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

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
June 9, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Ms. Barbara Gray at 1:05 p.m.

Introduction of New Employees
Ms. Tawana Toran introduced our newest employees: Adrienne Sloan, Family Services Supervisor; JaWanna Reavis, Benefit Programs Specialist I; and Sharmaine Burns, Human Services Assistant for Benefit Programs. Ms. Reavis and Ms. Burns returned to their offices after the introduction.

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

Also Present: Interim County Deputy Administrative Dr. Phyllis Toliver; DSS Director Tawana Toran; Advisory Board Secretary/Administrative Services Manager Melissia Hill; Benefit Programs Supervisors LaVeeta Saunders and Jessica Upton; Fiscal Manager Jennifer Ellis; and Family Services Supervisor Adrienne Sloan

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – May 12, 2026
Mr. Earl Rogers moved to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. Ms. Winnie Umphlett 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 May 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

- A new AI process for straight Medicaid applications has been implemented. The worker will still have to approve the application or renewal, but new AI features will complete some of the preliminary processes.
- So far, nine recipients have had their SNAP benefits stolen this month. We are urging our clients to download the ConnectEBT to lock and unlock their EBT cards.

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

- The Family Services Supervisor is getting acclimated to her new position.
- A Human Services Assistant II (Family Services) and Family Services Specialist I have been hired and will start Thursday, June 11, 2026.
- There are no new children in care. We are still working on adoption for our eligible children, but it is a slow process.
- There are no new updates for foster care.
- Our Fostering Futures client aged out last month. We were able to purchase a couch and a television for her apartment.

Program Coordinator Report
Ms. Tawana Toran gave the update on CSA activities.

- The position has been filled by Ms. LaKeitha Rusan, and she started in her new role yesterday. She was with the Family Services unit and will continue to assist them.
- Ms. Jenny-Lynn Ellis will continue to serve as the backup to the Program Coordinator.
- A CSA audit was conducted last month, and the Program Coordinator will be working to improve processes and compliance.
- A private provider will have to come off CPMT, so there are two seats that need to be filled.

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

- For the month of May 2026, there were 940 phone calls received, 202 clients who visited the agency, and 17 EBT vault cards issued. We continue to work to improve front desk processes.

Director's Report
Ms. Tawana Toran provided an update on the agency.

- With families struggling to pay electric bills, we have working through our Family Services Crisis program to help with electricity bills for qualifying individuals and families (if there is a child, elderly, or disabled person in the home).
- We are working to fill agency vacancies.
    - We have a successful applicant for the Human Services Assistant II vacancy. We are checking references and will proceed with a job offer if the references are acceptable.
    - Interviews are scheduled for next week to fill the Benefit Programs Specialist position (Ms. LaVeeta Saunders's unit).
    - Family Services has filled a Family Services Specialist I and Human Services Assistant II position.
    - The Program Coordinator position has been filled.

- The term for some Advisory Board members will end in July 2026.
    - Mr. Earl Rogers (Stony Creek) will serve another four-year term.
    - Ms. Winnie Umphlett (Blackwater) has elected not to serve another term but will stay until a replacement has been named.
    - Ms. Nathelia Wyche (Henry) has not responded.
    - Ms. Viola Brown (Wakefield) has resigned due to health issues.
    - Ms. Barbara Gray's (Waverly) term ends in August 2026. She will be mailed a letter concerning her term.
- Ms. Barbara Gray will as Advisory Board chair until new members are appointed. Ms. Winnie Umphlett will serve as co-chair until new members are appointed.
- The agency will participate in CPR training on June 30, 2026.
- Hiring qualified applicants has been a problem because of salary. We have had applicants decline their job offer because of the proposed salary.
- Internal alignment may be needed so that workers who qualify are paid a salary that more closely aligns with their position.
- The new minimum salary requirements for Family Services Specialists is $55,000.00.

Interim County Administrator's Report and Follow-Up Discussion

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

- The county is reviewing the county website.
- The Board of Supervisors will vote on the proposed budget at their next meeting on June 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the courthouse. Everything is balancing right now.

Public Comments

None at this time.

Board Members' Comments

Board Members would like to have agency shirts, too. Shirt sizes will be submitted, and we will order the shirts after new members have been appointed.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Winnie Umphlett to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Earl Rogers, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissia Hill

Melissia Hill
Sussex DSS Advisory Board Secretary