

## Families First Community Advisory Board

Date: Thursday, January 15, 2026

Time: 1:00 PM CST

Location: Tennessee Tower, Nashville, TN

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### Board Members Present:

- Commissioner Clarence Carter
- Jamie Stitt (Designee for Commissioner McWhorter)
- Ashleigh McFadden (Designee for Commissioner Reynolds)
- Jack Bailey
- Britney Cleveland
- Steven Gentile
- Elizabeth Fournet
- Rachael Corry
- Dr. Jerry Askew
- Annie Cacheiro

### Board Members Absent:

- Dr. Tobi Amosun (Designee for Commissioner Dunn)
- Stamatia Xixis (Designee for Commissioner Deneice Thomas)
- Chairman Bo Watson
- Leader Raumesh Akbari
- Chairman Brock Martin
- Chairman Bryan Terry
- Frank Lawrence
- Bishop Edward Stephens
- Executive Jim Mangubat

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## Agenda Items and Notes:

### 1:00 PM

#### Welcome and Commissioner's Update

*Presenter:* Commissioner Carter

*Key Points Discussed:*

Commissioner Carter called the meeting to order and welcomed the board, noting the significance of the initiative as Tennessee approaches the final year of its TANF Opportunity Act (TOA) work. He reflected on the past five years of collaboration, emphasizing the importance of learning from the pilots to inform both Tennessee's future approach and national discussions on TANF policy.

Eric Dunn conducted roll call.

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### 1:09 PM

#### Overview of 2025 Evaluation Progress & Review Upcoming Work

*Presenter:* Mike Fishman, Ashweeta Patnaik, MEF Associates

*Key Points Discussed:*

## **2025 Accomplishments**

Mr. Fishman summarized key evaluation milestones from 2025, including:

- Publication and ongoing updates to the Urban Institute data dashboard.
- Collection of 2024 MIS data from all seven pilot sites.
- Completion of most follow-up survey data collection in five sites.
- Extensive qualitative data analysis from summer site visits.
- Release of several major reports, including:
  - An interim evaluation report
  - A study on Tennessee's TANF benefit increase and its implications for families

## **Planned Work for 2026**

MEF outlined major deliverables expected in 2026:

- Seven implementation briefs (one per pilot) to be released in early 2026.
- A second round of MIS data collection covering all of 2025.
- Two briefs in Q2 2026:
  - A brief on transitional benefits
  - A Multidimensional Hardship Brief, examining hardship beyond income using baseline, quarterly, and exit UAT data

Commissioner Carter emphasized the importance of the Multidimensional Hardship Brief, noting that it could help Tennessee move beyond siloed service delivery toward a more holistic understanding of family well-being.

MEF also indicated that:

- The dashboard will continue to be updated quarterly.
- Urban Institute will release a new socio-economic indicators report comparing baseline conditions to current data.
- A comprehensive final evaluation report—including cost, impact, and implementation findings—is expected in Q4 2026.

## **Impact Study Overview**

Ms. Patnaik provided a high-level explanation of the impact study design for all seven pilots, clarifying the difference between outcomes (changes over time) and impacts (changes caused by the program). She reviewed the randomized controlled trial (RCT) designs used for each pilot, noting that:

- Three pilots use delayed (waitlist) designs (testing the full program).
- Four pilots use differential designs (testing specific program components).

She summarized the design, data sources, and key outcomes for each pilot.

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**1:31 PM**

**Update on Enrollment Goals**

*Presenter:* Jessica White, PCG

*Key Points Discussed:*

Ms. White provided a review of new enrollments in 2025, noting that:

- A total of 2,480 new families were enrolled across all pilots in 2025 (not including previously enrolled participants).
- Enrollment varied by agency, with no single month consistently representing the peak across all pilots.

Board members discussed whether there were identifiable reasons for enrollment fluctuations by month; it was noted that any explanations were likely pilot-specific and largely anecdotal.

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**1:36 PM**

### **Review Post-TOPI Contract Updates**

*Presenters:* Suzanne Carr

*Key Points Discussed:*

Ms. Carr provided an update on the planned one-year bridge contracts for the seven pilot sites, explaining that:

- The bridge contracts are intended to ensure continuity while DHS reviews MEF's final evaluation results.
- The target is to execute contracts by October 2026, aligning with the end of current agreements.
- Each pilot is expected to receive approximately \$1 million for the bridge year.
- Pilots will submit "wind-down plans" describing how they will scale to a more sustainable funding level.

Ms. Carr also reported that:

- DHS is working with STS on transitioning data systems post-TOA.
- The UAT system—developed primarily for research—will be phased out, with key data functions transitioning to the pilots in-house.

She noted that final evaluation findings are expected in December 2026, with public release shortly thereafter and prior to any new grant competition.

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### **Concluding Remarks**

*Presenters:* Commissioner Carter

*Key Points Discussed:*

Commissioner Carter reminded the Board that Tennessee will not have access to the same level of demonstration funding going forward and must plan accordingly within its annual TANF allocation of approximately \$191 million.

He underscored that the lessons learned from Families First will shape both Tennessee's future approach and broader national policy conversations. He thanked Board members and partners for their sustained commitment.

- Meeting was adjourned at 1:42pm.
- Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 16, 2026.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:42 PM CST.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 16, 2026.