

The Accomack County Board of Social Services met at its facility on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 9:30 A.M. Present in person were Ms. Reneta Major, Chairman; Mr. David Whalen, Vice-Chairman; Mr. Jackie Phillips; Mrs. Minnie White; Mrs. Vicki Weakley, Secretary, and Mrs. Nadine Greenley, Assistant Director.

Ms. Major called the meeting to order and welcomed the Board Members. Mrs. White gave the Invocation.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 3 – Approve Minutes of February 18, 2025**. Mrs. White made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whalen, to approve the Minutes as written. Hearing no discussion, the motion carried.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 4 - Fraud Report**. No questions or concerns were raised.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 5 – Presentation from Michelle Hart, Benefit Programs Supervisor (Families and Children)**. Mrs. Weakley introduced Mrs. Hart to the Board. The Board in unison welcomed her. Mrs. Hart handed out packets to the Board and stated that her unit mainly works with the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Medicaid, and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). TANF is the old AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Included in the hand-out is an overview of each of the programs. Her unit consists of eleven people including herself. Three workers are in-take workers that process all new applications, six on-going workers that are responsible for all on-going cases, and one clerical worker who assists both benefit units. If a person is interested in receiving from either of these programs, they can apply by telephone, online, in-person, or by mail. Mrs. Hart collected data to demonstrate the responsibility of this agency. As of March 2025, Accomack County has 11,831 Medicaid recipients. Forty percent of those are children under the age of 19. The most recent figures available for SNAP show over 6,000 families receiving the benefit. This does not include adult only cases in the benefit programs. There are currently a little over one hundred TANF cases because it's more onerous to receive those benefits so there are fewer people receiving. In 2024, the amount spent for these programs in Accomack County was \$120 million. To give this some context, according to the last census, there are just over 33,000 residents in Accomack County; therefore, 33% of the population receives benefits from this agency. Ms. Major inquired who supervises the Energy Assistance Program. Mrs. Hart responded that Kamesha Watson supervises the clerical staff and the Energy Assistance Program. Mr. Phillips inquired if the 33% was consistent or if it has fluctuated over the years. Mrs. Hart stated that the percentage has increased significantly. In 2017, it was approximately two-thirds of this amount and less than \$100 million was spent. Since the programs have expanded, such as Medicaid expansion, which covers adults who are below a certain income level, that has caused an exponential increase. Family and children under the age of 19 group generally are much healthier so of that \$120 million in Medicaid about 20% of that is what is spent on the younger population. The adult program with long-term care is where the majority of the Medicaid dollars are spent. Ms. Major inquired how TANF cases have changed. Mrs. Hart responded that during COVID the State suspended the time limit. In Virginia, a client is allowed to receive the benefit for twenty-four months. The federal government allows you 60 months of a lifetime limit. All of the timeframes were paused. Since the suspension has been lifted, the number of cases has been going down and the requirements have increased. One area with TANF has increased and that is diversionary. Instead of receiving TANF over time a client can receive one payment if there is an emergency need that receiving funds from a six-month period in a one lump sum would alleviate the emergency need. An example would be if someone started a new job, but they haven't been paid yet and don't have enough money to pay rent and are about to be evicted, they can apply for TANF diversionary assistance. The amount that would have been received monthly is divided up and, for that period, the person is not eligible for TANF. It is a way to help them help themselves. Ms. Major thanked Mrs. Hart for coming in and Mrs. Hart thanked the Board for having her.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 6 – Director's Notes**. Mrs. Weakley stated that since the last meeting she attended the VLSSE (Virginia League of Social Services Executive) board meeting, CPMT (Community Planning and Management Team), supervisor's meeting, two MSW intern consults, safety training (This was about a half hour training to remind staff of the safety features that are in the building and what they are.) Staff were reminded that if they are out in the field and feel uncomfortable, they are to leave that

area, come back to the agency to get someone to go with them or call the sheriff's department to go with them.), agency training retreat (The focus was self-care with a speaker in the morning and self-care activities the remainder of the day). Ms. Major inquired about morale and concerns about federal cuts. Specifically, are staff concerned about job security. Mrs. Weakley stated that she has heard more coming from clients rather than staff. There was a panic with the first Executive Order. She emailed staff and invited them to a meeting with an organization that she belongs to hear what was happening and what could and couldn't be done. Then a hold was put on that Executive Order. There is some anxiety revolving around it, but she has not heard anyone questioning if they will lose their job. Staff have been encouraged that if they have concerns to speak with their supervisor. During full staff meetings, there is a time when staff can bring up any issues that they have. Although complaints were made previously about it not being a part of the staff meetings; when it is then made a part, very few people say anything. Mrs. Weakley receives emails from people within the state and the VLSSE concerning things that directors should be aware of and what the State DSS has been told in terms of what to do if ICE shows up at the building. Most of it is not definitive. There has been some anxiety with our Hispanic staff concerned about family members and the status of completing the citizenship process already in motion. The I-9 (Employee Eligibility) forms were discovered throughout the state as not being filled in properly or completely; therefore, all of them must be checked for accuracy.

Ms. Major proceeded to **Item 7 – March is Social Worker Appreciation Month**. Mrs. Weakley referred members to the Pronouncement from the State Board of Social Services Resolution of Appreciation in the board packet. The agency arranges for social workers to either go as a group to a restaurant or order in lunch from a restaurant of their choice. Each worker has an allowance of \$20.00 for lunch.

Ms. Major continued to **Item 8 – Financial Statement**. Dawn Parks filled in for Ms. Linton. The local budget was \$944,084.00. The Year-To-Date Local Expenditures were \$563,442.46, and the Total Local Balance-To-Date is \$380,641.54.

Closed Session – On motion by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mr. Whalen, the Board went into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing items stated only on the Agenda (Foster Care Case #2124966 and Director's Consult) as permitted by the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2.3712. The motion carried.

On motion by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mr. Whalen, the Board returned from Closed Session and confirmed that the only items discussed were the ones listed on the Board Members' Agenda. Ms. Major called a vote (Mr. Whalen – yes; Mr. Martin – yes; Mrs. White – yes; Ms. Major - yes). The motion carried.

Mr. Phillips made a motion, seconded by Mrs. White that the Board accept foster care case #2124966. Ms. Major called a vote for all in favor to signify by Aye. The motion carried.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 9:30 A.M.

Mr. Phillips made a motion, seconded by Mrs. White, to adjourn the meeting at 10:46 A.M.

APPROVED: Cassandra Reneta Major

ATTEST: Vicki Weakley