

A report of the  
Department of Social Services  
Commonwealth of Virginia

**REPORT ON THE VIRGINIA  
FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY  
INITIATIVE**

to the Governor and the  
General Assembly of Virginia

October 2013

# Preface

Section 63.2-703 of the *Code of Virginia* charges the Department of Social Services (DSS) with providing leadership and coordination for Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative and to report on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on the fulfillment of DSS' responsibilities. Section 63.2-703 provides in pertinent part:

§ 63.2-703. Faith-based and community initiatives; responsibilities of Department.

A. The General Assembly finds that faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations make significant contributions to the welfare of our society and constitute an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs, and special efforts to increase utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations will enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs. To carry out these initiatives, the Department of Social Services shall have the following responsibilities:

9. Make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly on the fulfillment of the Department's responsibilities related to faith-based and community initiatives.....

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# Executive Summary

Section 63.2-703 of the *Code of Virginia* charges the Department of Social Services (DSS) with providing leadership and coordination for Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative and to report on a regular basis to the Governor and the General Assembly on the fulfillment of DSS' responsibilities.

Accomplishments during the period from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013 that strengthened faith-based and community collaboration through the Faith-Based and Community Initiative included:

- Provided technical assistance to over 2,000 constituents on locating grant funding, training opportunities, and resources for fund development;
- Increased faith-based presence in responding to emergencies in collaboration with Virginia Department of Emergency Management
- Integrated faith efforts in the Virginia State Service Plan for Volunteerism and Community Service listening sessions held in Danville, Alexandria, Newport News, Big Stone Gap, Roanoke, Charlottesville, Front Royal, and Richmond.
- Worked with faith-based leaders, coordinated training entitled "Collaboration is a Two-Way Street – Working with Faith Partners" during the 2013 Virginia Conference on Volunteerism and Service held in Virginia Beach on June 13, 2013.
- Expanded grant database on [www.vaservice.org](http://www.vaservice.org) to include more public and private funding opportunities of interest to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations.
- Increased overall subscriptions to *Volunteer Virginia*, the OVCS monthly e-newsletter for faith-based community partners from approximately 1,800 subscribers to over 5,000 subscribers during the last two years, for an overall increase of 178%.
- This year, increased funding to faith-based groups engaged in service. Four of Virginia's 23 AmeriCorps sites are hosted by faith-based organizations.
- Participated in the Virginia Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership Liaison Roundtable.
- In collaboration with the Governor's Advisory Board on Volunteering and National and Community Service, hosted the Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards where a faith-based category recognizes the significant contributions made by faith-based organizations throughout the Commonwealth.
- Engaged the faith community in promoting fatherhood programs. Presentations conducted at national, state, and local faith-based conferences with 85 faith institutions across the Commonwealth committing to engage families to assist them to be more successful.

This is the sixth report to the Governor and General Assembly. Building on previous successes, Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative will continue to promote collaborative service delivery, accountability, transparency, and results. The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative have helped countless community-based organizations across the Commonwealth

# **VIRGINIA FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2013**

## **Introduction**

The Virginia General Assembly developed the foundation for Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative through a Joint Resolution of the 2002 Session of the General Assembly. The mission of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) is to work across state agencies and with local governments to:

- Promote partnerships between public agencies and community and faith-based groups to meet local needs;
- Provide training and technical assistance to help faith-based and community organizations build their capacity to provide effective services;
- Expand the state's pool of effective service providers; and
- Coordinate offers of assistance from Virginia's faith-based and community organizations during emergencies or natural disasters.

The 2002 Session of the General Assembly codified DSS' responsibilities for implementing the Faith-Based and Community Initiative in § 63.2-703, and mandates that DSS make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly (Appendix A). The General Assembly stated, in § 63.2-703, that faith-based and community organizations are "an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs."

This sixth report summarizes, for the period of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2013, how the Faith-Based and Community Initiative's work "increase[d] utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations" to "enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs."

## **Faith-Based Integration**

According to the *2012 Report on Volunteering and Civic Life in America*, an annual publication of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the National Conference on Citizenship, 28.5% of Virginia residents volunteer. The report also indicates that 36.8% of Virginia volunteers do so through a religious organization, higher than the national average of 34.4%. During the past two years, much work has been done at better integrating faith-based efforts in all aspects of volunteering and service. For example, faith efforts were integrated in the Virginia State Service Plan for Volunteerism and Service, where representatives of faith-based and community organizations were invited to a series of sessions to share their

thoughts and insights on how faith-based and community initiatives might better support efforts in local communities. Specifically, faith groups were asked:

- What statewide support is needed to ensure the availability of appropriate faith-based volunteer and service opportunities for all Virginians?
- What can be done at the state level to support faith organizations' efforts to effectively engage, manage, and retain needed volunteers?
- How can the state raise awareness of the opportunities, value, and impact of volunteerism and faith-based efforts in Virginia?

Sessions were held in Danville, Alexandria, Newport News, Big Stone Gap, Roanoke, Charlottesville, Front Royal, and Richmond.

In order to improve and increase Virginia's efforts in faith-based programs, Department of Social Services (DSS) Office of Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS) staff received professional development and participated in the Points of Light National Conference on Volunteering and Service held in Washington, DC in June 2013. The faith track was sponsored by Repair the World, an organization that tackles pressing local needs by mobilizing the Jewish community to volunteer. They enable people to transform their neighborhoods, cities and lives through meaningful service experiences. Workshop sessions in the faith track included, "Engaging Faith Communities in Disaster," "The Role of Religious Literacy and Competency in Faith Community Engagement," "Calling on the Called: Managing Faith-Motivated Volunteers," and "Introducing Service and Community Volunteerism within Faith Communities." Resource materials gleaned from professional development are posted on [www.vaservice.org](http://www.vaservice.org) for the benefit of all faith partners.

In an effort to encourage collaboration, OVCS staff regularly participates in the Virginia Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership Liaison Roundtable. Members of this group represent local, state and federal government, and faith-based and nonprofit organizations that are engaged in faith-based outreach efforts. These meetings provide an opportunity to share and gain information and resources to build and support partnerships with faith-based and community organizations in order to better serve individuals, families and communities in need.

In collaboration with the Governor's Advisory Board on Volunteering and National and Community Service and the Virginia Service Foundation (VSF), DSS coordinates efforts to host the annual Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards presentation event. These awards recognize the most outstanding contributions of Virginia citizens and organizations to the life and welfare of the Commonwealth and its people.

In addition to the individual recognition categories for youth, adults and seniors, there are awards in six group categories, including "Faith-based Volunteer Service." Other group categories included Community Organization, Corporation, Educational Institution, Family, and Small Business. The Faith-based category has been included to recognize the significant contributions made by faith-based organizations throughout the Commonwealth.

Community outreach and engagement has been a key component of the Department of Social Services' mission in strengthening and engaging families. During the past two years, a critical focus of the agency has been on connecting and reconnecting fathers with their families. During this time information on fatherhood has been provided to numerous stakeholder groups including local departments of social services, state agencies, federal partners, advocacy groups, non-profit organizations, businesses, and members of the faith community.

As a stakeholder group, faith communities have a proven track record at promoting fatherhood programs within their communities. As a result, many presentations have been conducted at national, state, and local faith-based conferences that span a variety of denominational and non-denominational audiences. In addition, approximately 85 faith institutions across the Commonwealth have committed to working to engage families with a focus on fatherhood through DSS-led focus groups, forums, and training institutes. DSS has set of goal to engage 500 individuals and groups in outreach by December 31, 2013.

Additionally, DSS has partnered with the Virginia Department of Health's Richmond City Health District's Family and Fatherhood Initiative (RFFI) to serve as a demonstration site. In a recent Casey Family Programs Annual Report, RFFI was recognized as a national model for engaging the faith community. Through a collaborative partnership with DSS, Casey has supported the community engagement model with an implementation strategy for fifteen cities across the state. The community engagement strategy led to the creation of a Virginia Family and Fatherhood Consortium which includes five regional consortiums.

Utilizing a focus groups-forums-training institute process, 500 faith-based and community-based organizations will receive training in the focus groups-forums-training institute process. The process description is below:

#### Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus group is to raise awareness of father absence for faith and community-based leaders. A series of focus groups are conducted for 10-15 different leaders per group. After the focus groups are completed, a steering committee is formed. The steering committee is tasked with the development of a city-wide father engagement strategic plan and is the lead for the Virginia Family & Fatherhood Consortium in their city. Steering committees receive training and support through a partnership between DSS and Casey Family Programs.

#### City-wide Forums

The purpose of the city-wide forum is to raise awareness of father absence and to introduce the steering committee as a resource for father engagement in their city. The city-wide forums include expert speakers, panels and facilitated discussions on the father engagement strategic plan. The city-wide forum is also used to recruit participants for the training institutes.

#### Training Institutes

The purpose of the training institute is to equip faith and community-based organizations with training and certifications in evidence-based and evidence-informed curriculums related to fatherhood, reentry, healthy relationships and marriage, and mentoring. Also, steering committees and consortium partners receive capacity building training.



Currently 18 cities have committed to the focus groups-forums-training institutes process and eleven steering committees have been formed in the following communities:

Alexandria	Norfolk
Petersburg	Bedford
Prince William	Roanoke
Shenandoah	Winchester
Richmond City	Chesapeake
Richmond County	Frederick
Virginia Beach	Lynchburg
Caroline County	Charlottesville
Fredericksburg	King William

The DSS developed five fatherhood outcomes being tracked across the state and is in the process of developing a shared measurement system, enabling agencies, faith and community-based organizations to track and evaluate the impact of programs and interventions. Outcomes measure increased amounts of:

1. contact fathers have with their children;
2. contact incarcerated fathers have with their children;
3. number of co-parenting agreements fathers have with the mothers of their children;
4. amount of financial support fathers provide for their children; and
5. amount of safe and healthy contact of fathers with children in foster care.

## On-Going Technical Assistance and Training

During the past two years, the OVCS has responded to over 2,000 requests for technical assistance from constituents. Requests for technical assistance fell into two general categories: locating grant funding and training opportunities, and advice and resources for fund development. Other technical assistance provided during the past two years included assisting other organizations, such as AARP, Administration for Children and Families, Federal Reserve Bank, and state agencies, to coordinate and set up collaborative partnerships with their faith-based outreach efforts. An extensive faith-based list serve is maintained that includes names and e-mail addresses compiled through research, attendance lists and requests from faith-based representatives. This list is utilized to distribute information and resources that would increase a community's capacity to respond to changes and disasters. Examples of recent information include community partner information on upcoming health care changes, community response information after Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting and providing opportunities for Virginians to serve after Hurricane Sandy.

The readership of the OVCS monthly e-newsletter, *Volunteer Virginia*, has more than doubled in the past two years and is now sent to over 5,000 subscribers. Each edition highlights funding and training opportunities as well as information specific to the faith-based community. A Resource Portal is maintained on [vaservice.org](http://vaservice.org) and serves as a toolkit of web sites for community service, nonprofit administration, volunteer and faith-based management information. Also a training and events calendar is maintained and updated daily. A Virginia

Service You Tube Channel is utilized along with information posted on the DSS Facebook page and just recently a new Twitter account was created. All of these efforts attempt to connect faith communities to resources that assist in providing better service to individuals, families and communities in need.

During the past two years, 2-1-1 VIRGINIA and the faith-based initiative at DSS has coordinated database information, worked together on providing information to faith partners on initiatives such as AARP's Statewide Community Food Drive to fight hunger and provide opportunities to serve during special service days such as MLK Day or Labor Day.

In Winter 2012, the Virginia Service Foundation, the Governor's Advisory Board on Volunteering and National and Community Service, and DSS brought together a diverse 40-member conference planning committee from across the Commonwealth to develop the annual statewide conference agenda that provide the tools and training to help each community in the Commonwealth fully utilize faith-based volunteers and service.

This committee included several faith-based leaders who helped to plan the 2013 Conference on Volunteerism and Service, was held June 13, 2013, with 250 participants who received a full day of workshops and networking. Specific workshops of interest to faith-based partners included:

- Collaboration is a Two-Way Street---Working with Faith Partners
- Connecting Disaster Resources with Disaster Needs
- Leading Your Organization Through Change
- Engaging Businesses and the Corporate Volunteer
- The Etiquette of Inclusion
- Recruiting the Right Volunteer from the Right Place for the Right Job
- Community Disaster Preparedness for Special Populations
- Risk Management with Volunteers
- eHHR - How will Health Care Changes Affect My Community, Organization and Clients?
- We Have a Community Problem: Could Service be the Answer? Targeting Service for Community Impact
- My Organization's Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) and Post-Disaster Environments
- Legal Issues with Disability and Inclusion: What I Need to Know
- Establishing Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education: Colleges and Universities-- A Natural Partnership
- Beyond Volunteering: Converting your Volunteers to Donors, Ambassadors, and Fundraisers
- Financial Literacy and Resources for Volunteers and Service Members (EITC, IDA's, Cost Cutting Options)

## Statewide Network

In an effort to increase the state pool of effective service providers, DSS has worked to ensure that services offered by faith-based and community organizations are listed in 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, the statewide database of human services available to Virginians. Organizations are asked if they would be willing to have their services available to the general public or to specific neighborhoods. If an organization wants to restrict access to its services, meaning they are available only at certain times and in specific areas, 2-1-1 VIRGINIA Community Resource Specialists screen calls and make appropriate referrals. Many church pantries in particular have allowed 2-1-1 VIRGINIA to make referrals to callers from the specific neighborhoods in which they serve.

The 2-1-1 VIRGINIA database routinely provides mailing lists to state agencies seeking to do outreach in the faith community. The database is also used by faith-based and community organizations to identify potential partners providing similar services within a particular region of the Commonwealth.

The DSS encourages all state agencies to include faith-based organizations in their state plans. The 2012-14 Community Action Agency work plan that has been approved by the General Assembly includes information on ways community action programs can interact and improve services utilizing faith-based partners.

## Coordination of Efforts during Disasters

To ensure a well-coordinated and planned response to disasters, faith-based and community organizations are encouraged to affiliate with a traditional disaster and emergency response system, such as Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VAVOAD) and local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). Organizations are also encouraged to list disaster and recovery-related services with 2-1-1 VIRGINIA. This ensures there is a centralized database of services available for use by local authorities through their local Emergency Operations Center or through the Virginia Emergency Operations Center upon request.

As an active member of VAVOAD, DSS receives all communications sent to its member organizations. It uses this communication to identify resources that can be included in local and statewide emergency operations plans. Information received through VAVOAD is also disseminated, when appropriate, to all 2-1-1 VIRGINIA and volunteer centers statewide through a special disaster mailing list. This ensures that all centers simultaneously receive the information as to how to appropriately direct offers of assistance from faith-based and community organizations and the general community.

In addition to faith-based responsibilities responding to disasters, the OVCS is the liaison for many of the federal volunteer programs, such as AmeriCorps, FEMA Corps and Senior Corps, and for the local and regional Volunteer Centers. These programs can provide trained volunteers and volunteer coordination services in emergencies and disasters.

2-1-1 VIRGINIA is a service provided by DSS that can assist in providing information to the public with respect to community and disaster services. Volunteer Centers of Virginia is a federation of the local and regional Volunteer Centers and agencies that recruit, train and refer volunteers to non-profit agencies through their communities.

Faith-based response to disasters is coordinated through Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Emergency Support Function (ESF) #17 which coordinates the delivery of donated goods and volunteer services to support disaster relief efforts in impacted areas in the Commonwealth. During times of disasters, the following programs sit alongside each other in ESF #17 as part of the Emergency Operations Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia:

- VAVOAD
- Adventist Community Services ACS
- Virginia Citizen Corps
- Volunteer Centers of Virginia
- OVCS

The goal of the faith-based response to disasters is to provide coordination of donated resources and liaise for those voluntary organizations that provide disaster services within the Commonwealth, so that capabilities and resources will be effectively integrated with other local, state and federal agencies to meet the needs of the disaster. The ESF #17 scope is twofold:

- Facilitate the delivery of donated goods and services to the areas of need.
- Coordinate offers and needs for volunteers in both response and recovery.

When the President declares a major disaster and the Federal Emergency Management Agency implements a range of assistance programs available to individuals and families, ESF #17 will provide support and often continue its liaison role with VAVOAD member organizations active in the disaster area long after first responders have left the area. Faith-based and other non-governmental responder organizations may continue its support of the management of volunteer resources and donated goods in affected areas for many months after a disaster.

## Conclusion

This is the sixth report to the Governor and General Assembly. Building on previous successes, Virginia's Faith-Based and Community Initiative will continue to affiliate faith-based organizations with state, local and community organizations to promote collaborative service delivery, accountability, transparency, and results. The accomplishments and activities of the Virginia Faith-Based and Community Initiative have helped countless families, organizations, and communities across the Commonwealth.

## APPENDIX A

§ 63.2-703. Faith-based and community initiatives; responsibilities of Department.

- A. The General Assembly finds that faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations make significant contributions to the welfare of our society and constitute an underutilized and underrepresented reservoir of assistance for social programs, and special efforts to increase utilization of faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations will enhance the Commonwealth's ability to carry out human welfare programs. To carry out these initiatives, the Department of Social Services shall have the following responsibilities:
1. Lead and facilitate meetings as necessary, with faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations for the purpose of sharing information to help carry out human welfare programs in Virginia;
  2. Encourage conferences and meetings at the community level for faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;
  3. Provide procurement and funding information to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, as needed;
  4. Provide information regarding faith-based and community initiatives and other information the Department may deem appropriate, to faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations, and other state agencies whose missions may be enhanced by increased awareness of such initiatives and information;
  5. Encourage the development and maintenance of a statewide network of local liaisons to assist in the dissemination of information and assistance;
  6. Develop a statewide list of available faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations. Such statewide list shall be made available to the public through the Department's website;
  7. Obtain information concerning faith-based, volunteer, private and community organizations in other states;
  8. Coordinate offers of assistance from faith-based organizations during natural disasters;
  9. Make regular reports to the Governor and General Assembly on the fulfillment of the Department's responsibilities related to faith-based and community initiatives; and
  10. Perform such other duties as the Department deems appropriate.
- B. Nothing in this section shall imply or be inferred to mean that additional federal or state funds will be available for these purposes or that contractual preferences will be given to such organizations other than past or potential performance standards utilized under the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ [2.2-4300](#) et seq.).