

A report of the
Department of Social Services
Commonwealth of Virginia

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

to the Governor and the
General Assembly of Virginia

December 2009



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Anthony Conyers, Jr.
COMMISSIONER

December 1, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
Governor of Virginia

The General Assembly of Virginia

FROM: Anthony Conyers, Jr. *Anthony Conyers Jr.*

SUBJECT: Report on the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' (DSS) biennial report examining DSS' activities related to faith-based and community initiatives, which has been prepared pursuant to § 63.2-703 of the Code of Virginia. If you have questions or need additional information concerning this report, please contact me.

AC/lrm

Preface

Section 63.2-703 of the Code of Virginia charges the Department of Social Services (DSS) 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 DSS' 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:

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....

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Executive Summary

Section 63.2-703 of the Code of Virginia charges the Department of Social Services (DSS) 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 DSS' responsibilities.

Major DSS accomplishments during the period from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009 that strengthened faith-based and community collaboration through the Faith-Based and Community Initiative include:

- Hosting seven regional best practice forums with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human services programs in Virginia;
- Providing technical assistance to over 1,330 constituents on locating grant funding, obtaining training, and writing grant proposals;
- Developing employment resource guides for use by faith-based and community organizations serving as access points to Virginia's workforce development programs; and
- Increasing involvement by faith-based and community organizations in statewide emergency response and disaster relief efforts.

The regional best practice forums targeted communities considered "distressed" based on (1) unemployment, (2) the number of children enrolled in the school lunch program, and (3) median family income. Forums were held in Petersburg, Melfa (Eastern Shore), Wise, Keysville, Martinsville, Woodstock, and Sussex, and included 395 participants from over 38 localities.

This is the fourth report to the Governor and General Assembly. Building on previous successes, Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative will continue to affiliate faith-based organizations with state, local and community organizations to promote collaborative service delivery, accountability, transparency, and results. The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative have helped countless families, organizations, and communities across the Commonwealth.

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE July 1, 2007- June 30, 2009

Introduction

The Virginia General Assembly developed the foundation for Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative through a Joint Resolution of the 2002 Session of the General Assembly. The mission of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is to work across state agency lines and with local governments to:

- Promote partnerships between public agencies and community and faith-based groups to meet local needs;
- Provide training and technical assistance to help faith-based and community organizations build their capacity to provide effective services;
- Expand the state's pool of effective service providers; and
- Coordinate offers of assistance from Virginia's faith-based and community organizations during emergencies or natural disasters.

The 2002 Session of the General Assembly codified DSS' responsibilities to the Faith-Based and Community Initiative in § 63.2-703, and mandates that DSS make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly. The General Assembly stated, in § 63.2-703, that faith-based and community organizations are "an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs."

This fourth report summarizes, for the period of July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009, how the Faith-Based and Community Initiative's work "increase[d] utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations" to "enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs."

Meetings and Forums

To insure that DSS is responsive to the needs of faith-based and community organizations, Commissioner Anthony Conyers meets semi-annually with the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative Advisory Council (Council) established for this purpose. Appendix B lists the current membership of the Council.

In response to the recommendations of the Council, DSS convened seven regional best practices forums that focused on increased collaboration, best practices, and organizational capacity. These regional forums allowed participants to review indicators of community health, identify resources to support efforts that were already underway in their communities, and network with organizations having a similar mission. These meetings were intended to foster a

culture of collaboration with faith-based and community organizations and support increased partnerships to strengthen DSS' ability to address local needs across the Commonwealth.

The regional best practice forums targeted communities considered "distressed" based on (1) unemployment, (2) the number of children enrolled in the school lunch program, and (3) median family income. Forums were held in Petersburg, Melfa (Eastern Shore), Wise, Keysville, Martinsville, Woodstock and Sussex and included 395 participants from over 38 localities.

DSS partnered with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia One Church, One Child, and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, as well as local faith-based and community organizations to introduce participants to the resources offered by participating organizations.

Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative Best Practice Forums have resulted in:

- A conference held in May 2008 hosted by the Faith Community Health Ministry in the Petersburg area that focused on providing information and resources to promote health and wellness and network with faith-based and community organizations;
- A new partnership consisting of the Tabernacle Baptist Church's Restoration of Petersburg Community Development Corporation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the Better Housing Coalition that resulted in a housing tax credit application being submitted to the Virginia Housing Development Authority for a project in Petersburg that will create 47 units of senior housing;
- A follow-up meeting held at the Chamber of Commerce on the Eastern Shore that resulted in the development of a community collaborative network to address community issues on an on-going basis;
- A collaboration to aid families needing assistance in paying their electric service bills between A&N Electric Cooperative; Accomack and Northampton Counties' Departments of Social Services; Members Helping Members, Inc. (MHM), a non-profit organization; Northampton Social Ministries; and the Accomack Interfaith Crisis Council. The Accomack Interfaith Crisis Council interviews applicants at Accomack DSS and Northampton Social Ministries interviews applicants at Northampton DSS;
- A raised awareness of the need to bring more faith-based and community organizations into the Southwest Virginia Regional Substance Abuse Coalition for Planning Districts 1 through 4; and
- Enhanced support for First Lady Anne Holton's "Forever Family" Initiative through corrected misperceptions about children in foster care.

At each of the regional forums, participants received information regarding grant opportunities and other resources to build their capacity to serve their communities. Participants are encouraged to visit DSS' website, www.vaservice.org, for further information on resources,

recruiting volunteers, training, and funding. Ninety-five percent of participating respondents rated these sessions as “beneficial” or “very beneficial.”

In addition, DSS continues to build and expand on initial workforce development efforts which began as part of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative in 2002. The Governor’s Office on Workforce Development has initiated the Virginia SHARE Network – Connecting Faith-Based and Community Organizations to Workforce Development. The purpose of the initiative is to involve more faith-based and community organizations to serve as access points for employment and training services available through the local workforce investment agencies. Using the information available through 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, which is also managed by DSS, local employment resource guides have been developed for every workforce investment area of the state. These quick reference guides provide volunteers working in faith-based and community organizations with information on resources available to support individuals seeking employment. On June 1, 2009, there were 78 faith-based and community organizations serving as access points across Virginia.

Faith-based and community organizations are playing a role in implementing the Virginia Community Reentry Program (VCRP). This approach to reentry is based on the Commonwealth’s participation in the National Governors Association Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy. VCPR is a community-based and family-focused approach to reentry being voluntarily implemented in Richmond, Norfolk, Culpeper, King George, Greensville/Emporia, Albemarle/Charlottesville, and Planning Districts 1, 2 and 3 of Southwestern Virginia. Non-profits, faith-based, and civic organizations are represented on local reentry councils in these localities, and many of the mentors in the family-to-family mentoring component of the program have been recruited from these sectors.

On-Going Technical Assistance

During the past two years, the DSS’ Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) has responded to over 1,330 requests for technical assistance from constituents. The requests for technical assistance fell into three general categories: locating grant funding, obtaining training opportunities, and writing grant proposals.

OVCS circulates a monthly e-newsletter, “Volunteer Virginia,” to over 800 subscribers. Each edition highlights funding and training opportunities as well as information specific to the faith-based community.

Statewide Network

Services offered by faith-based and community organizations are listed in 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, the statewide database of services available to Virginians. Organizations decide whether they want to have their services available to the general public or to specific neighborhoods. If an organization wants to restrict access to its services, meaning they are available only at certain times and in specific areas, 2-1-1 VIRGINIA Community Resource Specialists can screen calls and make referrals.

The 2-1-1 VIRGINIA database routinely provides mailing lists to state agencies seeking to do outreach in the faith community. The database is also used by organizations to identify potential partners providing similar services within a particular region of the state.

Coordination of Efforts during Disasters

To insure a well-coordinated and planned response to disasters, faith-based and community organizations are encouraged to affiliate with a traditional disaster and emergency response system, such as Virginia Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) and local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). Organizations are also encouraged to list disaster and recovery-related services with 2-1-1 VIRGINIA. This ensures there is a centralized database of services available for use by local authorities through their local Emergency Operations Center or through the Virginia Emergency Operations Center upon request.

The Office on Volunteerism and Community Service is an active member of VOAD and receives all communications sent to its member organizations. It uses this communication to identify resources that can be included in local and statewide emergency operations plans. Information received through VOAD is also disseminated, when appropriate, to all 2-1-1 and volunteer centers statewide through a special disaster mailing list. This ensures that all centers simultaneously receive the information as to how to appropriately direct offers of assistance from faith-based and community organizations and the general community.

Conclusion

This is the fourth report to the Governor and General Assembly. Building on previous successes, Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative will continue to affiliate faith-based organizations with state, local and community organizations to promote collaborative service delivery, accountability, transparency, and results. The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative have helped countless families, organizations, and communities across the Commonwealth.

Appendix A

§ 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. Coordinate offers of assistance from faith-based organizations during natural disasters;
 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.).

Virginia's Faith-Based & Community Initiative Advisory Council 2009-2010

Rev. Jonathan Barton

Virginia Council of Churches
Richmond, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Imam Mohamed Magid

Imam Adams Center
Sterling, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Mr. Seyoum Berhe

Arlington Diocese Office of Resettlement
Arlington, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2010

Rev. Dr. Robert Murray

First Baptist Church
Norfolk, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Mrs. Patricia Carter

For the Children Partners in Prevention, Inc.
Martinsville, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Ms. Mary Parker

Accomack County DSS
Accomack, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2009

Dr. Imad Damaj

Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs
Richmond, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Rabbi Ben Romer

Congregation OR Ami
Richmond, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Rev. James G. Daniely

Pace Student Center
Richmond, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Ms. Everlena Ross

Pittsylvania County Community Action
Chatham, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Pastor John Dooley

Heart of Compassion Partnerships
Chesapeake, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2010

Rev. Cessar Scott

Baptist General Convention
Richmond, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2010

The Rev. Melissa Hays-Smith, LCSW

Episcopal Diocese of Southwest VA
Roanoke, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Rev. Doug Smith

Virginia Interfaith Center
Richmond VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2009

Pastor Joseph Henderson

Bragg Hill Family Life Center
Fredericksburg, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2010

Ms. Aleta Spicer

Occupational Enterprises, Inc.
Lebanon, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Mrs. Edith Jones

The STOP Organization
Norfolk, VA

Term Expires: December 31, 2010

Ms. Alice Taylor

Presbytery of Eastern Virginia
Portsmouth, VA

Term Expires: March 31, 2012