

Making a Positive Difference - Responding to Challenging Times

Now more than ever, the Department of Family Services (DFS) is making a critical difference in the lives of many thousands of county residents.

Continuing Effects of Recession

The Department of Family Services continues to provide critical assistance to tens of thousands of community residents. Although the economy shows some signs of recovery, people affected by economic recession and job loss continue to come to DFS in record numbers seeking help, many for the first time.

Most people coming to DFS are seeking public assistance, such as Medicaid and food stamps (now called SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Applications for both programs continue to skyrocket. In just 18 months, from July 1, 2009, to December 31, 2010, the number of households receiving public assistance through the county's Department of Family Services increased by 31 percent, from 58,561 to 76,906 households.

DFS SkillSource (employment) Centers helped 61,396 job seekers in Fiscal Year 2010, including experienced workers displaced by the recession's impact as well as lower-skilled and younger workers competing for fewer available jobs.



Paying it Forward

Earlier this year, a man was standing outside the DFS customer lobby when the supervisor opened the office. The man told her that he now had a job and wished to repay DFS for the assistance he had received during his unemployment. The supervisor explained that repayment was not necessary, but the man insisted. He gave her a check for \$200 and a note: "My income will stabilize again and I will again be self-sufficient. I would like the money that DFS has provided me to be used for another needy case...thanks again for your support." His check was deposited in the department's "Needy Families and Children Fund" and will be used, as he wished, to help others.

Impact on Families

Job loss, homelessness and poverty can be risk factors for child abuse and neglect. Child protective services investigations and assessments increased 19 percent from FY 2008 to FY 2010 (from 2235 to 2677).

Prevention programs are in high demand, such as the Healthy Families program for new parents, parenting education programs and supportive services.

Abuse and neglect of older people and adults with disabilities has also increased in recent years. Since 2008, adult protective services investigations have increased 17 percent and the number of clients needing protective services has gone up by 26 percent.

Artemis House, the county's shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence, has been consistently full for three years. In FY 2010, the shelter staff housed 133 adults and 170 children. Due to the shelter's limited physical capacity (34 beds), many of those needing help were placed in motels and neighboring shelters. With just one domestic violence bed for every 31,000 people in the county, Fairfax County has the worst ratio in Virginia. Due to limited resources and increased demand, the county has had to set up a waiting list for survivors of domestic violence needing individual counseling. Forty-five people were on the waiting list in March 2011.



Early Childhood Support

Waiting lists are also growing for families needing Head Start and child care subsidies. The Head Start waiting list included 1,326 children in March 2011 and nearly 3,000 were on the waiting list for child care subsidies. The median income of families who receive subsidized child care is just over \$25,000 in a community where the annual cost of full-time preschool child care can range from \$8,000 to over \$13,000.

Independence and Stability through Employment

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cases went up 21 percent in FY 2010. For many families, the need for public assistance is due to job loss and unemployment. The Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) helps families receiving TANF get back on their feet. Since FY 2009, enrollment for VIEW increased 19 percent (1,202 to 1,436).

Journey to Self-Sufficiency

An unemployed single mother enrolled in VIEW in 2008. While attending her courses at the Northern Virginia Community College, VIEW helped with the cost of child care and transportation to and from school. With the help from TANF, SNAP and Medicaid she was able to stay in her home and care for her daughter while attending school full time. After completing her certification in June 2010 she started a full-time job two months later as a medical technician. She is moving from public assistance to independence. Now both mother and daughter have a bright future ahead.



Many Volunteers, Many Languages, Big Impact

In FY 2010, 2,430 volunteers spent 79,660 hours (worth \$1.7 million) providing services for older adults and adults with disabilities, including home-delivered meals, transportation to medical appointments, and insurance counseling. Many people who need services speak a language other than English. Of the volunteers, 153 are bilingual or multilingual and can speak a total of 32 languages. Photo (right): A volunteer installs a shower grab bar to help an older person live safely at home.



Federal Stimulus Funds Helped Local Meals Programs Serve More Older Adults

In FY 2010, the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging received federal stimulus funds that were used to serve an additional 7,546 home-delivered meals to 22 clients on a waiting list for services in Falls Church and Annandale and to provide congregate meals to underserved older adults in Vienna, Annandale and Falls Church.

A Positive Trend in Child Welfare – Fewer Children Entering Foster Care

In spite of the challenging times, a positive trend continues in child welfare. From FY 2006 to FY 2010, the number of children placed in foster care went down by 39 percent, from 172 to 105, even as the number of Child Protective Services investigations increased. By employing new strategies to locate and involve family members in planning for their children's safety and well-being, by providing intensive services and respite support when needed, and by encouraging kinship care as an alternative to foster care when an out-of-home placement is necessary, DFS is seeing improved outcomes for at-risk children and families. Thanks to community partnerships, even with static resources DFS was able to offer parenting education to more families in FY 2010. This focus on prevention has contributed to the decline of children entering foster care.

Lines of Service Initiative

The Lines of Service initiative DFS launched in May 2009 focused on identifying ways to work more efficiently and effectively throughout the department. This in-depth department-wide effort resulted in improvements in all of the lines of service and contributed to the department's success in achieving budget reductions of over \$4 million in FY 2011 while continuing to provide critically needed services during challenging times.

Budget Summary

The FY11 Adopted Budget for DFS is \$212 million.* Only 38.3 percent of the DFS budget was funded from Fairfax County's General Fund. The remaining funds came primarily from the federal and state governments and School Age Child Care fees. Approximately half of all expenditures are mandated by federal or state laws.

*This figure does not include the \$360 million in federal and state public assistance benefits that DFS administers for local residents.

