



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Office of the Commissioner

James Hunter Williams
Commissioner

December 18, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Co-Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

Michael Maul
Director, Department of Planning and Budget

FROM: James H. Williams *James Williams*

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

This report is submitted in compliance with Item 331.S. of the 2024 Appropriation Act, which states:

S. 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.

JW:kc

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health and Human Resources



United Community Services for Families with Low-Income

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UNITED COMMUNITY'S SERVICES FOR FAMILIES WITH LOW-INCOME

A Report for the Virginia General Assembly

September 01, 2024

REPORT MANDATE

Item 331, S. of 2024 Appropriation Act:

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funding was appropriated by the General Assembly 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.

This program offers personalized support through a dedicated coach who helps families set and achieve financial, educational, and professional goals. Each family undergoes an assessment to identify strengths and needs, leading to a customized plan that addresses barriers and provides essential services. Services include food security, rental and childcare assistance, financial literacy, advocacy, and employment support, all managed through comprehensive case management.

United Community's FAP, in its 4th year of implementation, is consistently reaching their projected outputs and outcomes each year. During the past 4 years, 276 households consisting of 386 adults and 441 children participated in one or more FAP services leading them closer to self-sufficiency and independence.

About VDSS and United Community

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) partners with local departments of social services and community organizations, to promote the well-being of children and families across the Commonwealth. We proudly serve alongside nearly 13,000 state and local human services professionals throughout the Social Services System, who ensure that thousands of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens have access to the best services and benefits available to them.

Together, we work each day to serve, empower, and create opportunities for brighter futures.

United Community designed the Family Achievement Program provide comprehensive support to families. The program creates a supportive environment where families can thrive and achieve their long-term goals as they navigate unique challenges.

DEFINITIONS

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF stands for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program which provides monetary assistance to families.

Family Achievement Program (FAP)

FAP stands for the Family Achievement Program (FAP), a program to assist families in reaching their goals of self-sufficiency and independence.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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. 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 wraparound case management services to address basic family needs, to include food security, rental assistance, childcare assistance, financial literacy, advocacy, and employment assistance.

CONTACT

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United Community's Services for Families with Low-Income

SECTION 1 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 wraparound 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. United Community has continued to receive funding each year for FAP.

SECTION 2 FISCAL YEAR 2024 RESULTS

Program expenditures totaled \$1,199,359.90 during the 2024 fiscal year. The following information is for fiscal year 2024, the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024:

**Data is collected on an ongoing basis over the course of a program cycle.*

- **70** households were served through FAP and received wrap around services. All families were provided with a coach; together they developed a service plan.
- On average, **83%** of all heads of households showed progress in two or more domains using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix tool.
- **39** participants were referred for mental health and wellness support through partner programs providing outpatient services.
- **9** participants engaged in paid On-the-Job-Training Apprenticeships during the year; **6** FAP Apprentices are now gainfully employed in the community.
- **7** FAP Neighborhood Ambassadors are paid to provide outreach services in their own communities.
 - **15** families were registered for the Fairfax Economic Mobility Pilot Project. 3 FAP households were chosen as recipients, receiving a monthly \$750 stipend for 15 months.
- **79** participants have completed or are currently enrolled in the Pathways to Self Sufficiency program. This program focuses on education and workforce development.
 - **27** participants are completing certification courses in one of the following:

▪ English as a Second Language (ESL),	▪ Home Improvement,
▪ General Educational Development (GED),	▪ Cosmetology,
▪ Nursing Assistant,	▪ Billing and Coding,
	▪ Contractor's License.

SECTION 3 ADDRESSING IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

The lack of affordable housing units and rising costs of rent continue to affect families in the Commonwealth with low incomes who are predominantly renters. Housing costs on an already limited household budget constrains client's options, imposing a decision between minimum necessities and housing expenses; this often results in a higher likelihood of eviction. United Community's FAP provided the following in efforts to provide more pathways for clients:

- Limited rental assistance to eligible households with co-payment arrangements to prevent eviction and late rental fees.
- Presented a variety of housing options for households of all incomes.
- Partnered with local housing programs such as Fairfax Housing, FACETS in locating affordable housing units and the Legal Aid Justice Center to advocate for tenants.

INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, LOW WAGES

The average monthly income of single parent families participating in the program is about \$1,579 to support three family members. While the average monthly income for two parent families is about \$2,812 to support four family members. Both household types must earn between \$4,000 and \$5,000 to rise above the federal poverty guideline. Families served by United Community are living on income under 50% of the federal poverty guideline.

To address this gap, United Communities implemented the Pathways to Self Sufficiency program which focuses on education and workforce development. Additionally, the following services were provided to participants in FY24:

- Monthly budget reviews on an as needed and quarterly basis.
- Eligibility for direct financial assistance, as deemed necessary.
- Assistance applying for public benefits for eligible families.
- Participants completing training or certification classes are offered financial assistance for tuition, transportation, and childcare.

INSUFFICIENT INCOME

While 72% of participating families receive public benefits in the form of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), their household income remains insufficient to support basic needs. This gap inhibits self-sufficiency and independence amidst the rising cost of commodities and services.

The United Communities FAP program provided pathways to self-sufficiency and independence to participants in these ways:

- Registered families for weekly food assistance at the UC Food Pantry.
- Referrals to other nonprofit organizations for food, clothing, and furniture.
- Enrolled 9 paid FAP apprentices.
- Enrolled 70 participants in career pathway certification classes.

SECTION 4 CONCLUSION

United Community's Family Achievement Program (FAP), in its 4th year of implementation, is consistently reaching their projected outputs and outcomes each year. During the past 4 years, 276 households consisting of 386 adults and 441 children participated in one or more FAP services leading them closer to self-sufficiency and independence.

FAP continues to maintain and expand upon referral sources as well as critical community partnerships, such as Virginia Career Works and Adult Education for no-cost employment and training programs; and the Local Departments of Social Services for access to additional benefits such as Childcare subsidies, SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid.

APPENDIX A ITEM 331.S. OF THE 2024 APPROPRIATION ACT

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.