



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Danny TK Avula MD, MPH
Commissioner

November 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Janet D. Howell
Chair, Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee

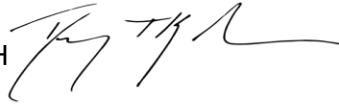
The Honorable Barry D. Knight
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable John Littel
Secretary of Health & Human Resources

The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Secretary of Education

The Honorable Robert Mosier
Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security

The Honorable Stephen E. Cummings
Secretary of Finance

FROM: Danny TK Avula MD, MPH 

SUBJECT: Report on a Model State Shelter Plan

This report is submitted in compliance with Item 349.B.1. of the 2022 Appropriation Act, which states:

B.1. The Department of Social Services, in consultation with institutions of higher education, and with the assistance of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Department of General Services, shall develop a model shelter

plan to include but not limited to the process of mobilization and demobilization of the shelter; relocation of residents when a state shelter is deactivated; warehousing of pre-positioned supplies; potential use of existing resources and vendors already under contract with institutions of higher education; and cost estimates for resources that would be reimbursed by the Commonwealth. The Department shall submit a report on the model plan and its recommendations, including challenges implementing such a plan in all state shelters, by October 15, 2022, to the chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and the Secretary of Finance.

Please contact me if you have questions at (804) 726-7011.

DA:kc

Attachment

Model State Shelter Plan October 2022

2022 Report Mandate

Item 349.B.1 of the 2022 Appropriations Act provides:

The Department of Social Services, in consultation with institutions of higher education, and with the assistance of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the Department of General Services, shall develop a model shelter plan to include but not limited to the process of mobilization and demobilization of the shelter; relocation of residents when a state shelter is deactivated; warehousing of pre-positioned supplies; potential use of existing resources and vendors already under contract with institutions of higher education; and cost estimates for resources that would be reimbursed by the Commonwealth. The Department shall submit a report on the model plan and its recommendations, including challenges implementing such a plan in all state shelters, by October 15, 2022, to the chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and the Secretary of Finance.

Background

An identical report requirement was included in the 2021 Appropriation Act, Item 358 B.1. (Special Session I, 2021). The model shelter report, [Report Document 777](#), was published in December 2021 and submitted to the appropriate committee chairs and secretariats. A summary of the report follows:

The 2020 State Coordinated Regional Shelter (SCRS) Plan was developed from planning initiated in 2004. The plan has undergone regular updates and revisions and has developed substantially since its creation. In 2018, the Commonwealth opened state shelters for the first time in the wake of Hurricane Florence evacuation orders, and many lessons were learned. From that experience, much thought and discussion has gone into re-thinking the SCRS plan to allow for greater flexibility while containing costs for future sheltering operations.

The success of the SCRS plan depends in large part on the success of local and regional shelter planning and operations, as well as state planning and preparedness efforts. As incidents expand and shelter operations scale up, gaps and deficiencies at the local and regional level will directly impact SCRS operations, if activated; therefore, SCRS planning needs to be holistic in its approach. While local jurisdictions are responsible for their own shelter planning, it is wise to proactively understand and plan for known gaps throughout the shelter system. While the updated plan itself won't be able to address all known gaps, the dialogue in the development and planning for improvements has been helpful to better understand these localized issues and try to address for them through a wide variety of means, including improved education, wider collaboration, and deeper contextual review of policies, protocols, and procedures. Mentions of some of these gaps are included in this document to help provide additional context to the reader.

This report identifies new strategies to support the Commonwealth's SCRS shelter program in order to increase efficiencies and lower costs while ensuring the equitable delivery of services. The strategies consider the following factors: shelter operational phases and commodities; shelter sites; staffing; SCRS Transition Team; shelter consolidation, relocation and transition; and training

Some of the strategies in this report have already been instituted, such as staffing changes, updated training, and supplemental shelter education workshops. Other strategies are in progress, such as implementing operational phases, revising commodities, and developing a SCRS Transition Team; while others are still being explored, such as identifying additional shelter sites. Shelter planning is a fluid and reactive process; as information is learned through experience or best practices, the plan is updated accordingly. Thus, some of these strategies may be altered or exchanged as new information becomes available.

Annual Reports on State Shelters and Emergency Management

The status of state shelters and progress toward implementing improvements is an annual report, with the first report published in October 2021 as [Report Document 550](#). The Virginia Department of Emergency Management publishes an annual [Virginia Comprehensive Emergency Management Report](#) in November.