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

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
May 12, 2026
1:00 p.m.

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Ms. Tawana Toran at 1:01 p.m.

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

The introduction of Interim County Administrator Steve White and Interim Deputy County Administrator Dr. Phyllis Tolliver was done by Ms. Tawana Toran.

Also Present: Interim County Administrator Steve White; Interim County Deputy Administrative Dr. Phyllis Toliver; DSS Director Tawana Toran; Advisory Board Secretary/Administrative Services Manager Melissia Hill; Benefit Programs Supervisor LaVeeta Saunders; Benefit Program Supervisor Jessica Upton; Fiscal Manager Jennifer Ellis; and Program Coordinator Titiana Nicholson

Approval of the Agenda and Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – April 14, 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 April 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

- Benefit Supervisors have read 131 cases.
- Ms. JaWanna Reavis joined the Benefit Programs team as a Benefit Programs Specialist I.
- Three BPS workers attended the BPRO conference.

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

- The Fostering Futures recipient is aging out this month, as she is about to turn 21 years old. She is doing well. We will make sure she has everything she needs to be successful before she transitions out of the program.
- We are working on adoptive placements.
- We have three in-home cases.
- We have received about 10 CPS referrals, and we have screened out five.
- We have 41 cases APS, 30 adult services cases, and 28 guardian cases.
- Adult Services average 48 cases quarterly.
- We need a resource home or foster care home/parents in the area. It is cheaper to house a child in a foster home in Sussex County than having to transfer them to a neighboring locality.

Program Coordinator Report
Ms. Titiana Nicholson gave an update on CSA activities for the month of March 2026. A written report is attached to these minutes.

- There are eight kids in care as mandated by the court and a total of 35 children currently in care.

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 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.

- The Governor's budget is pending and has a proposed 2% salary increase and a proposed 2% one-time bonus. The budget also includes a pay band increase to a minimum annual salary of $55,000.00 for Family Services employees. We will have to make that adjustment as of July 1, 2026.
- SNAP federal funding switched from 84.5/15.5 75/25 split (federal/state), so the administrative costs will not fall on localities
- Vacancies:
    - One vacancy in Admin
    - One vacancy in Benefits
    - The HSA in Benefits has been filled.
    - Family Services Supervisor has been filled
    - Interviews will be conducted on May 20, 2026, for the open HSA in Family Services.
    - Tracy Wray is retiring on May 29th.
    - The Program Coordinator's last day is June 1st.

- Advisory Board Chair Viola Brown has resigned because of medical reasons. The Board will need to name a replacement for the Wakefield district. The Yale district also does not have a representative on the Advisory Board. We will need to elect a new Advisory Board Chair.
- The term appointments for Ms. Nathelia Wyche, Ms. Winnie Umphlett, and Mr. Earl Gray will expire in July 2026. Verification and more information will be shared at the June meeting.
- The maintenance director has advised that he will be able to update the front desk area by adding/extending the window in the front office. He has not provided a timetable on when this will be done.

Interim County Administrator's Report and Follow-Up Discussion
Mr. Steve White gave the update on county-related matters.

- Mr. White advised that the county plans to implement the 2% salary increase and is working on the 2% one-time bonus.
- The Health Department does not have a representative on CPMT. Titiana spoke to Dr. Hart of the Crater Health District and was advised that they do not have a representative available to attend those meetings. Dr. Phyllis Tolliver will speak to Dr. Hart. There was discussion regarding the Health Department's funding and responsibilities.
- The Board Secretary will share Ms. Viola Brown's contact information in case the Advisory Board would like to reach out to her.
- Dr. Tolliver asked about the cost of caring for foster children in private residential home versus treatment foster care facilities. It is significantly less expensive to place a foster child in a private home. In spite of the high costs, annual spending is 2% less than it was this time last year
- Group homes placement is available for children who are at least 12 years old. There are currently three children in a group home setting.

Public Comments
None at this time.

Board Members' Comments
None at this time.

Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 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