

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

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

February 18, 2026

Attending: DeRonda Short (Vice Chair), Matthew Melvin (Secretary), Maria Benjamin, Les Ford, Coke Stewart, Tony Whittingham, Mike Flynn, and Zach Clinton

Absent: Don Carey, April Morefield, and Mallory Addison

Also in Attendance: Duke Storen (Commissioner) and Ellen Fulmer (Assistant Attorney General)

Meeting called to order at 10:02am – Mr. Melvin

Acknowledgement and Approval of Remote Participation by Board Members

The Secretary announced that DeRonda Short and Zach Clinton requested to participate remotely. A physical quorum was present. Ms. Short stated she was participating remotely due to her being out of state. Mr. Clinton stated he was participating remotely due to prior work commitment before being appointed to the Board. ***On Motion Duly Made***, (Maria Benjamin), second (Les Ford), motion for Ms. Short and Mr. Clinton to participate remotely approved with all in favor.

Comments from the Commissioner – Commissioner Storen provided an overview of current agency priorities. Ms. Ford asked about internal QC tracking. Commissioner Storen stated a report will be available at the April meeting.

COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments from the public.

There were no comments from boards and directors.

Comment from the Virginia League of Social Service Executives – Rebecca Morgan, President

Ms. Morgan shared the League has started to participate in two projects that are going to make an impact at local departments. She got the opportunity to hear from KPMG that work can be shifted to a statewide model. The League is busy navigating through the General Assembly.

ACTION ITEMS

1. December 2025 Meeting Minutes

On Motion Duly Made, (Les Ford), second (Mike Flynn), motion approved with all in favor.

2. Resolution to Recognize April 2026 as Child Abuse Prevention Month
On Motion Duly Made, (DeRonda Short), second (Maria Benjamin) motion approved with all in favor.
3. 22VAC40-680, Virginia Energy Assistance Program-Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Exempt Regulation
The agency is still working with the Office of Attorney General on this regulation; therefore, it is not ready for action.
4. 22VAC40-325, Fraud Reduction/Elimination Effort
On Motion Duly Made, (Les Ford), second (Coke Stewart) motion approved with all in favor.
5. 22VAC40-325, Fraud Reduction/Elimination Effort
On Motion Duly Made, (Les Ford), second (Coke Stewart) motion approved with all in favor.
6. Patrick County DSS Deviation Request
On Motion Duly Made, (Mike Flynn), second (Maria Benjamin) motion approved with all in favor.
7. Radford City DSS Deviation Request
On Motion Duly Made, (Les Ford), second (Mike Flynn) motion approved with a vote of 7-1. Members voting in favor were DeRonda Short, Matthew Melvin, Maria Benjamin, Les Ford, Tony Whittingham, Mike Flynn, and Zach Clinton. Member opposed was Coke Stewart.
8. Washington County Deviation Request
On Motion Duly Made, (Maria Benjamin), second (Les Ford) motion approved with a vote of 7-1. Members voting in favor were DeRonda Short, Matthew Melvin, Maria Benjamin, Les Ford, Tony Whittingham, Mike Flynn, and Zach Clinton. Member opposed was Coke Stewart.
9. Brunswick County Deviation Request
On Motion Duly Made, (Les Ford), second (Maria Benjamin) motion approved with a vote of 7-1. Members voting in favor were DeRonda Short, Matthew Melvin, Maria Benjamin, Les Ford, Tony Whittingham, Mike Flynn, and Zach Clinton. Member opposed was Coke Stewart.
10. LDSS Administrative/HR Manual Updates - Chapter 6 Performance Management and Chapter 7 Employee Relations & Grievance Procedures
On Motion Duly Made, (Mike Flynn), second (Coke Stewart) motion approved with all in favor.

Child & Family Services Review – Carl Ayers provided an overview of the Child and Family Services Review.

Report from Committee on Location of June 2026 Meeting – Mr. Melvin shared the Committee suggested three recommendations for the June meeting to include Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, and Tazewell. Les Ford, Maria Benjamin, Tony Whittingham, DeRonda Short, Zach Clinton, Mike Flynn and Coke Stewart voted with motion in favor of Harrisonburg.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Stewart asked that consideration be given to sending regular updates to members. Commissioner Storen asked that a scope of reference for the updates be provided. Ms. Stewart suggested that a few members discuss it outside of the meeting and provide suggestions to the Commissioner.

Ms. Ford requested a short summary of the LIHEAP regulation, prior to the meeting at which a vote will be taken.

Ms. Ford requested a standing update at each meeting on the SNAP error rate and steps being taken. She requested a standing update on implementation of Medicaid work requirements. The Commissioner agreed to providing these updates at each meeting.

Ms. Short would like a report on constituent issues that are rising around the state.

Meeting adjourned at 12:22pm