



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of September 23, 2023

DATE: September 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Establishment of Arlington County Social Services Advisory Board (SSAB) and adoption of its Bylaws

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve and Adopt the attached Charter to create the Arlington County Social Services Advisory Board for the purpose of providing input to the Director of the Arlington County Department of Human Services on policy issues and to serve as a resource for the County Board on behalf of residents of Arlington County in identifying and addressing social services needs throughout the community.

ISSUES: Appointment of a local Social Services Advisory Board is required by § 63.2-305 of the Code of Virginia. There are no known issues at the date of this report.

SUMMARY: The Department of Human Services is requesting the County Board establish a new advisory group for the purpose of providing input to the Director of the Arlington County Department of Human Services on policy issues related to public assistance and social services programs and to serve as a resource for the County Board on behalf of residents of Arlington County in identifying and addressing social services needs throughout the community.

BACKGROUND: Code of Virginia § 63.2-305 stipulates that there shall be a local board in each county and city of the Commonwealth where a local government official is designated a local official as constituting the local board of social services. Prescribed powers and duties of such boards include:

- 1. To interest itself in all matters pertaining to the public assistance and social services needed by people of the political subdivision or subdivisions served by the local department;
2. To monitor the formulation and implementation of public assistance and social services programs by the local department;

County Manager: MJS / Mic
County Attorney: MNC Lem
Staff: Brooke Hammond Perez, DHS Economic Independence Division
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3. To meet with the local government official who constitutes the local board at least six times a year for the purpose of making recommendations on policy matters concerning the local department;
4. To submit an annual report to the governing body or bodies, prior to the budget presentation of the local department, concerning the administration of the public assistance and social services programs; and
5. To submit to the governing body or bodies, from time to time, other reports that the advisory board deems appropriate.

The Arlington SSAB will operate according to the Charter (attached) developed pursuant to state requirements. The Charter addresses the board's purpose, power, and duties; composition; meeting requirements; and committees.

DISCUSSION: Public assistance and social services in Arlington do not have a formal commission or advisory group to provide input about programs and services or to serve as a resource for the County Board on behalf of residents of Arlington County in identifying and addressing social services needs throughout the community.

Appointment of a Social Services Advisory Board will ensure that local services continue to meet community needs.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: A public engagement effort is not required for this item.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact related to this proposed action.

THE ARLINGTON COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD (SSAB) CHARTER

The Arlington County Board, by adoption of this Charter, hereby creates the SSAB as an advisory board to the Director of the Department of Human Services, pursuant to Virginia Code § 63.2-305.

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this Organization shall be the Arlington County Social Services Advisory Board, hereinafter referred to as the SSAB.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE, POWERS & DUTIES

Purpose. The SSAB has been established by the Arlington County Board (“County Board”), pursuant to § 63.2-305 of the Code of Virginia, for the purpose of providing input to the Arlington County Department of Human Services on policy issues and to serve as a resource for the County Board on behalf of residents of Arlington County in identifying and addressing social services needs throughout the community.

Powers and Duties. As required by Virginia Code § 63.2-305, the powers and duties of the Board shall be:

- (a) To serve in an advisory capacity to the Director of the Department of Human Services (“Director”), in accordance with § 63.2-305;
- (b) To take an active interest in all matters affecting the social services and public assistance benefits needed by the people served by Arlington County Government;
- (c) To monitor the formulation and implementation of public assistance benefits and social services programs;
- (d) To meet with the Director, or their designee (a member of the DHS Senior Leadership Team) at least six times a year for the purpose of making recommendations on policy matters;
- (e) To collaborate with the Director to promote stakeholder engagement and input to promote equity-informed planning and service delivery;
- (f) To submit an annual report to the County Board, prior to the budget presentation of the Department of Human Services, concerning the administration of the public assistance and social services programs; and
- (g) To submit to the County Board, from time to time, other reports the SSAB deems appropriate.

The ideas, decisions, and actions of the SSAB will impact the lives of children, families, and vulnerable members of the Arlington community. Therefore, the business of the SSAB will be handled with the utmost respect, seriousness, and commitment.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF OFFICE, AND TRAINING

Appointment/Composition of the SSAB. The membership of the SSAB is constituted in accordance with the Code of Virginia (§ 63.2-305). The membership of the SSAB shall consist of a minimum of five (5) voting members and up to nine (9) voting members who are appointed by the County Board. The Director of the Department of Human Services, or their designee, is an *ex-officio* member without voting privileges. The voting members shall be residents of Arlington County. The membership shall be broadly representative of the diverse backgrounds of County residents and all geographical areas of the County based upon the following core recruitment principles:

Diversity. To ensure that decisions and outcomes benefit from a range of insights, there shall be proactive recruitment of a diverse membership representative of different races, genders, sexual orientations, religions, ages, socio-economic statuses, educational backgrounds, and disability statuses. Additionally, recruitment efforts shall strive to ensure that the membership reflects the demographic profile of those served by VDSS programs, with intentional focus on underrepresented and underserved groups, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Lived experience. A person with lived experience is someone who has lived, or is currently living, with the issues their community is focusing on, and who can offer their perspective about the system as it is experienced by those who have received social services. The insights of persons with lived experience are invaluable inasmuch as they will inform program planning, education, and policy decision-making, thereby contributing to improved outcomes and enhanced well-being of social services clients. Persons with lived experience possess expertise that comes not from formal education or training, but instead from direct experience with the system, process, or issue being addressed.

Term of Office. As required by Virginia Code § 63.2-305, members shall be appointed initially for terms of one to four years, so as to provide for the balanced overlapping of the terms of the membership thereon. Subsequent appointments shall be for a term of four years, except for appointments to fill vacancies that occur during terms shall be for the remainder of the unexpired terms. Appointments to fill unexpired terms shall not be considered full terms, and such persons shall be eligible to be appointed to two consecutive full terms. No person shall serve more than two (2) consecutive full terms.

Resignations and Vacancies. If a member cannot serve or resigns from office, then the Chairperson or the County support staff coordinator shall advise the Clerk to the County Board of the vacancy in writing. SSAB members' vacancies shall be filled for unexpired terms in the same manner as original appointments.

Holdovers. If a member completes their term of office, remains qualified to serve as a member, and the County Board has not reappointed that member to another term or appointed a successor member, that member may continue to serve until such time as the member is reappointed or a successor member is appointed.

Suspension/Removal. As set forth in Virginia Code § 63.2-308, members may be suspended or removed for cause by the County Board.

Training. Within the first ninety (90) days of their term, SSAB voting members are required to sign and submit the Pre-Service Agreement and complete both the online Board Member Training and at least one of the monthly Regional Director's Q&A Sessions. Other recommendations for new SSAB members within ninety (90) days of appointment include the following:

- (a) Participate in the Onboarding Orientation with the SSAB Chair, Vice Chair, and Director of Human Services (or the Director's designee);
- (b) Read the Local Board Member Handbook;
- (c) Visit the VDSS website;
- (d) Complete Introduction to VDSS e-learning and other mandated trainings; and
- (e) Review the Local Agency Profile.

ARTICLE IV: OFFICERS OF THE SSAB AND THEIR DUTIES

Elections. The SSAB shall be served by two Officers: A Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson shall be elected in accordance with the voting provisions of Article V by the SSAB voting members annually and such election shall be scheduled at the first meeting of each fiscal year. At least one (1) month prior to the election meeting, a slate of candidates for Chairperson shall be nominated during a meeting held pursuant to Article V. After nomination, each candidate shall be polled on their willingness and ability to serve as Chairperson. At the election meeting, the Chairperson shall be elected from among the willing nominees in accordance with the voting provisions of Article V. As soon as possible after the election of the Chairperson, but no later than next SSAB meeting, the Chairperson shall nominate a Vice-Chairperson. After nomination, the candidate shall be polled on their willingness and ability to serve as an officer. The Vice-Chairperson shall then be elected in accordance with the voting provisions of Article V. The Officers of the SSAB shall serve in their office for a one-year (1-year) term. Officers may serve additional terms, not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms in the same office.

Chairperson. The powers and duties of the Chairperson shall be as follows:

- a. To preside over SSAB meetings;
- b. To rule on procedural questions;
- c. To report official communications at Board meetings;
- d. To certify minutes as true and correct;
- e. To request assistance from County staff supporting the SSAB;
- f. To appoint standing and special committees; and
- g. To carry out other duties as required.

Vice-Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson at a meeting, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Chairperson. If neither the Chairperson nor the Vice-Chairperson is available, the member present with the longest tenure on the SSAB shall act as Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson shall perform any other duties assigned by the SSAB or Chairperson.

Replacement Officers: If an office becomes vacant for any reason, it shall be filled by an election at the next regular meeting having a majority of members present. The newly elected officer shall complete the unexpired term of the officer succeeded. Prior to the election of any replacement officer, all members shall be provided with notice of the proposed election before the meeting at which the replacement is elected.

ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

VFOIA. All meetings shall be open to the public except as provided under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code § 2.2-3700 et seq., as amended (“VFOIA”). Pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3701, “meeting” or “meetings” means the meetings including work sessions, when sitting physically, or through electronic communication means pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2, as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (i) as many as three members or (ii) a quorum, if less than three, of the constituent membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not votes are cast, of any public body. The SSAB may hold public hearings and report its findings to the County Board regarding issues that affect the public interest.

Notice and Agenda: Notice and the agenda of all meetings shall be provided as required under the VFOIA. All meetings shall be preceded by properly posted notice stating the date, time, and location of each meeting. Notice of a meeting shall be given at least three working days prior to the meeting. Notice of emergency meetings, reasonable under the circumstances, shall be given contemporaneously with the notice provided to DSSAB members. Notices of all meetings shall be provided to the County's Communications and Public Engagement Team for posting at the Bozeman Government Center, on the County website, and at such other locations as County policy may require. All meetings shall be conducted in public places that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Frequency: The SSAB shall meet at least six (6) times per year and may meet additional times when convened by the Chairperson. Meetings shall be held at a time agreed to by a majority of the SSAB's members, and at a place arranged by the County support staff.

Voting: A quorum is necessary for a vote. A majority of the voting membership of the SSAB shall constitute a quorum. In making any recommendations, adopting any plan, or approving any proposal, action shall be taken by a majority vote of SSAB members present and voting. All votes of SSAB members shall be taken during a public meeting, and no vote shall be taken by secret or written ballot or by proxy.

Procedure. Except as otherwise provided by Virginia law or this Charter, all meetings shall be conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, and except as specifically authorized by the VFOIA and County policy, no meeting shall be conducted through telephonic, video, electronic, or other communication means where the members are not all physically assembled to discuss or transact public business.

Public Access. For any meeting, at least one copy of the agenda, all agenda packets, and, unless excepted under the VFOIA, all materials furnished to SSAB members, shall be made available for public inspection at the same time such documents are furnished to the SSAB members. Pursuant to the VFOIA, any member may photograph, film, record, or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting required to be open, but such actions may not interfere with any SSAB meetings.

Records: The County support staff shall ensure that minutes of meetings are recorded as required under the VFOIA. Minutes shall include: (1) the date, time, and location of each meeting; (2) the members present and absent; (3) a summary of the discussion on matters proposed, deliberated, or decided; and (4) a record of any votes taken. Such minutes are public records and subject to inspection and copying by citizens of the Commonwealth or by members of the news media. The County support staff shall maintain records and minutes of the meetings and other SSAB business under the direction of the Chairperson and in consultation with SSAB legal counsel as needed.

Attorney-Client Privilege: Records containing legal advice from legal counsel to the SSAB, and legal advice provided in closed session by legal counsel to the SSAB, are protected by the attorney-client privilege and from disclosure under the VFOIA. Any such records or advice should not be disclosed by members of the SSAB to any third party, or the privilege against disclosure may be waived. Questions regarding the handling of records or advice subject to attorney-client privilege should be directed to the SSAB's legal counsel.

ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES

Standing. The Chairperson may appoint standing committees and a chairperson for each with the consent of a majority of the SSAB members present and voting.

Special. The Chairperson may appoint special committees and a chairperson for each with the consent of a majority of the SSAB members present and voting.

Committee Meetings. All meetings of any such committees shall comply with the notice and other requirements of the VFOIA and County policy. To the extent practicable, any such committee shall be composed of at least three (3) members. Committee meetings may be held at the call of the SSAB Chairperson, a committee chairperson, or at the request of two committee members, with notice to all committee members.

ARTICLE VII: CONDUCT, PARTICIPATION, DISCIPLINE

Conduct. SSAB members shall demonstrate a high level of professionalism, commitment, sensitivity, and sound judgment, and shall function in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical behavior. SSAB members' conduct shall be guided by the SSAB purpose described in Article II and the core principles described in Article III.

Attendance/Participation: Any voting SSAB member who misses three (3) consecutive meetings or more than half of the scheduled meetings within a 12-month period, or who fails to participate in the work of the SSAB without good cause acceptable to a majority of the other voting SSAB members, may be asked to resign from the SSAB. The Director of the Department of Human Services, serving *ex officio*, may designate one or more Department officials to appear for meetings in the Director's stead as necessary.

Notification to County Board. The SSAB may request that the County staff coordinator notify the Clerk to the County Board in writing when a member is absent from three (3) consecutive meetings, when any member resigns, or when any website, staff, or contact information changes.

Removal. Any SSAB member may be recommended to the County Board for removal from the SSAB for cause, by a two-thirds majority vote of all the SSAB members. The members' authority to recommend removal under the Charter neither limits nor waives the County Board's authority to remove members from the SSAB as provided by law.

ARTICLE VIII: PREVAILING AUTHORITY

In the event of any conflict between a provision of these Charter and Virginia Code § 63.2-305 or any successor provisions, the provision of the Virginia Code shall supersede such Charter provision. Additionally, if any Virginia Code Section cited herein is amended subsequently to the approval of this Charter , references to these Code sections shall be interpreted to be references to the most recently amended version of these Code sections.

ARTICLE IX: COMPLIANCE WITH LAW AND ARLINGTON COUNTY POLICY

The SSAB shall comply with all Virginia laws, including, but limited to, the VFOIA, and the Virginia State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3100 *et seq.*, with all County ordinances, and with all County policies concerning the activities of its boards, authorities, and commissions. In case of a conflict between a provision of this Charter and any applicable ordinance or law, the provisions of the applicable ordinance or law, as the case may be, shall control.

ARTICLE X: AMENDMENT OF CHARTER

This Charter may be amended at any regular meeting of the SSAB by adopting the proposed amendment(s) and by presenting those proposed changes for approval to the County Board. Any such amendments to the Charter shall become effective upon approval by the County Board.