

Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB)

Wednesday, May 20, 2026, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm

12000 Government Center Parkway, Government Center Building Conference Room 8

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

City of Fairfax, Andre Lee, Secretary
Franconia District, Marilyn Nevy Cruz (remote)
Hunter Mill District, Marcia McDevitt
Mason District, Julian De Phillips, Chair
Mount Vernon District, Raymond McGrath
Providence District, Melissa Hochberg
Springfield District, Hillary Hogan (remote)
Sully District, Jose M. Garzon, Vice Chair (remote)
At-Large, Andrew Fischer

Absent:

City of Falls Church, Sue Armstrong

Positions Vacant:

Braddock District
Dranesville District

Staff Present:

Alycia Blackwell, DFS Deputy Director
Michael Becketts, DFS Director
Tina Spurlock, Senior Policy Analyst and Project Manager/Appeals Hearing Officer

Meeting Opening

Chair Julian De Phillips called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and conducted a roll call. A quorum of members was confirmed.

Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes for May 2026 were reviewed and approved.

Director's Announcements: Pennino Building

Director Becketts provided an update on the Pennino Building.

- DFS is tentatively planning for a soft reopening of the Pennino Building around July 6, following the earlier plumbing-related flood.
- Director Becketts noted that elevator repairs remain a key factor in reopening plans. The goal is to have the elevators operational before the end of June, with at least three of the six elevators working to support reopening.
- Staff and public messaging will begin as the reopening date approaches. Additional updates will be provided as plans are finalized.

Legislative Updates

Deputy Director Blackwell provided the following legislative updates:

HB 1490 — Centralized CPS Intake

Deputy Director Blackwell discussed the legislation establishing a statewide centralized Child Protective Services intake hotline.

- DFS and its partners had advocated against the bill because of concerns that a statewide hotline could reduce the ability to provide localized information and referrals to Fairfax County families.
- Although the bill passed, Deputy Director Blackwell emphasized that there will still be opportunities to influence implementation. A vendor will be selected to conduct a study on how centralized intake would operate in practice. A working group will also be convened to discuss the enactment of the law.
- The timeline is short, with a report due to the legislature by December. The goal is to select a vendor as close to July 1 as possible. Deputy Director Blackwell also noted that the state budget had not yet been finalized, creating uncertainty around funding for the work.
- When asked about the timeline, Deputy Director Blackwell explained that the vendor-selection process is already underway, with several local directors of social services involved.

HB 1222 — CPS Interview Recording Bill

Deputy Director Blackwell reported that the bill requiring all CPS family assessments or investigations to be recorded was vetoed by the governor.

- DFS supported the veto because Fairfax County relies heavily on differential response. More serious CPS allegations may require a forensic or investigative approach, in which case recording can be useful. However, approximately 80% of referrals meet the family assessment criteria, which calls for a more collaborative, family-centered approach. Staff expressed concern that mandatory recording of family assessments could undermine that approach.
- Additional background was provided, explaining that the proposal appeared to draw from a 2013 federal report focused on forensic interviews, but the bill applied that concept more broadly to family assessments. However, it was noted that family

assessments are intended to help families access resources and support child safety and well-being, rather than function as investigations.

- Deputy Director Blackwell also noted potential confidentiality concerns and budgetary consequences, including the cost of storing recordings and responding to record requests. The estimated cost was approximately \$100,000 initially and about \$35,000 per year for storage.

HB 191 — Protections for Child Trafficking Victims

Deputy Director Blackwell reported that HB 191 passed. The bill ensures that children who are victims of trafficking are not charged with prostitution or trafficking-related offenses. She described this as a positive step that supports a trauma-informed response to child trafficking victims.

HB 283 — Prenatal Controlled Substance Use

HB 283 clarifies that a pregnant woman's prenatal use of a controlled substance prescribed by a health care provider shall not be used as the sole basis for suspecting child abuse or neglect. Deputy Director Blackwell explained that this is particularly relevant for pregnant women receiving medical treatment for opioid addiction. If a substance is detected at birth, DFS would need to determine whether it was prescribed by a medical provider. If it was prescribed and there are no other indicators of abuse or neglect, the referral would not be accepted solely on that basis.

HB 632 — Barrier Crime Waiver for Kinship Care

HB 632 establishes a process for local departments of social services to apply to the Virginia Department of Social Services for a barrier crime waiver on behalf of a prospective kinship foster care provider. Deputy Director Blackwell explained that this may help in cases where a potential kinship caregiver has a prior felony or other barrier offense that occurred many years ago and does not appear to affect the current safety of the child. Members asked which agency would approve the waivers, and staff confirmed that the state agency, VDSS, would handle them.

HB 667 — Custody Petitions for Certain Non-Citizen Youth

HB 667 allows the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to hear petitions from unmarried non-citizen youth ages 18 to 21 who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned and who seek to be placed in the custody of a proposed legal guardian. Deputy Director Blackwell noted that the bill does not appear to require DFS to take custody of these young adults. Instead, it creates a pathway for the court to appoint a custodian, which may support the young person's ability to pursue legal permanent residency or related immigration relief.

HB 770 — Public Utility Discounts

HB 770 allows certain public utility providers, including water and sewage providers, to offer discounted rates to customers whose annual household income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Deputy Director Blackwell clarified that the bill permits, rather than requires, utility providers to offer discounted rates. While the bill does not directly

affect DFS operations, staff noted that it may become a useful resource for eligible residents.

HB 879 — Bulk Requests for Public Assistance or Child Support Records

HB 879 requires local departments of social services to notify the Commissioner of Social Services when an individual or agency requests records concerning 25 or more applicants for public assistance or child support, when the request is not directly related to administering those programs. Deputy Director Blackwell explained that the Commissioner would then issue a public notice so that residents are aware such information has been requested. Possible examples of such requests could include press inquiries, research requests, or other bulk records requests. Staff noted that these requests would be reviewed through the Freedom of Information Act process.

HB 1414 — Mandated Reporters

HB 1414 expands provisions related to mandated reporters and creates a Class 1 misdemeanor for certain mandated reporters who fail to report suspected reportable offenses as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after having reason to suspect abuse or neglect.

- The bill also expands the categories of individuals covered, including individuals associated with athletic programs, scholastic activities, music clubs, and similar organizations.
- Deputy Director Blackwell noted that while broader reporting requirements can support child safety, DFS already receives a high volume of reports that are ultimately screened out because they do not meet Virginia's statutory criteria for abuse or neglect. She observed that this bill may increase reporting volume at the same time the state is moving toward centralized intake, which was partly justified by concerns about screening practices.
- Members asked whether school staff were included among mandated reporters. Deputy Director Blackwell confirmed that teachers, school personnel, physicians, nurses, law enforcement, and courts are among the primary sources of CPS referrals.

Director's Announcements: Medicaid Update

Director Becketts described forthcoming Medicaid eligibility changes and DFS's communication and engagement strategy.

Medicaid Eligibility Role of DFS

Director Becketts emphasized that DFS's role in Medicaid is limited.

- DFS does not provide health care, emergency medication assistance, or direct medical services. Its responsibilities include determining eligibility, helping residents understand changes in law, policy, and business processes, and communicating those changes to partners and affected populations.

- Approximately 150,000 Fairfax County residents receive Medicaid at a point in time, and more than 200,000 residents access Medicaid over the course of a year. DFS plans to use enrollment data and heat maps to target outreach in communities most likely to be affected.

Major Forthcoming Medicaid Changes

Four primary areas of concern were identified:

1. Qualified non-citizen definition and eligibility changes
2. Six-month eligibility redeterminations
3. Implementation of federal work and community engagement requirements
4. Reduction in retroactive coverage

DFS has created a Medicaid Operational Change Team, referred to as **MOCHA**, to coordinate proactive planning, community engagement, workload management, and staff training.

Non-Citizen Eligibility Changes

The ASSB was briefed on changes affecting some non-citizen adults who are expected to shift from full Medicaid to emergency Medicaid beginning on or after October 1.

- Director Becketts explained that affected individuals may still appear on the Medicaid rolls, but emergency Medicaid does not provide access to routine primary care or prescription coverage unless the situation meets emergency medical requirements.
- The change does not affect non-citizen children or pregnant women.
- Fairfax County is still working with the state to determine the number of affected residents. Current estimates vary widely, with possible impacts ranging from the low 20,000s to the upper 40,000s, depending on how certain categories are counted.
- DFS of Medical Assistance Services is expected to send notices to affected populations beginning in late summer. Fairfax County is also preparing its own direct communication strategy using community engagement channels and local partners.

Coordination With Health and Community Partners

DFS has begun discussions with the Health Department, Community Services Board, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, Inova Health System, and other health safety net providers. These partners include free clinics, federally qualified health centers, sliding-scale clinics, and community-based health resources.

- Director Becketts discussed a prior tabletop exercise examining what Fairfax County would do if a large number of residents lost Medicaid coverage. Lessons from that exercise are informing the current outreach and preparedness strategy.
- DFS has also met with Inova representatives, including community engagement and finance leadership, to ensure the health system understands the anticipated changes. Inova has a strong interest in helping amplify accurate messages to

Medicaid enrollees and patients, given the significant Medicaid spending generated in the Fairfax-Falls Church region.

Six-Month Eligibility Redeterminations

Beginning January 1, certain Medicaid recipients will be subject to eligibility re-determinations every six months rather than once per year.

- Approximately 55,000 residents may be affected by this provision at any point in time.
- The Board of Supervisors has approved 13 new positions to support Medicaid work, and DFS has begun the position establishment process.
- Director Becketts noted that Medicaid eligibility work requires a long training period, often close to a year for full proficiency, so hiring alone will not fully address the increased workload.
- DFS is working with Accenture to review Medicaid and SNAP application and redetermination processes and identify potential efficiencies. The review will examine no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech options to reduce bottlenecks and improve business processes.

Federal Work and Community Engagement Requirements

Federal work and community engagement requirements are also expected to begin January 1.

- Director Becketts noted that affected individuals will need to enter calendar year 2027 already in compliance in order to maintain eligibility, meaning outreach and education must begin well in advance.
- Fairfax County is well-positioned compared with many jurisdictions because DFS operates Virginia Career Works/American Job Centers in addition to administering benefits. This creates an opportunity to build a direct referral pipeline for residents who need support meeting work or community engagement requirements.
- Director Becketts explained that many affected individuals may already be working or able to document compliance with little assistance. Others may need guidance, and a smaller group may require significant support. DFS is working to identify those populations and appropriate pathways.
- Volunteer opportunities were also discussed as a possible way for some residents to meet requirements without negatively affecting other benefits, such as housing, SNAP, or childcare assistance. DFS has been working with Volunteer Fairfax and is monitoring state-level efforts through Serve Virginia and DMAS to create volunteer and reporting portals.

Reduced Retroactive Coverage

The ASSB was briefed on changes to retroactive Medicaid coverage. For the Medicaid expansion population, retroactive coverage is expected to be reduced from three months to 30 days.

- Director Becketts noted that timely application processing will become even more important.
- DFS currently processes Inova-submitted Medicaid applications in fewer than seven days on average, but Director Becketts anticipates that processing times may increase as volume grows.
- DFS is reviewing its contract with Inova, which currently funds approximately eight positions, to assess whether additional support may be needed.

Outreach and Communications Strategy

DFS is taking a person-centered approach to outreach and communications. Director Becketts emphasized the importance of clear, simple, targeted messaging so residents understand whether they are affected and what actions they need to take.

- DFS plans to use the state’s communications toolkit, expected in early June, and supplement it with local information about how residents may lose coverage and where they can find support. Outreach will be phased so residents are not overwhelmed or confused. Messaging about non-citizen eligibility changes will be prioritized from mid-July through the end of September, followed by communication about January 1 changes, including redeterminations and work/community engagement requirements.
- Outreach will include direct communication to enrollees by mail, email, text, and robocall, as well as coordination with Inova, the Health Department, CSB, NCS, health safety net providers, faith communities, libraries, parks, senior centers, SNAP retailers, and other community partners.
- DFS also discussed language access strategies, including multilingual printed materials, QR-code-enabled cards, voice-recorded information, and short videos in multiple languages. Spanish will be prioritized initially, with additional languages to follow. DFS is considering using bilingual staff or compensated bilingual speakers to create 30- to 45-second videos for the County website and YouTube.

Chair’s Announcements

Chair De Phillips reminded ASSB members to send any legislative agenda priorities to Tina Spurlock. He then tabled the Annual Report preparation for the next meeting, as the current meeting had already passed its scheduled end time.

District Updates

Providence District: Melissa Hochberg shared that a Planned Parenthood location is being developed in Fairfax County and noted that she plans to co-host a fundraiser with a friend to support the effort.

Adjourned

Chair De Phillips adjourned the meeting at 8:36 pm.

Next ASSB Meeting

Wednesday, June 17, 2026, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm.