

Department of Family Services

LOB #125:

DEPARTMENT WIDE SERVICES

Purpose

Agency-wide services provide operational support to all DFS programs and its workforce. Supportive services include the call center, records center, internal and external communications, information technology services, professional and organizational development, legislative liaison services, and regional logistical services. In addition, this LOB includes the administrative functions of Community Action Program administration, emergency management and strategic planning. These agency-wide essential support services and administrative functions enable the department to promote the well-being of the diverse community by protecting and improving the lives of children, adults and families through supportive services, education and advocacy.

Description

The LOB includes areas of operational support for client service delivery programs:

- Call Center
- Records Center
- Regional Logistical Services
- Information Technology
- Professional and Organizational Development
- Communication
- Legislative Liaison Services

This LOB also includes the following administrative functions:

- Community Action Program Administration / Support for Community Action Advisory Board
- Emergency Management
- Strategic Planning

These programs are strategically bundled to assure that agency services are delivered with limited redundancy and with the highest efficiency of effort and that the DFS workforce is supported in having the knowledge and resources needed to provide excellent human services to the residents of Fairfax County. Agency-wide functions are operational from 8am to 4:30pm with occasional evening meetings. Emergency response functions are a 24/7 responsibility. With the exception of the regional logistical services, the staff who provide agency wide services are located in the Pennino building.

Call Center:

Call Center employees provide a responsive and knowledgeable service at the agency's telephonic "front door" and seek to resolve customer requests at their first point of contact so line service staff can spend their time providing more complex service delivery. When possible, Call Center employees connect customers directly to staff within each program. Services most frequently requested include public assistance, food assistance, employment, child care and preventive and protective services for children and adults. The Call Center staff optimize department resources and provide the information customers need to receive services quickly and efficiently.

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Records Center:

Records Center employees manage the department's record center which houses closed client (paper) records. They ensure compliance with state and local requirements regarding records retention, archiving and destruction by assisting program staff to develop, clarify and monitor internal standards, policies and procedures. Records Center employees manage and administer the Random Moment Sampling (RMS) process, a state system that determines reimbursable personnel costs for social service agencies.

Regional Logistical Services:

Regional logistics employees provide vital services for clients and support agency programs in providing staff with resources to provide services for their clients. Logistics staff provide emergency client assistance for food and transportation, and electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. Regional Logistics manage the agency wide vehicle fleet, equipment and supply purchases and inventory, facilities and space utilization, service document processing (i.e. subpoenas and program correspondence) and telecommunication devices in the department's five field office locations throughout the County.

Information Technology (IT):

DFS Information Technology employees are Business Analysts who work in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology (DIT) to provide access to multiple state and local systems, computer equipment, desktop support, and technical training. Many of the systems DFS employees use are state mandated systems and as such, DFS IT Staff work closely with the Virginia Department of Social Services to ensure DFS users have access to state systems and state owned computer equipment. Some of the major endeavors by DFS Information Technology employees include electronic document management systems for the Office for Children, Self Sufficiency, and Children, Youth, and Families divisions; agency-wide secure encrypted email technology, and mobile workforce solutions for field staff. DFS Business Analysts manage major information technology projects from idea to implementation phase, most of which involve work with both DIT and external contract vendors. With the aim of effectively providing IT services, Business Analysts are integrated within the DFS divisions and in offices throughout Fairfax County. They are matrix-managed as part of a cross functional work team which enables interconnectedness, greater flexibility, and response.

Professional and Organizational Development (POD):

The quality of human/social services provided to the most vulnerable residents in the community is limited by the competence of the workforce providing those services. Professional development provides program specific agency-wide training aimed at eliminating racial/cultural service outcome disparities, supporting state-of-the-art, evidence-based clinical service practices, and promoting succession planning and employee retention at all levels by administering the new employee onboarding process, promoting career management and leadership development best practices, skills, knowledge and abilities. In addition, POD coordinates the design and implementation of related agency priorities such as the Leadership Academy and the Diversity & Inclusion initiatives. POD services are provided throughout all DFS locations hours by personnel with specialized education and backgrounds in social systems, adult education, organizational change management, leadership and training.

Communication

Public outreach provided by Communications (media relations, publications, e-newsletters, website, social media, podcasts, videos, special events, public service announcements, presentations) enables the workforce to better serve clients because clients have more information about what services are available and how to access them. It also helps DFS to be responsive to community requests for information and allows DFS to be transparent and accountable to stakeholders. Internal communication efforts also educate DFS employees about all of the department's programs and services so no matter what "door" a client comes through, the workforce is knowledgeable about the full array of service options. Communications also plays an integral role in creating a DFS culture of employee engagement and innovation through strategic messaging and strategic planning, coordination of an employee-driven interactive webpage, FairfaxNet (SharePoint) support, and support for staff development and agency-specific initiatives.

Legislative Liaison Services

This agency wide function, in conjunction with the County Executive's Government Relations staff, coordinates the department's legislative program including the development of County initiatives, monitoring budget amendments and legislative positions related to department's program

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services; tracking, analyzing and researching legislative, regulatory and budget initiatives on a year-round basis; and determining the impact of legislative actions during the General Assembly Session on the department. Also, this function includes the preparation of position papers and public comment and testimony about legislative issues impacting department programs and services.

Community Action Program Administration

DFS receives federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds which totaled \$825,776 in FY 2016. This grant funding is used to for the delivery of services subcontracted to community-based organizations through the Consolidated Community Funding Pool. Administration of CSBG funds is overseen by the federally required Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB). Agency-wide services supports this board, administers the CSBG grant, and ensures DFS compliance with federal, state and local laws and regulations governing the Community Action Program.

Emergency Management

Agency wide staff manage, facilitate and coordinate the emergency management responsibilities for the department including responsibilities outlined in the County Emergency Operation Plan and the DFS Continuity of Operations Plan.

DFS is the lead County agency responsible for provision of short term shelters and basic needs in an emergency as defined in the Fairfax County's Emergency Operation Plan (EOP). The EOP outlines the duties and responsibilities of multiple government and non-government agencies in the plan's annex entitled Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF - 6) Mass Care, Housing and Human Services. Should a large-scale event occur (such as a devastating winter storms, flash flood, hurricane, tornado, hazardous material incident, resource shortage, or act of terrorism in Fairfax County) that results in the displacement of large numbers of County residents, DFS is responsible for coordinating with the American Red Cross and designated County agencies the activation and operation of short term shelters. The location of these shelters will most likely be in County owned DFS facilities such as public schools or recreation centers. Types of shelters include:

- Evacuation Shelter – a facility where potentially impacted residents can seek refuge from an impending incident (pre-incident). Evacuation shelters are intended for short-term protection from the direct impacts of an impending emergency and should provide basic amenities (showering, sleeping and meals).
- Emergency Shelter – a facility designated as a site to temporarily provide housing and basic services such as sleeping areas, food services, health services and other resources post incident.
- Reception Center – a temporary location intended to provide a place of refuge for temporarily displaced workers or residents as might be required immediately after a spontaneous event. A reception center is intended to provide limited assistance for a short period of time.
- Warming/Cooling Center – a physical location that provides certain services such as protection from adverse weather conditions and restrooms, but does not offer any overnight sleeping accommodations. The services provided will be based on demonstrated needs.
- Family Assistance Center – designed to facilitate the process of identifying victims of a disaster, reuniting them with their family members, and ensuring the provision of emergency social services to victims and families as they recover from the emergency.

On an annual basis the department recruits staff from within the department to serve as emergency personnel. These employees agree to be designated as emergency personnel staff and to be called upon in the event of an emergency to staff shelters in Fairfax County. Additionally, the DFS Senior Management Team (SMT) serves as department's emergency response personnel and are responsible for staffing the County's Emergency Operation Center. DFS SMT members rotate the "24/7 on call" duty on a two-week basis. The department's budget does not include funding specifically allocated for emergency response expenditures other than a portion of the position in this LOB responsible for emergency planning and departmental oversight. American Red Cross (ARC) and its trained volunteers are critical to the effective and efficient operation of emergency shelters. DFS works in close collaboration with the ARC and its trained volunteers to operate emergency shelters.

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Strategic Planning

Agency wide staff provide facilitation and planning expertise to the agency's strategic planning process. DFS began its agency-wide strategic planning process in 2003 as part of a countywide initiative and is in the third year of its current plan for FY 2013 - 2016. The strategic planning process is led by the agency director and a 28 member strategic planning steering committee comprised of the department's Senior Management Team and representatives from each of the divisions and agency-wider services. In addition to participating in the planning and development of the strategic plan and objectives, the Steering Committee guides the implementation of the plan and monitors initiatives and action plans developed to accomplish the department's vision of being "a model social service agency, understanding and effectively responding to the needs of the community by 2016."

The department's goals in the strategic plan are as follows:

- Customer: We are customer focused.
- Services: We provide service to the diverse community that is outstanding in quality, responsiveness, and results.
- Community: We work in partnership with the community for the well-being of the people of Fairfax County.
- Innovation: We cultivate an environment that encourages and supports creativity and opportunities for continuous improvement.
- Workforce: Employees are encouraged to develop and maximize their talents and leadership skills.

Benefits

Agency-wide services maximize the success of DFS service delivery through the operational support services and the administrative functions provided in the LOB. The Call Center, Record Center, regional logistical services, information technology, professional and organizational development, communications, Community Action Program administration, legislative liaison services, emergency management and strategic planning functions of this LOB assure that the DFS workforce has what it needs to meet current and projected human service needs of Fairfax County. Emergency planning and resources save lives, and protect property and infrastructure.

Agency-wide services support the following County vision elements:

Maintaining Safe and Caring Neighborhoods

- Agency-wide services support DFS programs and services, all of which support this County vision element
- Promote services for a particularly vulnerable segment of the community

Connecting People and Places

- Develop and leverage technology to improve service delivery
- Manage of DFS County vehicle pool for use by employees

Practicing Environmental Stewardship

- Implementation and management of/implement the agency's content management systems with a goal a "paperless system"

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Exercising Corporate Stewardship

- Oversight of the federal Community Services Block Grant and Community Action Programs
- Effective and efficient management of both state and County technology funding, projects and equipment.
- Work diligently to retain and develop the department's most valuable resource; its employees
- Provide responsive support to County departments

Mandates

Emergency Management is a federal, state and local mandate.

Federal

- Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, Public Law 81-920, as amended.
- The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-388
- Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, Management of Domestic Incidents, Feb 28, 2003.
- National Response Framework (NRF), Second Edition, May 2013.
- National Incident Management System (NIMS), December 2008

Commonwealth

- Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Law of 2000, Virginia Code §§ 44-146.13 to 44-146.28:1, as amended.

Local

- Fairfax County Code, Chapter 14, Emergency Management mandates a local Emergency Operation Plan
- Fairfax County Emergency Operation Plan (Approved June 2015 by the Board of Supervisors) mandates the provision of Emergency Support Function: Mass Care and Human Services (ESF 6)
- Resolution by the Board of Supervisors adopting the National Incident Management Systems (NIMS), November 21, 2005.

Community Services Block Grant and Community Action Program Advisory Board Legislative Authority

- Community Action Act: Virginia Code §§ 2.2.5400-5408
- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors assigned the County Executive responsibility for managing the Community Action Program and created the Department of Community Action (DCS) in 1980
- DCA was designated as the community action agency for Fairfax County in 1982.
- In 1994, DCA was merged into the DFS, making DFS the designated Community Action Agency for Fairfax County.
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was re-authorized in 1998; Community Opportunities, Accountability, and Training and Educational Services Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998, P.L. 105-285.
- A federal requirement of receiving CSBG funds is to have a board (Community Action Advisory Board) to oversee expenditure of the grant funds.
- Agency-wide services support DFS mandated programs.

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Trends and Challenges

Professional and Organizational Development

DFS employees need advanced clinical skills and knowledge to serve an increasingly complex human service client base. Further, according to the demographic trends reported in the Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County, a culturally competent workforce is now and will be critical to keeping up with the community's ever-changing demographic composition. Finally, the cost of employee turnover is high both financially in terms of the expense of onboarding, and in terms of the toll it takes on continuity of services when employees leave. Professional and organizational development efforts assure the departmental structures and on-the-job program specific learning that are needed to provide complex and essential community services while addressing these workforce trends.

Communication

For external communications, social media has replaced traditional news media as the primary resource for news. Information shared through social media contains links which drive readers to the web pages so it has become even more imperative to create and maintain dynamic, timely web content which requires increased resources and time. It also requires more staff time to create content for social media and to monitor it.

For internal communications, DFS has an increased focus on staff development and employee engagement to improve service delivery and the department's communications staff plays an integral role in content development, strategic messaging and FairfaxNet support. In FY 2014, the Department of Family Services launched a dynamic, interactive webpage for employees (on FairfaxNet) to increase employee engagement and improve internal communications. A volunteer Editorial Board comprised of employees across every DFS division, location and "grade level" (front line employees to directors) provides two new articles for the webpage every week. A very successful kudos page where employees recognize their coworkers was created. In April 2015, generated by the Employee Feedback Strategic Planning Workgroup, DFS launched an innovative online Suggestion Box where employees do more than simply submit suggestions. Suggestions are voted on, and those that meet the threshold are forwarded to SMT for a timely online response.

Information Technology

In Human Services there a growing need to share customer data among agencies and service providers in order to provide more integrated services. The challenge to sharing data is the use of multiple systems staff to conduct intake and assessments, manage caseloads and collect management reporting data. The use of many of these systems are mandated by the state. Retrieving and sharing data from these state owned systems can be challenging and in some cases impossible. When data was not accessible in state system, DFS employees created internal databases to capture data needed for management reporting. Over time, multiple databases have been developed using Microsoft Access tools which are the best type of database for storing sensitive data nor the ideal technology for use by multiple users. Identifying an alternative to Access databases that is cost effective, secure and implementable by the agency, is a challenge the department is currently addressing.

Today's workforce is increasingly more technically savvy and as such have expectations for technical tools in the workplace that are similar to what they use in their daily lives such as smart phones, GPS systems for use in the field, mobile applications and access to social media sites. Budgetary constraints restrict the agency's ability to meet the staff expectations.

Nationally and locally, cyber security is becoming increasingly critical for government agencies. The need to safeguard sensitive data is a function the department's local security officers who monitor access to systems and enforce both County and state information security policy. Preparing for emergency situations where technology may not be available to conduct business, whether due to severe weather events, power outages or hackers is the responsibility of each agency and is a critical component in the department's continuity planning responsibility.

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Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #125: Department Wide Services			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$2,600,995	\$2,874,814	\$2,863,635
Operating Expenses	1,148,621	1,446,345	1,109,316
Total Expenditures	\$3,749,616	\$4,321,159	\$3,972,951
General Fund Revenue	\$1,600,868	\$1,548,618	\$1,713,527
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$2,148,748	\$2,772,541	\$2,259,424
POSITIONS			
<i>Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</i>			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	40 / 40	42 / 42	42 / 42
Total Positions	40 / 40	42 / 42	42 / 42

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Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Number of caller requests for information	134, 774	116,148	163,650	163,650	163,650
Average cost per call	\$2.88	\$3.52	\$4.01	\$4.10	\$4.10
Call resolution rate	25%	27%	37%	42%	48%
Employees report that they have the materials and equipment they need to do their work.	84%	NA	81%	NA	83%
Percentage of customers who rate the staff's knowledge of programs and services as good or better.	NA	87%	NA	89%	NA

The one-year decrease in the number of calls received by the DFS Call Center in FY 2014 was due to creation of a new Self Sufficiency Customer Care Center. The increase in FY 2015 was a result of Self Sufficiency Customer Care Center and other Self Sufficiency phone lines being forwarded to DFS Call Center. FY 2016 and FY 2017 numbers are estimated to remain flat due to transition to caseload management and implementation of DFS email box.

Due to the competencies required to provide a higher level of service, the call center staff were reclassified from S-13 to S-15 positions in FY 2015. The reclassification of call center positions increased the average cost per call. Market rate adjustments, COLAs and pay increases attribute to the projected increase in the average cost per call for FY 2016 and FY 2017.

Expanding access to technology has provided call center representatives the ability to conduct more in-depth screenings as well as allowed access to verify if customer documents have been received and provide details about case status. As a direct result of this expansion, the ability for representatives to resolve calls without forwarding them to a worker greatly increased between FY 2014 and FY 2015. In the last 3 months of FY 2015 the average call resolution rate was 48 percent. We anticipate the call resolution rate to remain over 40 percent as Self Sufficiency division transitions to a caseload management process.

The three percent decrease in the employee satisfaction in having the “materials and equipment they need to do their work” can be partially attributed to the implementation of a new Virginia Department of Social Services eligibility and case management system in October 2013. To meet the federal deadlines for the Affordable Care Act, the new system was put in place with minimal user training. Transitioning to a new system is a challenge for users but this implementation was compounded by an unexpected high number of new Medicaid applications coupled with a system implemented with several “bugs” and performance issues. As the system development continues and enhancements are made, employee satisfaction with the system is projected to improve in FY 2017. The state’s Eligibility Modernization project is expected to be completed by December 2016.

The professional development service quality measure metric of “the percentage of customers who rate the staff’s knowledge of programs and services as good or better” has demonstrates a trend of positive results in a customer satisfaction survey conducted every two years. Given the importance of staff knowledge to department performance, the department’s Professional Organizational Development unit has multiple initiatives to improve performance in this area of strength and as a result, projects an increase from 87percent in FY 2015 to 89 percent in FY 2017.