



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

# Partnering for Lasting Change

Virginia Department of Social Services BPRO Fall 2024 Conference

# Introductions

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Participants:

Please introduce yourself, your DSS position and the locality in which you work.



# Workshop Overview



The Division of Benefit Programs (DBP) distributes over \$7M in federal funding each year to non-profit partner organizations providing employment and training services in your community. Today we will review :

- **Funding guidelines;**
- **Who these partners are in your community; and,**
- **How their diverse services can help you increase employment and retention rates, possibly increase your VIEW spending rates, and, how working together can create lasting change for families seeking economic independence in Virginia.**



# Before we get started.....

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Take a minute to look over the list of partner agencies to see if you are familiar with those serving your region.

- How many of you have already been partnering with these service providers?
- How many never knew they could help your clients?
- What do you most hope to learn in this workshop?



# DBP TANF Funding Quick Facts

For FY2025, the DBP TANF division is:

- Stewarding \$40,592,925.26 in Federal and State TANF funds; and,
- Awarding, monitoring and evaluating 47 organizations providing employment and training for TANF/VIEW participants and **individuals with dependent child/ren earning income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.**

## *Why Fund Outside Organizations?*

As you all have experienced, Virginia's services to TANF clients have revealed the presence of many different disabilities in this population. Disabilities include: learning disabilities, other cognitive impairments, mental health issues, substance abuse issues, health issues, and other impairments.

The primary federal performance measure for state TANF programs is the TANF Work Participation Rate (WPR). The TANF work requirements, including mandatory participation rates and lifetime limits to benefits, have been posing challenges for the local social service departments as they attempt to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and/or other issues and help parents move to gainful employment.

Over the years, the Virginia TANF program has had the typical program outcomes of work-first programs - very good results with job entry, but outcomes that are not as successful for job retention and wage progression. The mission statement of the VDSS is to help people "triumph over poverty". In July of 2019, the Virginia TANF Program began deemphasizing the work participation rate and began emphasizing the placement of TANF recipients in activities that promote the movement of participants toward achieving a living wage.

**DBP partners with outside organizations to help meet our mission of helping families triumph over poverty.**

## What is the Eligibility Criteria For Services Under the Contracts?

- Recipients of TANF cash assistance who are in the employment program, Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW), including those sanctioned;
- Recipients of TANF cash assistance who are exempt from VIEW, called VIEW-exempt;
- Individuals receiving Diversionary Assistance under the TANF Program;
- TANF clients whose cash assistance has ended and who are now in the transitional period, up to 24 months after the end of TANF cash assistance; or
- Individuals with dependent children whose income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

## Target Population for Service Providers

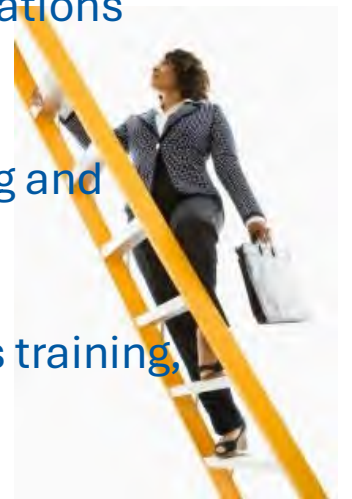
The objectives of this initiative are to help underemployed and unemployed clients obtain employment and retain employment, obtain wage increases leading to a living wage, and start on a career pathway. Employment and retention strategies apply to:

- Individuals who are already employed at the time of their program enrollment;
- Individuals who face special issues and need extra preparation and support before entering the workforce;
- Individuals who find or are placed in jobs but have difficulty keeping jobs;
- Individuals who can find only entry level, low wage or part-time employment; and
- Individuals who need additional training, education and/or job skills and supportive services not provided by the LDSS.

# List of Requested Service Provision Components

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- Comprehensive assessments (including utilization of psychologists and clinicians) that help identify strengths, diagnose disabilities, and determine any treatment and accommodations required;
- Services that stabilize an individual's situation so that he/she can participate in training and education programs, and obtain/retain employment;
- Intensive work preparation or work adjustment services, including education and skills training, community work experience placements, and on the job training;
- Job development and placement and the development of industry-based Career Pathways; and,
- Other services that assist individuals to retain employment and/or obtain higher wages, obtain health benefits, and/or obtain jobs with career paths that will in turn eliminate the participating individuals' families need for TANF benefits.





# Allowable Expenses

- Core staff in support of program activities including core staff involved in program design, development, and implementation. Limited to the personnel working directly with the recipients or developing program resources on their behalf;
- Equipment in support of project activities;
- Consultation, technical assistance or staff training related to this project;
- Medical Services including the evaluations of medical, psychological, psychiatric and/or dental needs. Note: Such funding is limited, and costs may be incurred as a last resort (only if not covered by other funds).
- Other allowable direct costs such as cash incentives, supplies, travel, tablets;
- Costs related to assistive technology needs of the persons served; and/or
- Fee for Service.

What have you seen so far that is different regarding eligibility, services, and allowable costs that could be most helpful for your participants to create lasting change?



# PARTNER SURVEY SUCCESS RESPONSES



One of the most valuable aspects of our collaboration with the local department of social services is the effective coordination of service referrals. MFA positions ourselves as the “Community Arm” for Social Services. While Education/Training and Employment form the foundation for project funding, many social services recipients struggle to achieve their goals without intensive support. If they could have pursued these goals independently, they likely would have done so. MFA can help referred clients build a solid foundation for long-term career success and income stability, ultimately reducing their reliance on social services benefits in the future.

In working with local departments, one of the most helpful aspects has been effective communication and a great referral source. They often will refer clients and reach out to check in to see if anything else is needed from them, for us to assist that client. Often, I will reach out to local offices to look for resources for meeting client needs and they do the same. It is generally easy to communicate with local offices.

By partnering with DSS, we are able to cost share to offset the burdens on one program.

Our local departments are phenomenal. They show sincere and authentic concern for their clients and are always professional. DSS has referred clients who had significant barriers but have really shined as they engaged with our career coaches and other students. We sincerely appreciate the front-line staff at DSS and their commitment to connecting people to the resources that will help them not only survive, but to thrive. It is our privilege however to do this work collaboratively and always with a true passion for helping others find their successful path.

## What have you found to be successful strategies in working with workforce partners in your community?

# PARTNER SURVEY CHALLENGES RESPONSES



The most significant challenge in collaborating with DSS is the lack of effective coordination for service referrals. There are a few potential reasons why referrals may not be happening as frequently as they should. Firstly, social services workers often feel overwhelmed by the demands of local and state requirements for their agencies. While sending a referral form might seem like a solution to help manage their workload, many may perceive it as an additional burden.

Referrals. There may be a lack of understanding among DSS workers regarding the purpose, opportunities, resources, and benefits of collaborating with TANF subrecipients. Knowing when and how to utilize the TANF subrecipients could create a system that better serves clients, workers, local social services agencies, and TANF subrecipients alike. Ultimately, this partnership could lead to improved outcomes for VDSS.

It can be challenging to engage with DSS/DFS in smaller jurisdictions. Initially they may see our program as duplicative and do not understand the value-add we bring. Through repeated outreach and communication, the referrals eventually materialize.

Communication. It's crucial that each entity maintain clear lines of communication so we can provide effective wrap around services for our clients.

**What have you found to be most challenging in working with workforce partners in your community?**

## Strategies for Increasing Collaboration with our TANF Funded Partners



**1**

Invite partners to an all-staff meeting to present on their programs and brainstorm partnership opportunities.



**2**

Take a field trip to visit partnership sites to see firsthand what your clients may experience so you can make informed referrals.



**3**

Develop mutually agreed upon effective communication processes with partners and hold staff responsible for following procedures.



**4**

Review the program descriptions in the Resource Guide. If partners in your locality are not providing a resource you need, meet to discuss the possibility of bringing it to your locality.

## Lasting Change Success Story #1

An Afghan refugee was referred by the VIEW program. He is married with four (4) children. He holds a master's degree in human resources management and has many years of HR experience in his home country. JD provided LinkedIn Learning access, and he completed various HR related courses. After several job applications, he was hired as an HR assistant making \$48,000 a year with benefits. A month after he was hired, he contributed to a new contract proposal that the company eventually won. He will be promoted, receive a salary increase and allowed to work remotely. The VIEW program is providing childcare assistance because his wife is taking fulltime ESL classes.

SkillSource – Northern Virginia







## Lasting Change Success Story #2

Dinwiddie County. AB was a local Dinwiddie VIEW and TANF client. She had a poor work history, and some medical issues with her feet and legs. JAC and Dinwiddie Social Services worked together to provide job readiness training, tuition assistance at Chester Career College for a Nurse Aide class and then to provide funds for State Board Exams and nursing uniforms for clinicals training and then different color uniforms once she obtained a job. We also worked together to purchase her special shoes for work due to her problems with her legs and her feet. She has completed training, obtained her state board license, is working full time making 20.00 per hour and is no longer in need of TANF funds.

Job Assistance Center – Central Eastern

# Lasting Change Success Story #3

I am always singing the praises for my education partners and my interpreters, but this summer, the Shenandoah Valley driving school really went above and beyond to work with my clients to get them scheduled for the many lessons they need to learn to drive. Driving with many of my folks is difficult, as many of them have zero vehicle experience, so it can be scary to drive with them. Add to it that they don't understand what you are telling them and you can see that it is a big ask! I do try to get interpreters but you can imagine how crazy it gets scheduling 8 drivers with 3-5 lessons per week along with them and their interpreters. Also, I need to taxi them there and back as well—all that scheduling is pretty complex. Even though it is crazy sometimes they stick with us and share our goal of putting only safe drivers on the road!

Harrisonburg/Rockingham DSS/Way2Go



