

## Inside eHHR

November 2012

### CommonHelp: Paving the Way to Citizen-Centric Human Services

On October 10th, I had the pleasure of attending the CommonHelp Public Launch held at the South County Center of the Fairfax Department of Family Services. It was an exciting time to see months of work come to fruition with this public unveiling. I applaud the work of the dedicated Fairfax County staff, and all of you as well.

Since April 2012, 6% of all Medicaid applications, 9% of all SNAP applications, 12% of all TANF applications, and 13% of all child care applications have been completed online by citizens...and that was with a “soft launch” of CommonHelp. In the month of August alone, 14%, 19%, 26%, and 28% of Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and child care applications respectively were completed online. This is amazing progress, in just a few months, toward citizen-centric delivery of human services.

Innovative solutions aren’t accomplished in a vacuum. We need to thank our federal partners and our public and private partners. I want to offer special thanks to all of the employees of the Virginia Social Services System, both state and local, from all divisions and localities who have contributed to the successful development of this project. Also special thanks are due to the Virginia League of Social Services Executives and their benefit program’s affiliate, the Benefit Program Organization.

There is much more to be accomplished. CommonHelp is just the first step in Virginia’s modernization plan with additional phases scheduled to incorporate new online services to better serve and meet the needs of our citizens. By leveraging technology, Virginia will create a comprehensive online, self-service environment where existing business functions can be streamlined and expanded services can be easily added to meet the changing needs of our citizens.

To be sure, providing concrete support in times of need is a protective factor that strengthens families. Providing support in an environment that maximizes staff resources through efficient use of technology will allow us, together, to build resilient and strong families!

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Deputy Commissioner – Programs  
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#### In this Edition

**CommonHelp: Paving the Way to Citizen-Centric Services**

**Questions?**

**The Fairfax CommonHelp Experience**

**eHHR Upcoming Developments**

#### Questions

To ensure that we are meeting your communication needs, we invite you to send questions about the eHHR Program and its projects to the [eHHR Program Office](#).



### The Fairfax CommonHelp Experience

Fairfax County has initiated a significant business process redesign with the primary goal of augmenting capacity to meet the unrelenting high demand for services. One of our strategies includes leveraging technology to maximize the use of workers’ time — freeing them to do more of what only workers can do. We benchmarked similar modernization efforts in other states, including Florida where over 90% of applications for public assistance are submitted online. After estimating the work load

from current customers, we projected the number of computers needed, requested them from the state, and worked within our space constraints to make room for computer and telephone cubicles in our lobbies. We developed Standard Operating Procedures for every function in the eligibility process, including CommonHelp. Staff was kept informed of CommonHelp development and was encouraged to participate in CommonHelp-related VDSS workgroups.

Today we have “greeters” and “navigators” in our lobbies. Greeters triage customers when they walk in and route them to either the computers, the phone banks, or to the waiting area depending on the nature of the transaction. Navigators assist customers with the use of CommonHelp and answer basic “how to” or “what does this mean” questions. Over 50% of all of our applications (more than 1,600 in September) are being submitted online by clients. Half of those are submitted from off-site locations. Clients like the convenience of CommonHelp and staff finds it provides many time savers that together with the other strategies we have put in place, allows them to get the work done well and on time in spite of continued increases in caseloads.

From the very beginning, we talked to staff about how CommonHelp was going to be part of our process management model. We developed a communications plan that included all levels and divisions in our department; all other Fairfax county human services agencies; elected officials; and other key stakeholders such as community-based organizations, public libraries, schools, boards, authorities, and commissions. Additionally, we posted the CommonHelp link on our public website, created our own flyers promoting the benefit of online applications, updated our phone messages, and created internal client communication forms such as “review letters” to promote the availability of CommonHelp. Our Business Process Re-engineering goals include:

- ◆ Improve staff productivity and job satisfaction by reducing work inefficiencies and interruptions;
- ◆ Meet and exceed all state quality and timeliness measures; and
- ◆ Improve customers’ experience.

To measure success, we use metrics for timeliness, quality, processing speed, approval/denial rates, and daily application numbers. New measures and tools to manage and analyze the work are also being developed.

Change always brings some discomfort, but it is needed if we are to remain relevant. With clear, current, and continuous communication, we have instilled more comfort with the new business processes. The benefits are significant: They improve the customer’s experience and with that bring workers more satisfaction in their ability to provide human services in Virginia.

Juani Diaz  
Director, Self-Sufficiency Division  
Department of Family Services

### eHHR Upcoming Developments

- ◆ The Enterprise Delivery System Program (EDSP) Eligibility Modernization vendor will come on board in the near future. The EDSP is run by VDSS and will be responsible for all projects managed under the Eligibility Modernization RFP No. DIS-12-055, which includes:



- ◇ Modernization of the Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS) to enable flexible configuration of staff workflow;
- ◇ Addition of an External Rules Engine to allow benefit program policy rules to be dynamically updated without extensive IT efforts;
- ◇ Enhancements to the CommonHelp Customer Portal to further improve its self-service ease of use by citizens; and
- ◇ Integration of a Document Management Imaging System (DMIS) to electronically collect and store program documents reducing our shared dependency on paper.

These projects represent the continued efforts to implement the VDSS vision of a self-service benefits and services model that is efficient, effective, and customer friendly.

- ◆ Deployment of an Enterprise Data Management (EDM) data service, to automatically and seamlessly identify citizen records as they apply for or renew benefits in CommonHelp: The EDM service is designed to reduce the manual effort local staff perform identifying the correct individual and to prevent data duplication. Additionally, the Commonwealth Authentication Service (CAS) will ensure that an individual is who they say they are by uniquely identifying an individual, providing for adequate identity proofing, and authenticating the credential via an enterprise shared service.
- ◆ Release of the first eHHR business process survey in November 2012: Mentioned previously, this survey of approximately 25 questions will help VDSS understand how local offices manage eligibility tasks and workflow. Results of the survey will guide VDSS and the EDSP vendor to create several workflows for managing eligibility tasks in the new system.

**Questions or comments?**

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