

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

**Department of Social Services  
Central Regional Office  
1604 Santa Rosa Road  
Richmond, Virginia 23229**

**August 21, 2019**

**Attending:** Ms. Lou Ali (Chair), Ms. MaryAnn Boyd (Vice Chair), Mr. William Boone (Secretary), Ms. Veronica Washington, Ms. Mona Malik, Ms. Joan Brennan, Mr. Kent Willis, Mr. John Kines, and Dr. Andrew Heck

**Absent:** Dr. Danny Avula and Mr. Clyde Santana

**Also in Attendance:** Mr. Duke Storen (Commissioner) and Ms. Ellen Malenke (Assistant Attorney General).

**Meeting called to order at 10:00am** – Ms. Ali

**Review of Agenda** – Ms. Karin Clark, Regulatory Coordinator

**Comments from the Commissioner** – Mr. Duke Storen

Commissioner Storen recognized the passing of Dr. Hughes Melton with a moment of silence. He thanked Ms. Ali for taking over as board chair, and he thanked the board for their on-going service and commitment. He provided state and federal updates.

**Children's Services Act Overview & Monitoring** – Scott Reiner provided an update on the Children's Services Act Overview and Monitoring. Handouts were provided.

**Assisted Living Facility Presentation** – Eddie Richardson presented on the Assisted Living Facilities.

**Procedures to Implement 22VAC40-667, State Response When a Local Department of Social Division of Local Support & Services Fails to Provide Services** – Angela Morse provided an overview of the draft *Procedures to Implement 22VAC40-667, State Response When a Local Department of Social Services Fails to Provide Services*. Handouts were provided. At a later point in the meeting, Ms. Ali confirmed that the document is under review by the Office and Attorney General and would be on the October meeting agenda for further discussion.

**Comment from the Virginia League of Social Service Executives** – Andy Crawford relayed comments from local directors regarding the draft *Local Procedures to Implement 22VAC40-667, State Response When a Local Department of Social Services Fails to Provide Services*. He prefaced his remarks by indicating he was not specifying whether the changes should be made in regulation or procedures, but that consideration should be given to them regardless. Comments included a request to take into

account whether cause of the action is a local board, local government or local director issue and to define the terms “all established mechanisms to assist a locality” and “pattern of not meeting performance standards.” Regarding the need for adequate definitions, he referenced the performance management process currently underway by the state that might be included in the regulation. There is concern with how future administrations and commissioners will use the regulation and procedures. Finally, an appeals process is needed.

**Regulatory Update – Karin Clark, Regulatory Coordinator**

Ms. Clark provided updates on the agency bills. She also provided the status update on 22VAC40-185 highlighted on page 2 of the report; 22VAC40-201 and 22VAC40-211 highlighted on page 3; 22VAC40-470 and 22VAC40-677 highlighted on page 4; and 22VAC40-730 highlighted on page 5.

**Comment from Virginia Community Action Agency Partnership – Jim Schuyler**

Mr. Schuyler spoke about the poverty issue. He spoke about community action programs working with families and communities with the greatest needs and the most vulnerable in our society.

**COMMENT PERIOD**

***Comment from the Public***

**Katie Boyle – Virginia Association of Counties**

Ms. Boyle spoke to the draft *Local Procedures to Implement 22VAC40-667, State Response When a Local Department of Social Services Fails to Provide Services*. She expressed that her organization would like to have further conversations with the Commissioner regarding the details of the document and how it will be used.

**Tyrone Sessoms – STOP Inc.**

Mr. Sessoms thanked everyone for their support of the community action programs and asked for continued supported. He shared that STOP Inc. is creating housing programs, health and wellness programs, and working with veterans in rural areas.

**ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. Approved June 2019 Meeting Minutes**  
*On Motion Duly Made*, (Mr. Willis), second (Ms. Washington), motion approved with all in favor.
- 2. Change in TANF Locality Groupings- Albemarle Department of Social Services**  
*On Motion Duly Made*, (Mr. Boone), second (Ms. Washington), motion approved with all in favor.
- 3. 22VAC40-670, Degree Requirements for Family Services Occupational Group – Report of Periodic Review Findings**  
*On Motion Duly Made*, (Mr. Boone), second (Mr. Willis), motion approved with all in favor.
- 4. 22VAC40-890, Human Subject Research Regulations – Report of Periodic Review Findings**  
*On Motion Duly Made*, (Ms. Washington), second (Ms. Brennan), motion approved with all in favor.
- 5. 22VAC40-201, Permanency Services-Prevention, Foster Care, Adoption & Independent Living – NOIRA**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Mr. Willis), second (Ms. Malik), motion approved with all in favor.

**6. 22VAC40-131, Standards for Licensed Private Child-Placing Agencies – NOIRA**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Ms. Brennan), second (Ms. Washington), motion approved with all in favor.

**7. 22VAC40-151, Standards for Children’s Residential Facilities – NOIRA**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Ms. Brennan), second (Ms. Boyd), motion approved with all in favor.

**8. 22VAC40-192, Background Checks for Child Welfare Agencies – Proposed**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Ms. Brennan), second (Mr. Boone), motion approved with all in favor.

**9. Regulatory Actions Exempt from the Administrative Process Act to Conform to the Code of Virginia:**

- **22VAC40-73, Standards for Licensed Assisted Living Facilities**
- **22VAC40-80, General Procedures and Information for Licensure**
- **22VAC40-131, Standards for Licensed Private Child-Placing Agencies**
- **22VAC40-141, Licensing Standards for Independent Foster Homes**
- **22VAC40-151, Standards for Children’s Residential Facilities**
- **22VAC40-185, Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers**
- **22VAC40-665, Child Care Program (Transitional Child Care)**
- **22VAC40-665, Child Care Program (Child Care Ratios)**
- **22VAC40-705, Child Protective Services**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Mr. Kines), second (Mr. Boone), motion approved with all in favor.

**10. Advocacy Letter to Governor Northam**

*On Motion Duly Made*, (Ms. Boyd), second (Ms. Malik), motion approved with all in favor.

**Board Member Requests for Future Information**

Ms. Ali asked members for closing comments and suggestions for future meeting topics. Members provided reflective comments on the meeting in general.

Ms. Washington noted that homelessness among the elderly is a serious problem in her area and nationwide. Seniors are not able to take advantage of the Rapid Rehousing program that assists other populations with housing. Ms. Washington would like information and statistics regarding homelessness among the elderly that would show governing bodies and the legislature how critical this problem is. Commissioner Storen will reach out to Virginia Housing Development Authority and Department of Housing and Community Development to see if they have information.

Ms. Washington recalled previous reports to the Board on opioid addiction. She observed that persons who are struggling with drug addiction have a difficult time getting into housing and obtaining jobs because the drugs are in their systems. She would like to know what is being done proactively to deal with these problems.

Mr. Kines would like to see local governments auditing CSA expenditures yearly, as is done with other areas of the budget. He would like to identify the appropriate procedure to recommend this. The

Commissioner indicated he would contact Scott Reiner, as this is a matter for the State Executive Council.

Mr. Boone commented on the use of the standard funding formula for local departments of social services and would like to discuss how the circumstances for high-poverty, low-tax based communities can be made better. The Commissioner will provide information on the current funding formula at a future meeting.

Ms. Brennan asked the Commissioner about the discussion on the Department of Education assuming oversight of certain child care programs currently under the Department, and when a decision will be made. A report is due to the Governor by 9/30/2019 and will include analysis and recommendations. Regardless of the report contents, statutory changes would be needed for implementation.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:40pm.**



Commonwealth of Virginia  
**STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

State Board of Social Services

**Lou Ali**  
Chair  
VDSS Central Region

**MaryAnn Boyd**  
Vice Chair  
Child Care Center

**William Boone**  
Secretary  
VDSS Western Region

**Dr. Daniel TK Avula**  
VDSS Central Region

**Kent Willis**  
VDSS Northern Region

**Mona Malik**  
VDSS Northern Region

**Clyde Santana**  
VDSS Eastern Region

**John G. Kines, Jr.**  
VDSS Eastern Region

**Joan Brennan**  
Child Care Center

**Andrew Heck**  
VDSS Northern Region

**Veronica Washington**  
VDSS Piedmont Region

August 21, 2019

**The Honorable Ralph S. Northam**  
Governor of Virginia  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

I write on behalf of the State Board of Social Services to kindly request that you include in your 2020-2022 budgets a significant increase in funding for the Department of Social Services in order to increase salaries for local foster care workers, child protective service workers, and eligibility workers. In addition, additional funding is needed to lower the caseloads for those same workers and to make new investments in training. The Board, via unanimous vote, agreed to forward this request to your immediate attention as we believe this issue to be critical to the safety and well-being of Virginia's children, the integrity of Virginia's families, and to the core mission of the department.

As you know, every community in Virginia has children who are at risk of abuse or neglect and families in crisis. Those children's safety depends on an experienced, well-trained social worker who can capably lead an investigation and determination of both the child's and family's needs. The viability of the affected families may well depend on a social worker who can provide guidance and support. To meet the Department's mission "to help people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect", all local departments of social services must have a stable qualified workforce. Funding for decent pay for those workers and for improved caseloads is essential to reach that mandate.

Unfortunately, over the last two years, a number of incidents and studies, including the recent JLARC study and an investigation by this Board, pointed to major problems with the services provided at some local departments of social services, particularly services to children in foster care and child protective services. Both JLARC and this Board have made a number of important policy and procedural recommendations to the Commissioner. He and his staff have addressed these recommendations and have begun making many important and needed systemic changes. Staff and boards at local departments are also working to improve the way services are delivered to families. However, we believe that changes in policies and procedures will have only a limited benefit as long as wages at local agencies remain dramatically low and social workers continue to be expected to serve too many families based on their current staffing levels.

Many studies have demonstrated that the two most critical factors in improving outcomes for children are the quality of the staff and the ratio of staff to child. We are convinced that these are the same factors that drive improved outcomes for children who come under the care of the Department of Social Services. Children who have experienced trauma are most in need of quality consistent, quality care and attention. Only a stable, quality workforce can provide that.

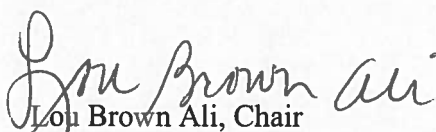
As part of our investigation into wages and caseloads, we sought information from directors of local departments of social services. Some of their concerns are shared below:

- The minimum starting salary of \$29,930 is too low to attract candidates to interview for many openings. At least one local agency reported that workers were only making \$31,426 after five years on the job.
- Because of these low salaries, many local departments have to conduct repeated recruitment campaigns to obtain applicants for interviews.
- Frequently social workers are hired, stay just long enough to be trained, and then move on to a better paying job.
- After being trained, many workers leave for *significantly* better paying jobs in partner organizations such as adoption and mental health agencies. Some have left for better paying jobs in prisons, schools and even in a poultry plant.
- Local agencies report that up to a third of their staff qualify for the benefits that the Department administers such as Medicaid and SNAP.
- Local agencies report annual turnover rates as high as 50%, with some of their programs with high stress experiencing rates of 100%.
- With such high turnover rates, combined with the difficulty in filling positions, existing staff are forced to cover the caseloads of the empty positions. In some small agencies caseloads are doubled during these vacancies.
- High turnover means that much essential inter-agency collaborative work is left to inexperienced staff members who have not yet developed an understanding of community processes.
- Low salaries are especially damaging to the operations of the poorer localities. These localities tend to have the highest percentage of low income families - those most in need of quality services. These local agencies report that they often lose staff to neighboring, more affluent agencies.

As members of the State Board of Social Services, we are concerned that many hard working, dedicated employees of Virginia's local departments of social services are being paid salaries that do not equal a living wage. Virginia's budget is most certainly a testament of our collective values. We hope you will agree that increased funding to improve the foster care and protective services programs should be a top priority in your upcoming budget. Please include these items in your budget.

We offer our most sincere thanks for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Loh Brown Ali, Chair  
State Board of Social Services