

**Report on the Response of the
Department of Housing and Community Development
To the Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population**

May 2008



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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May 1, 2008

Virginia Department for the Aging
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ATTN: Bill Peterson, MSW, PhD

Pursuant to House Bill 2624, enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia during the 2007 Session, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of the population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Bill Shelton'.

Bill Shelton,
Director



Partners for Better Communities

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**Annual Progress Report of the Department of Housing and Community
Development on the Effect of the Aging Population on State Agencies**

Executive Summary

Chapter 507 of the 2007 Acts of the General Assembly amended § 2.2-5510 of the Code of Virginia to require that each agency “*report by November 15 of each year to the Department for the Aging its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of the population, according to guidance established by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. Based upon information received, the Department for the Aging shall prepare a report summarizing the progress made by the agencies and submit such report to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 30 of the following year.*”

In accordance with this requirement and the guidance provided to agencies of state government by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Department of Housing and Community Development is submitting the following information for use by the Department for the Aging in preparing a summary report.

The major housing and community development programs and services administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) do not specifically target older Virginians. Instead, they focus on low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Because a portion of the senior population may have incomes at or below median levels, they may be incidental beneficiaries of the various program designs. In several of the agency’s programs, older Virginians have traditionally comprised a substantial share of the beneficiaries —from one-third to as much as one-half in some cases. Weatherization, home rehabilitation, and home accessibility activities are the most prominent examples.

An aging population challenges to the ability of the agency to attain its strategic goal and objectives. As the population ages and the number of frail elderly grows, DHCD must continually review the provisions of its building and fire codes as they affect assisted living facilities as well as other residential settings that are intended to provide a safe environment for older residents with limiting conditions.

The Department works with communities to identify the areas of greatest need and then assists them in meeting those needs through its grant and loan programs. As the aging population begins to have an impact on localities, non-profit organizations, and other partners, DHCD is positioning itself to work with them in responding to specific areas of anticipated need, including :

- Increasing demand for housing with access to critical supportive services to meet the needs of growing numbers of disabled, elderly, and homeless households.
- Increasing requests for assistance for home modifications reflecting the preferences of an expanding elderly population that is attempting to remain independent for as long as possible.

Agency Description

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) works to create safe, affordable, and prosperous communities in which Virginians can live, work, and do business. The agency develops partnerships with local governments, nonprofit groups, state and federal agencies, and others, to improve the quality of life for Virginians.

DHCD helps Virginia's communities develop their economic potential through a variety of programs that provide technical assistance as well as funding. The agency develops building and fire codes to enhance the safety of the built environment while providing training and certification for the local code enforcement personnel who implement those regulations. Each year it invests more than \$100 million in state and federal funds into housing and community development projects throughout the state--the majority of which help low-to-moderate income citizens.

Programs focusing on community development assist in the provision of new or upgraded public and public service facilities, support initiatives to improve economic development opportunities, and the rehabilitation of housing—including the provision of complete indoor plumbing facilities. Housing programs support in the creation and preservation of affordable housing opportunities, assist local homeless shelters, and invest in local and regional initiatives to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first place. Other programs address the energy efficiency and affordability of housing or support modifications that increase accessibility.

Persons over the Age of 65 Receiving Agency Services

- To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.*

Programs of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) have generally not distinguished between persons in the 65-74, 75-84, and 85+ age categories. Because of federal program reporting requirements, most of the programs distinguish between persons under and over the age of 65. The Department has not collected information by subcategories above the age of 65. The table below addresses the most recent years for which data by age is available, which will serve to indicate the recent trends in the respective program service areas.

Persons Over 65 Receiving Services

| Service Area | Fiscal Years | | | | |
|--|--------------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
| Home Rehabilitation/Indoor Plumbing | 94 | 56 | 45 | 54 | 71 |
| Production/Preservation of Affordable Housing Units* | N/A | N/A | 104 | 461 | 93 |
| Emergency and Accessibility Home Repairs [Households with Elderly Residents] | 274 | 271 | 128 | 366 | 475 |
| Prevention of Homelessness | 42 | 109 | 69 | 58 | 290 |
| Home Weatherization Services [Households with Elderly Residents] | 1306 | 1856 | 2217 | 1708 | 1505 |

*Presumed benefit based on units of senior housing projects receiving Community Development Block Grant or HOME Investment Partnership programs using DHCD administered federal funds.

**Reporting for these programs is on a federal fiscal year basis.

Agency Programs and Services Used by Senior Citizens

- 2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?*

Most of the major housing and community development programs and services administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) target low and moderate income individuals and families. Some of the benefits provided to seniors may be an incidental consequence of the program design. Nonetheless, in several of the programs listed below, older Virginians have traditionally comprised a significant share of the beneficiaries:

Indoor Plumbing/Rehabilitation Program: DHCD combines state general funds and HOME Investment Partnership funds to provide zero interest, forgivable loans paying for the installation of indoor plumbing. The program targets lower-income owners of substandard housing where either indoor plumbing does not exist or where the existing water delivery or waste disposal system has failed. This program also provides for the general rehabilitation of such units and for accessibility improvements to overcrowded units or those occupied by persons with disabilities. Indoor plumbing loans are only available to localities that are not federal entitlement jurisdictions of the CDBG program.

Community Development Block Grant Program: DHCD administers U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds through a competitive grant program that funds projects addressing critical community development needs. These needs include housing, infrastructure, and economic development. Eligible activities include rehabilitation, relocation, and demolition of homes and buildings. In addition, community facilities, such as senior centers, are eligible for project assistance.

Affordable Housing Production and Preservation Program: DHCD uses federal HOME Investment Partnership funds (including a 25 percent State match) to provide below-market rate loans for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental projects containing four or more units and congregate housing projects. These rental units target low and very-low income tenants. Funds from this program provide gap financing and are generally used with other funding such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits, bond financing, and other sources of private or public funds

Emergency Home Repair Program: DHCD uses state general funds to remove imminent health and safety hazards and barriers to habitability in the homes of lower income Virginians. Eligible repairs include plumbing, structural, and electrical work as well as the installation of wheelchair ramps and accessible appliances. Funding through the Virginia Tax Check-off for Housing, which specifically addresses the housing needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, is also distributed through this program

Accessibility Repair Program: DHCD works with other agencies and non-profit organizations and uses the receipts from income tax check offs to pay for modification work needed to make housing more accessible.

Homeless Intervention Program: DHCD uses state general funds and federal TANF funds to provide time-limited financial and housing counseling assistance to low income individuals and families experiencing a financial crisis and that are at risk of becoming homeless or that are currently homeless. HIP assistance sustains their ability to maintain or obtain permanent housing.

Weatherization Assistance: DHCD administers grants using two sources of federal funds, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to reduce the heating and cooling costs and ensure the health and safety of low-income households. The elderly, individuals with disabilities, and families with children are among the targeted populations. The **Weatherization Assistance Program** (WAP) relies on DOE funding. Fifteen percent of the HHS **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program** (LIHEAP) funds are used for weatherization assistance. Services include sealing air leaks, repairing leaky duct systems, repairing or replacing unsafe or inefficient heating systems, and installing carbon monoxide alarms and smoke detectors.

Although the agency does not directly maintain waiting lists for the services discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the referral lists maintained by the Department of Social Services for the LIHEAP program and referral lists maintained by housing authorities, homeless service providers and other agency partners, strongly suggest that the levels of need already exceed the resources available to the agency. As the agency has noted in its strategic plan, current funding levels are unlikely to meet the anticipated demand in the future for services linked to an aging population.

Agency Programs and Services Specifically Designed to Serve Senior Citizens

- 3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.*

DHCD has not developed programs specifically to provide services to seniors. The majority of the housing and community development funds available to the agency are from federal programs intended to benefit low- and moderate-income persons. To the extent that seniors—especially those with fixed or limited incomes--fall within program income guidelines, they have tended to comprise a substantial component of the beneficiaries. Depending on the specific program, they may account for one-third to as much as one-half of the persons benefited.

Consumer Oriented Publications and Websites

- 4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides “consumer-oriented” publications and websites online that are designed to be “senior-friendly.” If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.*

The majority of publications produced by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) target specific audiences, such as building inspectors, fire safety officials, business owners, small-business entrepreneurs and community development planners. Others address units of local government and other entities eligible to participate in various grant, loan or technical assistance activities administered by the agency. Therefore, most publications are not produced for the public, nor could they be described as consumer-oriented.

There is one significant exception to this general rule. DHCD publishes and offers online in PDF format a handbook containing the current provisions of the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA). The VRLTA specifies the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants under a rental agreement. The handbook also provides information on possible sources of legal assistance for landlord/tenant problems. This may be of wider use to the general public. Although DHCD maintains the handbook and responds to questions about aspects of the law and its application, landlord/tenant disputes (other than fair housing complaints) generally fall within the purview of the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs. The Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) is responsible for responding to fair housing complaints.

All documents published by DHCD are written and designed to be comprehensive and understandable to their target audiences. These audiences may include, but are by no means limited to, seniors. The use of portable document formatting (PDF) permits users to magnify online documents to enhance their readability.

The agency completed the redesign of the public portion of its web site during the past year. The redesign conforms to the most recent standards for agency sites, enhances its user-friendly features and facilitates access by persons with disabilities. This should also increase its utility for older Virginians seeking information about a variety of community development and housing assistance services administered by the agency or its state and local partners. The following specific features are noteworthy:

- The web site has a new and cleaner design. With less visual clutter, visitors to the site can locate critical information and documents more quickly.
- The agency has enhanced the functionality of the “search” feature, again with the intent of facilitating identification access to, and the use of relevant information.
- The site is compatible with screen reader systems to accommodate the needs of persons with visual and other limitations.
- DHCD posts each important public document on its web site using the portable document format, which also facilitates ease of handling by visitors to the site.
- The agency is continuing to work on integrating the web presence of a former individual executive branch agency incorporated in DHCD--the Commission on Local Government (CLG)—into the overall agency site. The goal is to assure that the functionality of and ease of access to the CLG portion matches that of the Department site as a whole.

Effects of Aging on the Agency’s Workforce and Service Delivery Capacity

5. *Describe the effect that the aging of the agency’s own workforce will have on its ability to deliver services. Consider the number of retirements expected in the next two years, the effect these retirements might have (e.g., loss of leadership or institutional knowledge in certain programs), how losses might be replaced (e.g., promotions or transfers, recruitment, use of wage staff, including retirees, reengineering, outsourcing), and the costs or savings from the replacements (e.g., staff development cost, salary savings). This item might be addressed by summarizing relevant portions of the agency’s workforce plan.*

Because the Department’s workforce is somewhat older than that of the state government as a whole and because of its relatively small size, the impact of its aging is an important concern.

- In FY 2007, thirteen employees were eligible to retire with an unreduced benefit; however, only two employees actually retired. Eleven percent of the agency's employees are currently eligible to retire. Approximately 19% of the agency's workforce will be eligible to retire in the next five years. The agency anticipates that a peak in retirements is likely to occur within the next two years.
- The financial costs of paying leave balances would be one primary impact. More importantly, the agency could experience a significant loss of experience and institutional memory. However, in the majority of the cases, the agency will be able to recruit replacements with new skills and ideas for future.

DHCD has taken a number of steps to address the issue of succession that is associated with the demographic profile of its workforce.

- To prepare Associate Directors for succession, advanced management training is offered to those who have taken the initiative and/or demonstrated the ability, aptitude and desire to go to the next level. They are encouraged to learn the essential functions of the role filled by the Deputy Director and may be asked to be the acting Deputy Director in times of absence. All Associate Directors have attended or are scheduled to attend the Commonwealth Management Institute.
- Program Managers are also strongly encouraged to participate in various management training such as Commonwealth Management Institute to improve their skills on an ongoing basis. Those who have demonstrated the initiative, desire, ability and aptitude to move up within the organization are encouraged to increase their knowledge and skills in preparation for the Associate Director's role. They are often given special projects and assignments to help them learn responsibilities that are more advanced.
- All managers are encouraged to mentor the individuals they supervise or identify other senior employees to mentor them. In some cases, the mentors are agency partners who excel in the skills needed for advancement.

Services Addressing the Impact of Aging on Virginia's Population

6. *Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.*

The Department is undertaking actions in several areas that may assist in responding to the challenges associated with the aging of the state's population.

- In the realm of building regulations, DHCD is continuing to review building and fire code provisions affecting assisted living facilities as well as other residential facilities that are intended to provide a safe environment for generally older residents with various limiting conditions. Provisions of the building code may also increase the accessibility of new multi-family construction and support designs for new single-family construction with more accessibility features that benefit not only persons with disabilities but also seniors.
- In keeping with its emphasis on enhancing opportunities for community development in Virginia's localities, the Department is maintaining its commitment to working with communities in identifying the areas of greatest need and assisting through its grant and loan programs in meeting those needs. As the aging population begins to have an impact on localities, non-profit organizations, and other partners, DHCD is positioning itself to work with them in responding to specific areas of anticipated need, including :
 - Growing numbers of disabled, elderly, and homeless households are creating a higher demand for housing with access to critical supportive services.
 - Increases in the number of requests for assistance for home modifications are resulting from an expanding elderly population that is attempting to remain independent.