

## **DISASTER PLAN**

### **Continuations of Operations (COOP)**

The 2023 COOP for the Division of Family Services is attached. This plan is confidential and protected under FOIA. Therefore it will be submitted to the Children's Bureau, but is not posted on the public-facing website. The COOP plan was not activated for a natural disaster during 2022.

Virginia's child welfare services are carried out in a state-supervised and locally-administered system. Local departments, as part of local government, must develop individual emergency procedures as they are aware of emergency resources and supports within their area as well as the unique disasters to which each region of the state is particularly exposed. If, during the emergency/disaster situation, child abuse or neglect is reported, it will be handled by the locality where the alleged abuse/neglect occurred. If the state office is forced to close or relocate due to a disaster, service provision will continue to be offered through local departments of social services. Local departments that are in counties and cities that border other states have working relationships with those states and services could be provided there if there are adequate resources available to help.

VDSS continually maintains the Active Foster Care Report in an Excel file on an external hardware (jump drive). The jump drive is in the possession of the Foster Care Program Manager so that during an emergency/disaster situation, information regarding the children in foster care will be available outside of the automated child welfare data base. Additionally, in a disaster situation, VDSS staff will be available through the state hotline toll-free number for the community to contact for child welfare related service needs, referral information for services, and to notify the state office of displaced clients in the event the situation impacts the LDSS and the local office cannot be reached. The toll-free number will be given to the media and disseminated to local departments of social services. The regional offices serve as operation centers for service referrals and information throughout the state, including assistance with psychotropic medication. Virginia also operates "211" Information and Referral hotline that is available for locating services and assistance state-wide. Alternative contact information for divisional staff will be highlighted on the Department's website to make it easier for clients and other states to contact the necessary people. The LDSS shall ensure foster families and providers develop plans that help protect their families and also provide communication information for use in emergency situations (Emergency Plans Form). In the event the foster family or other provider needs to evacuate, information regarding the whereabouts of children in foster care and contact information shall be communicated to the LDSS. If the LDSS cannot be reached, the information shall be communicated to VDSS via the hotline and VDSS will enter the information into OASIS.

In preparation for the FY25-FY29 CFSP, VDSS will assess gaps in the disaster plan that may impact specific populations to ensure that the disaster and COOP plans address disparities for marginalized groups, including people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

### **COVID-19 pandemic**

Due to the COVID – 19 pandemic, Governor Northam declared a state of emergency, mandated state employees be vaccinated or comply with regular testing, and encourage the use of mask. Virginia's new Governor, Glenn Youngkin rescinded Executive Directive Number 18 requiring proof of vaccination or regular testing. Governor Youngkin is committed to providing a safe workplace for state employees. He instructed the Department of Human Resource Management to work with private providers to ensure vaccines and boosters are available and asked the Department of General Services to work with private

providers to ensure KN95 masks are available to employees and visitors at every state building. Teleworking is highly encouraged and VDSS and many local departments are utilizing telework options.

VDSS continued to post on the intranet ongoing FAQs, tools and tip sheets, broadcast communications, self-care resources, and technological resources related to COVID-19 during the state of emergency. Guidance was updated concerning virtual visitation. Virtual contacts are only permitted if the family refuses access due to a COVID-19 concern or anyone in the home has tested positive for COVID-19, has been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or has had symptoms in the last 14 days. VDSS contracted with Doxy.me, enabling local department staff to conduct virtual visits, when necessary, on a HIPAA and HITECH compliant platform.

Workforce Development and Support (WDS) expanded online learning opportunities. VDSS has converted the foundational new worker guidance classroom courses to a virtual platform using a series of live webinars with proficiency tests upon completion. WDS offers virtual trainings as well as self-directed eLearning opportunities.

### **Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act**

VDSS submitted an application for reimbursement of \$141,693 for funds expended during Hurricane Florence in response to ACYF-CB-PI-20-01. VDSS was granted \$182,509. Of the total amount, \$86,421.02 was used to provide support to staff who conduct mutual family assessment. A Mutual family assessment is a process that includes both a study of the physical home as well as the prospective foster, adoptive, and kinship resource parent. It is mutual in that while the LDSS maintains final authority on the decision to approve or not approve, assessment is done with families rather than to families. Prospective providers are empowered to assess themselves as applicants and to determine if the role of foster, adoptive, or resource parent is right for them. A thorough assessment integrates pre-service training topics into the home visits to maximize opportunities for developing and documenting a family's competence in meeting the special needs of children in care. Each prospective kinship resource, foster, and adoptive family are encouraged to participate in an open and honest assessment of their strengths in fostering or adopting, as well as their needs for support. Their strengths and needs are utilized in making a match with the needs of a specific child to be placed.

VDSS used \$48,884.80 to pay for licenses for COMPASS Mobile technology and \$47,203.18 for COMPASS administrative costs. COMPASS Mobile provides family services specialists with technology to maximize time away from the office, accelerating service delivery. COMPASS Mobile utilizes iPads that can be used both offline and online. Uses include entering in case notes, review of existing notes, completing assessments, updating demographic and relationship information, and completing forms. The administrative costs cover updates to the system that have taken place throughout the year.