SUSSEX COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES
VIOLA BROWN, ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR
TAWANA TORAN, DIRECTOR of SUSSEX SOCIAL SERVICES

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
April 14, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Ms. Barbara Gray at 1:04 p.m.

Roll Call/Determine Quorum
Advisory Board Members Present: Barbara Gray, Winnie Umphlett, Earl Rogers

Also Present: County Administrator Richard Douglas; DSS Director Tawana Toran; Advisory Board Secretary/Administrative Services Manager Melissia Hill; Benefit Programs Supervisor LaVeeta Saunders; and Program Coordinator Titiana Nicholson

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – March 10, 2026
Ms. Winnie Umphlett moved to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. Mr. Earl Rogers seconded the motion, and the agenda and minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Unfinished Business
None at this time

New Business

Benefit Programs Report
Ms. LaVeeta Saunders gave the update on Benefit Programs for the month of March 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

- Ms. Jessica Upton is in security officer training today.
- Benefit Supervisors have read 152 cases.
- Benefit workers attended the Wakefield W.I.N.S. Easter Egg Hunt event.

Family Services Report
Ms. Tawana Toran provided an update on Family Services.

- We had a IV-E review for April. We passed the review with no errors found..
- The termination of parental rights regarding the B****m family was approved by the judge. The parents have appealed the judge's decision.
- The B**d children (three of them) have parents who want to adopt them.

Program Coordinator Report
Ms. Titiana Nicholson gave an update on CSA activities for the month of March 2026.

There are currently 34 children in care. Of these, 14 are DSS referrals, 17 are Sussex County Public School referrals, and three are Greater Community Services Board referrals.

CSA was dinged during a recent audit because the Health Department does not have a representative attending the CPMT meetings.

Administrative Services Report

Ms. Melissia Hill provided an update on Administrative Services. A copy of her report is attached.
For the month of March 2026, there were 856 phone calls received, 242 clients who visited the agency, and 28 EBT vault cards issued.

April is Administrative Services Appreciation Month.

Director's Report

Ms. Tawana Toran provided an update on the agency.

- Ms. Toran has spoken with the maintenance director about knocking down the wall to the right of the reception window so that we can have two employees serving the clients in the lobby. Victor is working on that..
- Mr. Douglas will speak with maintenance about the exit/emergency door because it is very hard to open. Victor is working on it
- The leadership team had an all-day retreat in March. There were positive outcomes, and it was a good experience.
- Ms. Toran attended a mass care meeting today about shelter procedures.
- The Directors' Meeting was today. Melissia attended and took notes. There is a proposed 2% raise and 2% BONUSES. The starting salary for Family Services workers will increase to $55,000 if the budget is approved.
- There is an issue with starting pay for HSAs. We lost a potential employee because we could not meet her income request.
- We may have to do an internal alignment with the two lower BPS positions.
- The vacancies we have now are opportunities to get better employees. Tracy Wray will be retiring again soon for the third time at the end of May. She will stay on to train her replacement. There are two Benefit Programs Specialists openings, two Human Services Assistants, a Family Service Supervisor, and one Family Services Specialist.
- Debbie's last day is Friday, April 17th. We will present her with a plaque, gift basket, and cupcakes.
- Lashawn is the HSA leaving, and her last day is Friday, April 24th, and her position will be posted soon.
- We have done multiple interviews: A lot of people are applying.
- Three Family Services consultants will sit in on the Family Services Supervisor interview.

County Administrator's Report

Mr. Douglas gave an update on county-related matters.

- Mr. Douglas is working on the budget. There is a question on how the federal and state governments will handle the administrative costs for Medicaid. The federal government has shifted administrative costs to the states. The states may try to funnel that costs to the local government at some point. Mr. Douglas has put a budget line item to include the potential additional costs.
- The auditor's report includes the names of the Advisory Board members on the cover of the report, which is unusual.

Public Comments

None at this time.

Board Members' Comments

None at this time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m. after a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Earl Rogers and seconded by Ms. Winnie Umphlett.

Submitted by,
Melissia Hill
Melissia Hill, Sussex DSS Advisory Board Secretary