

**Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Board of Social Services**

**Virginia Department of Social Services  
5600 Cox Road  
Glen Allen, VA 23060**

**October 16, 2024**

**Attending:** Don Carey (Chair), DeRonda Short (Vice Chair), William Boone, Leslie Ford, Zulma Santos, Sheryl Garland, April Morefield, Coke Stewart, Matthew Melvin, and Sarah Owen.

**Absent:** Maria Benjamin

**Also in Attendance:** James Williams (Commissioner) and Ellen Malenke (Assistant Attorney General)

**Meeting called to order at 10:01am** – Mr. Carey

**Acknowledgement and Approval of Remote Participation by Board Members**

The Chair announced that Les Ford requested to participate remotely. A physical quorum was present. Ms. Ford stated she was on maternity leave and participating from home. ***On Motion Duly Made,*** (Buckey Boone), second (Zulma Santos), motion for Ms. Ford to participate remotely approved with all in favor.

**Comments from the Commissioner** – Commissioner Williams reviewed agency priorities and provided an update on the Parental Child Safety Placement Program.

**Kinship Overview & Update** – Nikole Cox provided an overview of the program and latest placement numbers.

**COMMENT PERIOD**

Jane Lissenden – Ms. Lissenden shared the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman is in support of the Parental Child Safety Placement Program regulation.

Tim Martin – Mr. Martin spoke about a case in Augusta County that resulted in a child’s death by the mother’s boyfriend, which could have been prevented. He stressed the need to investigate backgrounds and current situations of potential caregivers before a child is placed.

There were no comments from boards and directors of community action agencies.

**Comment from the VA Community Action Partnership** – Erik Johnston, Executive Director  
Mr. Johnston gave provided background on the VA Community Action Partnership. He shared they are hosting their annual summit at VDSS the following week with 130 community action leaders across Virginia and with VDSS leadership. He shared the network applied for a \$12 million grant and has partnered with the State Broadband Office to provide digital skills to training and technology and digital

literacy. They are expanding the volunteer income tax assistance program with bipartisan support in the General Assembly. Lastly, he shared they are working on their legislative priorities.

**Comment from the Virginia League of Social Service Executives** – Rebecca Morgan, President  
Ms. Morgan shared that she submitted public comments regarding the Parental Child Safety Placement Program regulation on behalf of the League. She expressed the importance of the regulation and asked the Board to continue to monitor the program closely.

**Stephanie Coleman, TANF/ESP Committee Chair and Director, Buckingham DSS** – Ms. Coleman shared an overview of the TANF/ESP committee.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **1. 22VAC40-705, Child Protective Services – Exempt Regulation**

**On Motion Duly Made**, (Buckey Boone), Mr. Boone moved to continue action on the regulation until the December meeting. As there was no second, the motion failed.

**On Motion Duly Made**, (Matthew Melvin), moved to approve the regulation with the understanding that Section M. would be amended to reflect 10 calendar days. Also understood was that, once the regulation is effective, discussion from the Board will be an element to consider for local departments, who should receive lists of local supports for placements, including mental health and other resources. DeRonda Short seconded the motion, and the action was approved with all in favor.

During the discussion, concerns were expressed about the capacity of local departments of social services to effectively implement the regulation. Mr. Ayers noted that once the regulation is approved, the agency will finalize guidance, assessment tools, and training to support local departments. Commissioner Williams committed to keeping the Board informed as guidance, tools and training are developed and rolled out.

Due to the length of the discussion of the kinship regulation, the Chairman suggested continuing the remaining agenda items to the December meeting. **On Motion Duly Made**, (Matthew Melvin), second (Sheryl Garland), motion approved with all in favor.

### **Board Member Comments**

There were no Board member comments.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:12pm**