

**Report to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees of the Virginia
General Assembly on Pregnant Women Support Fund
July 2012**

Background

In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly enacted SB1088, which created the Pregnant Women Support Fund to “support women and families who are facing unplanned pregnancy.” Pursuant to §32.1-11.6 of the Code of Virginia, the Board of Health is required to create and administer the Virginia Pregnant Women Support Fund as a special nonreverting fund. The General Assembly established the following authority and responsibilities for the Board of Health when administering the fund:

- Authority to solicit gifts, donations, bequests, and grants on behalf of the Fund from any source and to deposit all moneys received in the Fund.
- Responsibility to establish an application process and related procedures for community health centers, migrant health centers, homeless health centers, and public-housing centers seeking grants from the Fund.
- Authority and responsibility to use the Fund solely for the purposes of carrying out the following activities:
 - Purchasing or upgrading ultrasound equipment;
 - Creating a separate program for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking screening against pregnant women and new mothers;
 - Conducting a public campaign to increase public awareness;
 - Providing support services for students of institutions of higher education;
 - Providing funds to allow early childhood education programs to work with pregnant or parenting teens to complete high school and provide job training education; or
 - Providing for teenage or first time mothers education on the health needs of their infants through free home visits by registered nurses.

Virginia Department of Health Activities That Support Women and Families

VDH manages the following pregnancy-related programs and services that support women and families.

- *Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program*, which provides evidence-based home visiting programs in eleven at-risk communities, including Campbell, Danville, Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, Montgomery-Radford, Newport News, Norfolk, Suffolk-Southampton and Williamsburg.
- *Local Health Departments* either provide direct prenatal care services or make arrangements with local providers to ensure low income women receive care during pregnancy.
- *BabyCare Program*, which provides Medicaid case management services to pregnant women in 22 local health district offices and a small number of private community organizations, targeting high-risk pregnant women and infants up to two years of age.
- *First Time Motherhood / New Parents Initiative Program*, which promotes awareness of preconception and interconception issues through use of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, the existing resource and referral system in Virginia, targeting women and men of childbearing age.

- *Resource Mothers Program*, which uses lay community health workers to mentor pregnant teens through this difficult time in their lives and help them make the transition to parenthood, targeting teenagers throughout their pregnancy and up to their baby's first birthday.
- *Virginia Healthy Start/Loving Steps Program*, which provides case management and health education to reduce health disparities among the African-American population, targeting pregnant women in the cities of Petersburg and Norfolk and the county of Westmoreland.
- *Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)*, which provides nutrition education, breast feeding promotion and support, supplemental nutritious foods, and screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services, targeting pregnant women, infants, and children under 5 years of age.
- *WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program*, which helps improve initiation and duration rates of breastfeeding among postpartum women participating in the WIC Program through community-based peer education and support.
- *Text4baby*, which is a national program using mobile phones to text health messages regarding pregnancy and early parenting promoted by VDH
- *Healthy Baby Begins With You*, which is a program to train peer educators on college campuses regarding the role of preconception care and healthy lifestyles to reduce infant mortality.
- *Family Planning Program*, which provides individuals with comprehensive family planning and related preventive health services in 34 local health districts, targeting low income women and men of child bearing age.

From FY2007 through FY2012, no gifts, donations, bequests, or grants were received by the Fund. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) staff regularly review Grants.gov to identify funding opportunities.

Current Activities Related to §32.1-11.6

In September 2011, VDH was awarded \$1.486 million by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to administer and manage the Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Women Grant now known as the Pregnancy Assistance Fund Grant (PAF). The primary goal of the VDH PAF Project is to implement evidence-informed peer counselor programs through the development of an office of pregnant and parenting student services (OPPSS) at selected institutions of higher education (IHE). Each OPPSS will provide a myriad of health, educational, and social services and/or referrals to pregnant and parenting students aged 18-29 to assist them in achieving optimal health and completing their educational goals. A secondary goal of the grant is to address domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking on the participating college campuses. Therefore, the VDH PAF Project seeks to address two of the authorized purposes of §32.1-11.6 of the Code of Virginia by (1) “conducting a public campaign to increase public awareness” and (2) “providing support services for students of institutions of higher education” across Virginia. Improving services for pregnant and new parenting students who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking is a component of the services provided at the selected IHEs.

The three major VDH PAF Project strategies are presented below.

1. Provide support services for students enrolled in institutions of higher education (IHE) across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

After completion of a Request for Proposal (RFP) process begun in June 2011, two awards were made to Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) in the total amount of \$996,661 to conduct program activities through seven community colleges throughout Virginia. The contracts were made official in October 2011. A third award was made to Norfolk State University in June 2012 in the amount of \$100,000. Awards were made based on the extent to which each institution justified the following:

- Program need;
- Program cost;
- Organizational capabilities and qualifications;
- Effectiveness of planned activities;
- Existing or planned community support; and
- A small business subcontracting plan.

Each contractor is required to establish an Office of Pregnant and Parenting Student Support (OPPSS) to operate year-round and focus on connecting student-parents to existing campus and community resources, including academic services, child care, family planning, and health services. Institutions are further encouraged to help students apply for public benefits such as WIC, SNAP, and TANF, and several offices are preparing to train staff to provide on-campus eligibility screenings. All programs are required to provide several in-house supports, including tutoring, mentoring, and academic planning (with a special focus on balancing school and family obligations). College-based programs are also expected to conduct at least one campus-wide activity to raise awareness around domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. To-date, such activities have included involvement in the Red Flag Campaign, the White Ribbon Campaign, Take Back the Night or a comparable activity. Impacted communities include Alexandria, Annandale, Loudon, Manassas, Springfield, Woodbridge, Salem, Roanoke, Isle of Wight, Mecklenburg, Southampton, Suffolk, Franklin, Martinsville, Henry, Patrick, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Craig, Russell, Tazewell, Buchanan, Botetourt, Nottaway, Prince Edward, Emporia, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Hampton and Newport News.

2. Conduct a public awareness campaign of services available.

In September 2011, VDH initiated contractual agreements with Virginia Broadcasting Solutions to continue (a) development of public service announcements through print, radio, and television media and (b) development and maintenance of a web automated human interaction (WAHI) Internet site for the promotion of the PAF campus-based OPPSS and resources available to student-parents throughout the state. Since that time, Virginia Broadcast Solutions has assisted VDH in developing key promotional messages intended for use by participating IHE peer counselor programs and their campus-based media venues,

including internal television, radio stations and websites. A plan for targeted statewide distribution of program and resource information is under development and is planned for launch intermittently throughout the coming program year; September 1, 2012 – August 31, 2013.

3. Improve services for pregnant women and new parents who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Inherent in each IHE contract is the requirement to devote 15 percent of the total program funds requested to improve the identification and referral of pregnant and parenting victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking to services. In addition, each IHE is required to develop and implement a campus-based public awareness program regarding domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These activities will build upon each campus's existing prevention and awareness activities. Where none are currently being initiated, institutions will use established public awareness campaigns designed for use on college campuses such as The Red Flag Campaign, which was launched in 2007 to address the prevention of dating violence.