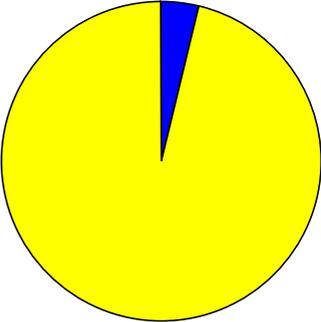


*Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection*

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**04-01-Consumer Protection**

Fund/Agency: 001/04	Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection	
Personnel Services	\$471,987	<p><b>CAPS Percentage of Agency Total</b></p>  <p>3.8%</p> <p>96.2%</p> <p>■ Consumer Protection   ■ All Other Agency CAPS</p>
Operating Expenses	\$106,195	
Recovered Costs	\$0	
Capital Equipment	\$0	
<b>Total CAPS Cost:</b>	<b>\$578,182</b>	
Federal Revenue	\$0	
State Revenue	\$0	
User Fee Revenue	\$0	
Other Revenue	\$0	
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$0</b>	
<b>Net CAPS Cost:</b>	<b>\$578,182</b>	
Positions/SYE involved in the delivery of this CAPS	9/9	

**► CAPS Summary**

The enforcement of consumer protection laws and investigation/mediation of consumer, cable, and tenant landlord disputes are essential for correcting illegal and unethical practices in the marketplace. The Consumer Protection Division investigates complaints to determine whether consumer protection laws have been violated and also prepares cases for legal action to enforce the consumer protection statutes. In addition to mediation, staff develops conciliation agreements to resolve complex disputes and offers binding arbitration when mediation efforts are exhausted. The division investigated 2,879 formal complaints during FY 2001 and recovered \$1,082,375 for citizens. It is estimated that complaints will increase to 2,914 in FY 2002 due to the filing of on-line Internet complaints, population growth, and educational outreach efforts by the division.

## *Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection*

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During FY 2001, the division maintained a favorable resolution rate of over 85 percent for valid consumer complaints. In addition, the division implemented a computerized case management information retrieval system that enables citizens to access complaint histories of businesses so that they can make informed pre-purchase decisions. Citizens also have the ability to file complaints electronically through the department's website.

Staff support is provided to the Consumer Protection Commission, Tenant Landlord Commission, and the Towing Advisory Board. Educational publications and brochures on a wide variety of consumer topics are developed for public distribution. The division also conducts an educational outreach program in which presentations are made to citizen associations, schools, and other interest groups. Staff also researches and develops a series of consumer programs for the division's *Consumer Focus* cable television show and administers a volunteer and student intern program.

In an effort to maintain data on all complaints received, the division will continue to develop and update its computerized case management information retrieval system that records, tracks, and disseminates complaint information. During FY 2002, the division will expand the computerized consumer complaint tracking system to provide for citizen and County interaction and information retrieval. The system, recently implemented, allows for the on-line filing of consumer complaints as well as the retrieval of complaint history records.

### ► **Method of Service Provision**

Services are provided directly by regular merit County employees Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. After-hours support is also provided for arbitration hearings and evening speaking engagements.

## *Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection*

### ► Performance/Workload Related Data

Title	FY 1998 Actual	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Estimate	FY 2002 Estimate
Formal complaints received	2,811	2,820	2,914	2,956	3,200
Formal complaints investigated	2,718	2,718	2,656	2,892	2,914
Complaint histories on businesses provided to citizens (other than complaints)	13,239	10,672	10,826	12,200	14,500
Percentage favorably resolved*	70%	70%	70%	85%	85%
Dollar value recovered	\$948,177	\$745,766	\$1,044,933	\$1,082,37	\$1,200,000
Internet inquiries acted upon (other than complaints)	NA	NA	NA	NA	150

\* With the implementation of the new computerized case management information retrieval system, the division is able to accurately track statistics as well as sorting out those complaints referred to other agencies. This, coupled with increased proficiency, has led to an increase in the favorable resolution rate.

### ► Mandate Information

This CAPS is Federally or State mandated. The percentage of this CAPS' resources utilized to satisfy the mandate is 76 - 100%. The specific Federal or State code and a brief description of the code follows:

- Code of Virginia Section 15.1-23.2
- FC Chapter 10