs of Franklin, Highlands, Otto, and Nantahala, recognizing differences in access, expectations, and service demand across the county, while building trust, supporting staff, and strengthening relationships across the community.



Macon County DSS staff and partners support the community through key initiatives such as (clockwise from top left) collecting donations for KIDS Place Child Advocacy Center to aid children and families, organizing a food drive for CareNet of Macon County that provides essential funding and hundreds of pounds of food for those in need, and participating in an elder abuse awareness walk to raise visibility and promote dignity, safety, and respect for older adults.

About the Organization, Department, and Position:

Macon County operates under a commissioner-manager form of government. A five-member Board of Commissioners provides overall leadership and policy direction, while the County Manager, who is appointed by the Board, oversees daily operations and the administration of county departments. The County employs over 650 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees across its various departments. The County's [FY2025–2026 budget of \\$64,711,599](#) supports operations across all county departments and includes funding for employee salary increases and key projects. Learn more about Macon County [here](#).

The [Macon County Department of Social Services](#) (DSS), located in Franklin, plays an essential role in supporting the health, safety, and stability of residents across the county. Guided by its mission “*Partnering to promote, protect and strengthen our community*,” the department works closely with individuals, families, and partner agencies to provide critical services that improve overall quality of life. The department emphasizes that its success, and the well-being of the county’s citizens, is rooted in an unwavering commitment to providing excellent service every day. This is reflected in its core values of compassion, learning, integrity, excellence, innovation, and teamwork.

DSS is organized into several key service areas. Economic Services helps individuals and families meet basic needs through programs like Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services (SNAP), Work First, and childcare assistance, offering both immediate support and pathways toward long-term stability. Children and Family Services focuses on protecting children and strengthening families through Child Protective Services, foster care, adoption, and in-home support, always working to ensure safety while preserving family connections whenever possible. Adult Services provides protection and assistance to vulnerable adults, including those who are elderly or disabled, through services like Adult Protective Services, guardianship, and representative payee services. In addition, Senior Services supports older adults in maintaining independence and quality of life with resources such as meal programs and caregiver support.

Reporting to a three-member Social Services Board, the **Social Services Director** manages the department’s \$6.4M budget while leading a team of 75 full-time employees, with eight direct reports, including fiscal, HR, Senior Services, Adult and Child Welfare, and Economic Support Supervisors.

The **Director** oversees a comprehensive range of public assistance and social services programs—including Fiscal and Agency Administration, Medicaid and Food and Nutrition Eligibility, Child Support Enforcement, Program Integrity and Fraud, Child Welfare and Adult Welfare Services, and Senior Services—ensuring services are delivered in compliance with North Carolina law and all state and federal requirements. Financial management is a key component of the role, requiring an active, hands-on approach to budget development and oversight. While finance staff manage day-to-day fiscal operations, a strong working knowledge of the funding streams that support the agency is essential to ensure responsible and effective use of public funds.

The **Director** also serves as Executive Officer and secretary to the Social Services Board and acts as an agent of the NC Social Services Commission and the NC Department of Health and Human Services, carrying out required work at the county level and serving as a key liaison with state partners. Additional responsibilities include participation on key community stakeholder boards and committees such as the local Community Action Agency, the local purchasing authority for childcare subsidy, and the local Community Child Protection and Child Fatality Prevention Teams. Coordination of mass care sheltering in times of declared emergencies is also a critical responsibility of this position.

Key Position Priorities:

- Build and sustain strong, collaborative relationships with county and state leadership, the DSS Board, staff, and community partners by fostering trust, breaking down silos among local organizations, and actively engaging across Macon County's distinct communities (Franklin, Highlands, Otto and Nantahala) to promote alignment, advocacy, and a unified, team-oriented approach to service delivery.
- Communicate clearly and consistently with internal and external stakeholders, ensuring transparency, active listening, and effective messaging, especially during high-profile or sensitive situations.
- Develop and maintain a strong understanding of social services programs, policies, and legislative changes, including the impacts of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R.1), to effectively guide departmental operations.
- Lead efforts to address facility space needs by working with county leadership and serving as a project manager for planning and implementation.
- Bolster recruitment and retention by addressing current staffing challenges, including multiple vacancies, building a strong pool of candidates, planning for upcoming retirements, adapting to funding changes, and fostering a supportive environment that encourages current staff to stay.

Qualifications:

A Master's degree in Social Work and two years of supervisory experience in the delivery of client services; or a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and three years of supervisory experience in the delivery of client services, one of which must have been in Social Services; or graduation from a four-year college or university and three years of supervisory experience in the delivery of client services, two of which must have been in Social Services; or an equivalent combination of training and experience.

A state driver's license is **required** or the ability to obtain one within a reasonable time following appointment.

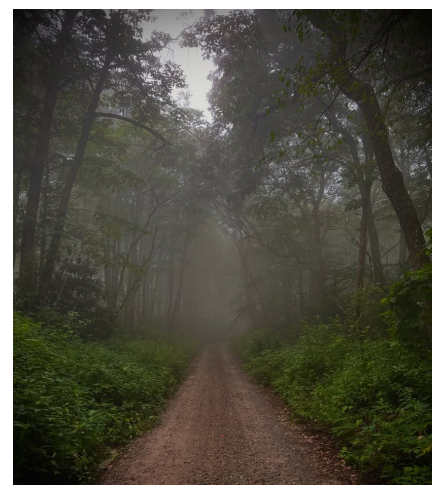
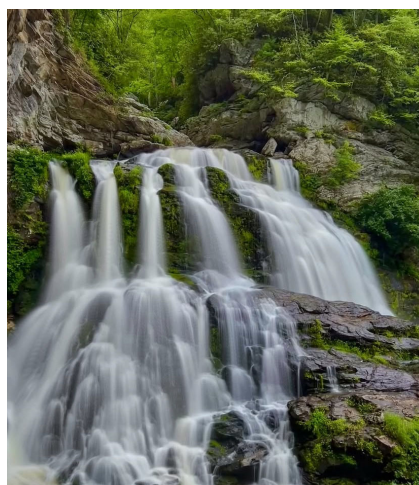
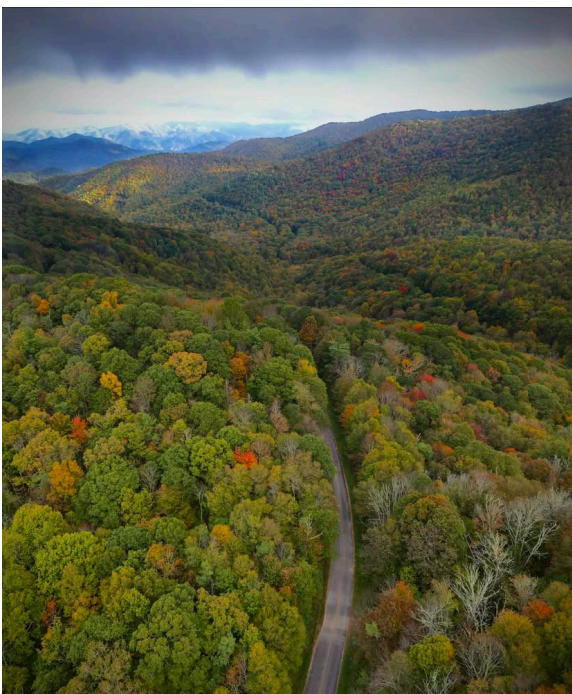


One of the key position priorities for the next Social Services Director is building strong, collaborative relationships—fostering trust, breaking down silos, and engaging across Macon County's communities: (top left, clockwise) Nantahala, Franklin, Highlands, and Otto.



The Successful Candidate:

- Demonstrates emotional maturity, empathy, and the emotional fitness required for a demanding and often difficult role;
- Builds and sustains strong relationships across the community, government, and partner organizations by engaging directly, earning trust, and gaining insight into local needs;
- Takes a thoughtful, intentional approach to leadership—investing time to listen to and learn from staff, understand county operations, and respect the community’s values while earning acceptance and identifying areas for improvement;
- Serves as a bridge builder—bringing together staff, leadership, and community partners, reducing silos, and fostering collaboration while remaining supportive and not micromanaging;
- Communicates with clarity and sound judgment, using diplomacy and active listening to build trust and effectively navigate sensitive or high-profile situations;
- Stays calm, confident, and composed in the face of stress and crisis, understanding the critical nature and liability of the position;
- Fosters a positive and engaged workplace environment, supporting staff morale and demonstrating a strong understanding of state policy, programs, and funding sources;
- Applies thoughtful decision-making and problem-solving skills in complex situations, recognizing that decisions are not always black and white and require thoughtful consideration beyond policy alone;
- Leads capital improvements and expansion efforts with a fiscally responsible approach, understanding the seriousness of managing public resources—not always asking for more, but using what is available effectively to meet community needs; and
- Recognizes there are big shoes to fill, as Macon County has had only six DSS Directors in its history, and honors that legacy by building on established relationships, maintaining stability, and continuing to move the department forward.



Scenic views of Macon County showcase the natural beauty of the Nantahala, from winding forest roads and cascading waterfalls to peaceful hiking trails. These landscapes offer both residents and visitors year-round opportunities to explore, unwind, and connect with the outdoors while experiencing the unique charm and serenity of Western North Carolina.

About the Community:

Nestled in the mountains of western North Carolina, Macon County offers a mix of natural beauty, history, and small-town living that appeals to those seeking a slower, more relaxed pace of life. Established in 1828 and named after North Carolina statesman Nathaniel Macon, the county has a long and layered history. Long before its formation, the land was home to the Cherokee people, and their influence is still visible today through preserved sites and cultural traditions that remain an important part of the area's identity.

One of the biggest draws to Macon County is its easy access to the outdoors. Surrounded by the [Nantahala National Forest](#) and located near the Appalachian Trail, the area offers abundant opportunities for hiking, camping, fishing, and exploring waterfalls. Lakes and rivers throughout the county provide space for kayaking, boating, and trout fishing. At the center of it all is [Franklin](#), the county seat and a hub for shopping, dining, and community events. It's walkable downtown features locally owned shops, galleries, breweries, and restaurants. [Seasonal festivals](#) play a key role in bringing the community together throughout the year, from the lively "Pickin' on the Square" music events in the summer to the popular PumpkinFest in the fall and festive Winter Wonderland celebrations during the holiday season, all helping to create a strong and welcoming sense of community.

In addition to its natural surroundings, Macon County offers a variety of parks, facilities, and recreational amenities. The [Franklin Golf Course](#), a historic nine-hole public course established in 1929, provides an affordable and scenic place to play. The [Little Tennessee River Greenway](#) is a standout feature—a 4.5-mile, 150+ acre riverside trail in the heart of Franklin for walking, running, and biking. Recognized as a National Recreation Trail, a Monarch Way Station, and part of the NC Birding Trail, it is home to more than 275 plant species and 136 bird species and includes amenities such as a visitor center, playground, splash pad, picnic shelters, dog park, boardwalk, wetland overlook, exercise stations, watercraft launches, and gardens.



The Tennessee River Greenway provides a scenic, accessible space for residents and visitors to walk, bike, and enjoy the natural beauty of Macon County. (littletennessee.org)



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Community events in Macon County, such as Pickin' on the Square (second photo), PumpkinFest (above) and the Taste of Scotland Festival (below) bring residents and visitors together to enjoy local culture, music, food, and seasonal traditions.





Veterans Memorial Recreation Park adds to these offerings with a swimming pool, baseball and softball fields, and gathering spaces. Known as the “Gem Capital of the World,” Franklin celebrates its heritage through popular gem mining and cultural attractions like the [Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum](#) and the [Macon County Historical Society and Museum](#), both of which connect residents and visitors to the area’s rich history and traditions.

Beyond Franklin, the county’s smaller communities each offer their own character and pace of life. Highlands, known for its higher elevation and cooler temperatures, has a more upscale feel with a strong dining scene and access to scenic overlooks and waterfalls. Nantahala is more remote and rugged, drawing outdoor enthusiasts with its proximity to whitewater rafting, hiking, and the Nantahala River. Otto provides a quieter, rural setting just south of Franklin, appealing to those who value privacy and mountain views while still being close to town. Scaly Mountain, near the Georgia line, is known for its seasonal attractions, including snow tubing in the winter and family-friendly outdoor activities year-round. Cullasaja offers a peaceful, scenic environment along the river, with easy access to waterfalls and nearby trails.

Dining in Macon County reflects its local character, offering a mix of casual and refined options—from barbecue and comfort-style fare to more upscale dining experiences, particularly in Highlands, which is known for its diverse and high-quality restaurant scene. Locally owned restaurants and small businesses are a key part of the dining landscape, especially in downtown Franklin, contributing to the area’s distinct, small-town atmosphere.

With a population of just over 37,000 people, Macon County maintains a rural, close-knit atmosphere. The population includes many retirees and part-time residents, as well as an increase in younger families and remote workers moving to the area in recent years. People are drawn by the relatively affordable cost of living, the natural surroundings, and the sense of safety and community.



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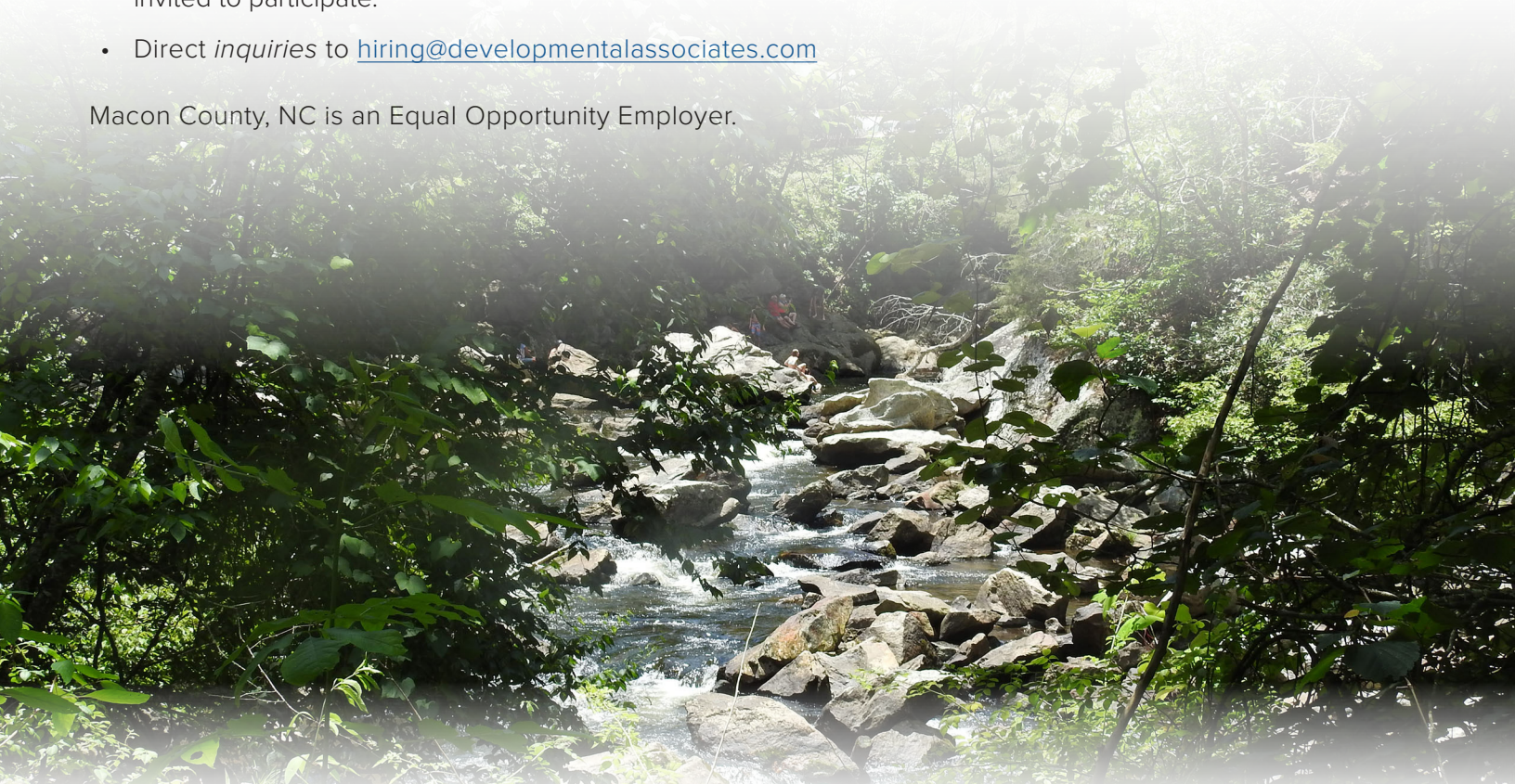
Salary and Benefits:

The hiring range for the **Department of Social Services Director** is \$80,109.42 to \$120,164.17, depending on qualifications and experience. The Board will evaluate finalists for a Credit for Service calculation. The County offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes 100% employer-paid medical coverage and basic life insurance, participation in the Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System (LGERS), optional dental and vision plans, NCFlex supplemental insurance, as well as paid holidays and accrued sick and annual leave. View the full benefit package [here](#).

To apply, please visit <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/developmentalassociates> and click on the **Department of Social Services Director – Macon County, NC** title.

- All applications must be submitted online via the Developmental Associates application portal (link above) – NOT the County's employment application portal or any other external website.
- Resumes and cover letters must be uploaded with the application.
- Applicants should apply by **July 24, 2026**.
- The hiring team will invite successful semi-finalists to participate in virtual interviews and skill evaluations on **August 27-28, 2026**. Candidates are encouraged to reserve these dates for virtual meetings should they be invited to participate.
- Direct *inquiries* to hire@developmentalassociates.com

Macon County, NC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



Cullasaja offers a peaceful, scenic setting along the river, with easy access to waterfalls and nearby trails for both residents and visitors to enjoy. (Jan Krossel)



Developmental Associates, LLC manages the recruitment and selection process for this position. To learn more about our selection process, visit <https://developmentalassociates.com/client-openings/>, select "Client Openings," and scroll down to "Important Information for Applicants."