



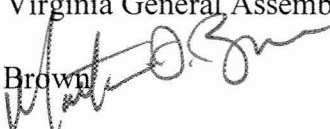
COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Martin D. Brown
COMMISSIONER

October 1, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Members, Virginia General Assembly

FROM: Martin D. Brown 

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

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' biennial report on 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 the report, please contact me.

MB/kc

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

October 2011

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, 2009 through June 30, 2011 that strengthened faith-based and community collaboration through the Faith-Based and Community Initiative included:

- Hosted nine regional best practice forums and capacity building workshops with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human services programs in Virginia;
- Provided technical assistance to over 2,000 constituents on locating grant funding and training opportunities, and advice and resources for writing grant proposals;
- Increased involvement by faith-based and community organizations in the DSS Strengthening Families Initiative; and
- Held five focus groups with local social service departments and community action agencies to determine how the Faith-based and Community Initiative might better support their efforts in local communities.

This is the fifth 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 community-based organizations across the Commonwealth.

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2011

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 (FBCI) 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 (Appendix A). 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 fifth report summarizes, for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011, 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 ensure that DSS is responsive to the needs of faith-based and community organizations, Commissioner Martin D. Brown has continued to meet 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 nine regional best practices forums that focused on increased collaboration, best practices, and organizational capacity building. 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.

In addition, DSS partnered with Virginia Community Capital (VCC), a multi-million dollar non-profit, community development financial institution (CDFI) and banking entity providing innovative loan and investment solutions for affordable housing and economic development projects in the Commonwealth of Virginia. VCC offers advisory services to help small businesses, non-profits and government entities operate more effectively. Because the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS), which leads the FBCI, serves some of the same organizations targeted by VCC, the partnership allowed both organizations to target capacity-building workshops at faith and community organizations that expanded their collaboration efforts and professional development.

Four of 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. These forums were held in Lynchburg, Wytheville, South Boston, and Warsaw. Two of the sessions were held by special request of faith leaders in communities not necessarily considered “distressed.” These were held in Chesapeake and Stafford. In collaboration with Virginia Community Capital, two more intensive capacity building workshops were held Martinsville and in Roanoke. The final regional forum was held in Hanover covering the greater Richmond metropolitan area. This forum served as the kick-off for DSS' Strengthening Families Initiative. In response to feedback from previous forum participants, five grant writing training sessions were offered following the regional forums.

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.”

On-Going Technical Assistance

During the past two years, the DSS' Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) has responded to over 2,000 requests for technical assistance from constituents. The requests for technical assistance fell into two general categories: locating grant funding and training opportunities and advice and resources for writing grant proposals.

OVCS circulates a monthly e-newsletter, “Volunteer Virginia,” to over 1,800 subscribers, an increase of over 1,000 new subscribers during the last two years. Each edition highlights funding and training opportunities as well as information specific to the faith-based community.

Statewide Network

In an effort to increase the state pool of effective service providers, DSS has worked to ensure that services offered by faith-based and community organizations are listed in 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, the statewide database of human services available to Virginians. At each regional forum, organizations are asked if they would be willing 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 screen calls and make appropriate referrals. Many church pantries in particular have allowed 2-1-1 VIRGINIA to make referrals to callers from the specific neighborhoods in which they serve.

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 faith-based and community organizations to identify potential partners providing similar services within a particular region of the state.

Coordination of Efforts during Disasters

To ensure 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 OVCS 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.

The Future

During the past year, regional meetings were held with directors of local social services and community action agencies to seek input as to the direction of the initiative over the upcoming two years. Using this information, OVCS is developing a two year strategic plan that will direct its activities during 2011-13. The plan, to be completed in November 2011, will address the DSS Strengthening Families Initiative and incorporate more two-way communication with local offices, as well as ensure wider distribution of best practices through use of video conferencing and other technologies.

Conclusion

This is the fifth 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.).

Appendix B

Virginia's Faith-Based & Community Initiative Advisory Council 2009-2011

Rev. Jonathan Barton

Virginia Council of Churches
Richmond

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Mr. Seyoum Berhe

Arlington Diocese Office of Resettlement
Arlington

Term Expired: December 31, 2010

Mrs. Patricia Carter

For the Children Partners in Prevention, Inc.
Martinsville

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Reverend William Coleman

Tri-County Community Action Agency
South Boston

Term Expires: July 31, 2013

Rev. James G. Daniely

Pace Student Center
Richmond

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Mel Howell

Hope Charitable Services
Portsmouth

Term Expires; December 31, 2013

The Rev. Melissa Hays-Smith

Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Virginia
Roanoke

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Ms. Alice Taylor

Presbytery of Eastern Virginia
Portsmouth

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Pastor Joseph Henderson

Bragg Hill Family Life Center
Fredericksburg

Term Expired: December 31, 2010

Imam Mohamed Magid

Imam Adams Center
Sterling

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Rev. Dr. Robert Murray

First Baptist Church
Norfolk

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Rabbi Ben Romer

Congregation OR Ami
Richmond

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Ms. Everlena Ross

Pittsylvania County Community Action
Chatham

Term Expires: March 31, 2012

Rev. Cessar Scott

Baptist General Convention
Richmond

Term Expired: December 31, 2010

Ms. Aleta Spicer

Occupational Enterprises, Inc.
Lebanon

Term Expires: December 31, 2011

Ms. Kimberley Miles

Petersburg Department of Social Services
Petersburg

Term Expires: July 31, 2013