

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

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Live In Our Community Police Housing Program

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



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 19

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Introduction

Chapter 561 of the 2000 Acts of Assembly established the Live in Our Community Police Housing Program through §36-140.1 of the Code of Virginia. The Act assigned to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) responsibility for developing and administering the new program with the cooperation of the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA). The program was intended to prevent crime while promoting neighborhood safety and security by encouraging law enforcement officers to become resident homeowners in certain economically distressed communities. The legislation anticipated the appropriation of funds to be held in a special nonreverting fund created in §36-140.2 of the Code of Virginia and known as the Live In Our Community Police Housing Fund.

Although the Act assigned DHCD primary administrative responsibility for the program, disbursements from the Fund could only be made upon a written request of the Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Other provisions of the Act required the promulgation of regulations establishing criteria for participant and community eligibility as well as the equal geographic distribution of initial program grants to at least five community-policing programs by June 1, 2001--subject to the availability of funds.

The Act concluded with a requirement for DHCD to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and report its findings to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2004.

Program Evaluation

In responding to the requirement for completing a program evaluation before its statutory sunset on July 1, 2005, the Department of Housing and Community Development anticipated that it would examine several aspects of the program once it became operational. These included:

- The willingness of eligible community-policing programs to participate in the program;
- Whether home ownership incentives were sufficient to encourage participation by eligible law enforcement officers; and

- Whether the program succeeded in meeting the goals of preventing crime and promoting neighborhood safety and security as indicated by such outcome measures as reductions in crime rates, increases in home ownership rates, and increases in inflation adjusted real property values reflecting more favorable perceptions of the community and the willingness of others to invest in the target community.

At the time that §§ 36-140.1 and 36-140.2 became law, it was assumed that at some point before the sunset date, funds would be appropriated to give effect to the program. However, to date the General Assembly has not appropriated funds for the program, nor have other sources of funding become available. Thus, the program never made awards to eligible community-policing programs that would have provided the basis for completing an evaluation of its effectiveness.

Conclusion

Under the circumstances, DHCD is unable to complete a meaningful evaluation of a program that has not been afforded a practical opportunity to test its underlying assumptions.