

December 22, 2003

TO: The Honorable Mark R. Warner

 and

 The General Assembly of Virginia

The Department of Social Services (Department) is charged in § 63.2-703 of the *Code of Virginia* with reporting on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on “the fulfillment of the Department’s responsibilities related to faith-based and community initiatives.” The report contained herein outlines the activities and accomplishments related to these responsibilities.

In July 2002, the Department began implementation of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative. The focus of this initiative is expansion of partnerships between public agencies and grass roots community and faith-based organizations to help meet social needs, provision of training and technical assistance to community organizations to strengthen their capacity as service providers, and identification of community based resources to assist those seeking services or new opportunities for collaboration.

During the initial implementation of the faith-based and community initiatives responsibilities, the Department has established a foundation that will help strengthen Virginia’s communities, families and workforce.

Respectfully submitted,

Maurice A. Jones
Commissioner

**REPORT ON THE VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED
AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE**

**Virginia Department of Social Services
December 22, 2003**

REPORT ON THE VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

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REPORT ON THE VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Executive Summary

Section 63.2-703 of the *Code of Virginia* charges the Department of Social Services (Department) with providing leadership and coordination for Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative and to report on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on the fulfillment of the Department's responsibilities.

Major Department accomplishments in strengthening community-based collaboration through the Faith-based and Community Initiative include:

- Facilitating meetings with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human services programs in Virginia.
- Conducting training and providing technical assistance on topics such as fund raising, grant writing and board development to expand the capacity of community organizations.
- Establishing a statewide network of local liaisons to assist in the dissemination of information and assistance. Liaisons have been identified in all local departments of social services, all community action agencies, all Workforce Investment Boards and numerous state agencies.
- Designing and maintaining the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative website, web-based resource directory and toll-free number for community based organizations and customers to obtain information on faith-based and community initiative activities and opportunities.
- Designing a technical assistance booklet for use by organizations considering partnerships with public agencies.
- Conducting a survey of local departments of social services and community action agencies to gather information on unmet social service needs of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients and on successful collaboration among community based organizations.
- Successfully competing for a \$1.28 million grant awarded by the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives of the Department of Labor grant to strengthen Virginia's workforce development system through expanded community based partnerships.

REPORT ON THE VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Study Mandate

The *Code of Virginia* directs the Department to carry out the following faith-based and community initiative responsibilities:

§ 63.2-703. *Faith-based and community initiatives; responsibilities of Department.*

A. The General Assembly finds that faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations make significant contributions to the welfare of our society and constitute an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs, and special efforts to increase utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations will enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs. To carry out these initiatives, the Department of Social Services shall have the following responsibilities:

- 1. Lead and facilitate meetings as necessary, with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human welfare programs in Virginia;*
- 2. Encourage conferences and meetings at the community level for faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;*
- 3. Provide procurement and funding information to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;*
- 4. Provide information regarding faith-based and community initiatives and other information the Department may deem appropriate, to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, and other state agencies whose missions may be enhanced by increased awareness of such initiatives and information;*
- 5. Encourage the development and maintenance of a statewide network of local liaisons to assist in the dissemination of information and assistance;*
- 6. Develop a statewide list of available faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations. Such statewide list shall be made available to the public through the Department's website;*
- 7. Obtain information concerning faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations in other states;*
- 8. Conduct a survey of local departments of social services, community action agencies, and other appropriate entities by July 1, 2004, to collect information on*

unmet social service needs of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families recipients;

9. Make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly on the fulfillment of the Department's responsibilities related to faith-based and community initiatives; and

10. Perform such other duties as the Department deems appropriate.

B. Nothing in this section shall imply or be inferred to mean that additional federal or state funds will be available for these purposes or that contractual preferences will be given to such organizations other than past or potential performance standards utilized under the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.).

Introduction

This initial report on the status of Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative focuses on the activities and accomplishments related to both the Department's statutory responsibilities and the implementation of a grant from the Department of Labor (DOL). DOL grant funding is being used to establish employment information centers in community and faith-based organizations, expand the workforce development system through new partnerships, increase the number of community based organizations to partner with public agencies, and compete for public and private funding.

Background

Churches, mosques, synagogues and faith-based non-profits have been partnering with public agencies to provide community and social services for decades. Catholic health care systems; Jewish, Methodist, Catholic, and Lutheran family services agencies; and Jewish, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian long-term care facilities have long partnered with government to address community needs. With the passage in 1996 of federal welfare reform legislation that emphasized government working with faith-based and grass roots partners to deliver services to communities and low-income families, new emphasis was placed on public private partnerships.

As Virginia implemented welfare reform, the 1999 General Assembly established the Special Task Force Studying the Ways Faith-Based Community Service Groups May Provide Assistance to Meet Social Needs. This Task Force gathered information and heard recommendations from community organizations, members of the faith-community, legal scholars, government agencies, and Virginia citizens to learn how to work together to address the needs of our communities. The Task Force examined the potential for collaboration between public agencies and community organizations in addressing multiple community needs such as social services, education, public safety, and housing.

As a result of the work of the Task Force, the 2000 Virginia General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 289, which provided the blueprint for encouraging historic relationships between public and non-public groups and for creating new partnerships to help those in need.

The 2001 General Assembly enacted legislation adding specific language to the Virginia procurement statute stating that public bodies are allowed to enter into contracts with faith-based organizations. While this always had been possible, not all organizations were aware of the option. In 2002, the General Assembly passed legislation for continuing collaboration with community and faith-based organizations and outlined responsibilities of the Department for this initiative.

Implementation of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative

While government has a responsibility to help those in need, its collaboration with private, community-based and faith-based organizations is essential to helping all Virginians build a better life. Many grassroots organizations currently provide services to address community needs. These groups collaborate with public agencies across Secretariats. Collaboration with community organizations helps ease unmet needs for day care, mentoring for youth and adults, and foster care. Many community-based and faith-based organizations provide clothing, medicine, eyeglasses, dental assistance, and transportation; work with ex-offenders and their families; help with emergency fuel and other utilities; and assist with job readiness and training.

Collaboration was carried out informally and formally through contracts. Examples of informal collaboration or collaboration by agreement include a synagogue volunteering to provide literacy training, members of a mosque serving as job coaches, and a church and non-profit group operating a mentoring program that helps ex-offenders transition back to the community.

Collaboration was also accomplished more formally through contracts. Contracting formally with both non-profit organizations and religious groups has historically been one method Virginia public agencies deliver services. However, this opportunity was not understood by all community organizations. At the recommendation of the Faith-Based Task Force, Virginia procurement law now includes language that clearly outlines that faith-based organizations can compete for government contracts.

Accomplishments

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2002, the Department put in place the framework for strengthening community-based collaboration through the Faith-Based and Community Initiative. Accomplishments through SFY 03 include:

- Facilitating meetings with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human welfare programs in Virginia. Meetings have been held with faith-based and community organizations in Danville, Richmond, Wytheville, Charlottesville, Radford, Fairfax, Culpepper, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Hampton, Virginia Beach, and Petersburg. The Virginia League of Social Services Executives, the Virginia Council Against Poverty, the Rural Health Association, the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation, Workforce Investment Boards and multiple faith-based organizations across the state are examples of organizations with whom there has been dialogue and coordination.

- Conducting eight community collaboration conferences across the state. These one-day conferences brought together public and grass roots community and faith-based groups to focus on public/private partnership opportunities, strengthening the workforce development system through local collaboration, and expanding the capacity of the community organizations through training on topics such as fund raising, grant writing, and board development.
- Establishing a statewide network of local liaisons to assist in the dissemination of information and assistance. Liaisons have been identified in all local departments of social services, all community action agencies, and all Workforce Investment Boards. Additionally, outreach contacts have been identified for the Departments of Aging, Corrections, Education, Emergency Management, Employment Commission, Medical Assistance Services and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
- Designing and maintaining the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative website. This site includes technical assistance for community and faith-based organizations, and is found at <http://www.dss.state.va.us/community/faith.html>
- Launching a web-based resource directory of over 400 community and faith-based organizations that serve localities. Interested parties can search the directory by locality and service areas. Additionally, it includes a link for directions to the service provider. New faith-based and community groups continue to register in the directory, which is updated quarterly. The directory is found at http://www.dss.state.va.us/community/faith_directory.cgi.
- Establishing a toll-free number for community based organizations and the public to obtain information on faith-based and community initiative activities and opportunities.
- Designing a technical assistance booklet for use by organizations considering partnerships with public agencies. Information is provided on funding sources, grant writing, formation of a non-profit organization, models for collaboration, and information on what to expect when contracting with public agencies.
- Conducting a survey of local departments of social services and community action agencies to gather information on unmet social service needs of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

recipients and on successful collaboration among community based organizations.

- Implementing the DOL grant to strengthen Virginia’s workforce development system through expanded coordination and collaboration between faith-based and community organizations and the state’s One-Stop employment and training network.

The federal grant received through the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives will enhance participation of grass roots community and faith-based organizations in workforce development in the state. This project is currently underway, with the following accomplishments:

- Established employment information centers in community and faith-based organizations to provide career and job search information;
- Expanded the workforce development system through new partnerships between the community and faith-based organizations and the One-Stop Centers providing employment training and job placement services;
- Increased the number of organizations listed for referrals in Virginia’s Faith Based and Community Initiative Resource Directory; and
- Built the capacity of faith-based and community organizations to partner with public agencies and compete for public and private funding.

In order to expand workforce support services across the state, 43 employment information centers have been established in competitively selected community and faith-based organizations. The centers provide job seekers with access to on-line employment information resources. Additionally, they will provide assistance with resume development and preparation for job interviews. The following is a listing of the selected organizations and their locations:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Holiness Tabernacle Community Resource Center | Roanoke |
| • Outreach Ministry | Newport News |
| • Radford Family Life Community Center | Radford |
| • Safehome Systems | Covington |
| • Rural Areas Development Association | Gate City |
| • Rappahannock Goodwill Industries | Fredericksburg |
| • Mountain Shelter | Wytheville |
| • New Life Community Development Center | Hampton |
| • Piedmont United Way | Culpeper |

- Multi-Generational Services
 - Garfield F. Childs Memorial Fund
 - WPGF, Educational Resource Center
 - Urban League of Hampton Roads
 - Greater Works Community Development Corp.
 - Total Action Against Poverty
 - Occupational Enterprises
 - Office of Human Affairs
 - STEP, Inc.
 - Stafford County Head Start
 - For the Children Partners in Prevention
 - Technical Associates of Rockingham Co.
 - Boaz and Ruth
 - Virginia Economic Bridge
 - Rooftop of Virginia
 - Nia Incorporated of Greater Richmond
 - Lynchburg Community Action Group
 - Mercy House
 - APCCL/T.A.P.
 - Faith Temple of God in Christ
 - East District Family Resource Center
 - Blue Ridge Independent Living Center
 - Temple Raphael
 - Mountain Community Action Program
 - William Byrd Community House
 - Gloucester-Mathews Job Referral Service
 - Emporia/Greenville Literacy Council
 - C. Waldo Scott Center for H.O.P.E.
 - Trinity Baptist Church
 - Waynesboro Resident Organization
 - St. Matthew Word of Life Fellowship
 - Hope Community Development Corporation
 - Richmond Community Action Program
 - Helping Hands
- Portsmouth
 - Richmond
 - Appomattox
 - Norfolk
 - Doswell
 - Roanoke
 - Lebanon
 - Newport News
 - Rocky Mount
 - Fredericksburg
 - Martinsville
 - Harrisonburg
 - Richmond
 - Radford
 - Galax
 - Richmond
 - Lynchburg
 - Harrisonburg
 - Petersburg
 - Rocky Mount
 - Richmond
 - Roanoke
 - Norfolk
 - Marion
 - Richmond
 - Gloucester
 - Emporia
 - Newport News
 - Richmond
 - Waynesboro
 - Roanoke
 - Fredericksburg
 - Richmond
 - Surry

The Department also awarded DOL grant funds to five community based organizations for employment of five community collaboration coordinators. The coordinators are charged with identifying community based resources and linking community and faith-based organizations to Virginia's Workforce Development System in a specific area of the state. In order to accomplish this goal, the coordinators were directed to work with their local Workforce Investment Boards, the state grant staff, and their respective local community and faith organizations. Each coordinator was given guidance on determining the best way to provide assistance and the specific activities necessary to best meet the

needs of the local system. Located across the Commonwealth, the collaboration grantees are:

- Holiness Tabernacle Community Resource Center, Roanoke
- Garfield F. Childs Memorial Fund, Richmond
- Voluntary Action Center of the New River Valley, Christiansburg
- Workforce Organization for Regional Government, Arlington
- New Life Community Development Center, Hampton.

As community organizations are identified, they are invited to participate as listings in the Resource Directory for the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative. In addition to the original 200 organizations that registered for the directory, another 250 have requested inclusion as a result of outreach by the community collaboration coordinators and Department training.

The final activities related to the DOL Faith-Based and Community Initiative grant have a two fold objective. The first is to help community and faith-based organizations understand Virginia's workforce development system and ways they can partner formally or informally with the One-Stop network. The second is to strengthen the capacity of faith-based and community organizations to partner with public agencies and to compete for public or private funding for delivery of services. These objectives have been met through one-on-one technical assistance to community or faith-based organizations and through eight one-day conferences.

Conferences have been held in Chesapeake, Richmond, Lynchburg, Wytheville, Staunton, Farmville, Newport News and Fredericksburg. Community collaboration conferences are still to be scheduled for Fairfax and Radford. Use of a pre and post conference survey has shown that participants are gaining knowledge and developing skills to help them strengthen and expand the service delivery network in their localities. Over 1000 individuals received training or technical assistance through the faith-based and community initiative during the last year.

Local Departments of Social Services Responses to Surveys

A survey of unmet needs and successful community partnerships was sent to local departments of social services and community action agencies. Approximately 27 percent of local departments of social services replied to the surveys on unmet needs and community partnerships. The sample represents both small and large agencies as well as rural and urban. Most agencies reported numerous partnerships that help provide needed services. Among the services provided by faith and community organizations are job readiness and placement, mentoring, and emergency services such as shelter, fuel, transportation and medication.

In several areas, faith-based organizations provide office space for satellite offices for local departments of social services, thus bringing services to where they are needed. In one area, money management seminars are conducted using donated funds. In another, workshops are held on child-rearing. Child care services are purchased from faith and community organizations.

The disabled population is also served through partnerships. Supportive services are offered to TANF and former TANF recipients with disabilities. Assessments and referrals to the Department of Rehabilitative Services for psychological evaluation and job training are provided.

Church and community volunteers in some areas of the state provide services such as running errands, doing light housekeeping, and making minor home repairs. They share meals with their clients and help them locate appropriate clothing for work.

The commitment and capability of the partners in bringing much needed services to clients is evident in the network of volunteer organizations in Virginia's diverse communities. However, even with the partnerships in place, there are several areas where more collaboration is needed. Most local departments mentioned transportation and child care as areas that need improvement. More approved in-home facilities might help to eliminate the shortage of affordable, reliable child care, especially for families with non-traditional work hours and/or sick children.

Other unmet needs include limited education/skills training, English proficiency classes, affordable housing, and substance abuse services. Many of those seeking self-sufficiency do not possess the skills or education needed to enable them to obtain and maintain a job that pays a "living wage." With large numbers of immigrants coming to the United States and their lack of command of the English language, a critical ingredient for success is lacking. In some areas, the high cost of appropriate housing poses a significant barrier to a low-income family's ability to move to a safe environment. Finally, substance abuse is a major reason for failure in employment.

Progress has been made in addressing the unmet needs of those Virginians striving to create a better life for themselves and their children. Yet, more remains to be done.

Community Action Agencies Responses to Surveys

Thirty percent of the community action agencies responded to the survey on unmet needs and faith-based and community partnerships. Those responding indicate that they partner with 39 individual churches/faith-based organizations and with 30 associations representing an unknown number of other churches and community-based organizations. The faith-based relationships tend to be informal and deal with the provision of emergency services such as shelter, food, utility payments, clothing and transportation.

The relationships are reciprocal between community action agencies and the faith-based groups in both receiving and providing referrals. Many of the churches make regular donations to the community action agencies in order to assist with their programs. Urban areas provide more programs supported by the faith-based organizations, while in rural areas, the faith-based organizations and community action agencies work more on a case-by-case basis to help individuals or families in need.

Community action agencies identified unmet needs such as housing for ex-offenders upon their re-entry into the community, the need for better health care and for adult education and training. Unmet needs related to education were employment and job placement, child care for working parents (particularly those parents who have to work second and third shifts), the need for training in English as a second language and for translators.

Two community action agencies reported a critical need for English as second language training due to the number of migrant workers and foreign-born residents in their areas. Survey respondents also identified unmet health care needs that included the need for prescription assistance, payment of hospital bills, and additional registered nurses.

Follow-up will be done with those local social services and community action agencies that did not respond to the initial surveys. A broader response will give a more accurate depiction of service gaps and needed resources.

Conclusion

The potential for community and faith-based organizations to collaborate with established public and private social service agencies is significant, but training and technical assistance are often needed before they can effectively administer a government contract or participate in a collaborative partnership. Using an educational approach, the Virginia Faith-based and Community Initiative staff provide technical assistance on capacity building to strengthen community based resources, on ways in which community groups and public agencies can collaborate, on the guidelines that apply when this occurs, and on the resources and opportunities for collaboration.

An important principle of collaboration between public agencies and community organizations is neutrality. Government can neither discriminate against nor favor religious organizations. There are no separate funds set aside exclusively for faith-based organizations. They must compete on the same basis as other potential service providers through standard funding streams. When the partnership is with a faith-based organization, faith-based groups must maintain separation between the services provided and religious activities in order to assure separation of church and state.

State and federal law provides safeguards for recipients of services by protecting their civil liberties. Community and faith-based organizations cannot require beneficiaries of services to participate in religious activities or attend religious services. Additionally, if individuals eligible for services object to the religious character of a service provider, government must make available an alternative service provider.

Community and faith-based organizations can apply for funding in any program for which they meet the eligibility requirements for service providers. They are subject to the same regulations as other service providers and are subject to audits. If these organizations segregate federal funds into separate accounts, only those funds will be audited. Finally, programs must operate in compliance with federal and state laws and funds may not be used for worship, religious instruction, or proselytizing.

Clearly, community based organizations are important components of Virginia's human services network and the Department will continue to provide information, technical assistance, and training to support increased utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations to enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out effective human services programs.

CODE OF VIRGINIA
CHAPTER 7.1.
FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES.

§ [63.2-703](#). *Faith-based and community initiatives; responsibilities of Department.*

A. The General Assembly finds that faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations make significant contributions to the welfare of our society and constitute an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs, and special efforts to increase utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations will enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs. To carry out these initiatives, the Department of Social Services shall have the following responsibilities:

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- 2. Encourage conferences and meetings at the community level for faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;*
- 3. Provide procurement and funding information to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;*
- 4. Provide information regarding faith-based and community initiatives and other information the Department may deem appropriate, to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, and other state agencies whose missions may be enhanced by increased awareness of such initiatives and information;*
- 5. Encourage the development and maintenance of a statewide network of local liaisons to assist in the dissemination of information and assistance;*
- 6. Develop a statewide list of available faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations. Such statewide list shall be made available to the public through the Department's website;*
- 7. Obtain information concerning faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations in other states;*
- 8. Conduct a survey of local departments of social services, community action agencies, and other appropriate entities by July 1, 2004, to collect information on unmet social service needs of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families recipients;*

9. Make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly on the fulfillment of the Department's responsibilities related to faith-based and community initiatives; and

10. Perform such other duties as the Department deems appropriate.

B. Nothing in this section shall imply or be inferred to mean that additional federal or state funds will be available for these purposes or that contractual preferences will be given to such organizations other than past or potential performance standards utilized under the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.).