

Minutes
State Board of Social Services
Gloucester Department of Social Services
6641 Short Lane
Gloucester, Virginia 23061
December 12-13, 2007

Attendees

Nettie Simon-Owens, Trudy Brisendine, Peppy Linden, Maggi Luca, Brenda Hornsby, Bela Sood, Shirley Culpepper, Marilyn Rigby, and Danny Brown (Thursday only).

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Chairperson Nettie Simon-Owens.

Welcome and Introductions

Stephen Blythe, Director for the Eastern Region welcomed Board members to the Eastern Region.

Beth Barry, Director of Gloucester Dept. of Social Services welcomed members to Gloucester and thanked them for giving Gloucester the opportunity to host the meeting.

William Whitley, Gloucester County representative welcomed the Board and mentioned the importance of traveling to different areas of the state to visit local agencies and hear their concerns and successes.

Rick Allen, Chair Board of Supervisors Gloucester County welcomed the members and thanked them for coming to Gloucester County. He said the county was honored that the Board chose to hold their meeting here. Mr. Allen presented the Board with a can of Whitley peanuts.

Corky Hogge, Chair Gloucester Social Services Board welcomed the Board to Gloucester and recognized the hard work of the Board and of the local department. He said they had been anxiously awaiting the Board's arrival to Gloucester.

Local directors were recognized: Rusty Jordan, Sarah Snead, Joann Wilson, and Eddie Harrison.

Review of the Agenda

Richard Martin, Director Office of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs reviewed the agenda.

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Regulation Report

Mr. Martin advised there are 58 regulations in place. Of those 58, 26 are in process.
16 being repealed
5 being amended
4 in periodic review

With 7 additional new regulations to be promulgated, that totals 64 regulations in place or being established.

Information Items

Status Report on Resource, Foster and Adoptive Family Home Approved Standards
Lynette Isbell, Director of Family Services advised this regulation would not come before the Board today because they had not done as good of a job involving locals as they could have. During public comment, unfunded mandates were mentioned. The Governor asked the department to review the regulation. She stated that agency approved foster care regulations should be similar to child placing agencies and they are currently working with Licensing Programs on this issue (will be similar but not identical). She further advised they had met with local departments, regional staff, licensing staff, and child placing agencies throughout the geographical areas since August. The Chair asked why this Board had not been notified of the meetings and requested they be put on a mailing list to be notified of future meetings (ensuring that no more than 2 members attend to meet FOIA requirements).

Ms. Sood mentioned private placing agencies and the large fees being charged. It was advised that Licensing controls this cost and not Services.

(lunch break)

Comment Period

Public
None

Local Boards and Directors of Social Services
None

Virginia League of Social Services Executives
Sarah Snead, Co-Chair said she hoped to be present at more Board meetings in 2008. She encouraged other directors to share their agency concerns with the State Board at future meetings. She will send emails to directors and encourage their attendance and speaking during public comment.

The Board was invited to share a list of issues they may want to hear additional information about.

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Ms. Snead advised that Rusty Jordan is an executive officer of the League.

She further advised that two-year terms end in June with elections being held in May 2008. She will keep members informed of the slate of officers.

The League continues to meet at 12:30 p.m. at City Hall and encourages the Board to attend.

January 30 & 31 the League Board meeting will be held with new member orientation on the 30th. Seasoned individuals will shadow new members and guide them in speaking with legislators.

Post-It Notes were provided to legislators last year and have been requested again. These will be handed out on January 30.

A draft legislative proposal document will be provided to State Board members once it has been finalized.

CSA, Foster Care, and Training are concerns being reviewed by the League.

Virginia Community Action Programs

Jim Schuyler, Director of VACAP provided members with an update on their latest community action activities including Earned Income Tax Credit Initiative, Community Action Agency Expansion, and VACAPs Public Information Exchange Project (PIE).

He advised that in the first year of funding for the grant program (2006 tax year) there were double the number of tax returns prepared; almost a 50% increase in numbers of EITC returns; almost \$1 million increase in EITC refunds; double the savings to taxpayers, and one-third increase in the number of EITC coalitions in Virginia compared to the 2005 tax year.

He reported that VACAP hosted an EITC Seminar on September 11, 2007 for 65 partners working with free tax preparation in Virginia. This one-day seminar featured federal agency partners from the Department of Health and Human Services, a message from Commissioner Conyers, a presentation by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities of Washington D.C., Internal Revenue Service staff, Virginia Department of Treasury Unclaimed Property presentation, an update on the Virginia Individual Development Account program, an outstanding workshop on Public Relations 101 by Marianne McGhee and Melissa Perdue of VDSS and Hollie Cammarasana of VHCD, and distribution of the grant applications by Carolyn Spohrer of the VACAP staff.

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VACAP approved 24 grants for 2007 tax year with the expectation of at least a 5 % growth in activity projected for the upcoming tax season.

He advised that VDSS has had a significant number of inquires regarding expansion from existing community action agencies and other agencies already operating in expansion areas. Based on current assumptions on expansion, there will be a need for at least \$1.4 million in additional funds to meet the needs of expansion areas and hold existing agencies harmless—that is, no reduction in existing funding for those agencies. If there were no additional dollars, current non-expanding agencies would absorb about a 10% reduction from current allocation of federal and state community services block grant dollars. Additional funding for community action expansion is our highest legislative priority for the upcoming General Assembly session, and we are hopeful that the Governor will include additional dollars for expansion in the Administration's biennial budget.

He advised they are very excited about their new PIE initiative. They are using federal training and teaching assistance and capacity building funds this year to develop the network's capacity to operate with dynamic and content-valuable websites. This website provides frequently changing content, interacts with users, and can provide information that is personalized to the requirements of the individual user. VACAP plans to begin the effort targeted to those agencies that do not currently have a website. The project will leverage the purchasing power of member agencies and offer these services at substantially lower cost than if each agency were to purchase them separately. When completed, each website will have similar dynamics, but with a distinctly local flavor—based on a dynamic website template which is being developed by Jay Andrews of the VACAP staff. The sharing of updated and timely community action content is the key to the success of this project. This will help make our agencies and programs known broadly in the community, promote our best practices throughout the country, assist our agencies in seeking diverse sources of funding for their services and programs, and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for each agency. Mr. Schuyler will provide updates on this project during the year. For more information, please visit www.vacap.org.

Commissioner

Commissioner Conyers addressed Child Welfare, saying there was a great deal of visibility and excitement in making improvements in the system.

In October, discussions were held with the First Lady of Virginia on her For Keeps Initiative and noted many benefits from this labor.

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Articles appearing in the Washington Post and various newspaper and press releases from the Governor, advised that significant resources have been targeted in his budget to address several initiatives.

He advised that foster care rates have increased 40% over the last three years, ranking Virginia in the middle of the states rather than last. It has been difficult attracting foster care families due to low rates. The budget proposes raising rates for in-home family care and lowering rates in the out-of-home facilities.

Commissioner Conyers stated that we need to monitor ourselves in a way that local partners can understand. This means we need to have better systems, better service and monitoring capabilities. One of the biggest challenges over the next two years is to get systems to catch up with our century. We need to manage the systems and not have them manage us. Karin Clark and Margaret Schultze are leading an effort to automate documents, allowing for search capabilities, formatting as needed, etc.

Members shared their appreciation to the Commissioner for his dedication and commitment to the Board, department, and citizens.

He further advised that he anticipates VDSS will have a significant role in PreK Initiatives and child care.

We must prioritize resources, we don't know what will be in the budget as yet, but doesn't anticipate any infrastructure cuts.

Child Fatality-this is part of the sub-recipient monitoring. Need to look at the problems and discuss how they can be solved. There is a significant rise in fatalities. Ms. Isbell will address this area in her report later today.

Commissioner Conyers advised he would not be with the Board at Thursday's meeting due to a previously scheduled meeting on Early Childhood Initiatives in Richmond. He thanked the Board for all they do to assist the agency. The department has noticed differences in the level of energy from this Board and their commitment.

Aging Report

This issue will be discussed at the February Board meeting. Members would like to hear how the department is addressing the issue of retirees; succession plan, etc.

Public Affairs, Podcast Initiative Update

Marianne McGhee, Director of Public Relations had the Board listen to an actual podcast. Bob Schultze was acknowledged for his assistance with this project.

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A copy of the VDSS Poverty Awareness Campaign report was shared with members. A copy of the report is attached to the Official Minutes housed in the Central Office.

Child Protective Services Out-of-Family Advisory (CPS OOF)

The Chair recognized Irvin Beard, member of the CPS Out-of-Family Advisory Group. He was thanked for his dedication and continued support to the group.

Nan McKenney, department liaison to this committee provided members with the Code citation of this committee and the membership. Code states this committee will not receive mileage reimbursement, etc. The Commissioner asked Mr. Martin to review this issue and advise if mileage reimbursement could be made since the citizens are giving freely of their time in carrying out Board work.

Ms. Simon-Owens advised she had spoken with most of the members and they were very excited to have the opportunity to serve or continue their service.

Ms. Isbell advised that she can prepare a review of unfounded cases (following General Assembly) and present the results to the Advisory Committee and they, in turn, could provide results to the SBSS. Ms. Isbell was charged with preparing an unfounded case report (that includes definition) for the committee. Ms. Isbell will begin the process and confer with the OAG for guidance on the definition. Ms. Simon-Owens advised the Board needs to hear options and identify issues for the CPS OOF Advisory Group to work sooner than wait until the General Assembly session ends.. Ms. Isbell agreed to have a preliminary report available at the February meeting with proposals and options, along with the OAG definition.

Ms. Wilson (Mathews Co. LDSS Director) and Ms. Sood (SBSS Member) felt that services can still be offered for children whether the case is unfounded or not. Ms. Sood advised that overlapping boundaries for accountability should be reviewed and the Chair agreed that identifying gaps is important. Ms. Rigby stated that founded cases should be reviewed with a holistic approach to better understand phases and a service plan and follow up completed.

Ms. Simon-Owens will communicate with the Advisory Committee on future issues.

Child Fatality Trends Report

Ms. Isbell shared this report with the Board. Ms. Isbell advised that preliminary information needs to be acted upon in a timely manner and also offer technical assistance to locals. She advised they are doing public awareness around 911. One concern is better public education on parents having a child sleep with them due to increased cause of deaths. Ms. Isbell advised the department needs to offer additional technical support to local agencies—most recent deaths were not known to the system.

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She advised that they can ask local agency staff to do a better job of collecting information to use on a trends report and red flags on cases. She suggested looking at the data trends once again.

Ms. Rigby wanted to ensure the correct questions are being asked when we gather the data and for the need to include the mental health piece. Ms. Sood offered her assistance to Ms. Isbell to ensure the “correct” questions are included on the local survey.

Ms. Isbell reviewed Structured Decision Making with members. She advised that two tools are used with SDM—safety assessment (if child at risk of immediate harm) and family risk assessment (if child at risk for future harm). This identifies cases so children won’t be maltreated again. The Board was interested in seeing a mock interview of a family and view what goes into a weekly visit. Ms. Isbell agreed to this and will have an SDM worker assist.

Ms. Brisendine asked if dollars could be diverted to support a one-day seminar for all of the CPS workers. Ms. Isbell will research and bring the information back to the Board.

The question of whether all agencies could benefit by SDM was discussed. Ms. Rigby stated we need to ensure staff that is identified as pilot programs are doing the work and not assigning staff to do something they’ve not been trained to do.

Action Items

Eligibility Worker Appreciation Resolution

Arlene Hamilton, POSSESS representative was recognized with a Resolution declaring that February 2008 would be recognized as Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month commending all eligibility workers across the Commonwealth of Virginia for a job well done.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Linden) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to recognize February 2008 as Eligibility Worker Appreciation Month commending all eligibility workers across the Commonwealth of Virginia for a job well done. Motion carried with all in favor.

22VAC40-35, Virginia Independence Program

Proposed Regulation

Tom Steinhauer, Director of Benefit Programs reviewed this regulation with the Board and requested approval of the proposed regulatory package and the fiscal impact analysis.

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ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Brisendine) and seconded (Mr. Culpepper) moved to approve the proposed regulatory package to amend 22VAC40-35, Virginia Independent Program, for publication in the Virginia Register subject to approval under the provisions of Executive Order Number 26 (2006) and approve the fiscal impact analysis of this action for distribution to local boards of social services pursuant to 63.2-217 of the Code of Virginia. Motion carried with all in favor. (Danny Brown was absent on this day.) No public comments were received on this regulation.

Local Department of Social Services Square Footage Allowance

J. R. Simpson, Chief Financial Officer advised that as part of a real estate initiative, the Virginia Department of General Services, Division of Real Estate Services published standards for office space for state offices. It was proposed to adopt the standard established by DRES for local departments of social services. The standard as currently written allocates space based on 205 square feet per employee with allowances made for special requirements like conference, interview and training rooms.

Ms. Brisendine advised she would vote against this recommendation stating she had conferred with League members in the past on the issue of space requirements. Agencies have found the need to go outside their agencies to hold meetings.

Ms. Luca confirmed with Mr. Simpson that special needs would be taken into consideration and that in 10 years agencies would not find themselves out in the cold if the market rate increased. Mr. Simpson stated this would not be an issue.

Ms. Simon-Owens said this item can be revisited in the future if necessary.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Hornsby) and seconded (Ms. Rigby) moved to approve the repeal of all space standards previously adopted by the State Board of Social Services and designate the standards published by the Virginia Department of General Services (205 sq. ft.) as the standard for the allocation of space for local departments of social services. Motion carried. (Ms. Brisendine voted against.) (Mr. Brown was absent this day.)

Recess at 5:20 p.m.

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Approval of Minutes

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Linden) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to approve the October Minutes as distributed to members. Motion carried with all in favor.

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22VAC40-60, Standards and regulations for Licensed Adult Day Care Centers
Periodic Review and Retain

Richard Martin, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs advised this action would complete the periodic review of this regulation as required by Executive Order 36 (2006). The department recommends this regulation be retained without change.

Discussion:

Ms. Simon-Owens questioned when the next comprehensive revision could be expected. Mr. Martin advised the timeframe would be 18-24 months. Ms. Lynne Williams was in agreement. Ms. Simon-Owens and Ms. Rigby both felt this timeframe was too long.

Ms. Linden noted there were many comments from Ms. Harvey and asked if she was a new inspector. It was noted she was not, and was only concentrating on her area of expertise.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Mr. Brown) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to approve 22VAC40-60, Standards and regulations for Licensed Adult Day Care Centers for periodic review for submission to the Department of Planning and Budget and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources as required by the provisions of Executive Order Number 36 (2006). Motion carried. (Ms. Simon-Owens opposed due to the numbers of outstanding revisions.)

22VAC40-470, Exemptions Applicable to Public Assistance Programs
Periodic Review and Exempt Final Adoption

Mr. Martin advised this action will complete the periodic review of this regulation as required by Executive Order 36 (2006). The department recommends that this regulation be amended with an exempt action. A statutory citation needs to be corrected in the regulation.

Discussion:

None

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Brisendine) and seconded (Ms. Luca) moved to approve 22VAC40-470, Exemptions Applicable to Public Assistance Programs Periodic Review report for submission to the Department of Planning and Budget and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources as required by the provisions of Executive Order Number 36 (2006) and approve the exempt final regulatory package for publication in the Virginia Register subject to approval under the provisions of Executive Order 36 (2006) and the Administrative Process Act. This action will become effective 30 days after publication. Motion carried with all in favor.

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*22VAC40-685, Virginia Energy Assistance Program-Home Energy Assistance program
Periodic Review and Exempt Final Adoption*

Mr. Martin advised this action will complete the periodic review of this regulation as required by Executive Order 36 (2006). The department recommends that this regulation be amended with an exempt action. The frequency that reports are filed with the General Assembly needs to be changed to comply with 2007 legislation.

Discussion:
None

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Brisendine) and seconded (Mr. Culpepper) moved to approve 22VAC40-685, Virginia Energy Assistance Program-Home Energy Assistance program periodic review report for submission to the Department of Planning and Budget and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources as required by the provisions of Executive Order Number 36 (2006) and approve the exempt final regulatory package for publication in the Virginia Register subject to approval under the provisions of Executive Order 36 (2006) and the Administrative Process Act. This action will become effective 30 days after publication. Motion carried with all in favor.

*22VAC40-690, VA Child Care Provider Scholarship Program
Proposed Regulation*

Mr. Martin advised that on August 15, 2007, the Board approved a proposed regulatory package to amend this regulation. The regulation has been reviewed and approved by the Department of Planning and Budget and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. Currently this is under review by the Governor's Office. The Governor's Policy Office has requested that we make one clarifying change to the regulation before we submit it for publication. A copy of the change was reviewed with members and is attached to the Official Minutes housed at Central Office.

Discussion:
Ms. Sood confirmed with Mr. Martin that the definition of "child care" is covered in the regulation.

ON MOTION DULY MADE (Ms. Brisendine) and seconded (Ms. Hornsby) moved to approve amending the text that was approved on August 15, 2007, to reflect the suggestion made by the Governor's Policy Office and request the Board to authorize the Regulatory Coordinator to submit these changes on the Board's behalf and to amend the regulatory package to reflect these changes. Motion carried with all in favor.

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Informational Items Continued

Gloucester Department of Social Services

Beth Barry, Director of Gloucester Department of Social Services thanked the Board for the opportunity to work together as a team in hosting this meeting, stating it was a great morale booster for staff.

Ms. Barry advised they have a genuine passion for the work she and her staff perform and are invested in carrying on the work that began in this agency many years ago.

They are committed to the citizens of the Commonwealth and take on many projects such as the “apple’ and “angel” trees, a one-stop shop for schools, and walking in the shoes of a welfare recipient, and an outreach programs to include enrolling uninsured children in FAMIS, etc. Many of the programs support choices that are made in life. Ms. Barry advised these are real eye-openers for school-age children and incredible feedback is received.

Ms. Barry spoke about concerns in the area that included the aging population and director retirements, staffing issues, CSA requirements and the impact on local agencies, funding issues for foster families, inconsistencies from locality to locality, insufficient administrative dollars, and the challenge of complying with laws and administering programs.

Assistant Commissioner Margaret Schultze stated that the Commissioner recognizes that we have to have written policies in place and this is part of the high-priority project that Ms. Clark is working on.

Ms. Barry was asked if transportation was a problem in this rural area. She advised it was not because Bay Area Transit will pick up and deliver clients for \$1.

Ms. Brisendine commended Ms. Barry for her outreach programs and suggested sharing these with the League at a future meeting. She also stated she was aware of the problem of different systems that can’t “talk to each other” and mentioned the importance of a computer assisting the worker in “asking the correct questions” of a client.

Assisted Living Facility Closure

Statistics Follow-up

Lynne Williams, Acting Director for Licensing Programs provided an overview of the assisted living facility closures as requested by the Board at a previous meeting.

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Ms. Williams was asked to provide operator information, number of beds prior to the new regulations, number of beds since the regulation was approved (on a regional aspect), whether the facilities accept Auxiliary Grant Rate clients, and if there is a waiting list.

Ms. Williams was asked to use the current format provided but include this information to the right of the named facility. Members were asked to review the format and advise if there was any other area they felt would be helpful in addressing. Ms. Williams advised she could have 2 data staffers work on this information and report on what information is available by the second week of January. If she finds this timeframe won't work, it will be communicated through Commissioner Conyers to the Chair.

It was suggested to look at ways to develop a customer satisfaction survey for feed back.

Status Report on Standard for Licensed Family Day Homes

Ms. Williams reviewed this report with the Board. She advised the Advisory committee will meet in January 2008 and members are invited to attend. Ms. Williams will forward the meeting date to Ms. Rengnerth for distribution to members that are interested in attending.

Report: Impact on Aging

A copy of this written report was included in the Board packet. Members can address comments/questions to VDSS. Ms. Rigby was concerned how the department is preparing for the loss of workers and ensuring work levels are maintained, and what strategies have been put in place to support local departments.

Ms. Schultze advised the department is preparing a presentation on this issue.

Ms. Brisendine asked about LIHEAP cutbacks at the federal level and the impact on elders. She asked if the department is capturing information on the numbers of people not being served.

It was advised that southwest and southern Virginia are experiencing problems where vendors won't deliver less than 100 gallons of fuel. There are few vendors in the southwest, so changing vendors is not always an option. Direct pay options are being considered, especially in rural areas. It was confirmed the cutoff date for heating was in November.

Ms. Brisendine advised she was getting the impression that people were not applying for this program and asked if statistics were available. Ms. Schultze advised that 2200 clients applied for LIHEAP, an increase over last year.

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Ms. Simon-Owens commented on the Auxiliary Grant Rate, mentioning that the Board had supported writing a letter in the past, supporting an increase to the rate.

It was advised that the rate increased recently due to an increase at the federal level. Ms. Schultze will check on the current rate and advise.

Ms. Hornsby stated concerns due to the numbers of mental health and elderly parolees released to ALFs. If we don't recruit for additional specialized facilities to handle the more challenging populations, ALFs may not be willing to accept these people.

Review Financial Disclosure Statement

Usha Koduru, representative from the Office of the Attorney General reviewed how to complete this form. If a member has already filled out the form within the past year, they do not need to complete another one. Please let Ms. Rengnerth know you have previously filed this form.

Legislative Update

Mr. Martin shared a copy of the 2006 and 2007 Legislation Implementation Plans for comparison. Copies of both reports are attached to the Official Minutes housed in Central Office.

Mr. Martin shared a preview of 2008 legislation important dates with the members.

January 9	General Assembly convenes –pre-filing 10:00 a.m.
January 9	Session begins at 12:00 noon
January 9	Governor Kaine addresses the General Assembly
January 18	Deadline for introduction of bills
February 12	Crossover day
February 17	Committees to report on budget bill
February 21	Each house completes its own budget bill
February 27	Budget conferees are appointed (midnight)
March 3	Last day for committee action
March 4	Report on Budget due
March 6	Report on Budget available
March 8	Adjournment
April 16	Reconvene Veto Session

For further information visit <http://legis.state.vate.va.us>

Mr. Martin advised that the Governor will address the Joint meeting of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees to reveal his proposed budget for 2008-10.

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Mr. Martin advised there are 5 studies pending approval for publication. If the Board would like to hear more on these, he can present them at the February meeting.

Mr. Martin provided members with a copy of HB3 and HB 9 summaries. A copy of this information is attached to the Original Minutes housed in Central Office.

Mr. Martin shared a copy of in-house committees of VDSS that Board members serve on.

There was discussion on utilizing video conferencing and teleconferencing. Mr. Martin and the OAG representative confirmed that Board, CDC Council and CPS OOF meetings must be face-to-face as they are defined as public bodies. A quorum must be present, physically meet in a public place and notify the public utilizing state guidelines. All of the above mentioned committees must hold at least one meeting per year.

Further, it was reported there is no teleconferencing available for citizens that do not serve as a member of the Council/Board. The department is aware of the commuting issues, but a Code change is needed to address the issue. Members may want to address this with the Commissioner and ask him to include this issue in his next legislative package.

Mr. Martin reminded staff that no more than 2 members can attend a meeting (other than their Board meeting) due to additional FOIA requirements.

Mr. Martin reminded the members that Mr. Henderson spoke of this issue during the orientation program.

Ms. Rigby asked for a position statement for all citizens to be involved. She will circulate among her legislators. Mr. Martin was asked to develop this statement.

Committee Reports

Strategic Planning
Child Welfare Advisory
Assisted Living Facility Advisory
Child Day Care Council
CPS Out-of-Family
Poverty

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Ad hoc Committee Reports

Public Comment Process

Peppy Linden, Chair advised they want the best information and widest solicitation made available prior to the regulation being written. There is some non-consistency, but public participation guidelines are available. Need to maintain and update interested party lists. Mr. Martin was asked to contact each division with questions provided from the committee to include what challenges are being faced in getting people involved. This information will be available at the February meeting.

Ms. Hornsby would also like to poll local agencies.

Ms. Schultze stated that the Commissioner encourages the system-wide approach and many committees have local representation on them as well as League attendance. They meet and share discussion about regulations. Local director Eddie Harrison was in agreement.

Updates and New Initiatives Guidelines

Marilyn Rigby, Chair reported there were several areas of concern. The committee feels that a guidance process should be in place for members on accessing the Commissioner and social staff when information is required. They also felt a need to differentiate between information items and policy items—don't want to intrude into the Commissioner's area.

There should be a process for requesting and determining speakers at Board meetings. It was suggested that members could give their requests at the end of the meeting following their comments. Another opportunity is to email or call the Chair and she will discuss during the Board agenda phone call.

Another suggestion was to have reports given that will assist members in looking at the regulations, ensuring they work collaboratively before being asked to pass a regulation.

It was suggested to ask localities to share information and to view other systems that may be working for them.

New Member Orientation and Acclimation Process

Brenda Hornsby, Chair advised the committee plans to improve on the orientation packet currently being shared with new members. The Board secretary would send a letter to new members 1-2 days following notification of appointment. The Chair would follow up with a phone call within 3-5 days of notification.

Orientation would be held 2 weeks prior to the next full-Board meeting date.

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The website would be enhanced to include Orientation material; FOIA information; Roles and Responsibilities of the Board; Mission Statement; Policies/Procedures; Financial Disclosure; Minutes; Public Comment Process; Media and Board comments; Committee structure and description; Organization Chart; link to who the Board members are; and a link to the Secretary covering her duties (to include reimbursement/travel policies), etc.

It was discussed that the Chair would cover meeting attendance and expectations; meeting schedule, committee expectations, and general format of the meeting.

The DVD on FOIA information should be made available to the new member prior to attending the orientation meeting (Assistance Attorney General would be on hand for consultation). It was mentioned this DVD is already available on the OAG website.

The regulatory coordinator will provide training on the regulatory process. The committee discussed ways to streamline the process and make it more “user friendly”. This will also be added to their website. The Board requested the coordinator to provide a mock demonstration for them, so they could critique it.

Ms. Linden wanted to ensure the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth was aware of the Board’s new website so it could be shared with potential appointees.

Ms. Hornsby felt it would be a good opportunity for seasoned Board members to mentor the new appointees.

A committee update was requested for the February meeting, with these changes in place by April 2008.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Schultze advised the AG rate is \$1,075 as of January 1, 2008 (was \$1,061)
\$1,236 as of January 1, 2008 (was \$1,220) NOVA

Personal care allowance was \$75 and is now \$77.

New Business

Members discussed suggestions for recognizing the years of service and dedication from Carolynne Stevens prior to her retirement. Suggestions included a Resolution or requesting the flag that flies over the state capital on her retirement day. Ms. Linden agreed to work on this project and will keep the Board informed of developments.

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Future Meeting Schedule

February 20-21	VDSS Home Office-Richmond
April 16-17	Roanoke CAP Agency
June 18-19	Winchester LDSS
August 20-21	Montgomery LDSS
October 15-16	Eastern Region TBA
December 10-11	Prince Edward LDSS

Board Member Comments

Members commented on their appreciation for the hospitality received during their stay, including the lovely reception and entertainment, daily treats, and baskets provided by Ms. Barry and her staff.

Holiday wishes and safe travels were expressed.

Ms. Linden shared her concern that many local directors were present at the meeting on Wednesday but no one chose to speak during their comment period. The Board is interested in hearing about both positive issues and areas of concern in the local departments. Ms. Snead advised she would advocate for this and reminded the Board that some directors spoke one-on-one at the reception on Wednesday night.

Ms. Luca reminded the Board that they heard drug issues in southwest Virginia at the October meeting and asked how the Board could address the problem. Ms. Rigby advised that committees are looking for new initiatives to address, and this issue could be assigned.

Thanks to Margaret Schultze for filling in for Commissioner Conyers at today's meeting and to Richard Martin, Pat Rengnerth, and department staff for their continued support.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.