

Performance Brief: Economic Self-Sufficiency

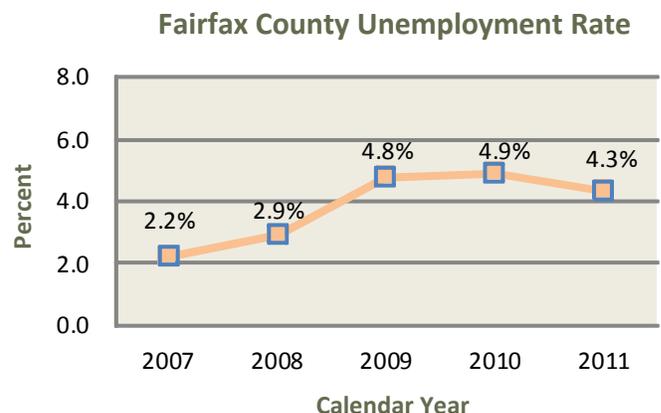
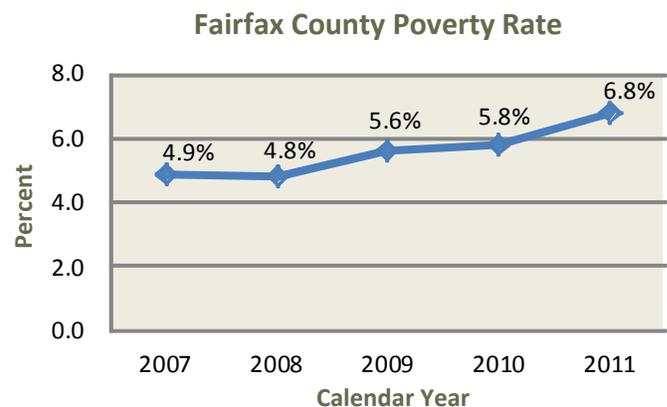
Economic Self-Sufficiency is the ability of individuals and families to maintain sufficient income to consistently meet their basic needs - including food, housing, utilities, health care, transportation, taxes, dependent care and clothing – with no or minimal financial assistance or subsidies from private or public organizations.

Why Is Economic Self-Sufficiency Important?

Despite the overall wealth of Fairfax County, there are substantial economic challenges faced by many residents. Over the past few years the area has witnessed a higher growth rate in poverty compared to the central city of Washington, D.C. due to the suburbanization of poverty. Food insecurity also plagues many county residents as a result of financial insecurity, and a lack of accessible resources that promote well-being.

Related facts which highlight the importance of increasing economic self-sufficiency include:

- As of 2011, approximately 74,000 people lived below the federal poverty level in Fairfax County. Of these individuals, 49% were employed (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011).
- Research shows a strong connection between command of the English language and economic prosperity. In 2011, 15% of Fairfax County residents did not speak English “very well.” Among those in the county who are living below the federal poverty level, the majority (65%) speak a language other than English at home (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011).
- Although the unemployment rate for Fairfax County is lower than that of the Commonwealth or nation, it has almost doubled since 2007 (2.1% in September 2007 versus 4.0% in September 2012) (Source: Virginia Labor Market Information 2012).
- In a 2011 survey of Fairfax County students in 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades, one out of five students reported going hungry at least some of the time in the past 30 days because there was not enough food in his/her home (Source: Fairfax County Youth Survey 2011).



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What Are We Doing to Promote Economic Self-Sufficiency?

The human services system promotes economic self-sufficiency through a variety of programs and services including but not limited to: job training; employment counseling; education; food and other basic needs assistance; English literacy; and financial literacy education.

The county also offers programs and services that help individuals prepare for work (e.g., substance abuse treatment); help individuals remain employed or in school (e.g., child care); and strengthen relationships to bolster self-sufficiency. Many programs and services assist vulnerable individuals or families who need multiple supports in their journey to become economically self-sufficient.

How Are We Measuring Performance?

To demonstrate accountability, the human services system must communicate how clients are better off as a result of its services and programs. As such, the system has adopted an approach to managing for results. This results accountability approach shifts how the system gauges performance from measuring only outputs and efficiencies (process measures) to measuring whether customers benefit in the long-term (are better off) from participating in programs and services.

To gain a better understanding of whether people are better off as a result of receiving services, the following factors are measured across the human services system:

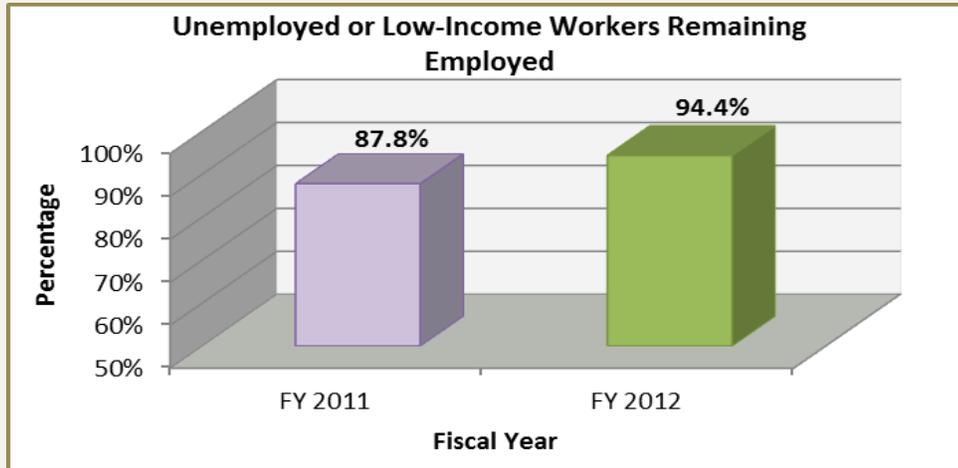
- ◇ **Job Retention** — remaining in the labor market over an extended period of time
- ◇ **Earnings**— increasing wages over time
- ◇ **Educational Attainment** — acquiring new skills and knowledge and/or earning a high school diploma, General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or postsecondary credential
- ◇ **Literacy Gain**— gaining English literacy and/or financial literacy skills
- ◇ **Basic Needs Met**— families and individuals consistently meeting their basic needs
- ◇ **Community Connections**—developing relationships with people or organizations that bolster self-sufficiency

Individuals and families who are successful in these areas are more likely to achieve higher levels of economic self-sufficiency and stability. The specific Fairfax County Human Services programs listed in this brief represent only a sample of those that promote economic self-sufficiency of system clients. By examining performance in these areas, the county is gaining a better understanding of where efforts are needed to improve the economic self-sufficiency of customers regardless of where a person enters the system.

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JOB RETENTION

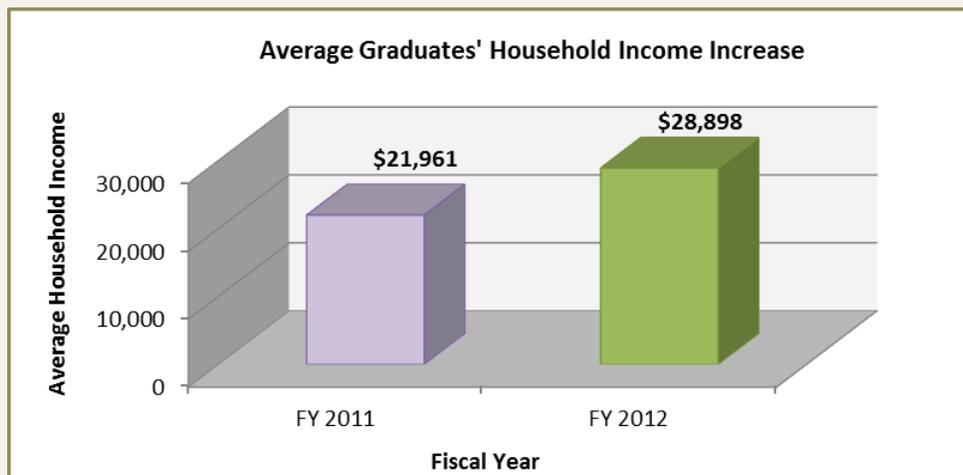
Measure: Percent of unemployed or low-income workers who receive Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services and remain employed 9 months after job placement



Employment and training services are delivered through a network of employment centers known as SkillSource. Jobseekers that need and qualify for intensive services (generally low-income or laid-off workers) are enrolled into WIA, which is regionally coordinated among seven jurisdictions.

EARNINGS

Measure: Average household income increase of graduates of the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program

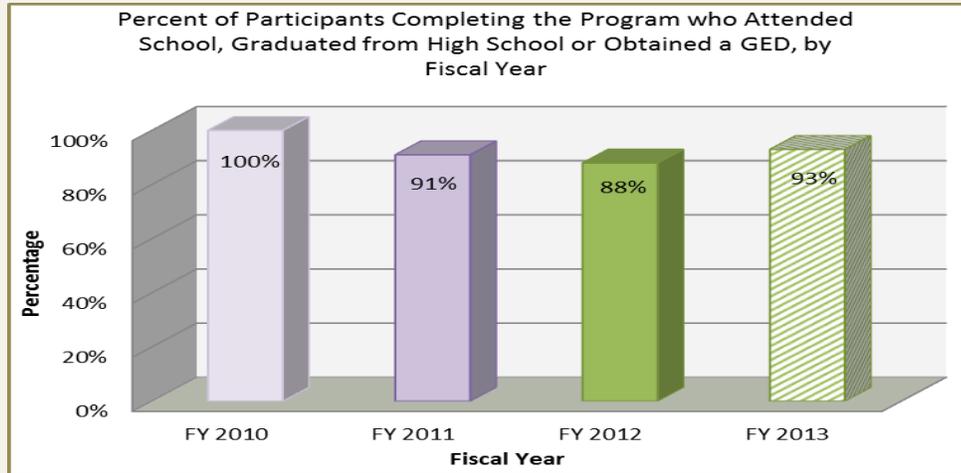


The FSS program provides Public Housing and HCV participants the opportunity to build assets while working towards self-sufficiency goals. The program helps residents build escrows and achieve employment and education goals.

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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

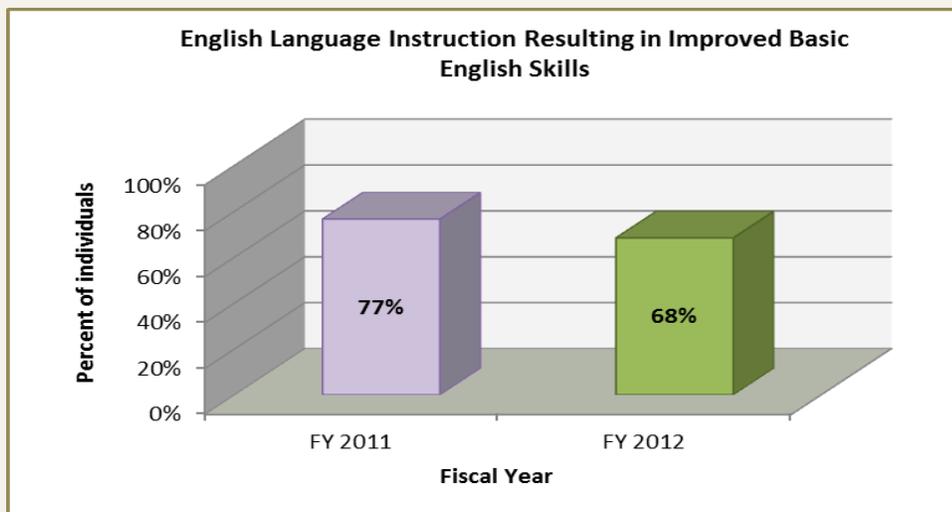
Measure: Percent of youth on probation completing the Empower program who attended school, graduated from high school, or obtained a GED



The Empower program assists youth on probation or in an Independent Study Program with preparing for employment, obtaining a job, succeeding in their educational pursuits, and diminishing criminal behavior.

LITERACY GAIN

Measure: Percent of individuals who complete English language instruction with improved basic English skills

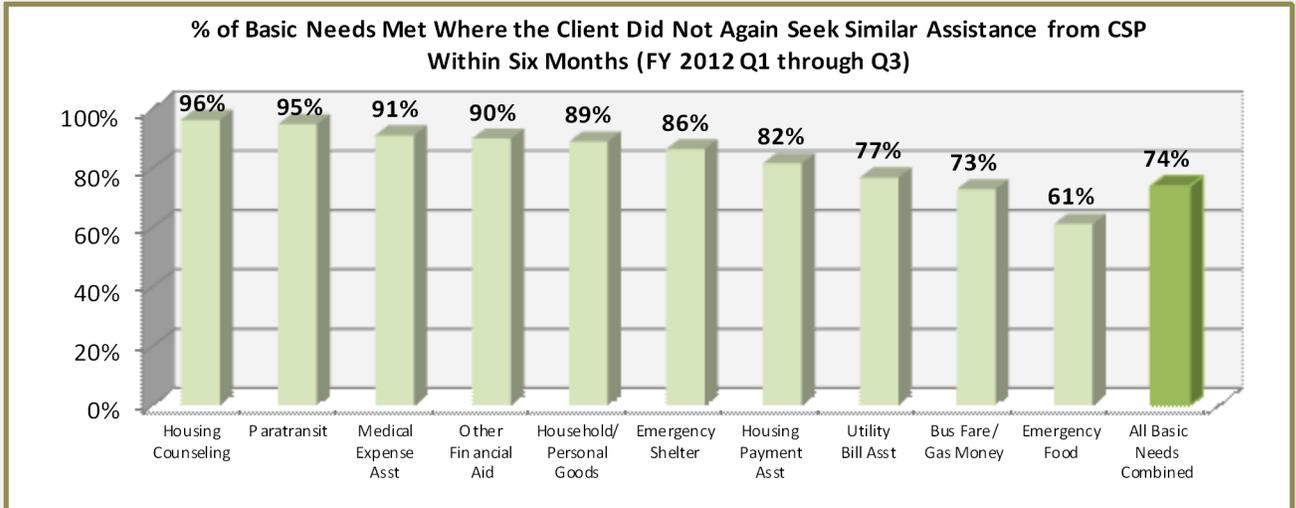


In FY 2012, five non-profit organizations contracted through the Consolidated Community Funding Pool provided English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to 2,179 clients. These five organizations utilized a pre/post assessment to determine improved basic English skills.

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BASIC NEEDS MET

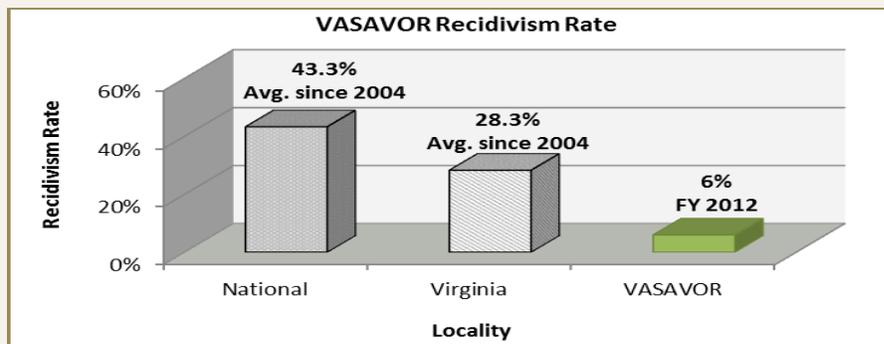
Measure: Percent of basic needs met where the client did not again seek similar assistance from Coordinated Services Planning (CSP) within six months



CSP provides emergency assistance in a call center environment and through an online resource guide. CSP social workers complete broad-based assessments over the phone to identify client needs, uncover underlying issues, and connect individuals to assistance. Residents may also seek emergency assistance, such as shelter and food, through other county programs and services. Validation of the data listed above is currently underway, therefore final reporting on this measure is not available.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Measure: Recidivism rate of Virginia Serious and Violent Offender Reentry (VASAVOR) Program participants



The purpose of the Virginia Serious and Violent Offender Re-entry Program is to facilitate a successful transition from long-term incarceration back into the community through services designed to meet supervision requirements and promote economic self-sufficiency. Recidivism rates for ex-offenders are linked to several factors including a lack of community support, significant barriers (including housing, transportation, substance abuse and mental health), and very limited opportunities to achieve economic self-sufficiency through sustained employment.



To request this information in an alternate format, call the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, 703-324-4600, TTY 711.

