SOCIAL SERVICES

DESCRIPTION

The Department of Social Services (DSS) provides an array of benefits and services to children, families, and individuals who need social and financial assistance and support. The financial assistance and service programs provided by the Department assist individuals and families in meeting their basic human needs, increasing their capacity to function independently, and providing protection for vulnerable populations within the community.

The benefits division assists lower income individuals and families who need help accessing food, adequate health care, and other basic needs. The services division provides protection for our community's children and elderly and disabled adults experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, and exploitation, care for youth in the Department's legal custody through foster care, permanency for youth in need of adoption and self-sufficiency through supportive services such as employment, education, and childcare assistance. The Administration Division provides support to ensure benefits and services programs are administered in a timely manner and in accordance with the law through customer service, case opening, finance, budget, and Information Technology all working to ensure that the department is fully operational, providing services 24 hours a day. Funding to support these efforts is provided by the Federal, State, and County governments as well as through community partnerships while program mandates are set forth in federal and state law and regulation.

ANNUAL FISCAL PLAN SUMMARY

Description	FY25 Actual	FY26 Original	FY27 Approved	% Change
Personnel	$20,182,641	$23,412,732	$25,964,371	10.9%
Operation	9,314,429	8,403,293	8,403,293	0.0%
Capital	62,603	47,110	47,110	0.0%
Subtotal	$29,559,673	$31,863,135	$34,414,774	8.0%
Recommended Adjustment	$0	$0	-$955,894	100.0%
Total	$29,559,673	$31,863,135	$33,458,880	5.0%
Personnel Complement*	239 **	239	244 ***	5

**Personnel Complement does not include one Kinship Navigator position funded entirely through the Opioid Abatement Authority.*

***Twenty positions added in FY25 from amendments to meet increasing workloads.*

****Three Senior Family Services Specialists added from FY26 amendments. A Casework Supervisor and Senior Family Services Specialist added in the FY27 Budget.*

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	FY25	FY26	FY27	26-27 Change
Workload Measures				
Foster Home Approval (Kinship & Non-Relative)	64	72	85	13
Efficiency Measures				
SNAP Application Timely Processing	92.4%	95.0%	97.0%	2.0%
CPS Complaints Initiated Timely	81.0%	95.0%	95.0%	0.0%
Efficiency Measures				
Customer Appeals Sustained (Benefits)	95.0%	97.0%	97.0%	0.0%

OBJECTIVES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

- Maintain continuity of critical services.
- Anticipate potential impacts on programs and staffing to ensure effective response to emerging guidelines while continuing to meet the needs of the community.

SERVICES DIVISION

- Continue to improve kinship foster care approval processes and support.
- Align Adult Protective Services staff expertise with the specific needs of each service area to enhance service quality, reduce burnout, and promote better outcomes for vulnerable adults.
- Strengthen family stability, reduce crises, and decrease need for intensive interventions through early prevention and eviction prevention efforts.
- The Virginia Initiative for Education & Work (VIEW) continues to establish pathways for clients to achieve self-sufficiency through initiatives like the vehicle donation program, the federal temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) pilot program, and job fairs and workshops hosted by staff.

BENEFITS DIVISION

- Deliver timely, accurate training that reduces processing errors, strengthens staff competency and improves workforce retention.
- Improve onboarding procedures and position placement to ensure new hires without prior benefits experience are placed in roles that allow for a gradual, structured learning process.

Social Services

- Develop assessment tools to guide decisions about when employees are ready to advance their workload and assume broader program responsibilities.
- Proactively address ongoing retention by strengthening the career development program to focus on targeted skill development and performance management
- Improve recruitment by targeting colleges and universities to build a stronger applicant pipeline while also leveraging job postings, recruitment events, and partnerships with workforce development agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

- Continue to process mail and documents within 1 business day of receipt, moving to same day as staffing levels allow.
- Continue to perfect the same-day case opening process for benefits applications.
- Modify coverages in the customer service team to reduce wait times during periods of high call volume and lobby visits.
- Leverage the division's Career Development Promotion Plan to strengthen workforce stability by filling hard-to-fill positions and strategically hiring entry-level staff to support succession planning. This approach will help build a sustainable talent pipeline, enhance staff retention, and ensure continuity of services amid evolving workforce and operational demands.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The budget for FY27 is $33,458,880 which is an increase of $1,595,745 or 5.0% compared to the previous fiscal year. The increase was entirely from the personnel component and came from an addition of three Senior Family Service Specialists in a September amendment and a February amendment from the Board of Supervisors, and increased salary and associated benefit adjustments. This budget will be primarily supported by State and Federal revenues, along with a General Fund transfer. Federal and State revenue will total an estimated $ 23,996,882, or 71.5% of total funding. The General Fund transfer will total $9,461,998, an 8.7% increase, which is 28.3% of total funding. Additionally, local partners in the Medicaid Outstation Program will contribute an estimated $78,794, which is 0.2% of the total budget. As part of an exercise in fiscal prudence, this budget includes an operating decrease of $955,894, which is equivalent to 3% of the department's FY26 approved budget.

DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

The operating environment going into FY27 is shaped by uncertainty at both the Federal and State levels, including potential shifts in policies, funding priorities, and administrative direction. With a new state administration and ongoing federal budget variability, it is essential for the department to remain adaptable and forward-looking.

Social Services operates almost exclusively on Federal and State allocations, with a 15.5% local match assigned to the State base budget. When the State base budget is exceeded, pass-through (exclusively federal and local funding) is utilized. In federal fiscal year 2027, the Federal government is shifting some costs to State and Local government:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) administrative costs to localities will increase from 65% to 73%. This percentage can fluctuate.
- SNAP administrative costs to states will increase by 25%, with a Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) recommendation to cover this change through the State General Fund.
- States could be responsible for actual SNAP benefit costs based on state processing error rates.

In response to frequently changing policies and procedures in public assistance programming, Henrico DSS remains focused on timely and accurate processing to ensure program compliance and client access to critical resources. There is a particular focus on SNAP as error rates in processing SNAP cases may require states to absorb SNAP benefit costs that are currently 100% federally funded. Increased auditing and oversight by VDSS has provided crucial quality assurance and accountability feedback and access to new best practices coupled with the meaningful feedback from staff during meetings, stay and exit interviews, and 1:1 supervisions, the department will continue extensive changes to operations and oversight to meet new requirements.

CASELOAD HIGHLIGHTS

The services provided by the Department are required under state and federal statutes and regulations, with specific mandates governing timelines, service delivery, documentation, and court oversight. While being the 6th largest locality in the state, Henrico DSS ranks higher in caseload for many categories.

SERVICES DIVISION

Adult Protective Services (APS)

- 3rd highest caseload in Virginia.
- APS Investigations increased by 16% to 1,670 investigations.
- Adult Services Ongoing Cases increased by 1.5% to 133 cases.

Social Services

Child Protective Services (CPS)

- 6.5% decrease in investigations, with 100% increase in child fatality investigations from 5 to 10.
- New program mandates that are significantly impacting the number of mandated case contacts.

Family Preservation

- 33% increase in caseloads, serving 343 families at high risk for abuse/neglect and foster care entry in FY25.

Foster Care

- 18% increase in number of youths served in foster care. 45% of foster care youth under age 18 are placed in kinship homes, with the state average at 18% and the national average at 35%.
- The addition of a kinship navigator position has helped in expanding kinship foster care approval and support.

Child Care

- 2nd highest caseload in Virginia, serving 4,023 children (2,536 families) with $28,092,464 in subsidy payments.

VIEW

- 2nd highest participant count in Virginia, seeing a 5.7% increase serving 628 participants in FY25.

BENEFITS DIVISION

Overall, there was a 4.5% decrease in clients served across all benefits programs, returning to a comparable level of caseloads as previously seen in FY23. This is still a 20% increase since 2021, though the Department anticipates numbers in these programs will continue to fluctuate as changes with Federal legislation are fully realized over the next several years. Vacancy rates for the benefits division have improved from as high as 30% in 2024 to a vacancy rate closer to 14%.

- SNAP: reduction in clients from 55,515 to 53,720.
- TANF: increase in clients from 3,722 to 3,806.
- Medicaid: decrease in clients from 106,776 to 100,405.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

During FY25 and into FY26, Henrico DSS has mostly transitioned to one-day processing for all mail and documents received to ensure assigned workers receive all documentation needed for timely case processing. The Department also moved to same-day case opening for all benefits applications. This division continues to see mostly increases in work responsibilities:

- Lobby Visitors: increase of 13.4% to 51,085 visits.
- Switchboard: decrease of 20.7% to 48,103 calls.
- Mail: increase of 2.9% to 66,493 pieces of mail processed.
- Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards: increase of 41.7% to 9,454 EBT cards issued.