



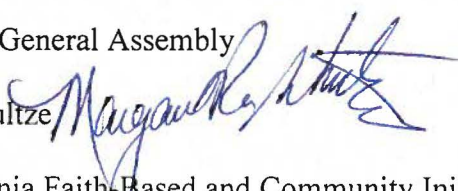
COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
*Office of the Commissioner*

Margaret Ross Schultze  
COMMISSIONER

October 1, 2015

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe  
Governor of Virginia  
  
Members, Virginia General Assembly

**FROM:** Margaret Ross Schultze 

**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, pursuant to § 63.2-703 of the Code of Virginia. If you have questions or need additional information concerning the report, please contact me.

MRS:kc

Attachment

A report of the  
Department of Social Services  
Commonwealth of Virginia

**Report on the Virginia Faith-based  
& Community Initiative**

October 2015

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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 (FBCI) and to report on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on the fulfillment of DSS' responsibilities. The following report documents the efforts and results achieved through the collaborative efforts of DSS staff and the volunteer members of the FBCI Advisory Council from July 2013 – June 2015 to meet the goals established by the General Assembly 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.

Major FBCI activities and outcomes achieved during this report period include:

- Increased the knowledge and awareness of community and faith organizations across Virginia through the promotion of *Volunteer Virginia*, a monthly e-newsletter sent to 5,000 faith-based and community partners. Several forms of social media are also utilized for communication;
- Responded with technical assistance to nearly 1,000 inquiries about grant writing, training, and fund development resources;
- Delivered several workshops at the Virginia Conference on Volunteerism and Service specifically designed to increase the capacity of community and faith-based organizations and foster collaboration; and
- Maintained strong working relationships with the Department of Emergency Management and voluntary organizations to plan for and respond to disasters.

The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative have helped to improve services and meet significant needs of citizens across the Commonwealth.

**Biennial Report on the Virginia Faith-based and Community Initiative  
January 2016**

**Report 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. 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.)

## **Background**

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 (FBCI) and to report on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on the fulfillment of DSS' responsibilities. This report documents the efforts and results achieved through the collaborative efforts of DSS staff and the volunteer members of the FBCI Advisory Council from July 2013 – June 2015 to meet the goals established by the General Assembly 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.

According to the *2014 Report on Volunteering and Civic Life in America*, an annual publication of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the National Conference on Citizenship, 29.1% of Virginia residents volunteer. This places Virginia in the favorable ranking of 18<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and Washington, DC. The report also indicates that 35.6% of Virginia volunteers do so through a religious organization which is higher than the national average of 33.9%. During the past two years, much work has been done to better integrate faith-based efforts in all aspects of volunteering and service.

## **Faith-based and Community Initiative Advisory Council**

The FBCI is strategically placed within DSS' Division of Community and Volunteer Services. This organizational placement allows staff to integrate FBCI priorities with ongoing statewide programs and projects.

The Faith-based and Community Initiative Advisory Council, comprised of 23 leaders of faith-based and community partner organizations, advises DSS and is instrumental in helping to increase the participation of faith-based and community organizations in the provision of human

service programs. Council members represent diverse faiths, community organizations and every geographic region of the Commonwealth. Quarterly meetings are structured to provide important updates and resources to Council members who are then encouraged to disseminate that information through their state-wide networks and in their local communities. DSS staff also have the opportunity to hear from Council members about any concerns or opportunities to better assist faith and community-based organizations across the State.

For FY15, the Council set three specific priorities for their (1) Work closely with the Governor's Advisory Board on Volunteerism and Service on issues significant to the faith-based organizations and community organizations; (2) Increase faith-based participation in the annual Virginia Volunteerism and Service Conference (3) Increase faith-based organization nominations for the Governor's Awards for Volunteerism and Services.

### **Activities and Outcomes**

The following section of this report details the activities and outcomes for each of the four goals of the Faith-based and Community Initiative.

#### **Goal 1: Promote Partnerships Among Public, Community, and Faith-based Groups**

- Included in the State Plans for the Community Services Block Grant, Refugee Resettlement, Family Violence, and AmeriCorps programs reference to the importance of faith-based and community organizations as partners in the delivery of services in Virginia.
- Led implementation of the Day to Serve campaign in Virginia in 2014 and 2015. Day to Serve is a joint project of the Governors of Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and the Mayor of the District of Columbia which encourages a month of volunteerism especially among different faith groups and community organizations. In 2014, the results from Virginia were outstanding: 329 volunteer service events involving 17,000 volunteers and 55,000 hours of volunteer time. One thousand seven hundred bags of garbage and debris were removed and 300,000 pounds of food were collected. The Faith-based and Community Initiative Advisory Council helped spread the word about Day to Serve and encouraged local communities to participate.
- Partnered with the Virginia Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnership Liaison Roundtable, a group of federal, state and local faith-based and community organizations convened by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This cooperation between two statewide, faith-based groups has prevented duplication of effort and has provided additional opportunities to stakeholders of both.
- Through the FBCI, nonprofits and faith organizations were contacted and encouraged to submit nominations for the annual Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards. The following community and faith-based organizations were recognized with Governor's Awards in 2014 and 2015:

- Newport News Community Emergency Response Team for building community preparedness through outreach and emergency shelter response and donating more than 3,100 volunteer hours annually.
- The Virginia Dental Association Foundation Mission of Mercy for outstanding contributions by a Community Organization for providing free dental care to Virginians who suffer from unrelenting dental disease and pain but are unable to get the help they need.
- Mercy Chefs is a faith-based disaster relief organization recognized for serving high-quality, professionally-prepared meals to victims, volunteers, and first responders in emergencies and natural disasters.

**Goal 2: Provide Training and Technical Assistance to Help Faith-Based and Community Organizations Build Their Capacity to Provide Effective Services**

- Increased knowledge and awareness of community and faith organizations across Virginia through wide dissemination of *Volunteer Virginia*, a monthly e-newsletter sent to 5,000 faith-based and community partners. Several forms of social media are also utilized for communication.
- Encouraged use of the extensive grants database, training calendar, and resource portal at [www.vaservice.org](http://www.vaservice.org). The website features public and private funding opportunities, training sessions, and resources for faith-based, volunteer, and community organizations. In 2014, this website received 4.1 million hits.
- Delivered workshops, developed by the FBCI Advisory Council, at the 2014 and 2015 Virginia Conference on Volunteerism and Service. This annual conference attracts 500 attendees from the nonprofit, faith and government sectors. The workshops utilize faith-based leaders in both the design and presentation of the workshops.
  - In 2014, a workshop entitled “Collaboration is a Two-Way Street: Working with Community & Faith Partners” was delivered and well received. At the September 2015 Conference, more than 40 workshops will be presented to build the capacity of our State’s nonprofit, faith and government workers. Workshops specifically developed by the FBCI will include collaboration between faith based and community groups, cultural sensitivity, faith-based response in times of disaster and fatherhood initiatives.

**Goal 3: Expand the Pool of Effective Service Providers**

- The Virginia No Kid Hungry Program is an important initiative for DSS and children across the State. The FBCI played a key role in promoting this program in order to increase the



number of meal sites and number of children served. Eddie Oliver, Virginia No Kid Hungry Program Manager, attended a meeting of the FBCI Advisory Council to educate members on the program and seek their help with expansion. Council members distributed information on summer feeding programs to their partner networks across the State. The expanded summer meal program was also widely publicized through the VA Service website site, newsletters, and 2-1-1 VIRGINIA.

- The FBCI Council is currently planning community/regional events that will provide opportunities for established and emerging faith-based, community and governmental partners to share information, connect, learn, and collaborate on key human services. A Council workgroup is developing these plans, with events to be held in later this year and in 2016.
- 2-1-1 VIRGINIA provides 24 hour information and referrals to meet human service needs. The more robust the 2-1-1 database is, the better able Call Specialists are to make accurate and useful referrals to callers in need. Communication to community and faith organizations is important to encourage them to sign up to be listed in the 2-1-1 database and also to encourage local citizens to call 2-1-1 when in need. Use of VA Service web site, Facebook accounts, Twitter and word of mouth through the FBCI Advisory Council have all been helpful in 2-1-1 reaching the point of having more than 18,000 programs listed in their database and handling more than 140,000 requests annually.

**Goal 4: Coordinate Offers of Assistance from Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Organizations During Emergencies or Natural Disasters**

- Collaborated with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management regarding Emergency Support Function 17 to assist with coordination of faith-based organizations in responding to emergencies.
- Maintained a faith-based and community organization contact list to be used for broad communication in the event of an emergency or disaster.
- Promoted the use of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA as a community resource in times of local or State disaster. Through 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, a centralized database of services is available for use by local authorities.
- Developed a training workshop for the 2015 Virginia Volunteerism and Service Conference to increase understanding of the important roles that faith-based and community organizations play during disasters. The workshop also covers the necessary coordination roles of Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters and Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

## **Conclusion**

Faith-based and community organization have been long-term partners with the Commonwealth to address community needs. Virginia's Faith-based and Community Initiative has continued to promote and expand participation of these important partners in the work and service delivery of social service programs. The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative during the last two years have continued to improve services and meet significant needs of citizen across the Commonwealth.

**Appendix**  
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