



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Review of Virginia's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program – Advisory Group Meeting

House Room 3
The Capitol
Richmond, VA 23219

September 6, 2016
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Meeting Notes

Advisory Group Members:

The Honorable Barbara Favola, Tonia Alexander, Mark Golden, Susan Massart, Jon Martz, Lilian Peake, LaTonya Reed, Michael Shook, Tom Steinhauser, Mike Tweedy, Emily Griffey

Members Absent:

The Honorable Mark Sickles

Attending Electronically:

The Honorable Scott Garrett

General Assembly Staff:

Sarah Staton, David May

Virginia Commission on Youth Staff:

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen, Leah Mills

Welcome and Introductions

The Honorable Barbara Favola

Senator Favola welcomed the Advisory Group members and guests and thanked everyone for attending. She asked everyone to go around the table and introduce themselves. Senator Favola noted that Delegate Garrett would be calling in to participate. Senator Favola then asked for a motion to adopt the August 1, 2016 meeting minutes. The motion was made, seconded, and adopted unanimously.

Senator Favola stated that in terms of creating a framework for the Commission's study; the Advisory Group should focus on the TANF goal of helping families achieve self-sufficiency. In addition, the Advisory Group would receive information on the intersection between TANF and the Child Care Subsidy Program. Lastly, under purposes three and four of TANF, a variety of programs in Virginia receive TANF funds to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies while

encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. While these programs are very worthwhile, they do not solely provide services to TANF recipients. Senator Favola stated that, after hearing the presentations, the Advisory Group would discuss recommendations that likely address these three themes.

TANF and Eligibility for Virginia's Benefit Programs

Mark Golden, TANF Program Manager, Division of Benefit Programs, Virginia Department of Social Services

Senator Favola introduced Mr. Golden and thanked him for providing an overview on the benefit programs for which TANF recipients are eligible. Mr. Golden reminded the Advisory Group that at the August 1 Advisory Group meeting, the members had requested additional information on other benefit programs/services available to TANF recipients and that he was pleased to provide this information.

Mr. Golden stated that TANF recipients are eligible for a variety of supportive services in order to remove barriers to the individual's work participation and to stabilize employment. Accordingly, child care services are provided to Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) recipients if such assistance enables these recipients to work. As of September 2016, 71.26% TANF recipients also were receiving Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Other services available to TANF recipients include energy assistance, housing assistance, Women's Infants and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch/Breakfast Program.

Mr. Golden informed the Advisory Group that transitional services are available for up to one year after TANF assistance ends. Transitional services include transportation assistance and child care assistance. Medical assistance, including transitional medical assistance for families with a working parent who becomes ineligible for TANF financial assistance because of increased earnings, is also available. The family may also receive financial assistance of \$50 per month if the participant is employed and is working at least 30 hours per week or more at the time of closure of the TANF case.

The Advisory Group asked questions about eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy Program and access to housing services. Mr. Golden stated that the demand for housing services exceeded the supply and that income limits vary among localities. Senator Favola inquired whether TANF recipients received priority for housing. Mr. Golden stated that there were certain program requirements and the federal government was cautious about treating certain groups differently. The Advisory Group discussed investigating the possibility of prioritizing housing for TANF recipients. The Advisory Group inquired about the time frames for TANF eligibility and the impact this could have upon prioritizing housing for TANF recipients. TANF recipients would only be eligible for housing while receiving TANF, which would only be for a two-year time frame.

Senator Favola thanked Mr. Golden for his presentation. Mr. Golden's presentation can be accessed on the Commission on Youth's meeting page under the September 6 meeting tab.

Overview of Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program

Mary Ward, Child Care Subsidy Manager, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development, Virginia Department of Social Services

Senator Favola thanked Ms. Ward for attending and providing an overview of the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Ms. Ward provided an overview of the program. She noted the subsidy is broken down into mandated services and non-mandated services. The following are prioritized for child care services:

- Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) & TANF working recipients
- TANF education and training recipients

- Transitional services for TANF/VIEW recipients
 - SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) employment and training recipients
- She stated that in Fiscal Year 2016, 17,361 families were served.

Ms. Ward stated that low income families falling under the non-mandated eligibility categories for the Child Care Subsidy included those who were not participating in VIEW/TANF working programs or not receiving TANF/VIEW transitional services. However, they may be eligible for the subsidy due to their child's participation in Head Start or based on the extent funding is available and if the families meet certain eligibility and non-financial requirements. When the demand for subsidies exceeds the available funding, localities utilize waiting lists to keep track of eligible families until subsidies can be made available. The Advisory Group learned that there are waiting lists in many localities for non-mandated child care subsidies. As of August 2016, there were 11,877 families and 19,055 children on the statewide waiting list.

Ms. Ward stated that, families who are not considered mandated but receive the Child Care Subsidy may lose access to this benefit if they move from one locality to another. When subsidy recipients move, they notify the new locality of their need for child care services. Child care services in the original locality ends and the family reapplies in their new locality. While VIEW recipients are prioritized for services, non-mandated families may be placed on a waiting list, even if they were receiving the Child Care Subsidy in the locality where they previously resided.

Ms. Ward informed the Advisory Group that a workgroup convened by the Virginia Department of Social Services is currently working on this transfer process. TANF will migrate into the Virginia Case Management System this fall. Both programs will be in the same case management system for the first time. This effort will allow cases to be transferred so that families will not need to re-apply for the subsidy.

The Advisory Group asked follow up questions about TANF transfers to the Child Care Subsidy. The Advisory Group then discussed how to proceed in formulating policy recommendations for improving access to the Child Care Subsidy for families who are non-mandated. The Advisory Group members noted that such a recommendation would certainly have a fiscal impact and this would have to be considered in light of the Commonwealth's budget shortfall.

Senator Favola thanked Ms. Ward for her presentation. Ms. Ward's presentation can be accessed on the Commission on Youth's meeting page under the September 6 meeting tab.

Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program and Barriers to Access – A Local Perspective

Jon Martz, Director, New Kent Department of Social Services

Senator Favola thanked Mr. Martz for presenting on barriers to access to Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program. He presented on several barriers low-income families face in accessing child care. He outlined the Commonwealth's income eligibility scale for the Child Care Subsidy along with the annual cost of child care for infants, four-year-olds, and school aged children. Mr. Martz then discussed the maximum reimbursable rates for child care for all Virginia's localities along with the waitlist for the Child Care Subsidy. He also clarified that the wait list did not include families that were mandated to receive the Child Care Subsidy including VIEW families. Mr. Martz then discussed the number of TANF cases exempt from VIEW due to a temporary medical condition.

The members inquired how families seek information about the child care providers that participate in the Child Care Subsidy Program. Senator Favola discussed using the Child Care Subsidy Program to fund child care services with the goal of preventing families from becoming eligible for TANF. The Advisory Group also asked about the feasibility of Child Care Subsidy funds "following the child",

changing the locality groupings which help determine eligibility/assistance payments, and expanding the time period that TANF recipients may receive transitional services. The Advisory Group members then discussed the implications of the Commonwealth's budget shortfall and the impact the shortfall may have upon recommendations that had a fiscal impact. Delegate Garrett inquired about the feasibility of establishing a pilot which incorporates these options to ascertain effectiveness. This type of approach has been discussed by the Joint Subcommittee Studying Mental Health Services in the Commonwealth in the 21st Century established by Senator Deeds. He also asked whether the Commonwealth could utilize a longitudinal data system that showed how children and families were doing after receiving services from Virginia's health and human services' programs.

Senator Favola thanked Mr. Martz for his presentation. Mr. Martz's presentation can be accessed on the Commission on Youth's meeting page under the September 6 meeting tab.

Expanded Services/Discretionary Activities Funded by TANF

Amy Atkinson, Executive Director, Commission on Youth

Senator Favola introduced Ms. Atkinson. Ms. Atkinson stated that she would quickly review her presentation on expanded services/discretionary activities so that the Advisory Group would have time to discuss potential study recommendations. Ms. Atkinson reminded the Advisory Group that a significant portion of TANF funds go to direct services to families under purposes 1 and 2. However, TANF can be used to fund a variety of programs and services known as "expanded funding." Expanded funding is allocated from the TANF block grant and was over \$21 million in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018. Expanded funding is currently used for:

- Healthy Families (\$9.0 million)
- Domestic Violence (\$3.3 million)
- Community Action Agencies (\$4.25 million)
- Comprehensive Health Investment Project (\$2.4 million)
- Boys and Girls Clubs (\$1 million)
- Resource Mothers (\$1 million)
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Grants (\$186 million)

Ms. Atkinson reviewed the mission and populations served by the expanded programs. She then reviewed the funding history for each of the seven programs. Ms. Atkinson then noted that in Fiscal Year 2019, Virginia may have a deficit if nothing else changes and funding remains at current levels. If caseloads start to increase, it is critical to remember that the Commonwealth must ensure there is sufficient funding to meet the primary purpose of TANF – financial assistance and supportive services to needy eligible families and children. That would mean funds appropriated to programs pursuant to these purposes could lose funding. Questions were raised about several of the expanded programs.

Senator Favola thanked Ms. Atkinson for her presentation. Ms. Atkinson's presentation can be accessed on the Commission on Youth's meeting page under the September 6 meeting tab.

Advisory Group Discussion

Findings/Recommendations

The Advisory Group reviewed the discussion from the meeting and the recommendations that emerged from the presentations. Several of the Advisory Group members stated that they could not take a position on the draft recommendations but would be happy to provide the Commission with any information necessary to help ascertain whether the draft recommendations would have a fiscal or programmatic impact.

The recommendations discussed by the Advisory Group are outlined below.

- Evaluate the feasibility of prioritizing housing services for Virginia’s TANF recipients while confronting barriers such as the time limitations of TANF and any other housing assistance program participation requirements.
- Support the Virginia Department of Social Services’ (VDSS) efforts to include a component within the Virginia Case Management System that allows the seamless transition of the TANF child care subsidy from local departments of social services.
- Introduce a budget amendment to increase funds for child care subsidies to the working poor.
- Support continued efforts to provide market-based subsidies to make quality child care a reality for vulnerable families.
- Provide resources to assist families in identifying and accessing child care to meet their needs such as non-traditional hours of care, children’s special needs or other considerations.
- Fund the extension of transitional services available to Virginia’s VIEW recipients from 12 months to 18 months
- Gather information on the use of shared data and analytics among Virginia agencies with focus on Virginia’s welfare and health and human services’ programs for children and families.
- Assess the feasibility and fiscal impact of extending transitional services available to Virginia’s VIEW recipients from 12 months to 18 months.
- Request VDSS to assess the feasibility and fiscal impact of increasing Virginia’s TANF income eligibility threshold for VIEW participants.
- Request VDSS to develop policies for improving the temporary medical exemption determination process and the transition of TANF cases that are exempt due to a temporary medical condition to expeditiously transition TANF medically exempt cases to VIEW or facilitate their application to appropriate disability benefits.
- Introduce legislation/budgetary language to fund designated staff to work with the TANF population that are exempt from VIEW due to a temporary medical condition to either transition them to VIEW, facilitate approval of disability benefits, or otherwise resolve medical issues.
- Provide funding for training for LDSS workers who work with TANF recipients to fulfill the goals of self-sufficiency.
- Request the Virginia Board of Social Services to review the statewide locality groupings and assess the feasibility and fiscal impact of combining Locality Groupings I and II.
- Support the General Assembly’s efforts which ensure that Virginia’s TANF program is adequately funded and ensure that the primary purposes of TANF are maintained.

Ms. Atkinson thanked everyone for their participation and stated that staff would send the Advisory Group participants the draft recommendations for additional feedback. The draft recommendations would then be shared with the Commission on Youth at their meeting scheduled for September 20, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in House Room C at the General Assembly Building. Ms. Atkinson stated that all meetings are open to the public. The Commission would then receive public comment and all

comments submitted to the Commission on Youth would then be shared at the Commission's meeting scheduled for October 20 at 1:00 p.m. in House Room C of the General Assembly Building. The Commission would also receive testimony on the draft recommendations at the October 20 meeting and then vote on the proposed recommendations after receiving public comment. Ms. Atkinson thanked everyone for their involvement. The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:55 p.m.