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

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

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Advisory Board Chair Barbara Gray at 1:01 p.m.

Introduction of New Employees
Ms. Melissia Hill introduced our newest employees:

Charles Dixon – Human Services Assistant II (Admin)
Laniyah Dennis- Family Services Specialist I
Cherelle Cain – Human Services Assistant II (Family Services)

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

Also Present: Interim County Deputy Administrative Dr. Phyllis Tolliver; Advisory Board Secretary/Administrative Services Manager Melissia Hill; Benefit Programs Supervisors LaVeeta Saunders and Jessica Upton; Fiscal Manager Jennifer Ellis; Family Services Supervisor Adrienne Sloan; and Program Coordinator LaKeitha Rusan

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – June 9, 2026

Ms. Winnie Umphlett moved to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. Ms. Edythe Brown 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. Jessica Upton gave the update on Benefit Programs for the month of June 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

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

- Two new employees will be starting soon
- Working on adoptive placement
- No new children in care
- Brenda Hardy was promoted to Family Services Specialist IV effective July 1, 2026.

- Ellis Cofield, III is working on Child Protection Services (CPS) and assisting with Adult Protection Services (APS).
- There has been one APS call regarding a resident at Waverly Healthcare, and Family Services will follow up.

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

- There are 12 DSS cases and 17 cases from Sussex County Public Schools; there are three pending cases from the school district.
- Ms. Rusan is in the process of renewing and approving new contracts.
- Working on an audit and making sure we are in compliance with the Office of Children Services. Policy errors and financial errors have been identified. Quality Assurance Assessment – tells us what we are not doing right and what we are doing wrong. There was a minor discrepancy with the verbiage, and there are minor financial discrepancies. It is our responsibility to make sure that we are compliant, as the Office of Children Services (OCS) does not offer official training. OCS has recommended that we shadow other agencies to see how they do things. With the errors, we should not have to repay any monies, but we will try to recoup that money from the providers. Parents should be paying parental copays.
- Dr. Tolliver recommended that Ms. Rusan meet with her and Mr. Steve White.
- Ms. Rusan met with the school system this morning and got a little push back, but she will continue to move forward.

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

Director's Report
Ms. Melissia Hill provided the update on the agency. Ms. Toran was not able to attend the meeting due to an emergent and unforeseen circumstance.

- Sussex County employees will receive the 3.5% COLA increase starting with the August 16th check.
- Sussex County employee employees received the 2% bonus on their July 16th check.
- Viola Brown, former chair of the Advisory Board, recently passed away. Her funeral has been set for Friday, July 17, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Wakefield, Virginia. Sussex DSS has ordered a spray for her.
- Appointments for board members will hopefully be addressed at the next Board of Supervisors meeting. Vacant seats include Ms. Winnie Umplett (Blackwater District) and Ms. Viola Brown (Wakefield District).
- Ms. Nathelia Wyche has missed a few meetings due to illness but plans to return in August.

Interim County Administrator's Report and Follow-Up Discussion

Ms. Phyllis Tolliver gave the update on county-related issues.

- The Board of Supervisors' next meeting is on Thursday.
- An Advisory Board member will need to be appointed to represent the Blackwater and Wakefield Districts.
- Interviews are being done for the Animal Shelter Director.
- There is an opening for an AP clerk; Stephanie Daniels is leaving.
- County Administrator and Deputy County Administrator positions will be posted soon. Job descriptions are still being developed.

Public Comments

None at this time.

Board Members' Comments

- Dr. Julius Hamlin lost his father in a boating accident last Friday.
- Ms. Barbara Gray heard a negative comment about Sussex DSS while she was at the schools, and she quickly came to our defense. She has seen the difference since Ms. Toran became Director. Ms. Rusan advised that Family Services will be conducting a mandated reporter training soon. She also shared the CPS hotline number that is available after hours, weekends, and holidays. Please call the agency first during office hours. Ms. Saunders advised that any supervisor is available to answer questions any Sussex resident may have.
- Ms. Winnie Umphlett's last day is today. She expressed how much she has learned about Sussex Social Services and how much she enjoyed being able to serve in this way.
- Ms. Gray reported that she has spoken to someone who has expressed interest in serving on the Advisory Board, but she is in a district that is already represented on the Advisory Board.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Edythe Brown and seconded by Ms. Winnie Umphlett to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissia Hill

Melissia Hill
Sussex DSS Advisory Board Secretary