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

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
March 10, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Ms. Tawana Toran, at 1:07 p.m.

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

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

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2026

Ms. Winnie Umphlett moved to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. Ms. Barbara Gray seconded the motion, and the agenda and minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Unfinished Business
We need to elect/appoint a Vice-Chair. Ms. Barbara Gray volunteered to assume that role.

New Business
Benefit Programs Report
Ms. Jessica Upton gave the update on Benefit Programs for the month of February 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

- Benefit Supervisors have read 157 cases.
- Ms. Deborah Rogers will retire on April 30, 2026. We will do something for her; the Advisory Board will be contacted.
- Ms. Claressa Strawn has resigned her position as a Benefit Programs Specialist II. Her last day is March 13, 2026.

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

- The Family Services Supervisor resigned her position, effective March 6, 2026.
- The termination of parental rights regarding the B****m family was approved by the judge. Ms. Titiana Nicholson was in court during this hearing. The parents have indicated that they plan to appeal.
- No additional children have been taken into care. There are a set of twins we are trying to keep out of care. They are currently with the grandmother as part of their safety plan.
- Internal and external audits are pending.

Program Coordinator Report
Ms. Titiana Nicholson gave an update on CSA activities for the month of February 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. There is a pending case for FAPT.

Administrative Services Report
Ms. Melissia Hill provided an update on Administrative Services. A copy of her report is attached.
For the month of February 2026, there were 523 phone calls received, 175 clients who visited the agency, and 26 EBT vault cards issued.

There are two positions open for Human Services Assistants, one for the Admin Unit and one for the Benefit Programs Unit. Resumes are being accepted until March 23, 2026.

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.
- Mr. Douglas will speak with maintenance about the exit/emergency door because it is very hard to open.
- The leadership team is doing an all-day retreat on Wednesday, March 11, 2026.
- March is Family Services appreciation month.
- The Director and County Administrator are working with the state to move the agency to a partially non-deviating status.

County Administrator's Report
Mr. Douglas gave an update on county-related matters.

- The budget for the upcoming year indicates a sizable shortfall. Revenue remains flat.
- If the state does not cover DSS administrative expenses, the county will have to cover it.
- The state budget indicates a salary increase of two percent for the upcoming fiscal year.
- After the last weather scare, the Department of Emergency Management Services will sponsor a shelter training for DSS employees in April 2026.

Public Comments
None at this time.

Board Members' Comments
- Ms. Barbara Gray spoke of DSS having an Easter Egg Hunt in April. DSS plans to partner with Wakefield W.I.N.S. and their Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for April 6, 2026.
- Ms. Gray asked about our storage options, which remains limited to the storage shed in the employee parking lot.

Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 1:41 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissia Hill

Melissia Hill
Sussex DSS Advisory Board Secretary