



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

Danny TK Avula MD, MPH
Commissioner

December 29, 2023

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

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

Annual Report on Services for Low-Income Families with United Community September 2023

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 (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 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 committees, by September 1 each year.

Background

In 2022, the General Assembly, in Item 347.T. of the appropriations act, appropriated \$1,200,000 in each year of the biennium to United Community for services to low-income families. United Community, a human services non-profit agency in Fairfax County, designed the Family Achievement Program (FAP) to assist families in reaching their goals of self-sufficiency and independence. Families are provided with a FAP Coach who works one-on-one with families to identify and achieve their personal financial, education, and professional goals. Together with a network of local community-based organizations and county agencies, FAP connects families with the resources and opportunities they need to accomplish those goals.

Under FAP, 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, to include food security, rental assistance, childcare assistance, financial literacy, and advocacy, and employment assistance. Participants are measured using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Assessment Scale to determine their current and post-service ability to achieve economic independence. The Arizona Self-Sufficiency Assessment Scale is an evidence-based tool that assesses 18 different domains to include such things as income, employment, shelter, food security, childcare, 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.

The contract for services with United Community was executed on November 23, 2020, to implement FAP. After the initial phase, which focused on program planning and design, hiring staff, and outreach to community partners, the program was implemented and began serving participants in May 2021.

Barriers Identified and Plans to Address Barriers

Initially, unemployment and underemployment, limited income, lack of employable skills, and time management skills were the primary barriers for participants. The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down business activities for both staff and participants. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a large increase in rental rates and a low supply of affordable housing. Due to this, the low-income families served through FAP are currently struggling to maintain permanent housing. There is also an increased number of refugees that have obtained housing through family and friends but have been unable to secure any long-term housing. FAP is providing financial support to families to prevent homelessness.

While the majority of participants showed minimal or no symptoms of mental health disorders at the point of program entry, a closer and consistent interaction with participants indicated a need for mental health services. Many participants displayed a lack of motivation, sadness, hopelessness, and frustration. Compounding the issue was the lack of access to mental health resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent extended waiting periods to access services. Currently, undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues are still prevalent amongst program participants. Due to this, FAP has partnered with the Growth and Healing Hub (HUB) to provide mental health services and wellness to program participants. So far, 28 participants have been referred to HUB for mental health services.

Results

Data is collected on an ongoing basis over the course of a program cycle. The following data is for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023:

- Program expenditures totaled \$1,175,486.
- 74 households were served through FAP for SFY23 and received wrap around services. All families were provided with a FAP coach. Together they developed a service plan.
- On average, 61% of all heads of households have showed progress in two or more domains using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix tool.
- Average income for families in FAP increased by 55%.
- FAP implemented the Pathways to Self-Sufficiency, which focuses on education and workforce development, and 88% of FAP participants were enrolled.
 - 8 participants received a certification in one of the following: Cosmetology, Phlebotomy, Plumbing, Project Management, Child Care, and Peer Recovery.

- 26 participants are still completing their certification classes for English as a Second Language, General Educational Development, Child Development Assistant, and Medical Assistant.
- FAP formed a partnership with the Growth and Healing HUB to provide outpatient mental health and wellness services to program participants.
- 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.

Conclusion

FAP will continue to register new apprentices to provide on-the-job training experiences. 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 and Adult and Career Education (ACE) of Central Virginia for no-cost employment and training programs and adult education classes.

Families who are eligible to receive public assistance such as the Child Care Subsidy, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), TANF, and Medicaid 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. FAP will continue to intensify partnerships and relationships with local businesses in the community by introducing FAP and its initiatives.