

Charlottesville Department of Social Services Advisory Board

ANNUAL REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

The Social Services Advisory Board is pleased to present its 2024 Annual Report to City Council. We appreciate Council's support for the Charlottesville Department of Social Services' mission to join with the community in providing social services that meet essential needs, promote self-sufficiency, and enhance the quality of life for all residents.



The Department of Social Services administers Benefits Programs and Family Services for the citizens of Charlottesville.

Federal and state mandated **Benefits Programs** help low income families and individuals meet basic needs for food, shelter, and medical care.

Major programs include but are not limited to:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid - also known as Cardinal Care
- Cash assistance payments: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Refugee Assistance and General Relief
- Workforce Development Programs consisting of: Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) and SNAP Education and Training program (SNAP-E&T)
- Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP) and Fuel/Cooling/Crisis components.
- Auxiliary Grant payments to providers

Family Services Programs provide assessment, intervention, and case management services through federal and state mandated programs.

Major programs include but are not limited to:

- Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Foster Care Prevention and In Home Services
- Foster Care
- Adoption
- Fostering Futures
- Adult Protective Services (APS)

Economic Impact of Services provided in the City of Charlottesville

The economic impact of providing these services totaled **\$140,063,368** in fiscal year 2023

Many of these funds were spent on rent, utilities, payments to medical providers and hospitals, purchases at grocery stores and gas stations, and purchases of clothing and school supplies, thereby increasing the economic impact to the community as the funds recycled through the local economy. The matching local costs for fiscal year 2023 totaled **\$3,798,075** for Social Services and **\$1,638,282** for the Children's Services Act (CSA).

- **\$102,771,672** in Medicaid and Family Access to Medical Insurance Security (FAMIS) payments to providers
- **\$13,586,908** in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- **\$4,448,650** in Children's Services Act (CSA) payments to providers
- **\$6,136,639** in Staff, Administrative, and Operations costs
- **\$3,399,613** in Adoption Assistance payments to adoptive parents
- **\$362,245** in Title IV-E Foster Care payments to providers
- **\$1,078,199** in Child Care Subsidy Payments to providers
- **\$1,490,699** in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- **\$45,069** Fostering Futures Foster Care Assistance
- **\$20,772** in Kinship Guardianship Assistance
- **\$507,787** in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- **\$131,308** in Auxiliary Grant payments to providers
- **\$174,518** Other Purchased Services for clients
- **\$206,861** in Central Service Cost Allocation
- **\$206,235** in Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW)
- **\$26,420** in Independent Living Services
- **\$20,839** in Refugee Assistance
- **\$12,525** in General Relief

Highlights from the Department's three divisions

Administration Division

The administration division is responsible for planning, budgeting and fiscal management, program coordination and evaluation, and personnel administration.

The department's director and management team make up the administration division along with financial staff.

The finance team works primarily in the office due to the nature of the work and the structure of their internal processes.

Kinship Financial System

The finance team along with staff from the Family Service's division funding team transitioned to the Kinship financial and case management system on July 1, 2024 for Children's Services Act (CSA) and IV-E foster care payments. This replaces the Harmony financial system that was no longer supported. The transition has not been as smooth as planned and has required additional technical support from the vendor and an outside contractor.

Benefits Division

Most division staff continue to work remotely with rotating coverage days in the office to support walk-in clients. The client entry team work primarily in the office to provide administrative support to citizens and staff.

13,169 citizens in the city received assistance from a benefits program in fiscal year 2024.

Medicaid Unwinding Work

On December 29, 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023 (CAA2023) was enacted. This law separated the Federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) declaration from the Medicaid Continuous Coverage requirement as of March 31, 2023, meaning that states (Virginia) were no longer required to continue coverage regardless of changes in circumstances.

On April 1, 2023, Virginia resumed normal operations and began redetermining eligibility and local departments of social services (LDSS) began taking actions, including adverse actions (reducing coverage, closing coverage, and increasing patient pay). For Charlottesville, the division processed over 10,000 Medicaid case renewals within the allowable time frame set by the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS).

SNAP EBT Skimming

The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023 (CAA2023) authorized the replacement of some EBT benefits that were stolen through card skimming, card cloning, or other fraudulent methods nation-wide. This is applicable to benefits stolen during the period of October 1, 2022, through the end of December 20, 2024. The SNAP EBT replacement component became active effective July 17, 2023 for Virginia. Benefits staff have led multiple public outreach efforts to educate and build awareness in the community about the issue along with tips on how to protect EBT cards and guidance on how to replace stolen benefits.

Family Services Division

Family Services staff work a hybrid work schedule where they often complete documentation tasks at home and come into the office for meetings, trainings, and case discussions. Staff complete required monthly home visits with clients in their home or the community.

The division is seeing an increase in all program areas. The Child Protective Services (CPS) team has seen an increase in referrals and there has been a 33% increase in Foster Care cases over the past year. There are currently 78 children in foster care.

There has been increase in Adult Services cases which includes completing a screening for services. The division has also seen an increase in Adult Protective Services (APS) cases which tend to be more complex. The APS worker spends a lot of time engaging vulnerable adults to participate in services in order to improve their quality of life. However, not all adults are interested in being helped so it is important to be patient and consistent.

The child welfare and APS teams spend many hours trying to assist clients in the area of housing. Whether it is staying housed, finding suitable housing, or accessing community housing resources, workers are addressing housing instability at an increased rate. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of success in this area. Even if clients or families have vouchers, they struggle to find appropriate housing in Charlottesville or the surrounding areas. Staff are also addressing housing issues for families that are finding their way to Charlottesville with no prior connection or any resource to find and retain housing. These type of situations cause workers to make difficult decisions primarily due to the fact that Charlottesville does not have any family shelter availability.

Current and Future Challenges

Child Care Subsidy Program Waitlists

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) instituted waitlists for the child care subsidy program on July 1, 2024 due to funding availability. Any new applications received for child care through local departments of social services will be denied and placed on a waitlist. There are currently 13 children on the waitlist for Charlottesville. VDSS allocates funding to each locality based on population size and previous levels of enrollment. There is a need for more Child Care Subsidy providers in the City of Charlottesville. Several long-term providers have closed in the past year and the limited number of subsidy program providers in the City do not have openings. Department child care staff are partnering with the City Schools preschool program and the United Way to assist income eligible families.

Re-instatement of SNAP Interviews

Starting November 1, 2024, the SNAP program will reinstate program interviews for initial applications and renewals. VDSS secured a waiver from USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to waive initial and renewal interviews during the COVID pandemic and then with the enactment of CAA2023 the department was able to continue this waiver through the Medicaid Unwinding work. The SNAP interview waiver ends on October 31, 2024. This will increase administrative work for Benefit Program Specialists due to scheduling interviews and conducting them timely and a re-education of clients to keep interview appointments to maintain their SNAP benefits.

Re-instatement of TANF Program Clocks

Due to the enactment of CAA2023, TANF (cash assistance) caseloads will decrease due to the reinstatement of the 24-month clock effective January 2023. Due to the COVID pandemic, starting in April 2020, TANF cases were not closed and TANF clocks were suspended including the 24-month clock and 60 month clocks. There are approximately 40 cases that will close by 12/31/2024 due to the expiration of the 24 month clock unless clients request their case to close earlier to save time on the 24-month clock.

Eligible clients are able to receive TANF benefits for 24 consecutive months. Once that time period ends, they have to wait 24 months to apply again. There is a lifetime limit of 60 months to receive TANF benefits.

New position request:

The department will be requesting a new position to be added to the adult services team as part of its FY26 budget submission. The detailed level of work that is needed for ongoing cases and the rising number of new investigations will exceed the team's ability to provide effective services. The board supports this request and hopes it is carefully considered by city council.

Succession Planning

The department has a multi-generational work force. There is a recognized need for succession planning and the board recommends that this be a priority for the new director. In calendar year 2024, the department has had 4 retirements to date including a Director with 30+ years of service as well as a finance employee with 25 years of service. 10% of the department's workforce will be eligible to retire in 2025 based on years of service and/or age. This includes 4 out of 6 Benefit Programs Supervisors.

Respectfully submitted by Charlottesville Department of Social Services Advisory Board Members:

- Cherry Stewart, Chair
- Maria Rincon, Vice Chair
- Darlene Ayars-Feazell
- Brian Pinkston, City Council
- Rebecca Schmidt
- Toya Trager
- Ashley Zhang