



Fairfax County

A D V I S O R Y S O C I A L S E R V I C E S B O A R D

2006 **ANNUAL REPORT**

Advisory Social Services Board

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Executive Summary

This report is a summary review of the Department of Family Services public welfare programs that are under the purview of the Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB). This report summarizes significant program trends, events and initiatives for 2006.

Introduction

In accordance with its responsibility to provide citizen oversight of the county's public welfare programs administered by the Department of Family Services (DFS), the Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB) presents this report summarizing significant program trends, events and initiatives in 2006 for three DFS divisions: Adult and Aging; Children, Youth and Families; and Self-Sufficiency.

The main intent of this report is to provide information and lay the groundwork upon which sound decisions can be made and wise actions taken to protect the welfare of county residents.

Outlined in the Executive Summary are six areas of particular importance for which the continued attention and support of the Board of Supervisors are critical:

- Continue to support initiatives that benefit older adults and caregivers.
- Prepare for and support state and local efforts to manage increasing workload of public assistance and social work staff.
- Support specific plans to prepare for emergency mass care, transportation and sheltering during a disaster, with attention to residents who have special needs.
- Implement the county's initiative to prevent and end homelessness in 10 years.
- Decrease the disproportional representation of African-American children in foster care and effectively serve a diverse population.
- Support youth employment centers.

Meeting the Needs of a Growing Senior Population

Action Item: The Advisory Social Services Board commends the Board of Supervisors for its foresight in establishing its Committee on Aging and for its continuing support for initiatives that benefit caregivers and older adults.

Fairfax County will experience an increase in the number and percentage of persons age 65 and older through 2020 due to longer life spans and the number of persons currently between 60 and 65 years old who are expected to remain county residents. By 2010, persons age 65 and older will be 9.2 percent of the county's total population, increasing to 104,400 persons. After 2010, the county's population of older adults will expand more rapidly because the oldest baby boomers will reach age 65 in 2011, increasing the rate of growth of this age group. By 2020, it is projected that there will be 138,600 persons age 65 and older living in Fairfax County, and they will be 11.6 percent of the total population.

Support for family caregivers and direct care workers is essential to help older adults continue to live safely and productively in their own homes. The ASSB appreciates the Board of Supervisors' important annual recognition for direct care workers and the continued attention to the needs of the direct care workforce for adequate training, compensation and benefits.

The ASSB also appreciates the efforts made by members of the Board of Supervisors to let constituents know about the county services available for family caregivers, for grandparents raising grandchildren, and Internet-based services, such as SeniorNavigator. A new DFS outreach effort launched in 2006 is the Adult and Aging Division's telephone help line for Korean-speaking seniors, which relies on volunteers and links family caregivers and older adults with the Web-based resources of SeniorNavigator.

Meeting Federal and State Performance Requirements

Action Item: Prepare for and support state and local efforts to manage increasing workload of public assistance and social work staff.

The Advisory Social Services Board appreciates the Board of Supervisors' inclusion in the Critical Needs in Human Services Issue paper for the 2007 Fairfax County Legislative Program information regarding the department's need for 52 additional public assistance staff to administer the growing demand for entitlement services such as Food Stamps and Medicaid.

Additional resources are also necessary to implement the statewide program improvement plan for child welfare services and to meet new regulatory and legislative requirements.

The Virginia Department of Social Services is currently conducting a workload study looking at all areas of the social service delivery system. Fairfax County staff is working closely with the state on this effort. Results from the study will be available in time for consideration of the 2009 – 2010 state biennial budget and in time for the county's FY2009 budget process. If the state provides more resources for staffing, the county will need to be prepared to provide its local share of the cost.

Preparing Our Community

Action Item: The Board of Supervisors should continue to support the development of specific plans to prepare for emergency mass care, transportation and sheltering during a disaster, with attention to residents who have special needs.

During the past year, the Department of Family Services has conducted and participated in a number of planning efforts with the goal of improving the county's ability to respond to the needs of its most vulnerable residents in the event of an emergency.

- A preliminary plan has been developed to determine how, where and when to open a shelter for residents with special medical needs, and plans are underway in the coming year to exercise this plan. In addition, sites will be reviewed for potential use as medical special needs shelters.
- A plan was developed for operating a Family Assistance Center where, should the county experience a major disaster, families would come to provide and receive information about their family members to help identify the missing and reunify families. A table-top exercise was arranged with multiple agencies to test out the assumptions of the plan.
- A DFS emergency management coordinator was designated.
- DFS participated in several community summits held for nonprofit human service providers, child care providers and foster care parents to help them prepare for pandemic flu and assist them with their continuity of operations planning.

Preventing and Ending Homelessness

Action Item: The Advisory Social Services Board commends the Board of Supervisors for its initiatives to prevent and end homelessness in 10 years.

The newly launched Partnership for Permanent Housing program and the opening of the new Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter are two significant efforts that were initiated by the Board of Supervisors. Continued development of housing for persons with very low incomes is essential if we are to end homelessness in Fairfax County. The Advisory Social Services Board supports the Board of Supervisors in its work to meet the housing needs of its most indigent residents, while balancing the interests of all county residents.

Serving a Diverse Population

Action Item: The Board of Supervisors should continue its support for efforts to decrease the disproportional representation of African-American children in foster care and efforts to effectively serve a diverse population.

Nationwide, there is an issue of a disproportionate number of African-American children in the foster care system, and Fairfax County is no exception. While about 10 percent of the children in Fairfax County are African-American, 43 percent of the children in foster care are African-American. Additionally, there has been a recent increase in Hispanic children entering foster care.

The department is working on many levels to address this – through preventive outreach to families at risk and through building networks of support in the community for African-American and Spanish-speaking families. In addition, DFS is a key participant in the countywide “Community Collaborative,” initiated by the Deputy County Executive, which brings together government and community members with a strong interest in reducing the overrepresentation of African-American children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and improving

school readiness and performance. A “Call to Action” was held in 2006, involving more than 150 human services professionals, faith community representatives, and community members.

Helping Youth Participate in County’s Growing Job Market

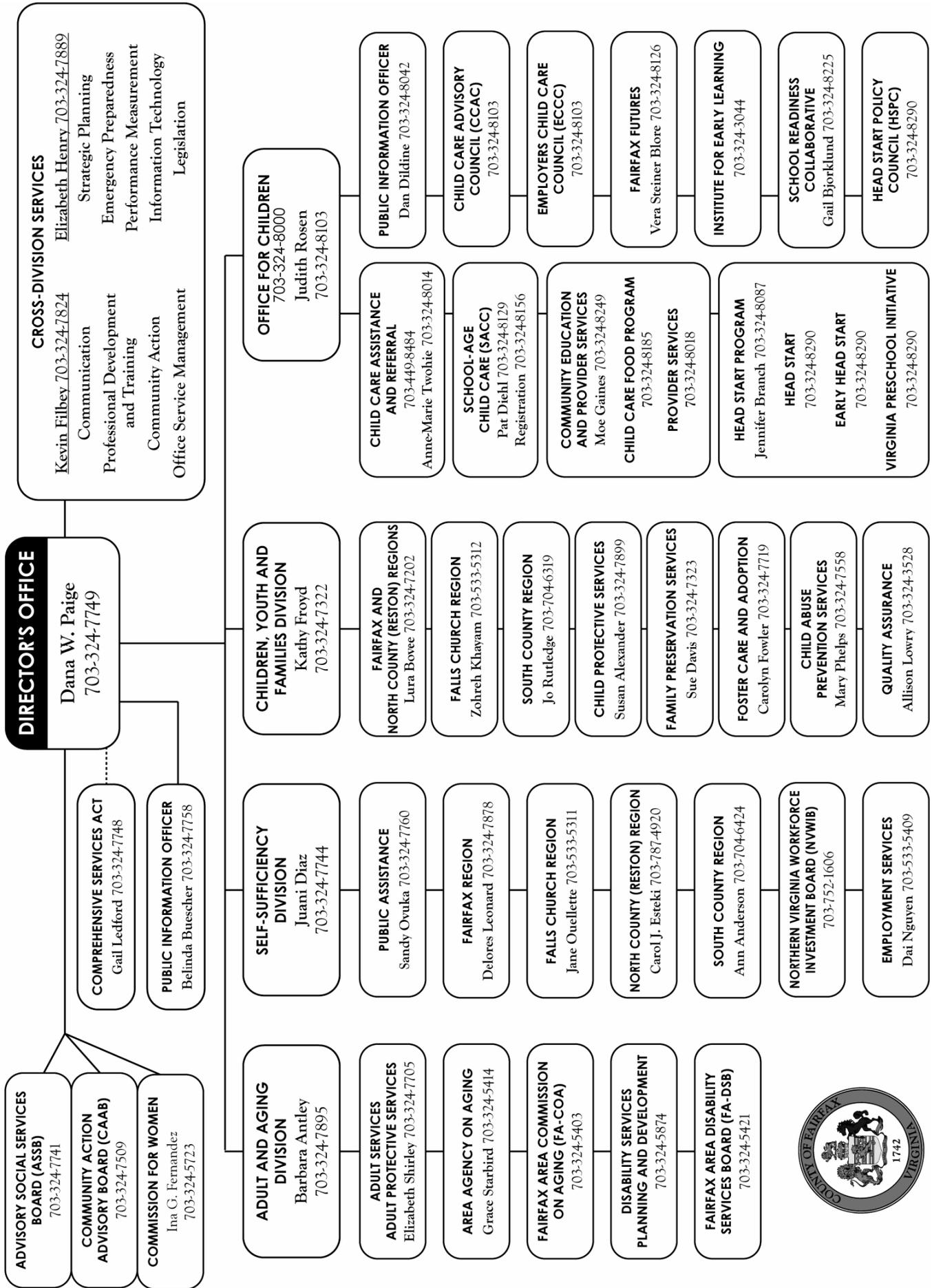
Action Item: Provide space and funding for Youth Employment Centers.

While Northern Virginia is one of the fastest growing job markets in the nation, there remains a substantial education and employment challenge for many disengaged youth who lack the skills, experience, parental guidance and understanding of the job market required to find productive employment and connections to better opportunities. Youth employment centers can bridge this gap, offering information, resources and services for youth to learn about career opportunities and to develop specific skills that will prepare them for employment.

The Department of Family Services is interested in opening a new Youth Employment Center in 2007 in Falls Church, patterned after the award-winning “Job Hut” that operated in Manassas Mall from 2003 – 2006. The department has secured an appropriate space, but it will need additional funding to staff the center. The department will involve business, education and other community partners to design and deliver services for this population. Working in partnership, the goal is to help develop this precious resource – our youth – so that they, too, can contribute to the growth, prosperity and future of Fairfax County.

Organization of the Fairfax County Department of Family Services

December 2006



Department of Family Services

Adult and Aging Division

Fairfax County will experience an increase in the number and percentage of persons age 65 and older through 2020 due to longer life spans and the number of persons currently between 60 and 65 years old who are expected to remain county residents. By 2010, persons age 65 and older will be 9.2 percent of the county's total population, increasing to 104,400 persons. After 2010, the county's population of older adults will expand more rapidly because the oldest baby boomers will reach age 65 in 2011, increasing the rate of growth of this age group. By 2020, it is projected that there will be 138,600 persons age 65 and older living in Fairfax County, and they will be 11.6 percent of the total population.

The Adult and Aging Division is planning for, and adapting services for, a changing population. The mission of the Adult and Aging Division is to provide programs that support older adults and adults with disabilities. The goals are to maximize independence, provide leadership in developing new support networks, and enhance informal social support networks already established by families and communities. The Adult and Aging Division includes the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, Adult Services, Adult Protective Services, and Disability Services Planning and Development. (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs)

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Cluster Care

In response to a growing population of those needing services, and to avoid a waiting list for home based care, a more efficient model was implemented to provide the assistance necessary to allow elderly persons and adults with disabilities to stay in their own homes. This model, termed "cluster care," builds on ideas from other local jurisdictions around the country that align services around "naturally occurring communities" – older communities in which a significant number of residents have aged in their homes. The cluster home care model has three components: task based home care, volunteer services and home delivered meals. Fairfax County's cluster care model was recognized in the recent report, "The Maturing of America," sponsored by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), the MetLife Foundation, and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), as a program that addresses the need for one point of entry and provides a range of services.

In moving to a cluster care model of services, clients receiving hourly home-based care services had their services changed to task-based home care. With task-based home care, clients receive help with services such as housekeeping and assistance with bathing (compared to the hourly model of service, where the aide remained with the client for a predetermined block of time). Task-based home care services are provided to functionally impaired, income eligible seniors and adults with disabilities. Clients are served primarily through contracts with four private home health agencies. As of June 2006, all home based care clients are receiving task based services.

Volunteers are being recruited in the cluster areas to provide friendly visiting, shopping, telephone reassurance and other assistance. Instead of having meals prepared by home care aides, some clients are offered Meals on Wheels which are delivered by volunteers. The volunteer component of cluster care was recognized with a 2006 Aging Innovations Achievement Award at the n4a National Conference in August 2006.

In 2006, a partnership with George Mason University's Kellar Institute for Human Disabilities was implemented. Graduate students from the Kellar Institute provided in-depth assistive technology assessments for a small number of clients in spring 2006, and a continuation of the partnership in spring 2007 is planned. A contract with an occupational therapist also provides consultation for cluster care clients regarding assistive equipment and continues the focus on helping people to continue living independently and safely in their own homes.

Nutrition Program/Home Delivered Meals

Home delivered meals are provided for individuals age 60 and over who are unable to shop for or prepare their own meals. The objective of the program, mandated by the Older Americans Act, is to improve nutrition and maintain the physical, mental and/or cognitive functioning of homebound seniors as long as possible.

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging has memorandums of agreement with 19 Meals on Wheels volunteer groups who coordinate and deliver the meals. Meals are purchased by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging through contracts with the following six groups: Fairfax Department of Housing and Community Development, Inova Health System, the Hermitage in Northern Virginia, Fairfax County Public Schools, Huong Binh Deli, and the Korean Central Senior Center.

The Nutritional Supplement Program targets low-income and minority individuals who are unable to consume sufficient calories from solid food due to chronic disabling conditions, dementia, or terminal illnesses. Clients' families pick up cases of liquid supplement from 11 sites around the county.

In program year 2006, **1,177 clients were served by the home delivered meals and nutritional supplement program.** The total number of meals served to clients for both nutrition programs was 289,045.

In March 2006, two Vietnamese Meals on Wheels routes in the Falls Church area started operation. A route serving Middle Eastern food to eligible seniors in the Tysons area is anticipated to begin later this year.

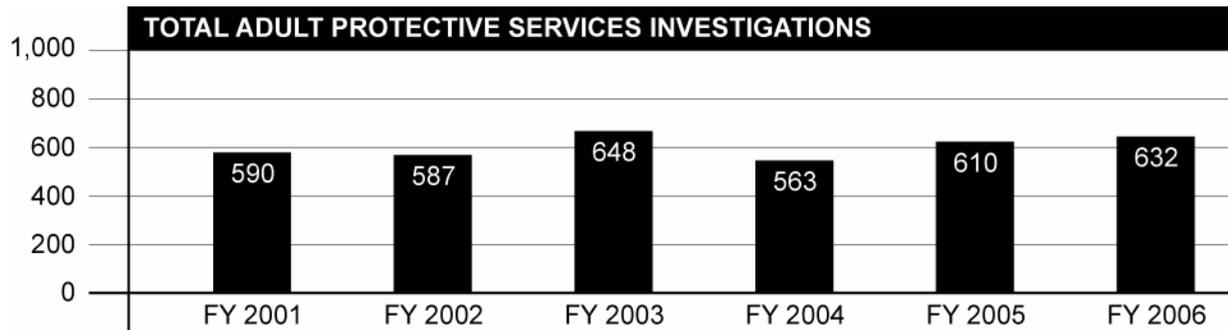
Recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing effort. Currently, volunteers are especially needed in the western part of the county, due to development of a second route in the Centreville/Chantilly area. A new initiative this year is to offer residents an option of having a supply of frozen meals delivered once a week, rather than having volunteers deliver meals five days a week.

Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Volunteer Services

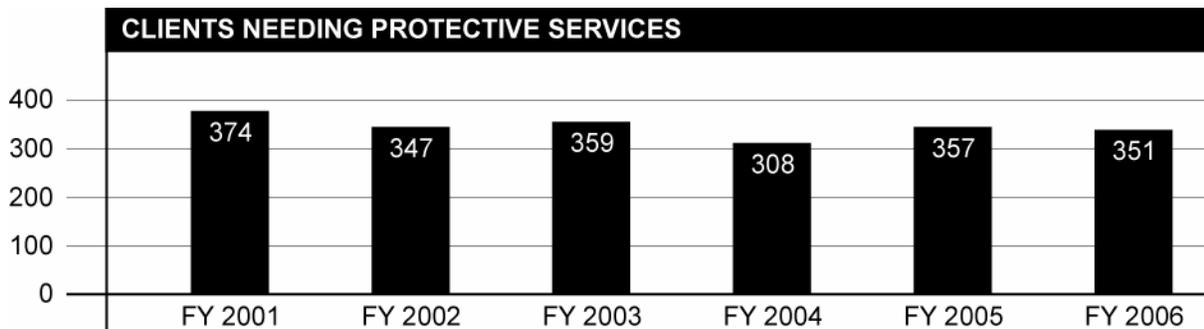
In 2006, a total of **2,293 volunteers performed 91,120 hours of volunteer service**, providing such essential services as home delivered meals, telephone reassurance, friendly visiting, insurance counseling and pet visits to nursing homes (Pets on Wheels Program). Volunteers also provided transportation to doctor appointments and performed grocery shopping, minor home repairs, home maintenance, yard work, and other services that allow seniors to remain in their homes. (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa)

Adult Protective Services

In fiscal year 2006, there were 632 Adult Protective Services (APS) investigations, which resulted in 351 adults needing protective services.



Of the cases investigated: 82 percent involved persons over age 60; 18 percent involved persons under age 60; and 23 percent involved persons in institutional facilities.



Of the adults needing protective services:

108 were cases of caretaker neglect.

131 were cases of self neglect.

63 were cases of abuse.

41 were cases of financial exploitation.

8 were cases of other exploitation

Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

During program year 2006, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocated for the rights and well-being of residents living in the 33 nursing facilities and 75 assisted living facilities in northern Virginia. As of July 1, 2006, Fairfax County had 16 nursing

facilities (2,117 beds) and 47 assisted living facilities (3,675 beds), for a total of 5,792 beds, or 53 percent of northern Virginia's 10,816 beds.

The Ombudsman Program handled 164 complaints through formal investigations and mediation; 109 pertained to Fairfax County. Additionally, the volunteer ombudsmen handled 626 complaints that did not require formal investigations or mediation; 424 of those involved Fairfax County facilities. The program received 6,884 inquiries regarding resident care and facility information; 3,902 came from Fairfax County residents. Consultation to facility staff totaled 172, with 81 of those for Fairfax facilities.

During 2006, the program continued to benefit from a capable team of 73 volunteer advocates, 37 for Fairfax facilities, who significantly increased the program's impact and presence around the region. Volunteer ombudsmen are recruited primarily through area newspapers, volunteer bureaus, and by word-of-mouth. The program is benefiting from good media exposure – new applicants are often familiar with the program from reading past publicity. Once trained, volunteer ombudsmen are assigned to one particular facility and are asked to visit at least four hours per week. (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ombudsman)

Caregiver Support

Through the Older Americans Act, the federal government provides funding to support family caregivers of elderly persons. The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging uses these federal funds to provide a range of services that support caregivers, including public information, support groups, respite care and assisted transportation. Cross-agency and public-private partnerships are formed to maximize use of the funds and provide more comprehensive services. The following are two examples of such partnerships:

1. The Fairfax Caregiver Seminar Consortium provides seminars for family caregivers. Members of the consortium are the Alzheimer's Association – National Capital Area; Alzheimer's Family Day Center; Fairfax County's Departments of Community and Recreation Services, Health, and Family Services; Thomas West Financial Services; and the Fairfax County Public Library. Twelve seminars were held in fall 2006 and additional seminars will be held in spring 2007.
2. In 2004, the Fairfax County Kinship Care Committee formed a collaboration between the Department of Family Services and Fairfax County Public Schools to research and meet the needs of grandparents and other relatives raising minor children. Two support groups for the relative caregivers have been meeting for more than two years.

The "Kinship Care Resource Guide for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children" was published and made available to the public in fall 2006. The guide was developed by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and the Fairfax County Public Schools for grandparents and other adult relatives who have taken on the full responsibility for raising a child or children with whom they share a family bond. It contains program descriptions, eligibility criteria, costs and contact information for a variety of services in the Fairfax County area. It is available in hard copy and on the Web site of the Department of Family Services, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/factsheets/kinship_care_guide.htm.

In 2006, an additional collaboration with Fairfax County's Department of Community and Recreation Services provided two opportunities for a day of respite for kinship families at Gum Springs Community Center. A respite day was provided in August and again in December, giving grandparents or other relatives an opportunity to spend time as they liked, knowing that the children were being cared for by county professionals at the community center.

SeniorNavigator

In response to the increasing number of seniors, the Long Term Care Coordinating Council identified as a priority focus for its work the need to make information about long term care services readily available to the public. To address this need, a partnership with SeniorNavigator was initiated. SeniorNavigator is a Web-based, statewide information service for seniors and those who care about them. To ensure access for persons without computers, SeniorNavigator Centers were established in 42 senior centers, libraries and community centers. A new outreach effort is being initiated to area churches through Faith Communities in Action. The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging is assuming a leadership role in the continuing partnership with SeniorNavigator.

ISSUES/TRENDS

Community Outreach

To reach the growing number of older adults and their caregivers who need information about services, the Adult and Aging Division has increased its focus on community education and outreach. In addition to the caregiver seminars and the new outreach through Faith Communities in Action, in 2006 a special telephone help line for persons who speak Korean was initiated. Trained volunteers listen to messages on the help line and assist older adults and their families with accessing county and community services.

A new community outreach program targeting the Franconia/Rose Hill area has begun. This outreach program involves a partnership with the Department of Family Services, ElderLink, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, the Fairfax County Health Department, and Inova Health System, and provides an in-home review to offer options for safe, independent living, along with fall prevention classes and exercise classes to help seniors build strength and improve balance.

Volunteers

The work of volunteers helps older adults remain connected with their communities and helps ensure that they are able to remain in their homes or are safe in their alternative living facilities. Recruiting and supporting volunteers requires significant staff effort. The need for volunteer services will continue to parallel the growth of the aging population. Additional state funds have provided a new grant position to continue the work to recruit and support volunteers.

Neighborhoods Supporting Older Adults and Adults with Disabilities

Neighborhoods with accessible housing, public transportation and pedestrian friendly sidewalks allow persons with disabilities to travel independently to shopping, medical appointments, social

events and result in enhanced quality of life. Public transportation and walkable neighborhoods are also essential for the service providers assisting older adults and adults with disabilities. The Board of Supervisors' Committee on Aging is examining models of visitable housing and utilitarian neighborhoods.

Direct Care Workers

The Long Term Care Coordinating Council has prioritized improving and expanding the direct care work force. The Long Term Care Coordinating Council is focusing upon strategies that improve training and benefits. The Board of Supervisors annually recognizes direct care workers for their important work to help people live safely and independently. Health care benefits and affordable housing are continuing challenges for a workforce that is essential to the well being of older adults and persons with disabilities.

Department of Family Services

Children, Youth and Families Division

The Children, Youth, and Families Division provides the following services:

- Child Protective Services.
- Foster Care and Adoption Services.
- Family Preservation Services, including services to homeless individuals and families.
- Child Abuse Prevention Services.

These 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 smaller community-based sites to be accessible to the families served. The goals of these services are to protect children from harm and prevent abuse and neglect; support and enhance parents' and families' capacity to safely care for and nurture their children; and ensure the normal development and long-term emotional and physical health of children by supporting families.

The Children, Youth and Families Division strives to serve children and families in the most effective ways possible by incorporating best practices into daily service delivery, evaluating results, and implementing identified process improvements.

The CYF Division provides leadership with several Juvenile Court judges for the **Permanency Planning Forum**, an interagency forum organized to address the issue of achieving timely permanency for children in foster care. The group meets quarterly and includes: circuit and juvenile court judges; guardians *ad litem*; county attorneys; foster parents; child welfare social workers; representatives from Fairfax County Public Schools and other human services organizations; and Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). This forum supports significant child welfare service delivery and court improvement efforts.

Quality assurance is critical to best practices and to identifying areas for improvement. The CYF Division has developed a comprehensive and broad-ranging quality assurance process. A new continuous case review process has been developed to enhance delivery of consistent high quality services. The CYF Division is evaluating our progress toward achieving better outcomes for children and ensuring quality service delivery. The next federal review of Virginia's child welfare system will likely be in 2009. As the largest metropolitan area in the state, Fairfax will be one of the localities reviewed, as it was in 2004.

The nature of the work in a public social services agency contributes to a high-stress, high-turnover work environment. The department provides opportunities for **professional development** and supports the recruitment, development and retention of a diverse professional workforce through in-house and Virginia Institute of Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA) training events. In addition, DFS offers several stipends for Masters of Social Work (MSW) programs and Licensed Clinical Social Work (LCSW) training and supervision. Despite these efforts, we continue to be challenged by difficulty in recruitment and retention of experienced, skilled staff to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse families in our community.

ISSUES/TRENDS

Several overarching issues and trends in our community influence services provided and initiatives undertaken by the Children, Youth and Families Division.

Addressing the Disproportionality of Minority Children in Foster Care

Nationwide, there is an issue of a disproportionate number of African-American children in the foster care system and Fairfax County is no exception. While about 10 percent of the children in Fairfax County are African-American, 43 percent of the children in foster care are African-American. Additionally, there has been a recent increase in Hispanic children entering foster care. There are a number of new programs in place to respond to the changing community needs.

In 2006, the Nurturing Parenting Program offered three classes using a new version of its curriculum specifically designed to be culturally appropriate for parents of African-American children. In addition, four groups using the standard curriculum were conducted in Spanish. Neighborhood Networks, a school-based parent networking initiative involved 33 families, almost half whom were African-American. The Early Intervention Strategy Team (EIST) continued its work to provide community-wide public awareness and education about this issue through a series of dialogue groups with community service providers.

Efforts are made in several ways to find permanent families for children in foster care and to recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the cultural diversity of the children in foster care. The Foster Care and Adoption program has an initiative called Fairfax Families4Kids that enables children waiting for adoptive families to meet prospective adoptive parents and mentors. Since the majority of the Fairfax County children waiting for permanent families are African-American, efforts to engage community members are focused primarily in the African-American community. Partnerships with community organizations and businesses are an important aspect of this effort. Additionally, eight foster parents are trained as ambassadors from the foster care program to make educational presentations in the community about the needs of children in foster care and the need for foster and adoptive parents. The ambassadors often reach out to their personal networks to accomplish this.

Kinship care helps to address the issue of the high numbers of African-American children in foster care because it shares the family-centered philosophy of the African-American culture and provides support to family members who provide primary care for children. In 2006, the Department of Family Services sponsored two series of support groups for grandparents and other relatives raising children. DFS also developed and published a Kinship Care Resource Guide for Family Caregivers which can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfsfactsheets/kinship_care_guide.htm.

The Community Collaborative, sponsored by Deputy County Executive Verdiana L. Haywood, brings together government and community members with a strong interest in reducing the overrepresentation of African-American children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and improving school readiness and performance. To engage the community and raise awareness about disproportionality, a "Call to Action" was held in 2006. More than 150 human

services professionals, faith community representatives, and community members attended. Together, the Community Collaborative and the county's staff planning group will work to reduce the disproportionate representation of African American children in child welfare and juvenile justice systems and improve school achievement.

Achieving Permanency for Older Children

54 percent of the children in foster care at the end of FY 2006 were over the age of 13. The average age of children in foster care during 2006 was 12.18. These data point to the need for more placement and independent living resources to serve older children, as well as the need to provide greater access to other services for older youth in foster care.

The department has undertaken several efforts to increase permanency for children. In 2006, the department placed a greater emphasis on the placing of older children. The Fairfax Families4Kids initiative focuses specifically on placing children nine and older for adoption. These children awaiting adoption were featured on the Fairfax County website for the first time. Fairfax County also participates in a partnership between the Washington Area Council of Governments and the Freddie Mac Foundation called The Heart Gallery, a traveling display of photographic portraits of children around the country awaiting adoption.

In 2006, training for foster parents and adoptive parents was consolidated into a single training for both. Once parents complete the training, they are now dually approved as both a foster parent and an adoptive parent, or what is known as a "resource parent." This shortens the length of time to adoption by streamlining the process for foster parents to adopt.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Population

Since Fairfax County is so large and diverse, local government agencies face significant service delivery challenges including recruiting social workers and resource families who reflect the cultural composition of the population we serve. This is critical, not only because of the language capacity, but also for specific cultural understanding and relationship building. CYF continues to develop strategies for recruiting social workers as well as resource families and volunteers to ensure diverse representation.

Prevention of Homelessness and Support for Homeless Families

The lack of affordable housing in Fairfax County remains a serious problem and a significant stressor on low-income families, making it difficult for them to remain stable and meet the needs of their children. There are significant waiting lists for Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers and public housing, permanent supportive housing and other support services programs. It was recently announced that the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list will be closed effective March 1, 2007 for an unspecified length of time. This will increase the difficulty families experience in moving from homelessness to stability.

While awaiting a Housing Choice Voucher or public housing, families have limited options available to them – living in unaffordable or sub-standard housing, doubling-up with others and homelessness. The waiting list for the family shelters averaged around 80 families in FY 2006. The Katherine K. Hanley Shelter, scheduled to open in summer 2007, will have space for 20

families and will offer an exciting new opportunity to intervene in the cycle of homelessness that many families experience.

Fairfax County is working to address the long ranging issues pertaining to homelessness. In 2004, the Fairfax-Falls Church community established a Community Planning Collaborative on Homelessness. The leadership of the collaborative created a Planning Committee to End Homelessness and charged it with developing a strategic plan to prevent and eradicate homelessness in our community. After a study of the current state of homelessness in the county, a review of other jurisdictions' responses to homelessness, and a comprehensive solicitation of community input, the Planning Committee prepared a *Synopsis of Strategies* to end homelessness (Ten Year Plan), which was formally adopted by the collaborative in October 2006 and approved by the Board of Supervisors in February 2007. The strategies focus on homelessness prevention, preserving and increasing affordable housing, provision of support services to homeless families and individuals, and the creation of a management system to guide plan implementation. To implement the strategies, the County will engage the services of an experienced consultant to direct the creation of an implementation plan. The plan will include specific actions, assigned responsibilities, and first year performance targets and should be completed by July 2007.

DFS actively participates on subcommittees and workgroups that are charged with implementing the Ten Year Plan. Additionally, the department is overseeing the development of The Katherine K. Hanley Shelter and the Partnership for Permanent Housing, significant initiatives that will address family homelessness in Fairfax County.

Managing an Increasing Workload

In 2004, the Commonwealth of Virginia expanded Structured Decision-Making (SDM) to 27 pilot agencies including Fairfax County. This model, which is being piloted across the CYF Division, provides a framework for more efficient, consistent, and valid decision-making for child welfare agencies. It uses different criteria at each decision point to address the issues at each stage of the case. The use of this model requires additional social worker time for completing various assessments, conducting additional visits with families, and for additional supervisory review.

In March of 2006, the State Board of Social Services policy tripled the minimum frequency of face to face visits to the children in foster care in their homes from quarterly to monthly. This change is congruent with the direction being taken by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families in the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006. These visits must occur regardless of where the child lives.

The Virginia Department of Social Services has issued proposed regulations on the review of foster and adoptive homes. Should the regulations be passed as written, the in-home review of foster and adoptive homes will increase from once every two years to once every six months.

As all of these changes contribute to additional workload for social work staff, the state is undertaking a broad workload study in 2007 to help determine staffing needs in all social service areas. The Department will report back to the Board of Supervisors with the results of the study.

Children, Youth and Families Division

Child Protective Services

The Child Protective Services (CPS) program is designed to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Child Protective Services social workers assess child and family strengths and needs and provide services and support to families, such as counseling, referral to parenting programs, child care and other supports to enable children to remain safe in their own homes.

INITIATIVES/PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Family Intervention, Resource and Engagement Program

The Family Intervention, Resource and Engagement Program offers families intensive, short-term crisis intervention and family education services in their home for six to eight weeks. The program goals include preventing out-of-home placement of children, assuring the safety and well-being of children, improving family functioning, collaborating with the family to develop a service plan based on their strengths and competencies, providing culturally competent and community-based services and engaging the extended family and community resources to provide support to the family.

Staff is available and accessible to the family 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The social workers work collaboratively with the family to identify strengths and needs and assist families by teaching, modeling and reinforcing parenting skills. Results from the first year's evaluation indicate that children are significantly safer after the family receives intensive services. In addition, staff use feedback provided by clients to continually improve service delivery.

January 2007 marks the end of the second full year of this program. More than 40 families received services throughout the past year. Virginia Commonwealth University is conducting an outcome evaluation that will look at the results for all families who have received services during the first two years of implementation. In addition, VCU will evaluate internal perception and demand for program services.

Childhelp USA Children's Center of Virginia

The Childhelp USA Children's Center of Virginia, supported by a public-private partnership, provides a child-friendly facility where victims of sexual abuse receive the continuum of services needed to interrupt the abuse and treat its effects. In its fourth year of operation the center served 834 children from infants through age 17, and 705 non-abusing parents or guardians with assessments, investigations, intervention and treatment services.

CPS and law enforcement staff conduct forensic interviews of children using the nationally recognized *Finding Words* interview model, developed by the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) in conjunction with CornerHouse, a child abuse evaluation and training center in Minnesota. One CPS staff member received advanced training and began serving on the faculty for the *Finding Words* Virginia training program in 2006, sponsored by Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

With funding by a grant from the Victims of Crime Act, Childhelp has begun providing individual and group therapeutic services to sexual abuse victims at the center. During FY 2006, CPS social workers and other partners provided individual and group therapeutic services to 318 sexual abuse victims at the center. Additional therapeutic services are available as a result of a partnership between CPS, Childhelp, Multicultural Clinical Center and Inova Kellar Center for families impacted by sexual abuse.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

Child Protective Services Hotline

Social workers on the CPS Hotline receive reports by phone, in person and through other county agencies of alleged abuse and neglect. Hotline social workers request specific information about the alleged abuse or neglect, assess the information, and determine whether the situation meets the criteria for CPS intervention. If the situation meets Virginia’s definition of abuse or neglect, the complaint is assigned to a CPS social work investigator or assessment social worker. The hotline is also a helpline since many calls are from people seeking information.

TELEPHONE CALLS TO THE CPS HOTLINE/HELPLINE					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
24,001	30,879	31,749	35,430	31,388	27,790

CPS Investigations and Assessments

Social workers in CPS are responsible for investigating or assessing allegations of child abuse and neglect and providing needed short-term services. They visit the site where the alleged abuse occurred, interview the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and other relevant witnesses, assess the situation, then determine the needs of the family, ascertain whether abuse or neglect occurred (investigations only) and provide appropriate services.

CPS COMPLAINTS PER YEAR					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
2,427	2,302	2,022	2,310	2,071	1,884

* Of the 1,884 complaints made to the hotline in FY 2006, 22% (420) were investigations; 76% (1423) were family assessments; and 2% (41) were courtesy interviews for other child protective service agencies.

Ongoing Treatment Services

CPS ongoing treatment social workers are responsible for providing continuing services in serious situations where the child remains in the home and may be at risk for future abuse or neglect. Approximately 84 percent of these cases involve court-ordered monitoring of families experiencing serious child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse.

As in all cases, social workers conduct safety and risk assessments – focusing on factors related to the child, parent and family environment; maltreatment; and intervention. Many of these families have multiple problems and are involved with multiple service providers. CPS ongoing treatment social workers collaborate with the family and service providers to develop specific

interventions to address the needs and goals of the family and to reduce risk and increase safety for the child. Families who do not speak English are referred for services to a bilingual and, whenever possible, bi-cultural provider.

MONTHLY AVERAGE OF FAMILIES RECEIVING ONGOING TREATMENT SERVICES					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
280	292	225	219	196	154

One factor contributing to the drop in the average number of families served over the past few years was a realignment of responsibilities within the Children, Youth and Families Division to improve services and supports for families. The reduction in calls to the hotline, child abuse neglect complaints reported and ongoing treatment cases also reflects the increasing availability and effectiveness of prevention services available both within the department and in schools and community-based services.

Children, Youth and Families Division
Foster Care and Adoption

Foster care is the provision of substitute care and rehabilitative services for children temporarily separated from their parents. Foster care can be provided until a child is returned to the family or placed in an adoptive home or other permanent living arrangement. Children may be placed in a variety of settings including foster homes, group homes, hospitals and residential treatment facilities.

Adoption services include counseling to birth parents and preparing for and placing a child into an adoptive home when efforts to reunite the child with his or her birth family are unsuccessful. Support in the form of subsidy payments, therapy and other social services is provided to adoptees and adoptive parents before and after an adoption is finalized.

INITIATIVES/PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Foster Care

Declining Number of Children in Foster Care

The following charts show the number of children entering foster care and the monthly average number of children in foster care over the past six years:

MONTHLY AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
507	496	475	479	447	437

NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
200	186	177	202	164	210

The fastest growing group of children in foster care is Hispanic. In FY 2001, 10 percent of the children served during the year were Hispanic, compared to 22 percent during FY 2006. Of all the children who entered foster care during 2006, 25 percent were Hispanic, yet only 12.5 percent of the county's population in 2004 was Hispanic.

At the end of 2006, African-Americans comprised 43 percent of the county's foster care population. The African-American population in foster care has decreased seven percent since FY 2003.

A significant trend is that the average age of children in foster care has risen over the past six years. In 2001, 42 percent of the children entering foster care were newborn to age 5, but in 2006 only 34 percent of the children entering foster care were in that age range. The average age of children in foster care at the end of FY 2006 was 12.18. The department continues to enhance placement and independent living resources to serve older children.

AVERAGE AGE (in years) OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AS OF JUNE 30					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
11.77	11.91	12.18	12.23	12.48	12.18

Of the 198 children who exited foster care during FY 2006:

- 38 percent were returned home.
- 20 percent were placed in the custody of relatives.
- 20 percent were placed for adoption.

The remaining 22 percent exited for reasons such as turning 21 years old or refusing to remain in foster care after turning 18. The median length of stay for all children in foster care in FY 2006 is 1.73 years, reflecting a steady decline from 2.71 years in FY 2000.

Independent Living Services

In FY 2006, 248 (54 percent) of the children in foster care were age 13 or older. Older youth in foster care often have severe emotional or behavioral difficulties requiring expensive, long-term residential treatment. Adolescents, especially those who are in care for a number of years, face numerous challenges in becoming self-sufficient adults once they leave the foster care system. Without proper services, these youth are at risk of homelessness, unemployment, incomplete education and untreated illnesses. All youth in foster care between ages 16 and 21 must receive a range of services to help them transition to independent living such as career and employment counseling, work training programs, supervised apartment living, educational coaching and the support of mentors. The department operates a mentor program for teens and provides mentor foster homes for those older, more responsible youth who need support rather than parenting. Each youth is encouraged to remain in foster care past their 18th birthday so they may continue to receive the services necessary to obtain an education, finish treatment programs, and establish

a support network. The department received grant funding for the past two years from the state to implement a program, “Choices for Success,” customized specifically for teens and young adults who are close to transitioning out of foster care services. The department’s foster care and employment/training programs are partnering to deliver intensive services including educational workshops about job readiness skills, career assessments, paid and unpaid work experiences, assistance with finding financial aid, and other supportive services to help these young people achieve their goals for living independently. Eight youth are currently participating in the program. The Community Collaborative to end Homelessness has highlighted the serious issue of homelessness among former foster care youth. The department will be working with the collaborative to develop creative approaches to this issue.

Foster and Adoptive Home Recruitment and Training

- **Ongoing Recruitment and Retention Efforts** – Ongoing recruitment and retention of foster/adoptive families is critical in building and maintaining a pool of families. This area remains a challenge, both locally and nationally. Despite significant efforts, the Fairfax County pool of foster parents continues to need expansion.

The racial/ethnic balance of foster homes remained the same during 2006. The department works to increase the cultural diversity of foster homes through culturally sensitive recruitment efforts and partnerships with community organizations, businesses and faith communities. The department has developed a strategic recruitment plan that targets certain neighborhoods and media channels for reaching minority foster/adoptive families. As part of this effort, the Foster Care and Adoption Ambassador Program was implemented. Eight foster and adoptive parents are currently trained to speak publicly on behalf of the department to educate residents about the needs of children in foster care. They utilize their personal networks to carry out this community education.

The training and home study process for foster and adoptive parents remains state-of-the-art. The department uses the competency-based Parent Resources Information Development Education (P.R.I.D.E.) training program developed by the Child Welfare League of America. The department requires each new foster parent to have 27 hours of training and each experienced foster parent to participate in a minimum of twelve hours of in-service training per year on topics such as effective discipline intervention techniques, developing “life books” with children, the effects of chemical dependencies on neonatal development and helping children build positive attachments.

Most newly approved families are dually approved as foster and adoptive parents. They are called “resource families” and as such, accept a child into their home as a foster care placement and support the goal of return home, while making a commitment to adoption. Early placement of children into resource families promotes healthier attachments and placement stability for the children.

- **Fairfax Initiative to Increase Adoptive Homes for Hard-to-Place Children** – The Fairfax Families4Kids initiative strives to find permanent families and lifelong connections for children age 9 and over, the majority of whom are male and African American. The children and youth take part in monthly activities that provide them with an opportunity to interact

with other children who need homes and to meet potential adoptive parents and mentors. Through this experience the children gain self-confidence, develop poise, and actively participate in the recruitment process on their own behalf. In 2006, 31 children and youth were served through Fairfax Families4Kids. Nine community based organizations partnered with the department in this initiative. A professional photographer volunteers her services to photograph many of the children and events. In 2007, three children will be featured in COG's Heart Gallery, sponsored by the Freddie Mac Foundation, a photo display that lets the community know about the children who need permanent families.

Adoption

Finalized Adoptions

As of December 31, 2006, 20 percent (93) of the children in foster care had the goal of adoption. The 40 finalized adoptions during 2006 represent 20 percent of the children who exited foster care during the year.

FINALIZED ADOPTIONS - FAIRFAX COUNTY FOSTER CARE YOUTH					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
50	46	27	43	30	40

Child Placement and Adoptive Home Recruitment Efforts

The department approved 39 families as adoptive families during FY 2006. As of December 2006, the department had 22 children waiting for identification of an adoptive home, compared to 25 children waiting at the end of 2005. The children who wait the longest for adoptive placement tend to be African-American, male and school-aged. They may have educational delays, behavioral or psychiatric problems, a history of sexual abuse and/or medication needs. Recruitment efforts on behalf of children awaiting adoptive placements include presentations at community fairs, town meetings, churches, businesses and social organizations. Partnerships established with faith-based organizations in all regions of the county enable the department to conduct orientations and training in the community and to participate in events hosted by those organizations to raise awareness about adoption.

Increase in Children Receiving Subsidized Adoption Services

Families who adopt children with special mental, emotional and medical needs are entitled to receive ongoing casework support from the department, as well as federal and state financial assistance to enable the permanent placement of these children. Support includes home-based services, counseling and treatment, child care, health and education services, respite care, transportation services, and quality assurance for services received. The number of post-final order subsidy cases continues to grow as the adoptions of children are finalized, because most children are eligible to receive assistance until age 21.

ACTIVE ADOPTION SUBSIDY CASES (POST-FINAL ORDER)					
FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
496	520	522	551	563	592

Note: Numbers are the total at the close of each fiscal year.

Children, Youth and Families Division

Family Preservation Services

Family and Child Services changed its name to Family Preservation Services in 2006 to more accurately describe the work of the program. Family Preservation programs are designed to improve family functioning and increase self-sufficiency in families who are at moderate to high risk of child abuse, neglect or family dissolution. These families may struggle with a number of complex issues that destabilize the family structure, such as family violence, poor parenting, substance abuse, mental or physical illness, and/or homelessness. This program area oversees the department's programs to prevent homelessness and to provide short-term shelter and transitional housing support to move families into more permanent housing.

INITIATIVES/PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Intensive Services

Family Preservation Services staff works with families who are referred to them by agencies and groups including Child Protective Services (CPS) and Foster Care; Fairfax County Public Schools; Department of Systems Management for Human Services-Coordinated Services Planning (CSP); Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transition Services (FACETS) and other local human services providers.

Social workers provide an array of services to families: comprehensive assessment; case management; counseling; parent training and education; linkage to other services; monitoring of purchased services; life skills training; court-ordered home studies; and court-ordered protective supervision.

In 2006, 58 percent of the families served by Family Preservation Services social workers demonstrated improvement in family functioning and well being after receiving intensive services. This was a decrease from 2005, when 82 percent of the families registered improved functioning. The decrease in the improvement measured in 2006 appears to be tied to a change to the Structured Decision Making (SDM) strengths and needs assessment. In 2006, Family Preservation Services completed its transition to full utilization of the SDM tools (strengths/needs inventory, risk assessment and safety assessment) used by other CYF staff.

FAMILIES SERVED BY THE FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES PROGRAM						
Monthly Average:	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Families Served	271	245	297*	333	344	331
Number of Children in Families	598	544	632	703	737	659

Note: In 2006, almost 36% of the families served speak a language other than English in the home; approximately 70% of those families speak Spanish.

Family Group Conferencing Practice

Family Group Conferencing is based on a model in which family members, friends, community service providers and others join together to strengthen the family and to support parents in

developing a protection and care plan for their children. Respect for the family's cultural traditions and beliefs is integral to the process. The program was expanded in 2006 to allow this support to be offered to more families.

Children, Youth and Families social workers make referrals to one of the coordinators when it is determined that children are at risk of being removed from their homes, or when a safety plan must be developed so that children can be returned to their homes from foster care. The coordinator prepares the attendees for their involvement, facilitates the conference and follows up to determine if the family's plan to care for their children effectively meets their needs. During 2006, the coordinators received 18 referrals and held nine conferences. As a result of the conferences, most of the children in the referral families were able to remain with family members rather than come in to foster care; those in care were returned to family members.

In 2006, the coordinators focused efforts on educating the public and DFS staff about the value and effectiveness of family group conferencing. Working with the county's cable television network, they developed a 13-minute educational program that began airing on Channel 16 in February 2007. The coordinators also created a program brochure, published a quarterly newsletter for DFS staff, and have begun attending case staffings in DFS regional offices to assist social workers in offering this support to families.

Family Group Conferencing is expanding to other Northern Virginia localities. In February 2006, the coordinators held their first "regional roundtable," which was attended by coordinators from Prince William and Loudon counties, the City of Alexandria and Montgomery County, MD. The group meets quarterly to share ideas and resources, and has provided support and guidance to the coordinators as they establish new programs in their locality.

Domestic Violence Initiative

During FY 2006, the CYF Domestic Violence Initiative continued to develop in response to the significant need in Fairfax County. The domestic violence social workers are providing specialized direct services, serving families who are already working with a CYF social worker by providing additional assistance with safety planning, court accompaniment, education about domestic violence (including the impact it has on children), access to resources and alternative housing, etc. In 2006, they provided services to 27 families, almost half of whom spoke Spanish.

The social workers and their supervisor provided consultation and training to DFS staff and reached out to the larger community as well, providing numerous education sessions at churches, public schools, and apartment complexes on various aspects of domestic violence. They developed a partnership with the Victim Assistance Network to provide support groups for Spanish-speaking victims in both the northern and southern regions of the county.

The staff also actively participates in inter-agency committees and workgroups to improve and coordinate services for victims and their families, including the Network Against Family Abuse (NAFA), the Region 2 Domestic Violence Resource Council, the Domestic Violence Prevention Policy Coordinating Committee, the Route One Domestic Violence Task Force, and the Court Based Advocacy Project. Staff played an integral part in planning for Domestic Violence

Awareness Month in October, when activities were held in various venues throughout the county to inform and educate the public about domestic violence.

The supervisor and one of the social workers have been invited to present a workshop about the department's domestic violence initiative at the Second Annual Conference on Domestic Violence at the Strum College of Law in Denver, Colorado, in March 2007.

Services to Prevent Homelessness and Serve Homeless Families and Individuals

The 2006 *Point in Time Survey*, completed on January 25, 2006, identified 2,077 persons living in our community who are, unable to locate affordable, appropriate housing. Of these, 1,143 (55 percent) were persons in families with children living with them. They resided in shelters, motels, transitional housing or "doubled up" with other families awaiting shelter placement (The waiting list for family shelters averaged around 80 families throughout 2006.) The impact of homelessness on families is significant. Research indicates that 47 percent of homeless school age children have problems with anxiety, depression and withdrawal. Homeless women have three times the rate of post traumatic stress disorder as compared to the general population, and are twice as likely to suffer from depression.

The other 934 (45 percent) persons in the survey were single individuals (or adult couples) with no children living with them. The single individuals resided in shelters, overflow programs and on the street. Approximately 87 percent of these individuals have serious mental illness, chronic substance abuse, or a dual diagnosis.

County/Community Homeless Provider Collaboratives – In 2006, DFS continued to facilitate meetings with the shelter directors and other service providers who work with homeless families to enable a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of the residents in the shelters. Family shelter directors and staff attend the meetings along with representatives from DFS, Coordinated Services Planning, Fairfax Area Christian Emergency Transitional Services (FACETS), Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), Fairfax County Public Schools, and nonprofit organizations that provide case management services to transitional housing programs. This group continues to address policy and practice issues and serves as an information-sharing forum for providers who work with homeless families.

Shelters – In FY 2006 a total of 1,460 persons were served in the full-service emergency shelter program, receiving shelter, meals and case management services. Of those individuals, 1,006 were adults without children, and 454 were members of 132 families with children. An additional 1,254 single adults were served as part of the program's overflow and hypothermia prevention programs, many of whom may have received services as part of the full-service program at another time during the year, and therefore do not represent an unduplicated count.

Reston Interfaith operates the Embry Rucker Shelter, which serves both individuals and families. New Hope Housing operates Eleanor Kennedy (adults) and Mondloch II (families). Volunteers of America operates the Bailey's Shelter (adults), Shelter House, Inc., operates Shelter House (families).

TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS SERVED IN THE EMERGENCY SHELTER SYSTEM						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Individuals (duplicated)	1,751	1,916	1,788	2,194	1,861	2,260
Persons in Families	417	510	498	382	440	454
Total	2,168	2,426	2,286	2,576	2,301	2,714

Services for Families and Children

Emergency Assistance – Emergency assistance provides eligible families and individuals with a grant or loan to help with rent or mortgage, security deposits, utility payments, and storage or moving expenses. The Department of Family Services and the Department of Systems Management for Human Services (DSMHS) continue to work together to provide emergency assistance. These expenditures increased by 21 percent in 2006 and continue to rise in FY2007. This increase is attributed to an increase in the number of families requesting assistance and not an increase in the amount of assistance requested. During FY 2006, an average of 36 households per month received emergency assistance, a 29 percent increase over 2005.

Katherine K. Hanley Shelter - Construction of the Katherine K. Hanley Shelter began in spring 2006 and is scheduled to open in summer 2007. Plans are underway to create a “community committee,” which will provide an opportunity for the shelter to establish positive relationships with the surrounding neighborhoods. The Junior League is decorating three large multi-purpose rooms and outfitting them with computer equipment, and the Girl Scouts are collecting books for a shelter library. Day-to-day operation of the shelter will be provided by a nonprofit organization.

Motels - When space is not available at the family shelters and no other housing alternatives exist, homeless families with children may be placed in motels. DFS works with community partners to provide services to families while they wait for placement in the shelter.

HOMELESS PERSONS IN MOTELS						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Families	192	180	131	131	132	132
Number of Persons	724	647	431	381	341	381

Transitional Housing - The department continued to administer two federally funded (U.S. Department of Housing and Development) transitional housing grant programs – the Community Housing Resource Program (CHRP I and III) and Reaching Independence through Support and Education (RISE). The department’s nonprofit partners (Northern Virginia Family Service, Reston Interfaith, Shelter House, United Community Ministries and New Hope Housing) operated these programs, which provide support services to high-risk, formerly homeless families in scattered-site, community-based housing. In 2006, DFS decided not to renew the grant for CHRP I. County resources were refocused on the Partnership for Permanent Housing initiative to support permanent housing for families.

Partnership for Permanent Housing- Permanent Housing Initiative - At the April 2006 Summit to End Homelessness, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald Connolly proposed a pilot program which would assist up to 25 homeless families to progress through stabilized rental housing into home ownership within a five year period. With input from community-based service providers, the county's Department of Family Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) developed the "Partnership for Permanent Housing" program. They solicited nonprofit partners to provide project oversight and case management services, and selected families to participate in the initiative.

This initiative is supported by a strong partnership between DFS and HCD. Housing and Community Development will make all of its housing programs, trainings and housing supports available to the participating families, while DFS will provide case management support and oversight through its contracted nonprofit partners: Northern Virginia Family Service, Reston Interfaith, and New Hope Housing. An oversight committee made up of staff from the nonprofits, HCD and DFS, will guide the direction of the program. Community partners will also be involved, as they will be critical to the success of this effort.

Services for Individuals

Medical Respite – As mentioned earlier, the 2006 *Point-in-Time Survey* of homeless persons in our Community identified 934 individuals with no children, an increase of 17 percent over 2005. *The Special Committee on Medically Fragile Homeless Persons Report of January 2006* identified characteristics of homeless single individuals. Eighty-seven percent are either seriously mentally ill, chronic substance abusers, or have a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse; and 31 percent have chronic health problems. This year, the county continued the Medical Respite Program for homeless persons living in shelters that was initiated in 2005. The program provides for a temporary stay, combined with nursing and supportive services, for homeless persons recovering from more intensive illnesses and/or injuries.

Hypothermia Prevention – There is a continuing need in the county for hypothermia prevention services for persons who do not stay in the county's emergency shelters. For the winter of 2005-2006, the county contracted with FACETS (Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transitional Services, Inc) to coordinate hypothermia prevention services for 17 weeks in the central part of the county in partnership with faith communities.

This program is operating again this winter and has increased the number of participating faith communities. Faith communities in southern Fairfax County united to provide hypothermia prevention services for two months last year and are providing the service for four months this winter. Another hypothermia prevention site opened January 2, 2007 in Reston.

Children, Youth and Families Division

Child Abuse Prevention Services

Throughout the Children, Youth and Families Division, services are focused on strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention program area was developed to enhance the division's prevention efforts.

Child Abuse Prevention Services support families, particularly those at risk of child abuse or neglect, through community-based, family-focused prevention and early intervention services.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Five strategies are utilized in Child Abuse Prevention Services: one-to-one education of family members; group-based parenting education conducted at community sites, such as schools and churches; drop-in, neighborhood-based service delivery and coalition building to improve family and community conditions; community-wide public education and awareness initiatives; and engaging the community by involving volunteers and donors in child welfare programs.

One-to-One Education and Support of Families

The Healthy Families Fairfax and mentoring programs provide one-to-one education and support of families.

Healthy Families Fairfax is a home-based early intervention and prevention program offering first-time parents at risk of maltreating their child an opportunity to learn parenting skills and receive emotional support and case management services. It is supported through a partnership among DFS, the Fairfax County Health Department and three nonprofit organizations – Northern Virginia Family Service, UCM-Community Solutions and Reston Interfaith. In addition, program support comes through contributions from corporate and foundation donors, including a continuing contribution from the Freddie Mac Foundation.

HEALTHY FAMILIES FAIRFAX						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Families Served	534	604	649	671	650	684
Number of Children Served	337	391	449	707*	615	630

* Until FY 2004, the number of children served was tabulated differently than the number of families. In FY 2004, a more accurate method of calculating children served was established. This new process captured children served throughout the year.

Mentoring - Children and parents who are clients of DFS and would benefit from one-to-one mentoring are referred to receive four to eight hours per month of mentoring by trained volunteers. Through the BeFriend-A-Child (BAC) and BeFriend-A-Parent (BAP) mentoring programs, volunteers provide role modeling, companionship, support, guidance and advocacy. Mentors help children develop the protective capabilities that

come from having positive self-esteem, hobbies and interests, good decision-making skills, and a sense of responsibility. Those who mentor parents model parenting competence and good coping skills. BeFriend-A-Parent goals include increasing parent self-esteem, decreasing stress and isolation, and helping parents rely less on their children to meet their emotional needs.

MENTORING						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Parents Served (BAP)	N/A*	8	15	12	18	21
Number of Children Served (BAC)	55	60	69	76	77	72

* The Befriend-A-Parent program began in FY 2002.

Group-Based Education and Support

Information about the Nurturing Parenting Program and the Good Touch, Bad Touch® Program, as well as other parenting resources, is available to the public on the DFS parenting resource Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ParentingResource/default.htm

The Nurturing Parenting Program is a structured educational experience for parents, adolescents and children. Group sessions are offered in English and Spanish. The program addresses parents' needs for nurturing and teaches positive parenting skills. Each session includes concurrent, parallel lessons for their children. The curriculum helps participants develop empathy, increase self-awareness, promote responsible behavior in children, and establish developmentally appropriate expectations of children.

In FY 2006, the Nurturing Parenting Program conducted a total of 18 groups, including four groups using the Spanish curriculum, three groups using the curriculum designed to be culturally appropriate for parents of African-American children, and two adolescent groups.

NURTURING PARENTING PROGRAM						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Families Served	94	145	152	197	231	195
Number of Parents Served	122	194	199	265	321	267
Number of Children Served*	153	229	226	335	392	310
Number of Children Served in Child Care	N/A**	48	61	75	70	89
Number of Groups Held***	12	15	15	19	23	18

* Number of children served includes young children and adolescents.

** Children served in child care were not included in count prior to FY 2002.

*** Four groups were held in Spanish in FY 2002, three in FY 2003, five in FY 2004, six in FY 2005, and four in FY 2006. All others were in English.

Good Touch, Bad Touch® is a comprehensive child abuse prevention curriculum to teach students in pre-school through 6th grade the skills that play a major role in preventing or interrupting child abuse/sexual abuse in their own lives. Children are taught the definition of child abuse; are given prevention skills, including personal body

safety rules; and are motivated into action if threatened. Last year was the third year the program was offered by DFS staff. In 2006, 45 groups were offered throughout the county: 19 in South County, 7 in North County, 16 in Fairfax, and 3 in the Falls Church regions. Based on pre- and post-tests, participating children showed a marked increase in their understanding about how to protect themselves from harm.

In FY 2006, a pilot project was conducted with the Fairfax County Park Authority in which the Good Touch, Bad Touch® curriculum was offered to all children in the appropriate age range participating in summer programs. This dramatically increased the number of groups held and the number of children served in FY 2006.

GOOD TOUCH, BAD TOUCH®						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004*	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Children Served	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	89	481
Number of Groups Held	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	9	45

* The Good Touch- Bad Touch® program began in FY2004

Neighborhood-Based Organizing and Coalition Building to Improve Family and Community Conditions

Family Resource Centers offer culturally sensitive, prevention-focused programs. The primary goal is to strengthen families in their own neighborhoods by providing parents with opportunities to learn and improve their skills in raising and nurturing their children. The number of drop-ins at the centers decreased during FY 06. This can be attributed to staff vacancies at the Culmore, Springfield and Lorton sites. It is expected that in FY 2007, the Lorton site will no longer be operated by the department, but will be operated by the Lorton Community Action Center, a nonprofit organization, with funding provided through the County Community Funding Pool.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER DROP-IN VISITORS AND PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS (duplicated count)						
Site	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Culmore	8,242	13,809	12,163	13,678	14,266	10,817
Springfield	8,418	14,535	13,606	16,260	15,207	7,826
Lorton	1,800	2,171	3,362	4,519	3,695	1,815
Crestwood	N/A	N/A	4,130*	8,654*	6,377	6,464
Total	18,460	30,515	33,261	43,120**	39,545	26,922

* The Crestwood Family Resource Center was in operation for part of the year in FY 2003 and the entire year in FY 04.

** Outreach to the community about center resources and some additions to programming helped increase the number of drop-ins at all centers between FY 2003 and FY 2004.

Neighborhood Networks (NN) is a collaboration between DFS and Fairfax County Public Schools focused on educating and connecting families to support systems. Families nominated by the schools for this program are strong families who are committed to good parenting and stability and encourage their children to work for a better life. In 2006,

Neighborhood Networks partnership schools included Langston Hughes Middle school and the following elementary schools: Forest Edge Elementary School, Riverside, Dogwood, Woodlawn, Woodley Hills and Terraset. Weyanoke Elementary School partnered with Neighborhood Networks for half of the fiscal year.

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Number of Children Served	43	58	69	101	113	113
Number of Families Served	12	16	21	28	33	33
Number of Partner Schools	3	3	5	6	6	8

* Numbers include children and families served across multiple years.

Engaging the Community through Public Awareness and Education

The Early Intervention Strategy Team and the Blue Ribbon Campaign Committee educate professionals and the public about child abuse and neglect prevention.

The Early Intervention Strategy Team (EIST) was established in November 1996 to address the disproportionate representation of African-American children in the Fairfax-Falls Church area needing out-of-home services. The team was charged with identifying reasons for this disproportionate representation and to develop individual, family, school and community early intervention strategies for working with at-risk African-American children and their families. The EIST uses small group dialogue to engage frontline workers in learning from their own and others' experiences. The goal is to have service providers integrate awareness of the African-American culture and early intervention philosophy into their service delivery.

Blue Ribbon Campaign to Prevent Child Abuse

As part of a larger national Blue Ribbon Campaign focusing on preventing child abuse, the department's local campaign continues to assume greater responsibility for educating the Fairfax community on child abuse prevention. This outreach and education effort is guided by a steering committee which includes advocacy and community groups and human services staff who are committed to the welfare of children. Blue Ribbon outreach efforts are supported by various public and private organizations and corporations. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors issues an annual proclamation designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Other outreach and education efforts for 2006:

- A newly developed publication "Understanding and Guiding Children as They Grow and Develop." Written by a team of parents, educators, social workers and other child development professionals, it provides information and resources to help parents and others caring for children to build strong relationships with their children at any age from infancy to adolescence.
- "10 Tips for Keeping Kids Safe" was developed. 100,000 copies were printed and distributed throughout Fairfax County, again targeting parents and those caring for children from infancy through adolescence. COX Communications underwrote the

printing for 100,000 copies of the 10 Tips and donated \$10,000 towards the printing expenditure for “Understanding and Guiding Children as They Grow and Develop.”

- Blue Ribbon informational materials were distributed to libraries, schools, community and recreation centers, family resource centers, Fairfax County fairgoers, faith communities and homeowners associations.

The materials produced and distributed by the Blue Ribbon Campaign can be accessed at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/childreneyouth/blue_ribbon_campaign.htm.

Engaging the Community by Involving Volunteers and Donors in Child Welfare Programs

The Volunteer Services Program recruits, trains and supports volunteers to work with the division’s programs and the families they serve. The CYF Family Donor Program accepts donations from businesses, community organizations and individuals for children and families in child welfare programs who need clothes and other essentials.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Total Unduplicated Volunteers* does not include group or special event volunteers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	147	149
Total Unduplicated Volunteer Hours	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9,808	10,422
Value of Volunteer Hours FY 2005: \$17.79 FY 2006: \$18.04	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$174,484	\$188,013

* A new volunteer database tracking system was created during FY 2005.

DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Value of Donations	\$264,834	\$283,426	\$252,404	\$299,051	\$287,670	\$329,833
Total Number of Donors	141	153	194	213	290	290

* Neighborhood Networks leveraged \$84,389 in FY 2005 and \$59,862 in FY 2006. The leveraged funds are included in the Value of Donations listed above.

Department of Family Services

Self-Sufficiency Division

The Self-Sufficiency Division administers and operates several federal, state and local public assistance and employment programs. Public assistance programs provide financial and medical assistance to eligible low-income individuals and families. Employment programs, provided under contract with the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board (NVWIB), assist employers and job seekers in meeting their workforce or employment needs. Some of the programs in the Self-Sufficiency Division include:

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

Continued Increase in Demand for Public Assistance Services: By the end of fiscal year 2006, the division authorized more than \$290 million in public assistance benefit payments on behalf of county residents and managed an average monthly public assistance caseload of 49,501 cases – a 70 percent increase from FY 2001. Caseload increases are primarily the result of increases in population, as well as policy changes at the state and federal level aimed at promoting access to, and retention of, services.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF MONTHLY PUBLIC ASSISTANCE/WELFARE REFORM CASES						
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
TANF	1,077	1,149	1,253	1,378	1,419	1,422
Food Stamps	6,516	6,952	7,487	8,899	9,855	10,299
Medicaid	19,565	20,814	23,224	29,875	32,889	35,667
VIEW	209	243	322	390	419	414
Other	1,870	2,103	2,369	1,986	1,910	1,699
TOTAL	29,028	31,018	34,333	45,528	46,491	49,501

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Food Stamps Program

In FY 2006, an average of 10,299 families per month received \$1.59 million in nutrition assistance through the Food Stamps program, or \$19.1 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 2006, an average of 43,924 individuals (13,656 adults and 30,268 children) participated in the Medicaid/FAMIS Plus programs. The county also enrolled an additional 4,896 children in FAMIS. In FY 2006, a monthly average of \$22.2 million (or \$266 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 2006, an average of 1,422 families received \$474,546 per month in TANF benefits, or a total of \$5.69 million for the year. In addition to the cash benefit, 965 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 TANF grant in Fairfax is \$330.

VIEW participants who were employed during FY 2006, achieved an average wage of \$9.57 per hour and average monthly earnings of \$1,354. It should be noted that VIEW families become ineligible for TANF and VIEW when wages from employment, combined with other available income, reach 100 percent of the federal poverty level (for example: \$1,384 monthly, the Federal Poverty Level for 2006 for a family of three), or at the 24-month time limit of the program.

During FY 2006, the Fairfax County VIEW program provided 965 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 500 new participants with educational and vocational assessments to identify the best starting place to stabilize the family and begin preparation for entering the workforce.
- 124 neuropsychological evaluations for participants who screened in with potential hidden disabilities. The evaluations were followed up with appropriate referrals and services to help participants overcome or manage the identified challenges.
- More than 75 participants with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.
- 635 participants, who became employed, with follow-up services including extended Medicaid, transportation and childcare support when needed.
- 200 VIEW participants with meaningful work activities ranging from skill training to volunteer work experience.
- More than 70 participants per month with volunteer work sites in the community to

obtain work experience, develop a good work ethic, build skills and obtain a current reference.

- Four weeks of job readiness training in the Workplace Essential Skills classes for more than 80 individuals.

Other Public Assistance Programs

The department also manages other important public assistance programs such as 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 Assistance that address needs of eligible low-income families and individuals in our community. These programs comprise approximately 3.4 percent of the caseload or 1,699 cases. Another critical program administered by DFS, the seasonal Energy Assistance Program (Cooling, Heating and Crisis Assistance), served more than 1,400 additional county residents.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Implementation of Extended Business Hours – In late 2005, DFS extended its hours of operation for public assistance services in response to requests from customers for expanded hours of operation 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, we are now gathering data and surveying clients as part of the evaluation process. The division was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services for its efforts to enhance the mission of the Food Stamp Program by extending the hours of operation for public assistance services.

Continuous Quality Improvement - As caseloads continue to rise, and with the implementation of extended hours of operation, the division underwent a process analysis and system reengineering. The primary goals of these changes were to improve customer services, assist caseworkers in managing their increasing caseloads and successfully implement the extended business hours initiative. We continue to examine the effectiveness of these changes and make improvements and enhancements as necessary. In addition, enhanced automation is a critical component of this process. The new automated support, which is expected to move the division from a paper driven system into an integrated electronic document management system, will allow for better work collaboration and information sharing, and will use less paper. Implementation of the automated support system is projected for early 2008.

Health Access Assistance Team (HAAT) Program - The HAAT program is a partnership between DFS, the Fairfax County Department of Systems Management for Human Services (DSMHS), the Fairfax County Community Health Care Network (CHCN), the Fairfax County Health Department, the Office of Partnerships and Northern Virginia Family Service. The mission is to ensure that people without health insurance have access to and use the most appropriate healthcare 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. Over 10,000 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, e.g., 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 DSMHS. An average of 700 patients a month must recertify for continued services through CHCN.

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.

2006 Program Statistics

- In calendar year 2006, more than 31,000 visits were made to Fairfax County SkillSource Centers. Of these, more than 12,000 were first-time visitors. The centers reported 949 placements with an average annual salary of \$28,850.
- 436 individuals received intensive services through Workforce Investment Act programs. The 71 clients who completed training averaged a salary of \$56,326, a significant increase over calendar year 2005 (\$39,946). This increase can be attributed to the enrollment of individuals who were laid off due to the closing of Independence Air, mostly pilots with high earning potential.
- 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 39 new businesses in 2006, expand 11 existing businesses, and create 66 new jobs.

2006 Program Highlights

- **Second Annual “Envision Your Success” Career and Entrepreneurship Expo**
More than 50 employers exhibited at the Second Annual Career and Entrepreneurship Expo, which featured a mega job fair, and workshops on careers (for adults and youth) and business startup. The event attracted over 1,800 job seekers and prospective entrepreneurs, which was almost twice the number who attended the first annual Expo. The third annual event is scheduled for March 17, 2007. The EYS Expo is Employment and Training’s major event, with the primary goal of connecting job seekers to employers who have available jobs, and prospective entrepreneurs to business startup resources.
- **State Incentive Award for High Performance**
The NVWIB won a \$40,000 Performance Incentive Award made possible by this local workforce area’s high performance against the 17 Federal WIA Performance Standards.

ISSUES/TRENDS

Reauthorization of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and contains a number of public human service programs, such as Medicaid, child support, Food Stamps and child welfare, was re-authorized in February 2006, when the President signed the Deficit Control Act (DRA) of 2005. DRA makes major changes to a number of public human services programs including Medicaid, welfare (TANF), child support and others. Some of the bill’s major provisions for selected programs include:

TANF

- Reauthorizes program at current funding level through 2010.
- States must meet a work participation rate of 50 percent of the TANF population; 2005 is the year now used as the basis for calculating caseload reduction credits
- TANF high performance bonuses (awarded to Virginia seven of the last eight years) are eliminated.
- Imposes stiff financial penalties on states for failure to meet the new work participation requirements.

In response to the federal requirements, on October 1, 2006, Virginia instituted a new policy for implementing the TANF program. The major impacts of the new requirements include:

- TANF recipients who were formerly exempted from employment must now participate in the VIEW employment program. These include parents of children 12 months to 17 months of age, pregnant women, and non-parent relatives who are receiving assistance.
- Weekly required hours of participation increased from 30 to 35.

- Work activities are required immediately upon referral to the VIEW employment program, allowing no transition time to take care of personal issues such as finding child care or transportation.
- Participation in job search, job readiness and vocational education have specific time limits.

Meeting the new standards of participation, while maintaining a high level of performance and quality customer service, will seriously challenge staffing and funding resources at the state and local levels.

Medicaid

The DRA requires that U.S. citizens verify their U.S. citizenship and identity as a condition of eligibility for Medicaid. An assertion by the applicant of his/her American citizenship or the documentation of legal and qualifying immigration status has always been a requirement of Medicaid eligibility. However, effective July 1, 2006, the DRA requires actual documentary evidence of U.S. citizenship and identity before Medicaid eligibility is granted or renewed for American citizens. The new documentation requirement intends to ensure that Medicaid beneficiaries are citizens or qualified legal aliens. We have concerns about the possibility that some citizens, especially the elderly and the disabled, may lose Medicaid coverage because of their inability to produce documents. This concern became real when after the first three months of implementation of the new requirements there was a significant reduction in the number of children enrolled in Medicaid (approximately 10,000 fewer enrollments statewide). Enrollment numbers are going up again, but enrollment decisions are taking much longer, due to difficulties some citizens are encountering in securing the required documentation. In addition to the impact DRA has had on citizens, this change has also resulted in an increased workload for caseworkers as they assist those individuals who need extra help to document their citizenship to prevent unnecessary loss of benefits. We will continue to monitor this new requirement and the impact it has on our clients and staff.

Increased Demand for Public Assistance and Workload Increases

The trend of increased demand for entitlement services such as Food Stamps and Medicaid has continued since the start of this decade. The division is managing an average of 20,000 more cases per month or a 70 percent increase from 2001. No new staff resources have been received to support this significant workload increase, as state funding for the administration of these programs has not kept pace. Using a formula from an independent caseload study commissioned by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) in 2000, **the division would need approximately 52 additional eligibility worker positions to support this level of work and maintain the degree of performance required by state and federal regulations.** By accepted staffing standards, eight supervisors and eight clerical workers would be needed to support the new staff. This issue has been included as part of the Critical Needs in Human Services Issue Paper for the 2007 Fairfax County Legislative Program. VDSS is updating the aforementioned caseload study in 2007. It is expected that the information derived from the updated study will be used to request funding during the 2008 General Assembly session.

Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC)

Although the Base Realignment and Closing Initiative (BRAC) of the U.S. Department of Defense is not expected to begin planned activities until 2008 (and most will not be completed until at least 2011), a preliminary report from the Virginia Employment Commission indicates that workers will be required in Prince William and Fairfax counties in key occupations related to Fort Belvoir and Quantico construction. Further, over 20,000 workers are projected to commute or move from Arlington County to Fairfax, which will likely impact the need for SkillSource Center services, as well as housing, transportation, and child care.

New Youth Center in Fairfax County

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services is working to create Youth Employment Centers in Fairfax County, modeling the design and implementation on the award-winning Job Hut, a youth employment center created at the Manassas Mall in Prince William County in 2003. The main target population is youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who lack the financial resources, information and positive community connections that are essential for their successful transition to responsible and productive adulthood. Job Hut connects youth with a healthier and rewarding lifestyle by providing a friendly, safe, youth-appropriate place where they can receive tutoring and career assessment services, and find out about and be connected with opportunities for vocational or higher education and employment.

Over the past three years the Job Hut in Manassas served over 10,000 young people. More than 800 young adults were connected with full-time and part-time jobs. Many others benefited from one or more of the over 250 interactive workshops and employer events offered at the center. On average, 600 youth per month visited the Job Hut. For these young adults, having a safe and age-appropriate place to come and access services with their peers provided them with a haven uniquely theirs – a place where they felt welcomed and appreciated.

Recent economic data show that the Northern Virginia region is one of the fastest growing job markets in the nation. In an increasingly competitive, high-tech economy, local employers must have workers who are well prepared and highly motivated to keep pace with competitors.

At the same time, significant racial and cultural demographic shifts are occurring in Northern Virginia. When considering Fairfax County's strong economy and rapid growth, it is easy to miss the fact that there remains a substantial education and employment challenge for many disengaged Fairfax County youth. Many lack the skills, experience, parental guidance and understanding of the job market required to find productive employment and connections to better opportunities. Youth employment centers can bridge this gap.

From a public safety perspective, Fairfax County has experienced an increase in gang-related activity. Teens join gangs for self-identity, for protection, for money, and for a sense of belonging. Fairfax County has mounted a strong attack on gangs and gang violence by increasing enforcement, education, and prevention strategies. Youth Employment Centers can be critical to this effort, offering safe, youth-friendly environments in which to engage young adults in successful educational, employment, and social development.

The proposed centers can bridge a cultural divide for young people from households in which employment preparation and familiarity with workforce practices is not strong. The proposed Youth Employment Centers will offer information, resources and services for youth to learn about career opportunities and to develop specific skills that will prepare them for employment. Key features of the proposed centers include job search services, job development skills training, career assessments, workshops, and tutoring support. In addition, the centers will offer information about General Education Development (GED) and college preparation and opportunities, financial aid, and SAT/ACT support services. The centers will seek input and support from business and community partners to create places where our young people can access community services, find educational resources, and connect with local businesses.

This report can be viewed online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/pdf/ASSB2006.pdf

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