



## Response to Questions on the 2016 LOBs

**Request By:** Supervisor Storck

**Relevant LOB(s):** NA

**Question:** Describe Neighborhood Networks and how it intersects with Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON).

**Response:**

### **Opportunity Neighborhoods**

Opportunity Neighborhoods (ON) is a Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) initiative that coordinates the efforts of multiple County agencies and community-based programs and services to promote positive outcomes for children and youth by aligning available programming with identified needs, interests, and gaps in a particular community. The premise of ON is that children and youth do better when the major influences on their learning and development (family, schools, and communities) work together to ensure that they are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn and succeed in life. ON itself is not a service delivery program, but rather a model for identifying the needs and service gaps in the community and bringing together service providers (both in the County and in the community) in partnership to address children's needs in a holistic and collaborative approach. By facilitating collective planning and action across sectors (government, education, non-profit, faith, civic, philanthropy), ON focuses community efforts on common goals and outcomes. Major outcomes include ensuring that children are prepared for school entry; that children succeed in school; that youth graduate from high school and continue on to postsecondary education and careers; and that ON families, schools, and neighborhoods support the healthy development and academic success of the community's children and youth.

Implementation of ON in a particular community begins with a needs assessment to determine what complement of services are required based on existing community resources, community strengths and weaknesses, and areas that do not meet the current needs of the neighborhood. ON staff then work to bring partners together to fulfill those needs and ensure that families have access to the appropriate services. ON partners understand that in order for children and youth to be successful "cradle to career," investments must be made to ensure a "pipeline of supports" is available. Depending on the specific needs of the community, these pipelines may be non-profit organizations, faith-based and other community organizations, community-based providers and businesses, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), or County agencies. Services and programming generally fall into five broad areas, with specific strategies varying based on local needs and interests:



- **Family and Community Engagement:** Resident and community-based partners are engaged to review data, identify service gaps, set priorities, and ensure progress on unique strategies for local, youth, and family development.
- **Connected and Motivated Youth:** Establishes priorities and collaboration around out-of-school time programming and coordination, mentoring programs, and youth leadership development initiatives.
- **School Readiness, Early Childhood Education, and Literacy:** Enhances partnerships in early learning, literacy, and preparing students to succeed in school.
- **Service Access and Navigation:** A variety of public-private efforts to better connect families with community resources and services by providing information, referral and linkage to appropriate services, and advocacy.
- **Workforce Readiness and Student Career Preparedness:** Tutoring; credit remediation; access to college prep support and entrance to advanced academic programs; stem enrichment; and adult workforce readiness, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Region 1 ON was established in the Mount Vernon and Lee Districts in 2011. Boundaries were determined by the high school pyramid and include Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School, Riverside Elementary School, Woodlawn Elementary School, Whitman Middle School, and Mount Vernon High School. Funding is included in the [FY 2017 Adopted Budget Plan](#) to continue ON in Region 1 and support the first phase of expanding ON into Region 3, Reston.

### **Neighborhood Networks**

Neighborhood Networks (NN) is a community-school based service delivery system that integrates evidence-based child welfare practice to further enhance family functioning and community development. The NN program was developed in 2000 as part of the Promoting Safe & Stable Families Grant application by DFS and has been in operation for over 15 years. The initiative was an effort to take community-school based service delivery to a new level by intentionally partnering DFS services with FCPS and other organizations to serve identified families. It is a prevention/early intervention model that 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 which includes Cornerstones Inc. and the Culmore Family Resource Center. Community and school sites are selected based on factors such as areas with high Child Protective Service reports, elementary school need and community/school engagement and participation. Risk factors related to child abuse and neglect are reduced by



enhancing families' networks of support and helping them become leaders in their own community. The NN model includes the following components:

- **Referral Process:** Elementary school, pre-school or community-based partner agencies identify a family and make a referral to NN. (Each referral source has a specified number of slots, usually 2-3 due to limited program capacity.)
- **Comprehensive Assessment:** An evidence-based multi-domain assessment is completed with the family to identify key areas of strengths and areas of need (NCFAS).
- **Coordinated Services Delivery/Case Management:** The family meets with a multi-disciplinary team and goals are developed with the family based on the assessment. The team then meets regularly to re-assess and ensure progress is being made. Focus is on wrap-around services to help the family meet their goals and to build community connections.
- **Case closure:** Based on success of family, progress made toward stability, supports in place, resources available to the family, and connections formed.

#### **Intersection of Neighborhood Networks and Opportunity Neighborhoods**

The NN program is one of several programs in DFS that are partners in the ON initiative. NN is active in Region 1 and will also be part of the ON strategy in Region 3. It is important to note that County services and programs that are partners in the ON initiative are not funded or administered through ON, but rather they are autonomous programs that are leveraged in support of community needs and ON goals. County programs such as NN, Neighborhood School Readiness Teams, and parent education programs play an important role in meeting the service requirements that have been identified by ON; however, many programs also operate in parts of the County where the ON model has not yet been established. Additionally, while ON is a NCS initiative, in some instances other NCS programs are also leveraged to fill service requirements, such as after-school programming for children and Coordinated Services Planning (CSP). Funding for ON does not necessarily support the programmatic needs that have been identified for a particular community. If the ON strategy requires the expansion of another County program, such as the NN program in DFS, it is possible that additional funding may be necessary to meet the increased demand.