

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF
AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO
SHELTERS FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 37

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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PREFACE

The 1999 General Assembly approved House Joint Resolution 703. HJR 703 requested that the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) increase its efforts to improve the conditions within and services to shelters serving homeless families. DHCD currently administers federal and state grant programs for homeless shelters; it also annually oversees \$360,000 in state grant funds that enable homeless shelters to employ child service coordinators. These coordinators help assure that children in homeless or domestic violence shelters have access to necessary supportive services.

The resolution stated that when compared to low-income children not in shelters, homeless children demonstrate higher incidences of psychological problems, learning disabilities, poor academic performance, and delinquency. The resolution concluded that unsafe or unsanitary conditions in homeless shelters exacerbate these conditions.

In response to this resolution, DHCD inspected a large sample of the homeless shelters for which it provides assistance. The inspections focused on whether shelters met applicable federal Section 8 Housing Quality Standards (HQS), fire safety requirements, and health standards. The following pages report the Department's findings and recommendations concerning conditions in and the provision of services to homeless and domestic violence shelters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) uses federal and state funds to assist providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing throughout the state. The Department also oversees \$360,000 in state grant funds that enable homeless shelters to employ child service coordinators.

HJR 703 requested that the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) increase its efforts to improve the conditions within and services to shelters serving homeless families. The resolution stated homeless children demonstrate comparatively higher incidences of psychological problems, learning disabilities, poor academic performance, and delinquency. The resolution concluded that unsafe or unsanitary conditions in homeless shelters exacerbate these conditions.

In response to this resolution, DHCD inspected a large sample of the homeless shelters for which it provides assistance. The inspections focused on whether shelters met applicable federal Section 8 Housing Quality Standards (HQS), fire safety requirements, and health standards.

Findings

Emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities

Of the 46 emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities inspected, the inspections found 40 (87%) of them in good condition, four (9%) in fair condition and two (4%) in poor condition. Although some of those rated in good condition may need minor repairs or have experienced deferred maintenance, they provided adequate space for the residents and were maintained in an acceptable manner. Those rated in fair condition consisted of three emergency shelter facilities serving a general homeless population and one emergency shelter serving victims of domestic violence. Those rated in poor condition were both emergency shelters serving a general homeless population; one of these was unoccupied at the time of inspection.

Supportive services

As a part of the fiscal year 1999 SHARE Shelter Support Grant application for funding, DHCD requested information about each applicant's provision of the twenty-three supportive services listed in the section labeled "Background." Nineteen (41% of sample) of the shelters included in the sample provided all of these services. Five (11% of sample) provided at least 21 of the services, ten (22% of sample) provided at least 18 of the services, four (9% of sample) provided at least 16 of the services and (17% of the sample) provided less than 16 of the services.

All of the sample shelters provided needs assessment, case management, and information and referral services. The services provided by less than 85% of the sample

shelters were vocational training, job placement, adult education, legal assistance, day care, health care, and mentoring.

Recommendations

The primary objective of the SHARE Shelter Support Grant (SSG) is to provide funding for rehabilitation, repair, and improvements to bring existing facilities into compliance with state and local health and building codes. These activities should be completed before SSG funds are used for operations and supportive services. However, many shelter providers have focused on the immediate needs of food, health care, and a place to sleep rather than on the physical condition of the facility, placing a higher priority on these items than on routine maintenance and repair given the limited funds available and the level of needs among homeless individuals and families.

If the same percentage of shelter facilities that received a poor rating (9%) is applied to the total number of facilities housing children (126), the results suggest that eleven shelter facilities may need major repairs. In FY 1995, a one-time program offered a grant of \$20,000 to shelter providers for deferred maintenance and other repairs. These repairs were made at twenty-eight facilities with an average cost of \$17,114 per facility. Assuming eleven shelter facilities currently need a similar level of funding to perform deferred maintenance items and other repairs, a total of \$188,254 would be needed.

An estimated \$200,000 per shelter facility would be needed to rehabilitate shelters receiving a poor rating. The two facilities receiving a poor rating accounted for 4% of the sample. If 4% of the total number of shelters housing children would not pass inspection, \$1,000,000 would be necessary for rehabilitation activities. These shelter facilities are eligible for SHARE Expansion Program funds if it is documented that the shelter beds will be lost without rehabilitation activities.

There are 23 shelter providers currently receiving funds through the Child Services Coordinator Program. There are 84 providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing for women and children. Providing salary support for a coordinator of children's services in *all* emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities serving families and children would require an additional \$954,772.

I. INTRODUCTION

In fiscal year 1999, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) funded 97 providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing. Of these, 30 provided emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence, 4 provided transitional housing for victims of domestic violence, 44 provided emergency shelter for general homeless populations, 22 provided transitional housing for general homeless populations, 5 provided winter shelter, and 2 provided day shelter services only.¹

DHCD offers funding to providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing through various State and federally funded programs. Ninety-seven shelter providers received grants through the State-funded SHARE Shelter Support Grant for operations and supportive services. Seventy-six received grants through the federally funded SHARE Federal Shelter Grant for operations and supportive services. Thirty-eight accessed grants through the federally funded Child Care for Homeless Children Program for assistance with the costs of child care for parents who were working, or in an education or job training program. Twenty-three received support for the salaries of children's services coordinators through the State-funded Child Services Coordinator Program. Providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing for victims of domestic violence may also access funds through the Virginia Department of Social Services and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. Additional sources of funding for all types of shelters include other State and federal agencies, the United Way, local government grants, private foundations, donations and fund-raising events.

In the past, the phenomenon of homelessness was largely confined to single men. Today, according to Homes for the Homeless, a nonprofit agency in New York, the average age of a homeless person in America is nine. The National Urban Institute estimates that there are over 1.2 million homeless children in the nation. In Virginia, in fiscal year 1999, emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities receiving funding through the DHCD sheltered 7,991 persons under the age of eighteen. These children represented 31.47 percent of all homeless persons sheltered in these facilities.

The Action Alliance for Virginia's Children and Youth reports in its *KIDS COUNT in Virginia: 1999 Data Book* that children need order and a feeling of being protected to grow and thrive. Physical safety and psychological security are essential to their health, education and overall development.

The Virginia Commission on Youth and the Virginia Housing Study Commission completed a study of the needs of homeless children, requested through House Joint Resolution 181, in 1997. The one-year study identified malnutrition, poor health, and physical, emotional and social developmental delays as characteristics of many homeless

¹ The total number of shelter providers by type is greater than the number of shelter providers for which DHCD provides funds. Many providers operate more than one type of shelter and/or may operate more than one shelter of a particular type.

children. It was reported that homeless children experience chronic health problems at twice the rate of other children.

In response to the issues identified by the Virginia Commission on Youth and the Virginia Housing Study Commission, the 1996 General Assembly appropriated \$360,000 for salary support of children's services coordinators in emergency shelters. However, the children's services coordinators concentrate on the health and emotional needs of the children rather than the physical conditions present in the homeless facility.

House Joint Resolution 703, introduced by Delegate Frank W. Wagner, requested that the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) increase its efforts in improving the condition of and the provision of services to shelters for homeless families. The resolution further requested DHCD to report on the progress of its efforts.

II. BACKGROUND

Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities

Emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities may be configured in a variety of styles. These styles include single family dwellings, shared bedrooms with communal living, kitchen and dining space, individual bedrooms with communal living, kitchen and dining space, apartments, and barracks or dorm style sleeping quarters with communal living, kitchen, dining space. Many shelters set aside a room or an area for children's activities. Although some kitchen and dining facilities may be required to undergo periodic inspection by a local jurisdiction's Health Department, there are no State regulations specific addressing the physical conditions of homeless facilities, nor is any operating license required. Outside of a visual inspection, DHCD staff is not qualified to determine health-related conditions.

When new construction or rehabilitation requiring a building permit is performed, the homeless facility must meet the building codes effective in the local jurisdiction. As a safeguard, an annual fire inspection is required for all homeless facilities, excluding single family dwellings, receiving support through DHCD. All facilities that fail this inspection must exercise appropriate corrective actions and undergo additional inspection. Local jurisdictions may impose additional inspections as desired.

DHCD uses the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 Housing Quality Standards, as well as HUD's Habitability Standards, to determine the basic sanitary and safety conditions in homeless facilities. Among other elements, these standards require that facilities must be accessible without unauthorized use of other private properties. The facility must provide an adequate, acceptable space to sleep and securely store belongings; natural or mechanical ventilation; adequate heating and/or cooling; adequate illumination and sufficient electrical sources; and suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve food in a sanitary manner.

Supportive Services

Supportive services offered to residents of homeless facilities may include some or all of the following:

Needs Assessment	Legal Assistance
Case Management	Children's Programs
Information and Referral	Child Care
Substance Abuse Counseling	Support Group(s)
Individual/Family Counseling	Food
Vocational Training	Clothing
Job Placement	Housing Counseling
Employment Counseling	Health Care
Adult Education	Mental Health Care
Life Skills Training	Mental Health Counseling
Budgeting/Financial Training	Mentoring
Parenting Workshops/Classes	Transportation

These services may be offered through an in-house program or through linkages with other service providers, including local and State agencies. It is a requirement for all shelter providers receiving funding through DHCD to offer needs assessment, case management and information and referral. Other supportive services should be appropriate and adequate for the homeless population(s) served.

Study Methodology

DHCD used the following procedure to identify a sample of shelters that would receive an on-site inspection. DHCD identified all emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities that (1) receive funds through DHCD and (2) provide housing for families with children. Facilities were arranged alphabetically by the name of the shelter provider and were assigned sequential numbers. The address of each site was included for shelter providers operating ten or fewer individual sites. For those operating more than ten individual sites, the shelter provider appeared only once. Ten percent of that shelter provider's facilities would be inspected. The sample facilities were chosen from the resulting 126 facilities.

A table of random numbers was used to determine a stratified random sampling of at least 30 percent of the facilities. The actual sample of 46 facilities represents 36.5% of the total number and is representative of the number of facilities located in each area of the State.

To insure that DHCD staff would view the normal condition of the facility, shelter providers received no more than seven days in advance of the scheduled inspection.

DHCD staff experienced with Housing Quality Standards and familiar with other building standards performed the inspections. During the inspection, staff also reviewed the most recent fire inspection report.

Information collected through the application process for the SHARE Shelter Support Grant Program identified the supportive services offered by each shelter provider.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

Emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities

Of the 46 emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities inspected, the inspections found 40 (87%) of them in good condition, four (9%) in fair condition and two (4%) in poor condition. Although some of those rated in good condition may need minor repairs or have experienced deferred maintenance, they provided adequate space for the residents and were maintained in an acceptable manner. Those rated in fair condition consisted of three emergency shelter facilities serving a general homeless population and one emergency shelter serving victims of domestic violence. Those rated in poor condition were both emergency shelters serving a general homeless population; one of these was unoccupied at the time of inspection.

Supportive services

As a part of the fiscal year 1999 SHARE Shelter Support Grant application for funding, DHCD requested information about each applicant's provision of the twenty-three supportive services listed in the section labeled "Background". Nineteen (41% of sample) of the shelters included in the sample provided all of these services. Five (11% of sample) provided at least 21 of the services, ten (22% of sample) provided at least 18 of the services, four (9% of sample) provided at least 16 of the services and (17% of the sample) provided less than 16 of the services.

All of the sample shelters provided needs assessment, case management, and information and referral services. The services provided by less than 85% of the sample shelters were vocational training, job placement, adult education, legal assistance, day care, health care and mentoring.

Recommendations

The primary objective of the SHARE Shelter Support Grant (SSG) is to provide funding for rehabilitation, repair, and improvements to bring existing facilities into compliance with state and local health and building codes. These activities should be completed before SSG funds are used for operations and supportive services. However,

many shelter providers have focused on the immediate needs of food, health care, and a place to sleep rather than on the physical condition of the facility. It is difficult for shelter providers to place a higher priority on routine maintenance and repair and for unexpected major repair when funds are limited and the needs of the homeless individuals and families remain great.

When the percentage of shelter facilities in the sample that received a poor rating (9%) is applied to the total number of facilities housing children (126), the results suggest that eleven shelter facilities may need major repairs. In FY 1995, a one-time program offered a grant of \$20,000 to shelter providers to perform deferred maintenance items and other repairs. These repairs were made at twenty-eight facilities with an average cost of \$17,114 per facility. Assuming eleven shelter facilities currently need a similar level of funding to perform deferred maintenance items and other repairs, a total of \$188,254 would be needed.

An estimated \$200,000 per shelter facility would be needed to rehabilitate shelters receiving a poor rating. The two facilities receiving a poor rating accounted for 4% of the sample. If 4% of the total number of shelters housing children would not pass inspection, \$1,000,000 would be necessary for rehabilitation activities. These shelter facilities are eligible for SHARE Expansion Program funds if it is documented that the shelter beds will be lost without rehabilitation activities.

There are currently 23 shelter providers receiving funds through the Child Services Coordinator Program. There are 84 providers of emergency shelter and transitional housing for women and children. Providing salary support for a coordinator of children's services in *all* emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities serving families and children would require an additional \$954,772.

APPENDIX A

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 703

Requesting the Department of Housing and Community Development to increase its efforts in improving the condition of and the provision of services to shelters for homeless families.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 1999

Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 1999

WHEREAS, the Department of Housing and Community Development has the responsibility of coordinating services and resources to assist the homeless; and

WHEREAS, 39 homeless shelters, 36 transitional living programs and 30 domestic violence shelters which serve homeless families with children all receive funding through the Department; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Session of the General Assembly provided \$360,000 to shelters to hire child coordinators to help access necessary services in the community for children who were residents of either homeless or domestic violence shelters; and

WHEREAS, homeless children have a higher incidence of psychological problems, learning disabilities, poor academic performance and incidence of delinquency than a comparative group of low-income children, which is exacerbated by continued exposure to unsafe and unsanitary conditions at homeless shelters; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Housing and Community Development be requested to increase its efforts in improving the condition of and the provision of services to shelters for homeless families. The Department shall report on the progress of its efforts.

The Department shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

APPENDIX B: INSPECTION RESULTS

Project	Region	Location	Type	Condition	# of Units	Inspection Remarks
Family Crisis Support Services Inc,	1	Norton	DVES	G	1	Occupied facility, no residents on day of inspection, adequate lighting, space, kitchen, beds play area
People, Incorporated of Southwest Virginia	1	Grundy	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, bungalow, adequate space, lighting, kitchen bedroom play area
People, Incorporated of Southwest Virginia	1	Bristol	TH	G	5	3 unoccupied, 2 occupied facilities managed by Bristol housing authority, Section 8, adequate lighting, space, kitchen, beds play area in common
DOVES, Inc.	2	Danville	DVES	F	1	Occupied facility @ inspection. Full capacity. Preparing additional room. Adequate lighting. Smoke detectors. Junky and crowded.
Safehome System, Inc.	2	Covington	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen bedroom play area
The Salvation Army/ Roanoke	2	Roanoke	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen bedroom play area
YMCA Central Virginia	2	Lynchburg	ES/TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchens on each floor.
YWCA of Roanoke Valley	2	Roanoke	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen bedroom play area, constructed for its current use.
Project HOLD	3	Lawrenceville	ES/TH	P	1	Unoccupied & Uninhabitable, Total renovation is required to bring up to code.
YMCA Women's Advocacy Program	3	Richmond	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
St. Joseph Villa	3	Richmond	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate lighting. Kitchen, bedroom, living and play areas adequate
Crisis Assistance Response Emergency	3	Petersburg	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen bedroom play area. Renovated in 1983
Ecumenical Family Shelter, Inc.	4	Norfolk	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
F.O.R. kids, inc.	4	Norfolk	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space. Needs minor repairs and some deferred maintenance performed

Project	Region	Location	Type	Condition	# of Units	Inspection Remarks
Hampton Ecumenical Lodging and Provisions	4	Hampton	ES	F	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space. 117 years old structure needs care. Many deferred maintenance items
Help and Emergency Response, Inc.	4	Portsmouth	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Samaritan House, Inc	4	Virginia Beach	TH	G	23	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Avalon: A Center For Women and Children	4	Williamsburg	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
The Salvation Army/ Peninsula Command	4	Newport News	ES	F	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, Poor lighting, peeling paint. Old Hospital facility currently used as shelter. Needs renovation and rehabilitation.
The Salvation Army/ Williamsburg	4	Williamsburg	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Portsmouth Area Resource Coalition Inc.	4	Portsmouth	ES	P	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, Poor lighting, peeling paint. Water leakage, needs major roof and ceiling repair. Unsafe base board heating units. Facility is damp and dingy. No food storage area. Laundry and living areas are combined.
Virginia Peninsula Council on Domestic Violence	4	Hampton	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Suffolk Shelter for the Homeless	4	Suffolk	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Choices, Council on Domestic Violence	5	Luray	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space. Newly renovated
First Step: A Response to Domestic Violence	5	Harrisonburg	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Mercy House, Inc.	5	Harrisonburg	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Monticello Area Community Action Agency	5	Charlottesville	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
The Salvation Army/ Charlottesville	5	Charlottesville	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Greater Orange Community Development Corp.	5	Orange	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Alivel Inc. Alive House	6	Alexandria	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.

Project	Region	Location	Type	Condition	# of Units	Inspection Remarks
Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless	6	Arlington	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Arlington Community Temporary Shelter	6	Arlington	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Arlington Community Temporary Shelter	6	Arlington	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
City of Alexandria	6	Alexandria	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space. Minimal deferred maintenance.
Culpeper Community Development Corp.	6	Culpeper	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Homestretch, Inc	6	Falls Church	TH	G	37	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Northern Virginia Family Service	6	Woodbridge	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Northern Virginia Family Service	6	Dale City	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Prince William County Office of Housing	6	Woodbridge	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Rappahannock Refugee, Inc. / Hope House	6	Fredericksburg	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
SERVE, Inc.	6	Manassas	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
SERVE, Inc.	6	Manassas	TH	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Services to Abused Families, Inc.	6	Culpeper	DVES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Thurman Brisben Homeless Shelter, Inc.	6	Fredericksburg	ES	F	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, kitchen, living, dormitory requires more ventilation, great amount of deferred maintenance., Kitchen plumbing old and questionable. Need repairs or replacement of cooling units. Facility is shabby, needs cleaning and painting, has holes in walls, inadequate lighting. Dormitory style configuration for women and children, common bathroom needs many repairs to plumbing, lighting and doors. Many flies in facility, fly-paper hanging to catch them

Project	Region	Location	Type	Condition	# of Units	Inspection Remarks
Volunteers of America Chesapeake	6	Woodbridge	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
Carpenter's Shelter	6	Alexandria	ES	G	1	Occupied @ inspection, adequate space, lighting, kitchen, living, bedroom and play room space.
ES= Emergency shelter DVES= Emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence TH= Transitional housing ES/TH= Emergency shelter and transitional housing			G= Good F= Fair P= Poor			