



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Danny TK Avula MD, MPH
Commissioner

November 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Janet D. Howell
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Barry D. Knight
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Michael Maul
Director, Department of Planning and Budget

FROM: Danny TK Avula MD, MPH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DTK", written over the printed name of the sender.

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Services for Low-Income Families with United Community

This report is submitted in compliance with Item 347.T. of the 2022 Appropriation Act, which states:

T. Out of this appropriation, \$1,200,000 the first year and \$1,200,000 the second year from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant shall be provided to United Community to offer wrap-around services for low-income families. United Community shall report on annual program performance and outcome measures contained in the memorandum of understanding with the Department of Social Services. The department shall report on any performance and outcome data collected through the memorandum of understanding by September 1 of each year. This report shall be provided to the Governor, Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance committees.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at (804) 726-7011.

DA:kc

Attachment

cc: The Honorable John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources

Implementation of the Family Achievement Program by United Community

September 2022

Report Mandate

Item 347.T. of the 2022 Appropriation Act

T. Out of this appropriation, \$1,200,000 the first year and \$1,200,000 the second year from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant shall be provided to United Community to offer wrap-around services for low-income families. United Community shall report on annual program performance and outcome measures contained in the memorandum of understanding with the Department of Social Services. The department shall report on any performance and outcome data collected through the memorandum of understanding by July 1 of each year. This report shall be provided to the Governor, Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees, by September 1 each year.

Implementation

In 2021, the Virginia General Assembly, in Item 356.T. of the appropriations act, appropriated \$700,000 in the first year and \$1,200,000 in the second year of the biennium to United Community for services to low-income families. Under the Family Assistance Program (FAP) designed by United Community, clients are referred from Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning or from other partner agencies. Participants are assessed to determine strengths and family needs. A case manager works with participants to secure public benefits, if needed, and an individualized plan is developed that includes barrier reduction and service provisions. Activities include wrap-around case management services to address basic family needs including food, rental assistance, child care, financial literacy, and advocacy. Participants are measured using a self-sufficiency matrix (Arizona Self-Sufficiency Assessment Scale) to determine their current and post-service ability to achieve economic independence.

The contract for services with United Community was executed on November 23, 2020 to implement the Family Achievement Program. After the initial phase focusing on program planning and design, hiring staff, and outreach to community partners, the program was implemented and began serving participants.

Barriers Identified

Unemployment and underemployment, limited income, lack of employable skills, and time management skills continue to remain barriers for participants. The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down business activities for both staff and participants. Highlighted below is additional information about program participants:

- Lack of Training and Job Skills: 64 % of the participants have low educational attainment.
- One Income Household/Family Size: 69% of the participants are single parent households earning an average income of \$800 per month. Many of these families

rely on public benefit assistance, local food banks, and other community organizations to meet their financial needs.

- **Mental Health Treatment Needs:** While the majority of participants showed minimal or no symptoms of mental health disorders at point of program entry, a closer and consistent interaction with participants indicated a need for mental health services. Many participants displayed lack of motivation, sadness, hopelessness, and frustration. Compounding the issue has been the lack of access to mental health resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic and extended waiting periods to access services.
- **Lagging Employment:** 50% of program participants are employed, but primarily at part-time jobs without benefits in service-oriented jobs.

Results

Through December 31, 2021, the following cumulative outcomes have been achieved:

- Program expenditures totaled \$679,712.
- 207 families were served in the FAP. After the screening and assessment phase, eligible families received financial assistance, as necessary, to support self-sufficiency based upon their identified needs in the areas of employment, education, training, housing, transportation, medical, housing, and utilities. The financial assistance was paid to third parties and was not paid directly to the participants/families.
- Rental and utility assistance was paid on behalf of all families, which directly prevented eviction and the disconnection of utilities.
- United Community served 1,305 families with emergency food supplies through their food pantry.
- 70 families experienced a gain in the self-sufficiency assessment scale. To monitor the progress of participants, Unity Community uses the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, an evidence-based tool that assesses items such as income, employment, shelter, food security, childcare, adult and children's education, health care, and life skills. The tool provides the ability to measure the progress of families striving for self-sufficiency as they move through five stages: in crisis, vulnerable, safe, building capacity, and empowered.

Plans to Address Barriers

Lack of Training and Job Skills: FAP will continue to register new apprentices to provide on-the-job training experiences and boost the employment package. FAP coaches will partner closely with program participants and ensure employment goals are sound, feasible, and attainable. FAP will continue to collaborate with Virginia Career Works for no-cost employment and training programs and Adult Education Classes (ACE).

One Income Household/Family Size: Families who are eligible to receive public assistance such as the Child Care Subsidy, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, and Medicaid must apply and will be assisted in the application process, if needed. FAP will continue to collaborate with the local departments of social services for any policy changes and updates.

Access and Undiagnosed Mental Health Treatment Needs: FAP will intensify partnerships with local mental health providers, both public and private, and encourage participants to use Medicaid to find providers in their area. United Community is partnering with a community-based mental health agency called “The HUB” to provide greater access to mental health care and support. The partnership will allow greater access to families and children in FAP.

Lagging Employment: FAP will intensify partnerships and relationships with local businesses in the community by introducing the FAP program and its initiatives.