

Mathews County
Department of Social Services
Board Member Handbook



Mathews County Department of Social Services Board Member Handbook

The following handbook is adopted by the Board as a guide to assist the Board in their interaction with each other, the staff of the agency and citizens of the community.

I. Board Meetings

The regular Board meeting will take place on the third Wednesday of every month in the conference room at the Mathews Department of Social Services located at 536 Church Street in Mathews at 5:00 PM. The Board meetings are public meetings and a notice regarding the meeting will be posted in the lobby.

At least one meeting per year shall be training and orientation for Board members. The Board will be mailed information regarding each regular meeting, including an agenda at least five (5) days in advance of the meeting. The Chairperson may cancel any meetings because of inclement weather and reschedule the meeting by giving notice to each member of the Board as soon as possible.

Regular meetings shall include:

- A. Call to Order
- B. Ordering of the Agenda
- C. Period of Public Comment
- D. Approval of Minutes
- E. Staff Introductions/Presentations
- F. New Business
 - a. Director Updates
 - b. Administrative Expenses
- G. Old Business
- H. Closed Session (if applicable)

Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the Board Chairperson or in the absence or unavailability of the Chair by the Vice-Chairperson, or by two (2) members upon written request to the Secretary.

II. Closed Session

The Board may go into closed session pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. A motion to go into closed session, citing the appropriate section of the Act allowing such closed session, shall be adopted prior to going into closed session. The Board may invite staff or others into the closed session. Following the closed session, the Board must certify, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, which to the best of each member's knowledge only those public business matters exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion to go into closed session were heard, discussed or considered in the closed session.

III. Officers

The Board shall elect officers for Chair and Vice-Chair for a one-year term beginning July 1 and ending the following June 30. Officers shall be a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. The Director or Director's designee shall act as Secretary of the Board. The Director shall appoint the Clerk of the Board. In the

event the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are not elected by July 1, the officers shall remain in office until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in the offices of Chairperson or Vice-Chairman shall be filled by the Board for the remainder of the term. The Chairperson shall preside at the meetings. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall preside.

IV. Board Member Attendance

Board members shall make a concerted effort to attend every Board meeting. If a Board member is unable to attend a meeting, the member shall contact the Chair of the Board or the Director as soon as possible. In the event that a Board member misses two consecutive meetings, the Chairperson will contact the Board member to determine the reason for the absence and if the member desires to continue as a Board member.

V. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the Board. In the absence of a quorum, no business shall be conducted and no votes may be taken.

VI. Public Comment

The Board shall allow for public comment at each meeting of the Board. Each public comment period shall be limited to 15 minutes and each speaker may speak for 3 minutes, unless additional time is allowed by the Chairman.

VII. Minutes of Meeting

The Secretary shall prepare and keep on file minutes of the attendance and transactions at all meetings of the Board in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Virginia. Minutes of the immediately prior meeting shall be approved by the Board at the next meeting, if possible, or at a subsequent meeting.

VIII. Contacts Between Department Staff and Board Members

Board members who are contacted by Department staff (other than the Director) will first inquire as to whether the staff person has proceeded through the chain of command with his or her issue and suggest that the staff member do so. The Board member will indicate to the staff member that he or she cannot promise to keep any information given by the staff member confidential. The Board member will inform the Director of any such contact, unless the contact involves a complaint directly involving the Director and the Board member feels it would be inappropriate to contact the Director, in which case he or she will inform the Board chair. Board members shall not contact Department staff directly unless the Director is informed prior to the contact of the reason for such contact.

IX. Citizen Complaints Received by Board Members

Board members who are contacted with complaints from citizens will first inquire as to whether the citizen has contacted agency staff or the Director, and suggest that the citizen do so. The Board member will inform the Director of any such contact. The Director will inform the Board member of the disposition of the complaint.

X. Board Member Participation in Staff Functions

Board members are encouraged to attend staff functions such as receptions, trainings and staff meetings. Board members who would like to attend a particular event should contact the Director.

XI. Orientation and Training Requirements of Board Members

New Board members shall participate in an orientation and facility tour within the first two months after their appointment. The orientation and tour will be facilitated by the Director. New Board members are also encouraged to attend the training for new local Board members sponsored by the Virginia Department of Social Services. The Director will advise the Board of upcoming training dates and facilitate Board Members' attendance at such training.

XII. Confidentiality of Information

Board members may, in the course of their duties, become aware of information concerning cases being handled or investigated by the Department, including names of parents or children. The Board members understand that this information is confidential, and agree not to disclose any such information.

XIII. Influencing Department Staff

Board members shall not attempt to influence Department staff regarding the outcome of any individual cases that are being handled within the Department.

XIV. Amendment of the Handbook

This Handbook may be amended at any time by action of the Board.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Jeannie Elliot, Chairperson
Mathews County Department of Social Services