

# Department of Family Services

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LOB #112:

## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION SERVICES**

### **Purpose**

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services strengthen families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help community members and stakeholders provide neighborhood-based support networks. These programs support families, particularly those “at-risk,” through community-based, family-focused prevention and early intervention services.

### **Description**

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services include several programs that focus on preventing child abuse and neglect through one-to-one education and support of families, group-based education and support, and neighborhood-based coalition building to improve family and community conditions.

#### **One-to-One Education and Support of Families**

##### Healthy Families Fairfax

Healthy Families Fairfax (HFF) is an evidence-based home-visiting program offering parents at risk of maltreating their child home-based parenting education, health information and referrals to community support. Services are offered from pregnancy until the child reaches age 3 and is enrolled in an early group education experience. It is supported through a partnership among DFS, the Health Department and three nonprofit organizations – Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS), United Community Ministries (UCM) and Cornerstones (formerly Reston Interfaith). This program is accredited through the National Council on Accreditation and Healthy Families America and focuses on six areas:

- Promotion of healthy family functioning by teaching problem solving skills, reducing family stress and improving the support system,
- Systematic identification of overburdened families,
- Promotion of positive parent/child interaction,
- Promotion of healthy child development and prevention care in early childhood,
- Prevention of child abuse and neglect, and
- Pre-and post-natal health care.

Nurses assess at-risk families for potential enrollment in the program. Support workers provide home visiting services to families at a frequency based on risk level. Visits are focused on one-to-one parenting skills, child development and case management.

##### Befriend-A-Child

BeFriend-A-Child involves community volunteers who provide positive experiences for children who have been abused or neglected or who are at risk of abuse or neglect and are currently being served by a program in the Children, Youth, and Families Division. Befriend-A-Child carefully matches children ages 5 to 12 years old with trained volunteers who spend time together including participating in monthly educational or social group activities, attending holiday parties, engaging in performing arts workshops and helping with community service projects. Mentors commit to a minimum of eight hours a month for one year.

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## **Group-Based Education and Support**

### Parenting Education Programs

Parenting Education Programs (PEP) offers group-based comprehensive classes using evidence-based curricula to families in Fairfax County, especially those at risk of child abuse and neglect. Staff teaches essential parenting and nurturing skills so that parents may interact positively with their children. The program serves families with children from infants to age 18. Classes are unique in that they include both parents and children. The class topics for children mirror those for parents but are tailored to meet their different ages and stages of development. Targeted classes are offered for various age groups of children, Spanish-speaking families, and African-American families. In FY 2015, Child Protective Services and Foster Care and Adoption program staff referred 34 percent of the families and Fairfax County Public Schools referred 21 percent of the families PEP served.

### Body Safety Program

The Body Safety Program teaches pre-school through 6<sup>th</sup> grade children the skills that play a major role in preventing or interrupting child sexual abuse. The program provides a curriculum and recruits and trains community volunteers to serve as facilitators. They teach children about safe and unsafe touches and help children feel comfortable talking about body safety issues.

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

### Neighborhood Networks

Neighborhood Networks links communities and schools to enhance family strengths and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect in children. DFS operates the program in collaboration with 15 Fairfax County elementary schools, one preschool and two community-based partner agencies (Cornerstones and Culmore Family Resource Center).

Neighborhood Networks is a unified and holistic service delivery system for at-risk children and their families that leverages partnerships among County agencies, schools, businesses, faith-based organizations and the community. Staff reduces risk factors related to child abuse and neglect by enhancing families' networks of support and helping them become leaders in their own community. Specifically, staff:

- Identifies families' strengths and needs using a single multi-system family assessment that explores the family life domains of parental capabilities, family interactions, family safety, child well-being, social/community life, environment, economic self-sufficiency, and family health & well-being.
- Links them to services using a comprehensive family service plan to ensure the timely, customized, coordinated delivery of County and community services. This includes increasing the families' own capacity to support their children in school, and creatively involves other public and private resources in support of families and children

Services may be provided at the school, the family's home, and/or at local community sites in the family's neighborhood. Regular meetings are held with family members, DFS and school staff, and representatives of community-based public and private human service organizations who are working with the family. Team members create a holistic support system that combines the resources inherent in each family with existing community services in an intentional, carefully designed plan to achieve the families' goals.

Underlying premises of the program include:

- Poor outcomes for children in part result from the inability of current service systems to respond appropriately to the multiple and interconnected needs of children and their families.
- Schools are the enduring, dominant institutions of the community and neighborhoods.
- Community services are needed to address children's non-academic needs.
- Collaboration with community and school partners is the most effective approach to obtain the best child and family outcomes.

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## Volunteer and Partner Services

Created in September 2014, Volunteer and Partner Services (VPS) engages volunteers and builds partnerships to support families with children who are at risk of abuse or neglect, or who are placed in foster care or with relatives. The program builds volunteer capacity in the division, implements programs, and directs activities that promote positive relationships within the community. VPS staff recruit, train, and support volunteers. Volunteers serve in a variety of roles including office administrative support, mentors for BeFriend-A-Child, and facilitators for PEP and Body Safety programs. VPS staff also develops partnerships with local businesses, civic groups, faith communities, and other community organizations to provide donations and other material support to children and families. Examples include back-to-school backpacks, holiday gifts, new baby care packages, and tickets to events.

## **Benefits**

The department's prevention programs continue to be an integral part of the continuum of services to children and families at-risk. Early intervention and investment in child abuse prevention efforts considerably reduces the expense of costly rehabilitative human services programs at later stages.

Prevention programs reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and out of home placement, and increase the likelihood of children in foster care achieving timely permanency. The cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is estimated to be \$220 million per day, according to a 2012 study by Prevent Child Abuse America. Additionally, front-end preventive services have long-term benefits for the children and the community. Research into Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has shown that children who experience abuse or neglect are at a heightened risk of serious health issues including unintended and adolescent pregnancy, heart disease, depression, substance abuse, and suicide. By mitigating the impacts of child abuse early on, and preventing future abuse, these services decrease the likelihood of these poor health outcomes, all of which could potentially require costly interventions by other County programs.

## Cost Savings Compared to Foster Care

An immediate savings is realized in that preventing child abuse and neglect also prevents placements in foster care. In FY 2015, Fairfax County spent an average of \$54,945 per child in foster care (not including CSA costs for maintenance payments and services). Compare that to:

- \$7,696 per family in Neighborhood Networks,
- \$4,449 per family in Healthy Families Fairfax, and
- \$3,446 per family in Parenting Education Programs.

In addition to the outcomes detailed in the metric chart and discussion, a sample of specific programmatic benefits and outcomes are detailed below.

## Healthy Families Fairfax

HFF promotes healthy children and healthy communities:

- In FY 2015, 86 percent of target children in the program were 100 percent up-to-date with immunizations.
- In FY 2015, 93 percent of target children in the program have a medical provider within two months of the birth of the target child and continue with a primary care provider.

HFF prepares children for school readiness:

- In FY 2015, 93 percent of children who graduated from HFF transitioned into an early education program (i.e. early Head Start, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschooler Youngsters).

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## BeFriend-A-Child

A total of 47 children were matched with a mentor during FY 2015. BeFriend volunteer mentors serve as positive adult role models for children and help children develop appropriate coping and other life skills. The match provides the parent(s) valuable free time to pursue their own interests and focus on self-care. Parents and volunteers often say the children improve their communication skills and willingness to talk and relate with adults and their peers. Both child and parent stress is reduced.

## Parenting Education Programs

In FY 2015, PEP provided services to 347 families with 501 children, reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and out of home placement. PEP classes also increase the likelihood of timely permanency for those children in foster care, as they meet the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC) requirements for parenting classes whereas many community programs do not.

## Neighborhood Networks

In FY 2015, Neighborhood Networks served 168 children in 66 families. The families all had risk factors for child abuse and neglect which also places children at risk of out-of-home placement. However, 100 percent of children served remained safely in their homes with their families.

The key benefits of the Neighborhood Networks programs are that it:

- Promotes the healthy growth and development of children by assisting families to identify and address any home or community barriers to a child's success in school.
- Enables health, substance abuse, mental health, child welfare, recreation, child care and other social service programs to respond in a proactive way.
- Ensures that families have access to and are connected with appropriate community resources and receive the help that they need from those resources.
- Improves academic, health and social outcomes for children and their families.

## Volunteer and Partner Services (VPS)

The use of volunteers in CYF provides an immense cost-benefit to the County. At a rate of \$23.07 per hour for FY 2015, volunteers contributed \$293,265.84 worth of services to Fairfax County through VPS.

In addition to the monetary value provided to the County, the Volunteer Administrative Assistant program has allowed social services specialists to spend more time working with children and families by reducing their administrative duties.

## **Mandates**

The Healthy Families Fairfax program receives a state grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services. VDSS requires that DFS maintain national accreditation through Healthy Families America to receive the funds.

While not legally mandated, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program services are supported by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) which encourages innovative child abuse prevention programs, and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families law which emphasizes the need for programs addressing families at risk for child abuse and neglect.

DFS' child abuse prevention programs are specifically aimed at preventing the referral of families and children to DFS's federally and state-mandated services (e.g. Child Protective Services and Foster Care). Prevention programs can reduce risk factors that, if unchecked, are likely to result in child abuse and neglect, children's removal from home, and long-term health and social problems.

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## Trends and Challenges

As a non-mandated service, Prevention continues to be evaluated for budget reductions both at the state and local level. Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention programs in Fairfax County constantly evaluate their outcomes, their success, and their cost effectiveness. The demand for preventative services is already higher than current staffing levels can address. Prevention recently created a Volunteer and Partner Services program to enhance the department's ability to serve the community with additional resources beyond County or grant funds.

### One-to-One Education and Support of Families

#### Healthy Families Fairfax

HFF served 530 families in FY 2015 down from 613 families in FY 2014. This reduction is due to staff turnover and vacancies primarily in the Health Department, but also in DFS and partner non-profit agencies. Two of the 5.5 FTE nurse positions in the Health Department were vacant or brand new for the first half of FY 2015, reducing the capacity to assess eligibility for services. Since Healthy Families Fairfax was on the budget reduction list and the program's fate was unknown, positions were not filled for a portion of the fiscal year. Additionally, more families terminated services (255) than entered the program (198) in FY 2015.

The Healthy Families America (HFA) model is based upon 12 research-based critical elements. Sites demonstrate model fidelity through the Accreditation process which is required every four years. The process is a rigorous examination of all aspects of the program including revision of policy, collection and evaluation of data and process improvement.

Since 2000, there has been a gap between the number of families served and the number who are eligible. In FY 2015, only 16 percent of the mothers who were screened as high-risk were able to be served through HFF because of limited capacity. Other early childhood home visiting programs in the community have recently lost funding and are also unable to serve this population.

#### BeFriend-A-Child

The primary challenges are the need for more male and Spanish speaking mentors and the need for more staff to operate the program and recruit more mentors.

### Group-Based Education and Support

#### Parenting Education Programs

In FY 2015, PEP provided services to 347 families with 501 children compared to 384 families with 511 children in FY 2014. The reduction in the number of families served was due to staff vacancies and fewer groups being scheduled due to potential budget reductions. Additionally, more two-parent families are participating in groups, leading to groups reaching capacity with fewer families.

A major challenge for PEP is the diversity of the population in Fairfax County, specifically around language needs. While classes are offered in Spanish, families who speak other languages are in need of group-based parenting education as well. There has been a dramatic increase in the need for translation services for groups.

#### Body Safety Program

In FY 2015, 1,038 children were served in 65 groups using the Good Touch Bad Touch® curriculum. A key challenge in FY 2015 was the potential budget cut which delayed hiring the program coordinator. Another challenge continues to be connecting with the schools. There are not enough volunteers to cover all 130 elementary schools, and some schools are reluctant to offer the course due to the sensitive nature of the content.

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

### Neighborhood Networks

In FY 2015, Neighborhood Networks served 168 children in 68 families, almost doubling from 90 children in 35 families in FY 2014. The increase was due to expanding the program to schools beyond the South County region and adding staff. Neighborhood Networks now has a presence and a partnership with elementary schools in all four human services regions. This year, Neighborhood Networks also added partnerships with Cornerstones and Culmore Family Resource Center. Almost half of all families served were primarily Spanish speaking in FY 2015. The program was able to meet this challenge by hiring two additional bilingual specialists this year

The program began using a new evidence-based validated assessment tool that better measures changes in child and family well-being. Due to this change in assessment tool, data is limited this year. However, data will be available for FY 2016.

### Volunteer and Partner Services (VPS)

This program has demonstrated significant gains in the last year. In FY 2014, CYF benefitted from 129 volunteers providing 6,999 hours of service at a value of \$157,827.45. In FY 2015, this rose to 183 volunteers providing 12,702 hours of service at a value of \$293,035.14, an 86 percent increase in cost savings for the County.

The increases in both the number of volunteers and the total volunteer hours are due to several efforts and strategies. New volunteer opportunities were developed and advertised, including the Volunteer Administrative Assistant Program. New recruiting strategies for volunteers were employed including the use of the new Volunteer Management System (VMS), the Volunteer Fairfax website, and VolunteerMatch.org. Finally, VPS focused on ensuring consistency in the administration and tracking of the program and volunteer hours.

A challenge for the program is retaining volunteers for the administrative assistant program, as many of those who volunteer are looking for permanent employment.

## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #112: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$1,938,114	\$2,063,216	\$2,264,722
Operating Expenses	1,717,796	1,685,045	1,654,246
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$3,655,910</b>	<b>\$3,748,261</b>	<b>\$3,918,968</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$1,343,669	\$1,369,797	\$1,386,480
<b>Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund</b>	<b>\$2,312,241</b>	<b>\$2,378,464</b>	<b>\$2,532,488</b>
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	30 / 30	30 / 30	30 / 30
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>30 / 30</b>	<b>30 / 30</b>	<b>30 / 30</b>

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## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Cost per family served in Healthy Families Fairfax (HFF)	\$4,102	\$3,473	\$4,449	\$4,161	\$3,830
Percent of HFF families who demonstrate optimal home environments to support child development	91%	94%	92%	94%	94%
Percent of families who complete the Parenting Education Program (PEP)	73%	75%	77%	75%	75%
Percent of HFF families served that demonstrate an acceptable level of positive parent-child interaction after one year in the program	96%	94%	88%	92%	94%
Percent of parents in PEP who demonstrate improved parenting and child rearing attitudes	87%	91%	89%	90%	90%

## Summary of Key Performance Measures

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services LOB had \$3,918,968 in expenditures for FY 2015, offset by \$1,386,480 in revenue for a net cost to the County of \$2,532,488. These funds support 30 FTEs.

This LOB includes several distinct programs. Key program workload and outcome measures for FY 2015 include:

- Healthy Families Fairfax served 530 families in FY 2015; 88 percent demonstrated an acceptable level of positive parent-child interaction after one year in the program.
- Parenting Education Programs provided services to 347 families with 501 children; 89 percent of those completing a program demonstrated improved parenting and child rearing attitudes
- Neighborhood Networks served 168 children in 66 families; 100 percent of the children served remained safely in their homes with their families.
- Volunteer and Partner Services recruited 183 volunteers who provided 12,702 hours of service at a value of \$293,035.14.

Some Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Services are required to be compliant with state or funder-specific regulations.

## Metric Discussion

### HFF Optimal Home Environment

The overall quality of the home environment and the quality and quantity of the developmental stimulation provided to children by their families is a key factor in child development. Empowering parents to realize their potential as the first teacher of their own child is one way Healthy Families addresses this domain. This measure is assessed using the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME), a standardized instrument that has been widely researched. It assesses six aspects of the child's home environment that are known to foster cognitive development (1) responsivity of mother, (2) acceptance, (3) organization, (4) learning materials, (5) maternal involvement, and (6) variety in daily stimulation.

The percent of HFF families who demonstrate optimal home environments to support child development decreased slightly from 94 percent in FY 2014 to 92 percent in FY 2015. The fluctuation in scores is not uncommon when assessing families served in HFF. The FY 2016 and FY 2017 projections are that the outcome will remain high. This level of performance has been consistent over the past five years and exceeds the statewide goal of at least 85 percent. The consistency may be due to emphasis the staff place on the importance of providing safe and enriched environments for the children in the department's program.

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### PEP Completion Rate

The percentage of families who completed the Parenting Education Program (PEP) increased slightly from 75 percent in FY 2014 to 77 percent in FY 2015. All families who attended 80 percent of the classes are counted as “Completed.” Family issues and school or pregnancy are the top reasons that families report as reasons for dropping from the class. The proportion of court-ordered families can also impact the percent of families who complete the program. To improve retention, facilitators have begun contacting families between classes to check-in and follow up with those who have missed a class.

### HFF Parent-Child Interaction

HFF staff uses the Nurse Child Assessment Satellite Training (NCAST) Feeding Scale and Teaching Scale to measure parent-child interaction. The scores are based on observations of feeding episodes between a mother and her infant. The scales examine areas such as sensitivity to cues, response to distress, social-emotional growth fostering, and cognitive growth fostering.

The percent of HFF families served that demonstrate an acceptable level of positive parent-child interaction after one year in the program decreased from 94 percent in FY 2014 to 88 percent in FY 2015. Although this measure declined, the program continues to exceed the state goal of 85 percent. These consistently high scores demonstrate the ongoing importance placed by staff on teaching and fostering the relationship between parent and child. The fluctuation in scores is not uncommon when assessing families served in HFF.

One factor that may have contributed to the decline in scores over the past year involves how the assessment was used and scored. In FY 2015, the nurse providing training for staff received clarification on scoring and assessment frequency from the NCAST creators. Importance was placed on training all staff on the correct way to observe and score the NCAST. It is expected that outcomes for FY 2016 will improve as staff become more comfortable with the new expectations. FY 2016 and FY 2017 projections are that the outcome will remain consistent with previous years.

### PEP Improved Parenting

Parents who participate in PEP consistently show improvements in parenting and child rearing attitudes as measured by a pre and post-test. Responses to the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-version 2 (AAPI-2) provide an index of risk in five specific parenting and child-rearing behaviors: Appropriate Expectations of Children, Empathetic Awareness of Children’s Needs, Corporal Punishment, Parent-Child Role Reversal, and Children’s Power and Independence.

The percent of parents in PEP who demonstrate improved parenting and child rearing attitudes has ranged from 87 percent to 91 percent over the past three years, remaining consistently above the goal of 85 percent. The consistency can be attributed to utilizing highly-skilled facilitators who are trained by national experts. Exceeding 85 percent with a large proportion of court ordered participants is challenging, and using validated, evidence-informed curricula contributes to the success.

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## Grant Support

**FY 2016 Total Projected Funding:** \$713,775, including \$603,141 in Federal/State revenue and \$110,634 in Local Cash Match. Funding supports 8/7.0 FTE grant positions.

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) federal grant is administered through the Virginia Department of Social Services. These funds are designed to help children and families resolve crises, connect with necessary and appropriate services, and remain safely together in their own homes whenever possible. Locally, this grant primarily supports Parenting Education Programs and Neighborhood Networks. Services are provided to meet the following objectives:

- Prevent or eliminate the need for out-of-home placements of children,
- Promote family strength and stability,
- Enhance parental functioning,
- Protect children, and
- Assess and make changes in state and local service delivery systems.

Fairfax County has received funding from the PSSF grant since 1996. The grant amount started at \$250,000 and most recently has remained at about \$425,000. Twenty percent of each year's grant funding is required to be spent for services to children in foster care to support their return home and another 20 percent must be used for family preservation. The PSSF grant supports eight positions and requires a 15.5 percent local match.

In Virginia, the required state/local planning and management of Promoting Safe and Stable Family grant funds is accomplished under the auspices of Community Policy and Management Teams. Comprehensive community assessments are required every 5 years in order to develop and submit required 5-year plans for the use of grant funding. Staff submits quarterly and annual reports related to use of the funds and outcomes.