SUSSEX COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES
BARBARA GRAY, ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR
TAWANA TORAN, DIRECTOR

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
August 11, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Advisory Board Chair Barbara Gray at 1:21 p.m.

Introduction of New Employees
Ms. Tawana Toran introduced our newest employees:

Christopher Rather – Family Services Specialist I
Ellis Cofield, III – Family Services Specialist I
Precious Colbert – Benefit Programs Specialist II
La'Najiah Perkins - Family Services Specialist II

Roll Call/Determine Quorum
Advisory Board Members Present: Earl Rogers, Barbara Gray, Edythe Brown

Also Present: Director Tawana Toran; Advisory Board Secretary/Administrative Services Manager Melissia Hill; Fiscal Manager Jennifer Ellis; Family Services Supervisor Adrienne Sloan; and Program Coordinator LaKeitha Rusan

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – July 14, 2026

Ms. Edythe Brown moved to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. Mr. Earl Rogers seconded the motion, and the agenda and minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

Unfinished Business
None at this time

New Business

Benefit Programs Report
Ms. Tawana Toran gave the update on Benefit Programs for the month of July 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

Questions were asked about the variation in applications from year to year. Identifying trends is difficult because requirements and updates happen often.

Family Services Report
Ms. Adrienne Sloan provided an update on Family Services.

- No new children have been admitted to Foster Care.
- La'Najiah Perkins will be working with in-home prevention cases.

- Family Services recently held mandated reporter training at Sussex Elementary School. The training for the high school will be done on August 12, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. The training is about 90 minutes long.
- Christopher Rather is working in Adult Protection Services and gets 2-3 referrals weekly. He investigates referrals quickly, often on the same day the referral comes in. Most are found to be invalid. He shares resources with clients to get them the help they need.
- There are 13 children in foster care. One case is pending closure.
- We have three CPS cases and an in-home case.
- Laniyah Dennis has been helping with foster care cases.
- There are six pending adoption cases.

Program Coordinator Report
Ms. LaKeitha Rusan provided the update on CSA.

- There are 14 school-CSA cases and two pending referrals.
- There are 12 DSS-CSA cases.
- Ms. Rusan attended the Prince George County CSA vendor fair this morning at the Prince George Library and collected resources regarding vendors for parents and the schools, including a housekeeping consultant. She will compile a resource list based on the information received today and will check with Victoria Fisher to see if there are additional social workers in the Sussex School System.
- Will like to meet with the school superintendent to share resources. Contemplating a vendor resource fair for this locality.
- Ms. Barbara Gray will send a school directory to Melissia to share with Sussex DSS.

Fiscal Manager Report
Ms. Jennifer Ellis gave an update on DSS fiscal matters.

- Ms. Ellis continues to work with the Program Coordinator to ensure that all payments are accurate and accurately documented.

Administrative Services Report
Ms. Melissia Hill provided an update on Administrative Services. A copy of her report is attached.

- VDSS has rolled out their BOX program. BOX allows clients and others to securely upload documents to a portal. In addition to Ms. Hill, the benefit programs supervisors, senior workers, and two HSAs have access to the portal. It is going well so far.
- Chip EBT cards are being rolled out and will be tested in the next two weeks. The state has asked the Directors to identify an agency employee who will go to specified stores and try to use the chip and tap features on the new EBT cards. The state will access the results and then decide how to move forward.
- We are preparing for Angel Tree season. Letters will be sent to eligible clients and potential donors in early September.

Director's Report

Ms. Tawana Toran provided the update on the agency.

- We passed the most recent IV-E review and are in substantial compliance with federal mandates.
- Staffing – We are at 26 employees and are now fully staffed. Family Services is completely new, except for LaKeitha and Brenda.
- Ellis and Adrienne did an excellent job of presenting information during the mandated reporting training.
- The IV-E review was recently completed, and DSS had to pay about $18,000.00 to correct payments that were issued incorrectly because of inaccurate data. These errors occurred before Ms. Toran's tenure. Today, we are in compliance with federal eligibility mandates.
- The state of the Sussex DSS building continues to be a safety concern for employees, especially for family service employees.
- Family Services Specialists cannot carry weapons, and a sheriff deputy is not always available when Family Services has to meet with angry and/or unstable clients. Family Services workers usually go in pairs when they are in the field.
- The parking lot needs to be repaved and repainted. The flagpole needs to be fixed, and the front door does not latch when it is closed. The emergency door is very hard to open, and this will be a real problem if there is an emergency.
- The county hired a new Public Safety Coordinator, but he approaches the job differently from his predecessor.
- Because the Health Department does not lock their doors until 5:00 p.m., it is a safety issue for us because people can access our lobby even after we are closed.
- The Advisory Board was encouraged to participate with us in community events. Melissia will send invitations to the Board about our staff meeting on September 15th at 10 a.m.
- There are vacancies pending on the Advisory Board; Mr. White will most likely address the vacancies with the Board of Supervisors next month.

Interim County Administrator's Report and Follow-Up Discussion

None at this time.

Public Comments

None at this time.

Board Members' Comments

- Ms. Gray recently celebrated 50 years of service with Sussex County.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Edythe Brown and seconded by Mr. Earl Rodgers to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissia Hill

Melissia Hill
Sussex DSS Advisory Board Secretary