

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
DIVERSITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND INCLUSION  
AGENCY PLAN**

2025



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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## PREFACE

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This report was completed by the Virginia Department of Health, which was tasked with the mandate of maintaining a strategic diversity, opportunity, and inclusion strategic plan in coordination with the Chief Diversity Officer. This report is a summary of the agency's 2024 plan and activities. The report is due to the General Assembly on July 1, 2025.

### STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

#### **Virginia Department of Health**

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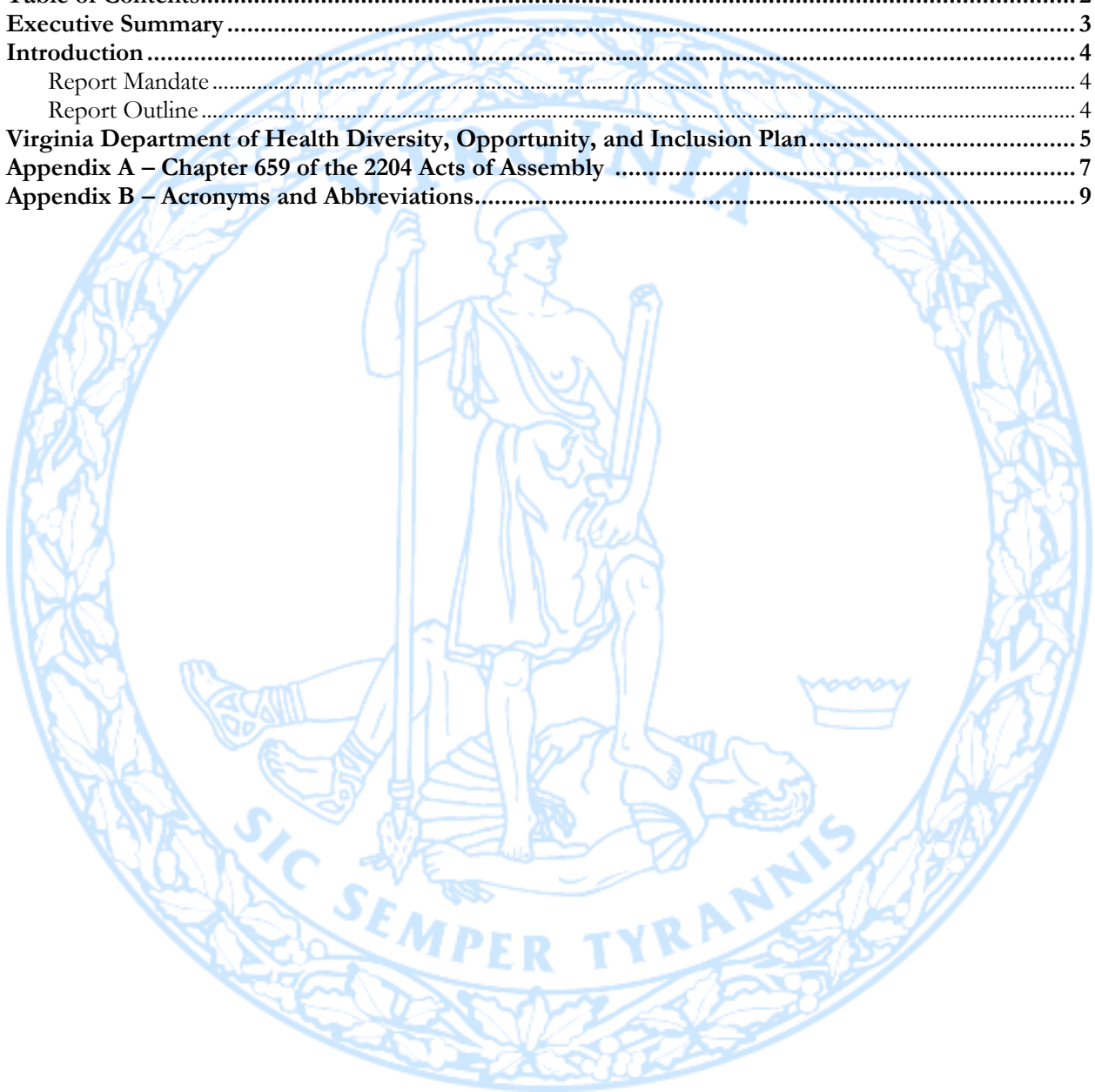


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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Virginia Department of Health was tasked with providing an annual diversity, opportunity, and inclusion report to the Governor and General Assembly, by July 1, 2025. The report was completed by the Virginia Department of Health and provides an overview of progress made towards the agency's Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan.



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## INTRODUCTION

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### REPORT MANDATE

This annual diversity, opportunity, and inclusion report is mandated by Chapter 659 of the 2024 Virginia Acts of Assembly (Appendix A).

### REPORT OUTLINE

This report provides an overview of the progress made towards the Virginia Department of Health's 2024 Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan. The primary goals of the plan were to maintain a competent and valued workforce, ensure a welcoming and respectful culture, and embed diversity, opportunity, and inclusion into agency practice.



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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DIVERSITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND INCLUSION  
PLAN

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Each agency shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1 of each year assessing the impact of the strategic plan on the populations served by the agency and on the agency's workforce and budget

In 2024, the Virginia Department of Health continued work towards the goal of maintaining a competent and valued workforce. This included ensuring employee voices were heard through participating in several employee surveys. VDH staff participated in the national Public Health Workforce Interest and Needs Survey (PH WINS) in the fall of 2024. The participation rate was high enough that VDH will receive an agency-specific data dashboard, and many offices and health districts will receive individual data dashboards. The results will be published in the summer of 2025.

Agency leadership finalized plans for an internal employee engagement survey. This survey was conducted by the same firm that has previously conducted VDH employee engagement surveys, allowing for detailed analysis of trends, changes, and improvements over time. This survey was conducted in March of 2025. Results from the survey show improvement from the most recent survey in 2022, and several items show the agency's best performance to date, going back to the initial survey in 2017. Staff reported higher levels of engagement, were more likely to recommend VDH as a place to work, and there was improvement on 94% of repeat items. Results from the survey will be used to inform office- and district-specific engagement plans, focusing on targeted areas with the greatest opportunity to enhance staff well-being.

VDH focused on giving staff the opportunity to advance throughout their career through mentorship and career ladder development. Efforts are underway to establish a mentorship program for new health directors as well as a mentorship program for new employees. More casual networking opportunities are available at VDH through a virtual coffee club, connecting peers at all levels of the organization on a monthly basis. Leadership in environmental health and public health nursing are collaborating with human resources and workforce development to continue building out formal plans for career advancement in those fields. Other disciplines are also beginning this work.

VDH leaders are encouraged to cross train staff. While this provides necessary coverage for critical work, it also allows staff to develop their skills and prepares them for future opportunities with the agency.

The second VDH goal was to ensure a welcoming and respectful culture. The first step towards this was establishing an Employee Advisory Council in October of 2024. Seventeen employees were selected out of over 120 applicants to represent their colleagues. The Employee Advisory Council serves as a liaison between staff and senior leadership, and shares feedback on areas for improvement, best practices, and new ideas to improve the work environment. Representatives are assigned to their home office or district, and up to two other offices or districts, ensuring that every VDH employee has the opportunity to connect with a designated representative. Since its establishment, the Employee Advisory Council has held office hours, visited workplaces, and received over 145 distinct pieces of feedback on over a dozen topics. Senior leadership can act on some feedback immediately, and other feedback is incorporated into long-term agency plans.



The Culture Assessment, Response, and Engagement (CARE) Team has conducted work environment assessments in several offices and health districts. These assessments evaluate work culture outcomes and employee engagement, resulting in an action plan created to improve the work environment and increase retention.

VDH has provided resources for employee wellness. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources have been shared with all leadership, and on-site Critical Incident Response has been made available several times throughout the year. VDH leaders have supported staff-initiated wellness ideas like volunteer days and bringing therapy dogs on-site. The Employee Wellness and Occupational Safety and Health program has provided regular trainings and resources for all staff.

To address concerns around accountability and training, VDH has taken several steps. A new Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Community Health Services will be hired to work with human resources and local health districts to address employee concerns and personnel matters. VDH's new Director of Workforce Development and Engagement leads the Workforce Development team, which has developed a VDH-specific Leadership Academy for all agency leaders. This training is being delivered across the Commonwealth, addressing leadership styles, crucial conversations, and leadership best practices. Coaching as a Supervisor training was offered through a partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University. That same partnership will offer Supervisor Bootcamp to leaders in the spring of 2025.

VDH's third goal was to embed diversity, opportunity, and inclusion into agency practices. The first step towards this was incorporating these objectives into the VDH Strategic Plan and the Workforce Engagement Strategic Plan.

The Office of Health Equity (OHE) is committed to improving health access by tackling factors that impact well-being, building partnerships, and ensuring all Virginians have access to quality care. By leveraging data-driven approaches and engaging with communities, OHE aims to reduce health disparities and foster a healthier future for all. OHE ensured that publicly available evidence-based resources to improve health outcomes were available for VDH staff and posted on the OHE webpage on the VDH website. Resources were cataloged by topic and end user, as appropriate. OHE began dramatic improvements to the various healthcare workforce incentive programs managed by the agency. These included faster processing times, improved communications with stakeholders, and an increase in outreach to healthcare students.

The Commissioner's Advisory of Health Disparity and Health Equity (ACHDHE) is designed to ensure that the health priorities and concerns of Virginia's minority and underserved populations, including those in rural areas, are adequately addressed by identifying gaps in public health programs and supporting policies to improve the accessibility and delivery of health services. Recommendations of ACHDHE were incorporated into the strategies of the agency through discussion and dissemination at senior leadership meetings throughout the year.

Through diversity, opportunity, and inclusion efforts, VDH aims to improve morale and inclusivity in the workforce by creating and sustaining a workplace culture that embraces merit-based opportunities and employee wellness.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § [2.2-602](#) of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ [2.2-602](#). Duties of agencies and their appointing authorities; establishment of personnel standards; diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans.

A. The heads of state agencies shall be the appointing authorities of the respective agencies, and shall establish and maintain within their agencies methods of administration relating to the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis that are approved by the Governor for the proper and efficient enforcement of the Virginia Personnel Act (§ [2.2-2900](#) et seq.). But the Governor shall exercise no authority with respect to the selection or tenure of office of any individual employed in accordance with such methods, except when the Governor is the appointing authority.

Appointing authorities may assign to the personnel officers or to other officers and employees of their agencies such personnel duties as they see fit.

Agencies shall establish and maintain rosters of their employees that shall set forth, as to each employee, the class title, pay, and status and such other data as they may deem desirable to produce significant facts pertaining to personnel administration.

Agencies shall establish and maintain such promotion and employment lists, rated according to merit and fitness, as they deem desirable. Agencies may make use of the employment list kept by the Department of Human Resource Management in lieu of keeping employment lists for their agencies.

Agencies shall supply the Governor with any information he deems necessary for the performance of his duties in connection with the administration of Virginia Personnel Act (§ [2.2-2900](#) et seq.).

B. The heads of state agencies shall establish and maintain a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan in coordination with the Governor's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

The plan shall integrate the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals into the agency's mission, operations, programs, and infrastructure to enhance equitable opportunities for the populations served by the agency and to foster an increasingly diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace environment.

The plan shall include best practices that (i) proactively address potential barriers to equal employment opportunities pursuant to federal and state equal employment opportunity laws; (ii) foster pay equity pursuant to federal and state equal pay laws; (iii) promote diversity and equity in hiring, promotion, retention, succession planning, and agency leadership opportunities; and (iv) promote employee engagement and inclusivity in the workplace.



Each agency shall establish an infrastructure to effectively support ongoing progress and achievements by reporting diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in coordination with the Governor's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the General Assembly.

Each agency shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1 of each year assessing the impact of the strategic plan on the populations served by the agency and on the agency's workforce and budget.



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## APPENDIX B – ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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This is a listing of the acronyms and abbreviations appearing throughout the report and its appendices.

PH WINS – Public Health Workforce Interest and Needs Survey

EAP – Employee Assistance Program

VDH – Virginia Department of Health

