

**Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)**  
Wednesday, May 17, 2023, 7:00pm-8:30pm  
Pennino Building, Conference Room 505  
12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035

**MEETING NOTES**

**Attendees:**

**Karen Darley**, Braddock District  
**Andre Lee**, City of Fairfax  
**Mary Wilcox**, City of Falls Church  
**Ben Zuhl**, Dranesville District  
**Joe Koszarek**, Hunter Mill District (remote)  
**Julian De Phillips**, Mason District  
**Raymond McGrath**, Mount Vernon District, Vice Chair  
**Laura Martinez**, Providence District, Chair  
**Alice Foltz**, Sully District

**Members Absent:**

**Saud Hasan Shah**, Franconia District, Secretary

**Positions Vacant:**

At-Large – Chairman’s Office  
Springfield District

**Staff Present:**

- Michael Becketts, DFS Director
- Melanie Fenwick, DFS Senior Policy Manager
- Patty Araujo, PAES Quality Improvement Manager
- Yonas Wondwossen, Child Care Assistance and Referral Director

**Approval of Remote Participation:**

The meeting was held in person with one member joining virtually. A quorum of the ASSB was physically assembled at the primary meeting location. The ASSB approved the member’s remote participation. The member participated from the Hunter Mill District and the voice of the remotely participating member could be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location.

**Meeting Opening:**

Laura Martinez called the meeting to order at 7:03pm and performed the roll call.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Minutes from the March 15, 2023, meeting were unavailable for review.

### **Public Comment:**

No members of the public attended the meeting.

### **Director's Briefing on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Initiatives:**

Director Becketts briefed 'A Primer on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Protective Factors' (available to the public online as part of the document set for this meeting) to the ASSB.

#### **I. Introduction by Director Becketts**

- ACEs are traumatic events experienced by children up to the age of 18 which can have a lifelong impact on health, economic mobility, and general wellbeing. The effects of ACEs, of which ten were identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1995-97, are compounding.
- ACEs are not necessarily determining when it comes to those lifelong impacts, but children's experience with them make adverse long-term impacts more likely.
- The Department of Family Services is the statutory child welfare agency for Fairfax County, but children's wellbeing is a community responsibility.
- Fairfax County has administered a new youth survey, the results of which will be provided to the ASSB to serve as basis for Board discussions over the coming six months.

#### **II. Questions from the ASSB**

- In response to a question from Ben Zuhl, Director Becketts reported that bullying and discrimination were not among the ten ACEs originally identified by the CDC, but they and their impact have been the subject of more recent research.
- In response to a question from Laura Martinez about the impact of the pandemic on child welfare and ACEs, Director Becketts responded that economic stress leads to a higher incidence of physical abuse in households. With the end of enhanced, federal COVID-related financial assistance, the county is preparing for increased problems in households, including by providing families with information about available resources. DFS anticipates a spike in families "hitting an economic wall" around October, and so August-December will be a focus time for working with families on protective factors to mitigate the likelihood and impact of ACEs. One initiative, for example, involves helping children get and maintain access to community centers for after-school activities.
- In response to a question from Julian De Phillips about DFS interaction with the Fairfax County Public School System, Director explained that while child protective services are

always available if necessary, DFS works with the school system to identify potential issues and to foster family-focused responses.

**Medicaid, Food Security, Safe Child Care, and Medical Assistance for Children:**

Patty Araujo provided the ASSB with an update on the unwinding of COVID-related Medicaid certification waivers and work requirements for food assistance.

As part of a 14-month process, the state is sending out pre-populated Medicaid re-certification packets. The state's Common Help website is also a renewal option, as are telephone services that provide translation assistance. Health care providers are participating actively in the information-sharing process. Director Becketts added the county is working with around 30 community groups to amplify state and local efforts. Memo to the Board of Supervisors, describing the efforts, was discussed, and disseminated via email following the meeting.

On food assistance, Patty Araujo explained the return of work requirements for certain SNAP beneficiaries; there will be a six-month grace period starting in August and so January-February will be "crunch time" for this factor. She noted SNAP requirements differ from those for TANF/Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW).

Yonas Wondwossen briefed the ASSB on county support for around 800 home-based and county childcare providers serving working families or families seeking work. He described household income levels (350% of the federal poverty line) at which families qualify for subsidized childcare, and fees families are expected to contribute themselves (was 10% of household income, but now 7%). Director Becketts added that while the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services has the lead in managing the childcare system, DFS is in charge of determining a family's eligibility.

**Chair's Announcements:**

Chair Martinez reported that it had been her intention to discuss the possibility of her testifying before the Board of Supervisors about the Zoning Ordinance Modernization (zMOD) project either as an individual or on behalf of the ASSB. However, since the ASSB canceled the April meeting, she did not provide testimony.

**Attachments:**

May 5, 2023 Memo to Board of Supervisors, Pandemic Unwinding – Medicaid Renewals

**Adjourned:**

- Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

**Next ASSB meeting:**

- Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm, Pennino Building, Conference Room 505




# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 5, 2023

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Christopher A. Leonard   
Deputy County Executive

**SUBJECT:** Pandemic Unwinding – Medicaid Renewals

A recent [Washington Post](#) article highlighted the Medicaid unwinding process that is underway across the country as pandemic-era policies come to an end. As the Board will recall, an initial update on local efforts was provided via memorandum on January 13, 2023. Today's memorandum is intended to provide a further status update as the process has now started.

During the three-year public health emergency declared by federal officials due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicaid enrollees were not subject to the required, annual renewal process, effectively suspending the renewal process. As the impact of the pandemic waned and the public emergency ended, the federal policies through the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services have reverted to their pre-pandemic state.

The restarting of the renewal process locally has effectively doubled the number of renewals needing to be processed over the next year. The chart below highlights the total number of renewals due, which includes all those suspended over the last three years. Medicaid enrollees are provided a 45-day advanced notice when their renewals are due. Beginning March 20, Virginia households whose renewals are due in May 2023 began receiving Medicaid renewal packets from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance. As of April 25, Fairfax County has 101,947 Medicaid renewals that are due to be processed in the next year. In accordance with state policy, the Medicaid unwinding is planned to end in April 2024. The following chart shows the number of Medicaid renewals due by month along with the number of county residents associated with each renewal effort.

**Board of Supervisors  
Pandemic Unwinding – Medicaid Renewals  
Page 2 of 3**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total # Medicaid Renewals Due</b>	<b>Total # Medicaid Enrollees</b>
<b>May-23</b>	2,916	5,627
<b>Jun-23</b>	7,263	12,194
<b>Jul-23</b>	9,831	16,818
<b>Aug-23</b>	8,569	14,979
<b>Sep-23</b>	6,864	12,244
<b>Oct-23</b>	10,275	16,867
<b>Nov-23</b>	10,176	16,127
<b>Dec-23</b>	8,380	13,959
<b>Jan-24</b>	8,162	14,585
<b>Feb-24</b>	10,248	18,499
<b>Mar-24</b>	9,751	18,375
<b>Apr-24</b>	9,512	18,467
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,947</b>	<b>178,741</b>

*Source: Locality Active Enrollment Report (MMIS/VDSS Data Warehouse) – as of April 2023.*

As required by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), the Fairfax County Department of Family Services (DFS) restarted the Medicaid renewal process in April 2023. Understanding the potential consequences of people losing coverage, DFS has approached this work to ensure that individuals and families who remain eligible for Medicaid continue receiving it. Further, coordinating access to health care with other needed services is foundational for the overall health and well-being of our residents. Accordingly, the Public Assistance and Employment Services Division (PAES) within DFS developed an operational plan to complete the suspended renewals alongside the daily work of processing applications and renewals for SNAP, childcare subsidies, and TANF cash assistance.

The operational plan considers the challenges involved in completing the Medicaid unwinding within the required 12-month timeframe while ensuring individuals and families in the community maintain vital access to food and healthcare. DFS aims to keep the unwinding process as simple as possible and has developed priorities to ensure individuals and families have timely access to needed assistance.

The DFS approach is resident-focused while emphasizing the maximization of resources, efficient processes, and data-driven decision making. Strategies include:

- I. Human Resources:
  - a. More than 50 new employees have been hired over the past year to support the Medicaid and other public assistance benefits work. They have been trained or are being trained to focus on Medicaid case processing.
  - b. In addition to hiring merit employees, DFS has onboarded several temporary staff who can support the benefits processing work.

**Board of Supervisors  
Pandemic Unwinding – Medicaid Renewals  
Page 3 of 3**

- c. With a focus on the Medicaid unwinding mandate, all lines of business within the Benefit Programs area were evaluated and some staff have been reallocated to focus on Medicaid unwinding requirements.
  - d. VDSS has made available additional funding to assist counties with the cost of overtime and temporary employees.
- II. Community Engagement and Outreach:
- a. DFS and the Health Department co-host a standing monthly meeting on Medicaid unwinding with health safety net stakeholders and partners to focus on ways to support broad community outreach and education of Medicaid enrollees on the renewal process. This group includes community-based organizations, medical providers, pharmacies, mental health providers, and other community stakeholders.
  - b. Published a dedicated web page on the DFS Fairfax County website that includes information for public awareness and also communication templates for partner organizations to use in their publications. [Normal Medicaid Enrollment Resumes | Family Services \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#).
  - c. Upon request, on demand information sessions about Medicaid unwinding have been conducted for community partners.

The focus of Medicaid unwinding is to keep eligible households connected to Medicaid; however, not everyone will remain eligible. For any individual or family who is no longer categorically eligible, information will be shared about applying and enrolling for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act as well as accessing medical services through Federally Qualified Health Centers and free clinics. If an eligible household is discontinued from Medicaid, there is a 90-day period for them to contact the agency and complete the renewal.

As stated in the January 13 memo to the Board, DFS is well-prepared for the ending of pandemic-era waivers. Federal and state partners have been consistent regarding the eventual sunset of these flexibilities. DFS leadership and staff are ready for the challenge and will update the Board as this work proceeds. In the meantime, for questions and/or further information, please contact [Michael Becketts](#), DFS Director, at 703-324-7749.

cc: Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Christina Jackson, Chief Financial Officer  
Tom Arnold, Deputy County Executive  
Rachel M. Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive  
Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer  
Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Health Department  
Michael A. Becketts, Director, Department of Family Services