
Department of Family Services

Self-Sufficiency Division

The Self-Sufficiency Division provides the following services to job seekers and economically disadvantaged residents of Fairfax County and the cities of Falls Church and Fairfax:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW).
- Medicaid and Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS).
- Food Stamps.
- Other cash assistance programs (e.g., General Relief, Energy Assistance)
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth Services.
- Other grant-funded employment and training programs.

The goal of public assistance programs is to prevent individuals from falling into poverty beyond a certain level. These federal and state programs provide those who are unemployed, underemployed or unable to work due to age and/or disability access to basics, such as health care, food and shelter. Services are provided in each of the county's four regional human services offices (Fairfax, Falls Church, South County and Reston), as well as in multiple community-based sites such as area hospitals, and Community Health Care Clinics. Employment and training services are also community based and delivered through one-stop employment centers, called SkillSource Centers, which serve employers and job seekers.

There has been a steady and significant increase in demand for public assistance since FY2001. This trend can be attributed to policy changes at the state and federal levels, successful outreach efforts, increasing population and most recently, changes in the economy.

In Fiscal Year 2007, the division authorized more than \$292 million in public assistance benefit payments (not included in the agency's budget) on behalf of county residents and managed an average monthly public assistance caseload of 49,681 cases, a 71 percent increase from FY 2001. The department has made continuous efforts to streamline business practices and has extended hours of operation to better meet customer needs. Even so, the increase in cases without corresponding staff increases is taxing the division's capacity to deliver services in accordance with federal and state requirements. It should be noted, that unlike other services in the county where waiting lists may be created if demand for services exceeds capacity, federal entitlement programs, such as Food Stamps and Medicaid, do not permit this practice. These mandated programs give everyone the right to apply for benefits, receive a determination of their eligibility, and receive benefits if eligible, within policy established timeframes regardless of associated workload created and staff capacity to handle the additional work. Agencies that fail to meet performance mandates (timeliness of delivery of services and quality) may be placed in corrective action ranging from 'technical assistance' from state and federal agencies to financial sanctions depending on the severity of the situation. Families and individuals in need are greatly affected when they cannot access these basic services in a timely manner.

A description of the programs offered and a caseload breakdown by year since 2001 follows:

AVERAGE NUMBER OF MONTHLY PUBLIC ASSISTANCE/WELFARE REFORM CASES						
	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
TANF	1,149	1,253	1,378	1,419	1,422	1,364
Food Stamps	6,952	7,487	8,899	9,855	10,299	10,553
Medicaid	20,814	23,224	29,875	32,889	35,667	35,696
VIEW	243	322	390	419	414	366
Other	2,103	2,369	1,986	1,910	1,699	1,702
TOTAL	31,018	34,333	45,528	46,491	49,501	49,681

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Food Stamps Program

In FY 2007, an average of 10,553 families per month received \$1.6 million in nutrition assistance through the Food Stamps program, or \$19.8 million for the year. The purpose of the Food Stamp program is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition by providing eligible low-income families additional food purchasing power through income supplementation.

Medicaid/Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS) and FAMIS Plus

In FY 2007, an average of 43,917 individuals (13,714 adults and 30,203 children) participated in the Medicaid/FAMIS Plus programs. The county also enrolled an additional 5,668 children in FAMIS. In FY 2007, a monthly average of \$22.3 million (or \$267 million for the year) was paid out under the Medicaid/FAMIS Plus programs to county residents. The federal/state funded Medicaid and FAMIS programs pay medical service providers for services rendered to eligible elderly, disabled and blind individuals; pregnant women; and low-income families with children. FAMIS is the federal/state program that provides low-cost health insurance for children in low-income families that earn too much to be eligible for Medicaid, but do not have private health insurance. FAMIS Plus is Virginia's name for children's Medicaid.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW)

In FY 2007, an average of 1,364 families per month received \$459,776 per month in TANF benefits, or a total of \$5.5 million for the year. In addition to the cash benefit, 1,036 parents received employment services under the VIEW program.

The TANF program provides monthly cash assistance to low-income families so families can stay together. VIEW is the mandatory employment program for able-to-work parents with children 12 months of age or older receiving TANF. The maximum amount of benefits a participating TANF family receives ranges from \$242 per month for one person to \$570 per month for six or more people. The average monthly TANF grant in Fairfax County is \$326.

VIEW participants who were employed during FY 2007 achieved an average wage of \$9.44 per hour and average monthly earnings of \$1,342. It should be noted that VIEW families become

ineligible for TANF and VIEW at the 24-month time limit for the program or when wages from employment, combined with other available income, reach 100 percent of the federal poverty level (for example: \$1,431 monthly, the Federal Poverty Level for 2007 for a family of three).

During FY 2007, the Fairfax County VIEW program provided 1,036 parents with economic, social and employment services including skills training and supportive services that helped them keep their families together. The VIEW program also provided:

- More than 600 educational and vocational assessments.
- 89 neuropsychological evaluations for participants who screened in with potential hidden disabilities. The evaluations were followed up with referrals and services to help participants overcome or manage the identified challenges.
- More than 60 VIEW participants with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.
- 636 participants, who became employed, with follow-up services including extended Medicaid, transportation and child care support when needed.
- 286 VIEW participants with meaningful work activities ranging from skill training to volunteer work experience.
- 88 individuals with a certificate for completing intensive job readiness training in Workplace Essential Skills classes.

Other Public Assistance Programs

Other important public assistance programs managed by DFS that address needs of eligible low-income families and individuals in our community include: Energy Assistance, Refugee Assistance, General Relief, Aid to Families with Dependent Children / Foster Care (AFDC/FC), Auxiliary Grants for the elderly and disabled, Fraud Prevention, and Repatriation. These programs comprise approximately 3.4 percent of the public assistance caseload or 1,702 cases. Another critical program administered by DFS, the seasonal Energy Assistance Program (Cooling, Heating and Crisis Assistance), served more than 1,350 additional county residents.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Extended Business Hours – In late 2005, DFS extended its hours of operation for public assistance services in response to requests from customers and in keeping with the department's strategic goal to improve access to services for clients. Public assistance services are now available Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This is a change from the previous schedule of Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Since these expanded hours of operation have been in place for over a year, the department is now gathering data and surveying clients as part of the evaluation process.

Continuous Quality Improvement – As caseloads continue to rise and budgets shrink, the division is undergoing again a process analysis and system reengineering. Working with a nationally recognized expert in the field of process improvement, the division will rethink its approach to service delivery in an effort to continue to maximize efficiencies, maintain excellent customer service and meet federal and state performance mandates.

Health Access Assistance Team (HAAT) Program - The HAAT program is a partnership among the Fairfax County Community Health Care Network (CHCN), the Fairfax County Health Department, the Office of Partnerships and Northern Virginia Family Service. The HAAT mission is to ensure that people without health insurance have access to and use the most appropriate health care resources available to them. This is achieved by simplifying access to federal, state and local health care services through coordinated “points of entry.” HAAT teams are located at each of the three Community Health Care Network offices located in Reston, South County and Bailey’s Crossroads. In FY 2007, over 8,000 families were assessed and evaluated for enrollment in health care programs including Medicaid, FAMIS Plus, FAMIS, State and Local Hospitalization, CHCN, Medical Care for Children’s Partnership (MCCP), MCCP Kaiser, and Kaiser-Bridge. Individuals ineligible for enrollment are connected to other resources in the community, such as pharmaceutical assistance programs. Effective April 1, 2006, HAAT was given responsibility for the recertification process for patients enrolled with CHCN, a function previously provided by the Department of Systems Management for Human Services (DSMHS). An average of 500 patients a month must recertify for continued services through CHCN.

CASH (Creating Assets Savings and Hope) Volunteer Tax Assistance Program - The Self-Sufficiency Division is working with the Fairfax County Office of Partnerships to provide free tax preparation services to low-income working families. The goal of the program is to enable families to avoid commercial charges for tax preparation services, maximize their tax their refunds by avoiding expensive advance tax refund loans, and to refer families to community resources that provide free services to maximize financial assets through savings and bank accounts, financial education, budget coaching, and credit repair. Tax preparation services are provided at regional human services offices, libraries, and community centers.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Self-Sufficiency Division of the Department of Family Services, under contract with the SkillSource Group, Inc., manages and delivers Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and other federal and state funded employment and training programs. The SkillSource Group, Inc. is the administrative arm of the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board (NVWIB). The NVWIB is the governing body for this local workforce area, which includes the counties of Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun, as well as the cities of Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas and Manassas Park.

Employment and training services are delivered through one-stop centers called SkillSource Centers, which serve employers and job seekers. A combination of mandatory (under WIA) and voluntary partners enable clients to access a wide variety of employment and support services under one roof. The Department of Family Services operates three of the five SkillSource Centers in this region, in South County, Falls Church, and Reston, plus an additional employment resource center in Fairfax.

2007 Program Statistics

- 27,000 visits were made to the employment and SkillSource Centers in Fairfax County, representing over 10,000 individuals. The centers reported 956 placements with an average annual salary of \$35,547. We estimate that the number of placements is vastly under-reported because job placements for individuals not enrolled in WIA programs are tracked on a voluntary basis.
- 192 individuals were enrolled in Intensive Services through Workforce Investment Act programs. Eighty-eight participants were placed in jobs with an average annual salary of \$41,849. Another 36 participants completed occupational skills training and were placed in jobs at an average annual salary of \$49,736. The remaining 68 participants are currently conducting their job search and/or in training.
- The Center for Business Planning and Development, which is co-located at the Falls Church SkillSource Center and provides small business startup and expansion services, helped to start 41 new businesses in 2007, expand 11 existing businesses, and create 53 new jobs.

2007 Program Highlights

- **Third Annual “Envision Your Success” Career and Entrepreneurship Expo**
More than 60 employers exhibited at the Third Annual Career and Entrepreneurship Expo, in March 2007, which featured a mega job fair, and workshops on careers (for adults and youth) and business startup. The event attracted over 2,500 job seekers and prospective entrepreneurs, a significantly higher attendance than in 2006 when 1,800 individuals attended the Expo. This year’s event is scheduled for March 29, 2008. The EYS Expo is the Employment and Training program’s major event, with the primary goal of connecting job seekers to employers who have available jobs, and prospective entrepreneurs to business startup resources.
- **Job Corner Youth Employment Center**
Job Corner opened in the department’s Falls Church regional office to help meet the growing need for youth employment services in our local area. Job Corner is a youth-friendly, safe place where teens and young adults can find positive adult role models, job leads, education options, apprenticeship information, workshops on job readiness skills, public transportation tips, scholarship listings, and other free resources to help them prepare for the world of work. Job Corner served as the headquarters for the Educating Youth through Employment (EYE) initiative of the SkillSource Group, Inc., and hosted workshops on careers and financial management for over 70 young people. Job Corner has welcomed numerous community stakeholders for information sessions, tours, youth job search resources, and workshops.
- **Statewide SHARE (Sharing How Access to Resources Empowers) Network**
Virginia is launching a statewide initiative to establish one-stop employment center access points at faith and community-based organizations (FCBO). The project emerged

from the US Department of Labor's investment in pilot grants to engage FCBOs as committed and active partners in the workforce investment system, and to increase access for individuals who cannot, or would not, visit an existing one-stop center. The statewide goal is to establish 17 SHARE access points by spring 2008. Three SHARE access points are underway in this local workforce area, with plans to add additional sites based on geographic need and FCBO interest.

- **Initiatives for Underserved Populations**

The Fairfax County SkillSource employment centers continue to pursue funding opportunities to help underserved populations, including ex-offenders and long-term care workers.

For Ex-Offenders

The success of the Virginia Serious and Violent Offender Re-Entry Initiative to facilitate the re-entry of ex-offenders into the community has enabled a continued partnership with the Virginia Department of Corrections, to provide employment services as a critical component to successful community re-entry. In 2007, the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board was awarded funding from the Governor's discretionary fund to establish an employment resource center in the Fairfax County Pre-Release Center, in partnership with the Office of the Sheriff.

For Long-Term Care Workers

Based on the success of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance (DMAS) program to serve long-term direct health care workers, the Fairfax County SkillSource employment centers have established a cross-division partnership with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging to improve job satisfaction among personal care aides and increase retention rates to improve overall client satisfaction.

ISSUES/TRENDS

- An economic recession is forecast by some economists for the near future. Traditionally, when the country is in a recession, more county residents will seek support from public assistance and employment services further increasing the department's workload.
- The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is updating its caseload standard formula. VDSS uses this formula to determine the number of staff required to support the work of local agencies. The county's legislative program attachment, *Critical Needs in Human Services*, points out that using the current state formula, which was developed in 2000, DFS would need approximately 62 additional workers to maintain the level of performance required by state and federal regulations. The updated caseload formula is expected to be available in spring 2008, though state funding for needed positions is not anticipated to be considered until the FY 2011 – FY 2012 biennium.

- **Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Designated State Agency for the Workforce Investment Act**

Since the inception of the Workforce Investment Act in 1998, the Virginia Employment Commission has been the designated fiscal and administrative agency and grant recipient for the federal WIA program. Effective July 1, 2008, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) will assume these responsibilities. The VCCS will also make recommendations to the Governor, in consultation with the Workforce Sub Cabinet, on the expenditures of the Governor's 15 percent WIA statewide discretionary funds and the 25 percent statewide Rapid Response funds; administer the WIA Rapid Response program; promote regional cooperation; and provide support to the Virginia Workforce Council. Executive Order 61 was signed on January 4, 2008, and the impact to the local workforce areas has not yet been determined.

- **Planned Consolidation of Local Workforce Areas**

In the Governor's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development, the top priority is to "Create substantial structural reform through consolidations to reduce administrative costs and streamline and integrate workforce policy and services for business, workers, and job seekers." One of the strategies to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of regional and local workforce development efforts is to consolidate regional Workforce Investment Boards during 2008.