

Access  
Outreach  
Payment Accuracy  
Policy  
Quality Control



Issue 5, July 2004

U.S. Department of Agriculture★Food and Nutrition Service★Mid-Atlantic Region

**AmeriCorps**

**Low-Cost Outreach Initiative Drawing Potentially Eligible Participants in Virginia**

AmeriCorps members have been spreading the word about the Food Stamp Program in Virginia locations where the poverty rate is high and the food stamp participation rate is low. While the primary responsibilities of the three volunteers are straightforward, the way they carry out the activities is special and reflects a personal desire to provide nutrition assistance to needy families.

AmeriCorps volunteer Marissa Bagley has gone door-to-door and provided information about the Food Stamp Program. She has struck up conversations about the program while doing her grocery shopping and other errands. She has driven folks to the food stamp offices in Prince Edward and Nottoway counties. Marissa has even hosted outreach gatherings in her home and has pre-screened for potential eligibility.

Co-volunteers Julie Sink and Greg Burkett can be found promoting the Food Stamp Program in the New River Valley area of southwestern Virginia and Northumberland County. Julie works with churches and participates in job fairs geared toward displaced workers. Greg primarily works one-on-one with individuals in his rural community, providing answers to eligibility questions and completing applications. He also promotes the Food Stamp Program at a local college.

AmeriCorps is a national service program that places individuals in disadvantaged communities to help residents become more self-sufficient. (continued on next page)

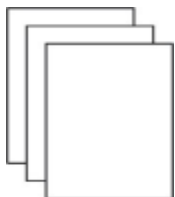
“ I love what I do. It is very rewarding. The people I have reached are very appreciative. I have received phone calls from people thanking me for the help. I try to provide assistance in all aspects of the Food Stamp Program,” Marissa says.

West Virginia -  
inROADS paving way  
to participation

Erie Co., NY -  
Telephone Interviews 25%,  
Error Rate 0%

Essex Co., NJ -  
New outreach unit  
thrilled with job

FNS Products★ Services



It's What's Inside

And much more...

# AmeriCorps Process

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The Virginia Department of Social Services obtained three AmeriCorps members to perform outreach activities during fiscal year 2004. There are many others, as well, who are working in local agencies, assisting low-income Virginians who need nutrition assistance.

“This is an excellent way for public service agencies to serve the citizens of their community and fortify the staff that already do so, with a minimal amount of financial commitment,” says Paula Scott Dehetre of the Virginia Department of Social Services. Paula explains the process involved in getting AmeriCorps volunteers:

The Social Services department applied to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) for an AmeriCorps State Program grant to fund the volunteers.

## Benefits for AmeriCorps Volunteers

Living Allowance of \$9,900

(will increase to \$10,197 on October 1, 2004)

Health Insurance

Child Care Benefits

Educational Voucher of \$4,725

Student Loan Forebearance

Developmental Opportunities

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“This is an excellent way for public service agencies to serve the citizens of their community and fortify the staff that already do so, with a minimal amount of financial commitment,” says Paula Scott Dehetre, Virginia Department of Social Services.

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Applications are due typically in April and are filed with the Virginia State Commission for National and Community Service. Social Services reapplies annually for the three-year grant of state formula funds. If viable and successful after three years, some agencies apply directly to CNCS for direct federal funding.

The local agencies/partners must commit to a 15 percent cash match to help pay the costs of members; the federal government pays 85 percent. The grant works on a reimbursable basis, thus invoices are submitted by the Social Services department, which is reimbursed by the Virginia State Commission for National and Community Service. Each partner also contributed an in-kind match this year towards the program.

The Social Services department and local partners must comply with financial and program reporting through web-based systems. Site visits to localities are conducted two or three times a year.

*Paula Scott Dehetre, Virginia Department of Social Services, (804) 726-7915, paula.dehetre@dss.virginia.gov*

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## ➔...AmeriCorps Volunteers in Virginia (continued)

The Virginia Department of Social Services obtained the three AmeriCorps volunteers in October 2003. Each is serving a one-year term and working 1,700 hours - the equivalent of 32 hours per week.

The Department trained them on educating families about the availability of nutrition assistance programs, determining potential eligibility and providing assistance with the application process.

In addition to these functions, the AmeriCorps volunteers are required to complete a report each month that includes information on their activities, such as the actual pre-screenings, referrals to the online pre-screening tool of the state, assistance with completion of the application and program presentations.

The AmeriCorps project has worked so well that application has been made for three members this coming fiscal year, say Department officials.

Besides benefiting the public and the Department, the AmeriCorps initiative has benefited the volunteers. “I love what I do. It is very rewarding. The people I have reached are very appreciative. I have received phone calls from people thanking me for the help. I try to provide assistance in all aspects of the Food Stamp Program,” Marissa says.

*To swap information, contact: Angela Beachy, Virginia Department of Social Services, (804) 726-7374, angela.beachy@dss.virginia.gov*

*2★Excellent Service for All*



## Essex County, NJ Bringing Food Stamps to More People

Since the latter half of 2003, the Essex County Division of Welfare took in 600 applications over and above the normal range for the largest food stamp agency in New Jersey.

The rise was due largely to the Division's new program to increase food stamp participation and improve its relationship with community groups.

### Outreach Unit

The Essex County Division of Welfare established an outreach unit, of one supervisor and five eligibility specialists. The members of the unit, whose selection was based on interviews, seniority and agency needs, for example, the ability to speak Spanish, are responsible for taking applications off-site, providing training to community groups and conducting in-home visits.

In outreaching to community organizations, the unit first targeted food pantries. The Division sent a letter to 20 of these organizations, offering to train staff and volunteers and take applications on major distribution days at the facilities.

The outreach unit rotated among 10 food pantries for three consecutive months and netted more than 100 food stamp applications. They have since returned in response to an increase in clientele at the organizations.

They also provided training to the food pantries and 18 other

non-profit groups, such as Hispanic organizations, pre-school agencies for family outreach and emergency assistance providers, on the basic rules and regulations of the program.

The outreach unit attends after-hour events such as school, job and health fairs, post-TANF outreach expos that target former TANF/food stamp customers and family violence meetings. At these functions, sponsored primarily by non-profit community agencies, they take applications, provide an overview of program rules and regulations and distribute pamphlets.

The Division is conducting more in-home interviews with elderly and/or disabled people in an effort to provide the best service to these customers. Additionally, the outreach unit has a regular presence at adult day care centers where they take applications and provide training. **Many elderly individuals at these sites are startled to find that they could**

**get more than \$10 per month in benefits, say Division officials.**

The outreach unit operates with one laptop computer, which has remote access to the main database of the state, paper applications and a scanner for copying verification documents.

### Success Story

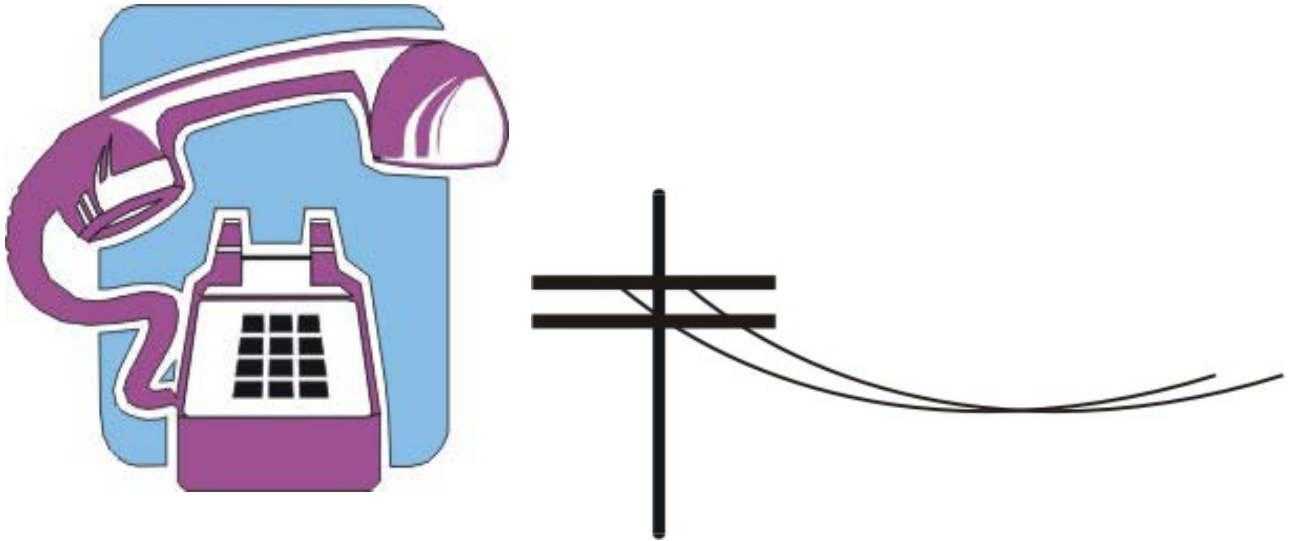
In many cases, the staff resources at community locations are limited and these groups cannot always assist people with the application process. Having food stamp staff at these sites ensures that people can obtain information about the program, apply for benefits and be interviewed, all in one shot.

Additionally the efforts of the outreach unit have helped to expand the knowledge of others to assist customers with the application process and eliminate some of the basic processing usu-

(continued on page 5)

# Telephone Interviews Successful in Erie Co., NY

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## If you're looking for an effective tool to improve access to the Food Stamp Program, try conducting more interviews by telephone. Oh my!

*You may be saying to yourself, most of what I've learned about interviewing throughout the years has focused on preparing for the interview and asking meaningful questions, in-person. Don't I need to ask questions face-to-face? How else am I going to obtain accurate information? These are reasonable questions. Read on for the details concerning a large county in New York that conducts at least 25 percent of its interviews by telephone AND has maintained a 0% error rate for the past three fiscal years.*

Eligibility specialists at the Erie County Department of Social Services have become quite accustomed to conducting initial and recertification interviews by telephone.

Even though it has a large caseload (Erie County is second to New York City), staff have been focusing on increasing participation and preventing barriers to participation.

Judy Tutuska, director of Erie County's Non-Public Assistance Unit puts it this way, "We are promoters of letting folks in

the community gain access to our programs. We have a lot of client-friendly policies."

The County explored the extension of business hours and the placement of eligibility specialists in off-site locations, but found telephone interviews to be the best choice for its customers in the county seat of Buffalo and the surrounding rural areas where public transportation is inadequate.

Federal regulations say:

1) Scheduled interviews can be conducted by telephone and home visit in favor of the face-to-face interview when household hardship situations warrant them; 2) "Hardship" is deter-

mined by state agencies and most commonly means, illness, transportation difficulties, work or training conflicts; 3) State agencies may opt to replace the face-to-face interview with a scheduled interview by telephone or home visit for ALL households in which ALL members are elderly or disabled AND do not have earned income; 4) No matter what type of hardship, eligibility specialists must document case records when the interview is conducted by an alternative means.

In Erie County, eligibility specialists do not need approval from a supervisor to schedule a telephone interview, and they pro-

## How It Operates

Telephone interviews are provided at the convenience of households. For the most part Erie County does them for households in which all members are elderly or disabled and do not have earned income, and also when the following types of specific hardships exist:

- Working full-time or odd hours
- Residing in rural area
- Experiencing transportation difficulties or health issues
- Caring for young children at home due to inadequate child care services



vide them “to anyone who has a need,” says Judy. **“It is rare that an applicant or recipient would be denied an interview by telephone,”** she adds.

Applicants and recipients arrange for a telephone interview in a variety of ways. Additionally, for the 50 to 60 percent of applications received by mail, if a potential hardship is identified, the eligibility specialists schedule the interview by telephone. When they know a household likely will need a telephone interview for the recertification as well, they send the household the application for recertification, notice of expiration, instructions on scheduling the telephone interview and mailing back the recertification application and verification. Erie County also will conduct fair hearings by telephone.

## Who Benefits from Telephone Interviews

### The Applicants and Recipients

Judy attributes at least a portion of Erie County’s high rate of participation in the Food Stamp Program to telephone interviews. She says, fewer customers lose benefits if they are offered a telephone interview when they cannot make it to the office. **“Our customers are absolutely thrilled with telephone interviewing,”** she adds.

### The Local Department

Most eligibility specialists find the telephone interviews to be efficient and timesaving, as well as beneficial to customers, says Judy. After initial reservations, caused mostly by the notion that “looking someone in the eye” is the best way to ensure a thorough interview, eligibility specialists have come to the realization that telephone interviews can be just as effective as face-to-face interviews, she explains. **“We have not seen any differences in quality or thoroughness between telephone and face-to-face interviews,”** Judy emphasizes.

## Best Advice

The Erie County trainers created a script to guide eligibility specialists through the interview. Here are some of their tips to conduct an effective telephone interview:

1. Make sure the customer is ready for the interview and has enough time for it.
2. Agree to an appropriate time for the interview, or if calling the customer without an appointment, ask, “Is this a good time?” Be flexible.
3. Prior to the interview, make sure the customer knows what types of information will be reviewed, so she/he can have the appropriate documents handy.
4. Review the application, any prior case record and eligibility systems (for example, matches) before the interview to eliminate unnecessary questions or raise additional ones.
5. Explain the next steps to the customer – verification and reporting requirements, client responsibilities, notices, etc.
6. At the end of the call, review with the customer what is needed (for example, pay stubs and other verification documents) and how she/he can get the information to the food stamp office.

To swap information, contact: **Judy Tutuska, Erie County Department of Social Services, (716) 858-6839, jtutus@dss1.co.erie.ny.us**



### ...Essex County (continued)

ally done by eligibility staff, Division officials say.

Concerning the members of the outreach unit, they are overjoyed with their new functions and experiences. And they believe their work has improved the feelings of the community toward the Essex County Division of Welfare, they add.



## Essex County Training Unit

Equally interesting is an outreach endeavor of the Division’s training unit. Recently expanded, it includes one supervisor, five assistant training supervisors and two training technicians.

The unit is involved in teaching administrative staff of corrections facilities about the types of services that are available to inmates after their release from these institutions.

The effort at coordinated discharge planning hopefully will provide ex-offenders with resources, and, therefore, make them less susceptible to re-incarceration, say Division officials.

To swap information, contact: **Bruce Nigro, Essex County Division of Welfare, (973) 733-3315, bnigro@oel.state.nj.us**

*Excellent Service for All★5*

# Information network for Resident

**West Virginia has joined the growing number of states that provide the public an opportunity to see firsthand whether they may be eligible for food stamps and to apply on-line.**

The Food Stamp Program was included among the e-products of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources this past November. The Information Network for Resident Online Access and Delivery of Services, or more commonly, inROADS, also provides the opportunity to apply for the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid for Children and Pregnant Women. Here's how the pre-screening and application functions operate:

## Pre-Screening

From the website of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, two clicks get the user to the pre-screening tool, of which there are 14 screens. The tool first provides information on the eligibility criteria for expedited service and then asks the user to identify:

- For whom the inquiry is being made, for example, self, family, friends
- Whether everyone purchases and prepares meals together
- First or nicknames of household members, their citizen status, sex, age and whether others live in the household
- Monthly amount of income before taxes and deductions, other sources, cash, checking and savings, etc.
- Number of individuals who are paid child or adult care expenses so work, school or training can be pursued
- Monthly amount of child care, child support, rent, mortgage, utility expenses

After completion, the user has the option to view the results or change the entered information. If it is determined that the user may be eligible, the system provides an approximate amount of the al-

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**inROADS**

lotment and a reminder that the results are not an official determination of eligibility. Users are encouraged to apply through the on-line system or a visit to the local office, even if the results did not indicate potential eligibility. The toll-free number of the Department is provided.

A click on "Close" erases the entered information. However, when the user is finished and would like to apply on-line, the system will automatically use the information entered during the pre-screening, and, obviously, will require entry of additional information.

## Application

With a click on "Apply Online!" the user is provided an introduction to the basic eligibility elements; for example, the types of information that would be helpful to have on hand, such as Social Security numbers, birth dates, all types of income, child or adult care, shelter and utility expenses, bank accounts, etc.

The user must choose a password and has the option of choosing a "hint" question and answer in case she/he forgets the password; examples of questions: What is your mother's maiden name? What is your place of birth? What is the name of your pet? The system then automatically assigns a number to the application. The next step is completion of the application. At any time, the user can stop the application process and save it.

Before submitting the application, the system prompts the user to indicate whether she/he would like to print the application or a printer is not avail-

# Online Access and Delivery of Services

able. If the user does not have access to a printer, the signature page is retrieved by the Department from the Internet, and it is printed and mailed to the user for a signature.

The user also must read (or have someone read to her/him), the rights and responsibilities statement and check a box to indicate it was understood. When the user reaches the signature page, the rights and responsibilities statement is shown above the



To swap information, contact: Margaret Lovejoy, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, (304) 348-0884, [margaretlovejoy@wvdhhr.org](mailto:margaretlovejoy@wvdhhr.org)

area where the applicant must sign and date. Signing the signature page completes the rights and responsibilities requirement.

After submitting the application on-line, the user is instructed to provide verifications, when the documents are due and where to send them. The signature page includes a list of verifications that must be provided, and the information is repeated on some additional screens.

The inROADS application is actually a request for assistance, and as such, the filing date is the date that the local office receives the signed signature page. If a signed signature page is not received, and a filing date is not entered, the computer system will withdraw the application after 30 days and send a withdrawal notice to the applicant. Cases are pending, if the local office does not receive the signed signature page and the documents that verify the applicant's information.

An interview is scheduled after the signed signature page is received at the local office. The eligibility specialist must explain that the application will be denied, if an interview is not conducted within the prescribed time frame.

inROADS applications are sent to the inbox of the Department computer system (called RAPIDS) Monday through Friday after 5 p.m., at which time a batch program is run. Once the program runs, the status of the application changes from "submitted" to "received." During the next business day, eligibility specialists retrieve the applications that pertain to the geographic area of their local office.

## Community Organizations

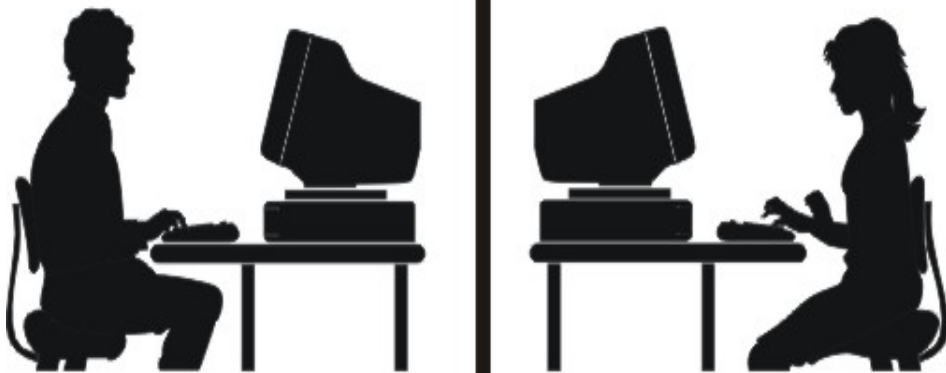
Service groups have been very active and enthusiastic about this initiative to reach more people and improve access to the Food Stamp Program, say Department officials who provided the training on the pre-screening and application tools. The community organizations have been assisting applicants in the completion of the application and the retrieval and printing of the application and the signature page.

## Armchair Application

inROADS is proving to be very popular. The tools provide people with a good idea of whether they may be eligible to participate in assistance programs and a convenient way to apply.

**From November 2003 (when the tools became functional) through April 2004:**

- ◆ 3,295 screening questionnaires were started, and of these, 2,455 were completed.  
November - 67  
December - 251  
January through April - 500+ each month
- ◆ 2,759 applications submitted, of which 623 were food stamp applications.  
200 to 300 submitted each month.
- ◆ Survey Results - On-line Application  
A+ for clarity and ease.  
A+ for clarity of rights and responsibilities.  
A+ for navigation.



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“The environment provides the county trainer with the flexibility necessary to walk around - physical barriers are removed, and the possibility for increased close interaction with workers is enhanced,” says Robin Blankenbiller, Berks County manager.

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## Berks Co., PA Strengthening Staff Education Through Innovation

All new eligibility specialists in Pennsylvania begin their education through the Department of Public Welfare’s mandatory seven-week training program. At the conclusion of the class work, the trainees return to their respective counties where a county trainer has the primary responsibility for monitoring and ensuring quality and providing opportunities for applying what they learned to real life situations.

The Berks County Assistance Office in northeastern Pennsylvania has made some innovative efforts to strengthen its ongoing educational component. New trainees stay together for about six weeks before they are integrated with veteran eligibility specialists. During this time they are under the tutelage of the county trainer and a supervisor who is a secondary trainer. They are responsible additionally for determining whether the trainees are proceeding according to standards or there is a need to extend the probation period.

8★*Excellent Service for All*

Around the perimeter of the room, cubicles provide private workspace for two trainees each. The center is a meeting area. “We wanted to make sure that each trainee received the full benefit from the program, which focuses on using designated trainers in a somewhat controlled environment,” says Robin Blankenbiller, Berks County manager. “The environment provides the county trainer with the flexibility necessary to walk around - physical barriers are removed, and the possibility for increased close interaction with workers is enhanced.”

During the first couple of weeks of training at Berks County, general information is provided on all income maintenance programs. The new eligibility specialists increase their understanding of the specifics of how tasks are accomplished. Then they begin to take applications and are provided opportunities to look at all programs.

To help eligibility specialists juggle the great deal of new in-

formation, they receive a review format that identifies the major elements of eligibility. “It helps workers to look carefully at all the information in a case,” says Robin. “With the first few cases, we don’t expect to see that worker again for the rest of the afternoon,” she exclaims.

From that point on, the new eligibility specialists will be assigned to a unit based on where the need is in the agency. Although they have more independence, there is still a great deal of involvement on the part of the supervisor. The trainees are in “sheltered caseload status,” and their caseload is gradually built up about 10 percent per month. This continues until they assume an equal share of the caseload.

“Whether or not the group stays together after the training, the bonds they formed stay with them throughout their entire career,” Robin remarks.

*To swap information, contact: Robin Blankenbiller, Berks County Assistance Office, (610) 736-4252, rblankenbi@state.pa.us*



# CyBerks Café



The offerings on the menu of the CyBerks Café change frequently. That's not because the cook keeps getting fired or the place keeps changing hands. It's to keep the patrons satisfied. They don't expect to get the "usual" here.

Rather, they order up "cuisine" that fuels their hunger for knowledge – information on electronic mail and calendars, word processing, food stamp regulations, food stamp payment accuracy, for example.

The innovative thinking of the Berks County Assistance Office in northeastern Pennsylvania brought to life the CyBerks Café. The e-learning center was designed to keep everyone current on computer technology.

While the exclusiveness of its third floor location and use creates an environment for focused learning, the ambiance is collegial and restful in the CyBerks Café. Live plants and motivational posters surround the students who work at the six computers.

The CyBerks Café also is used frequently by supervisors for "Question and Answer Meetings" in which they use the computers to look through the eligibility features of case records.

*"Our employees love the CyBerks Café. It's a pleasant place with no pressure and no grades," says Robin Blankenbiller, Berks County manager. "It is one of the best training concepts we have developed because the relaxed atmosphere enables staff to gain confidence in their ability to master software programs."*

**To swap information, contact: Robin Blankenbiller, Berks County Assistance Office, (610) 736-4252, rblankenbi@state.pa.us**

# Pennsylvania Website Offering

- ◆ Up-to-the minute error analysis
- ◆ Corrective actions of agencies with 0% error rate
- ◆ Answers to burning QC questions

**M**ore than 1,400 visits are made each month to the website of the Pennsylvania Division of Corrective Action. It debuted two years ago and continues to be a popular source of information for staff of the 67 county assistance offices.

The element drawing the most attention (about 100 hits each week) is “Hot Spot,” which features areas of concern that require immediate attention. The corrective action folks work closely with the Division of Quality Control so they are able to offer up-to-the-minute error analysis, which is published immediately on the “Hot Spot” page. The information provides a “heads up” that enables quick action on the part of county assistance offices to handle problems in their early stage.

Of great interest also are the training presentations and other materials on effective case management and error avoidance, followed by county best practices and tip sheets for maintaining a low error rate. For the more technically oriented, a number of useful databases can be downloaded from the website. And for those who wish to stay apprised of the most recent changes in policy and law, there is a large library of links to *United States Code*, *Code of Federal Regulations*, *Federal Register*, *Pennsylvania Code*, *Pennsylvania Bulletin*, and much more.

## Promising Practices

Many of the resources presented on the website are those developed in the county assistance offices, and they represent some of the best and most creative ideas in corrective action, say Division officials. All county assistance offices are encouraged to

present their ideas, methods, tools and techniques for achieving program integrity and avoiding mistakes in the disbursement of public assistance benefits.



## Newsletter

An integral resource on the website is the food stamp corrective action newsletter. It addresses all the Income Maintenance programs (food stamps, Medicaid and TANF) and is an upbeat, positive way to share information throughout the state, say Division officials. The newsletter showcases local agencies that have achieved a zero percent error rate. Problems also are discussed in a positive and solution-oriented manner.

A standard part of the publication features burning questions and answers on quality control. There also is a column called *Meet the Bureau*.

The quarterly publication reveals a world of relevant news and ideas in an appealing layout, Division officials say.

## Reviews

Another useful offering on the website is a review section that provides information on current management evaluation, corrective action, general assistance and simplified reporting reviews, along with summaries of previous reviews. Managers can read about reviews, what they can expect and how the reporting will be done. In addition, information on projects, news articles and references is included.

*To swap information, contact: (website) Joseph Waltenbaugh, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, (412) 565-2366, jwaltenbau@state.pa.us; (newsletter) Gayle Bentz, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, (717) 787-9006, gbentz@state.pa.us*

# Attention to Access and Accountability Equal Good Customer Service in Hanover Co., VA

The work philosophy of Hanover County, Virginia, engenders a reduction in barriers that prevent individuals from applying for the Food Stamp Program, facilitates proper certification and issuance of correct and timely benefits and produces a positive experience at the Department of Social Services – excellent customer service. Here is what Hanover County does to satisfy its customers:

## Program Access

The eligibility specialists, screeners and receptionists are tested randomly each year by agency graduate students. The periodic blind-testing ensures that the Department staff are providing the following information to callers:

- ✓ You can obtain an application at our office, or we will mail one to you today.
- ✓ You can return the application in-person or by postal mail, e-mail or fax.
- ✓ The business hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- ✓ You are encouraged to file an application the same day of contact.
- ✓ You also are encouraged to access the state pre-screening tool to determine whether you may be eligible for food stamps. The web address is [www.dss.state.va.us](http://www.dss.state.va.us); click on "Am I Eligible for Assistance?"
- ✓ If you are eligible, the processing time and the amount of benefits you will receive depend on the application date, and benefits for the first month are pro-rated.
- ✓ Your application can be processed more quickly if you qualify for an immediate need of food assistance.
- ✓ Separate rules exist for each program and application should be made even if some of the others have limitations on receipt of benefits.

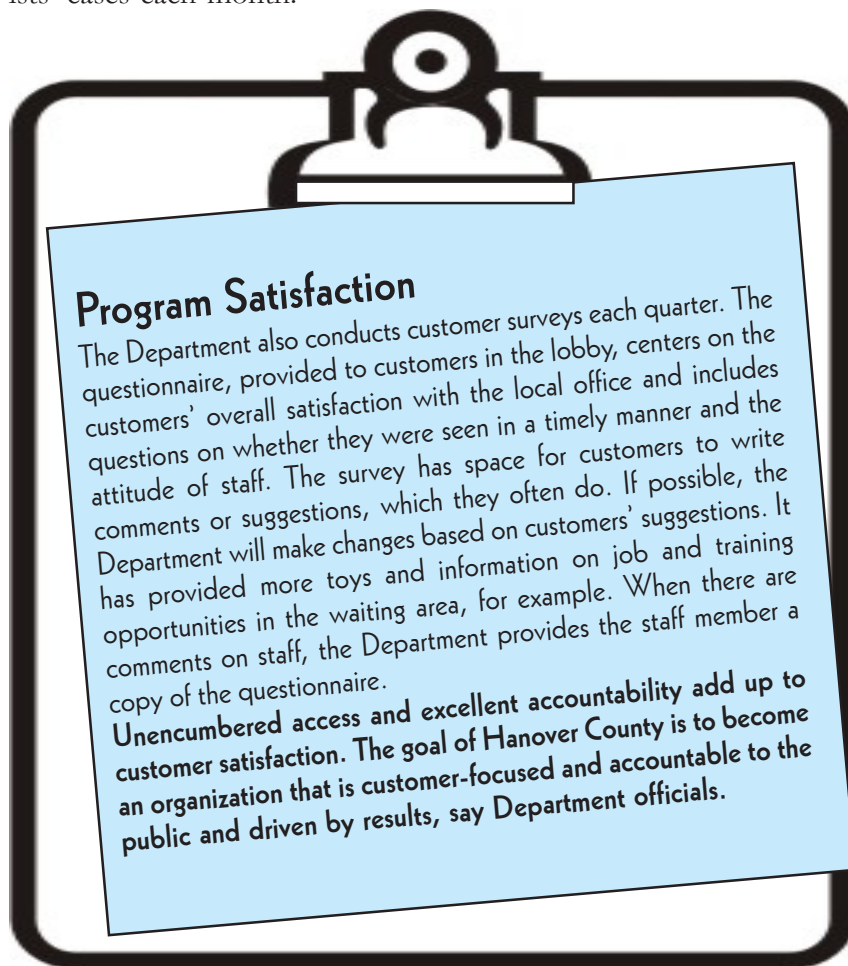
To swap information, contact, [Ginny Ferguson, Hanover County Department of Social Services, \(804\) 752-4118, gdf085@central.dss.state.va.us](mailto:Ginny.Ferguson@central.dss.state.va.us); and [Rose Painter, Hanover County Department of Social Services, \(804\) 752-4138, rop085@central.dss.state.va.us](mailto:Rose.Painter@central.dss.state.va.us)

## Program Accountability

The Department ensures that cases are tracked for timely action. The tracking component of the state is used to monitor overdue or almost overdue cases. The eligibility specialists understand that timeliness in general equals good customer service, and 100 percent timeliness is worth an award from the Department director.

A unit of 14 is divided into two teams, with a senior eligibility specialist as the contact for each team. The senior eligibility specialists provide training, assist one-on-one, monitor cases (four each month per eligibility specialist) and fill-in for staff. They meet weekly with the team members to discuss problem cases. They also review 100 percent of cases worked by eligibility specialists who have less than one year of experience.

An eligibility supervisor keeps all of the case reading reports and uses them as part of the performance evaluation. The quality assurance coordinator does 2 percent of the senior eligibility specialists' cases each month.



## FOOD STAMP OUTREACH Products★Services

### Media Campaign Update

The Food and Nutrition Service funded public service announcements and transit signs that advertised the benefits and availability of the Food Stamp Program this past Spring.

The public service announcements were aired by 102 AM and FM stations in locations throughout the country. In our area, they were broadcast in Philadelphia, Norfolk, Wilmington and New York City. The signs were posted on buses in Boston, New York City, Miami, Milwaukee, Denver and Dallas. Both will run again in July and August.

For the period March 1 through May 15, 2004, the radio announcements generated 7,000 calls to the toll-free number of the Food and Nutrition Service, and 675 calls to the agency's number were attributed to the transit advertisements.

### Translated Materials

The Food and Nutrition Service is now providing its FREE food stamp materials in simplified Chinese and traditional Chinese. Five different flyers on the Food Stamp Program can be downloaded in 36 languages:

[www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/translations.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/translations.htm).

### Application Assistance

The Food and Nutrition Service is again offering state food stamp agencies an opportunity to obtain FREE technical assistance on improving their application for food stamps. During the past two years, Maryland, West Virginia, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming have taken advantage of this service, obtained by contract between the Food and Nutrition Service and the Kleimann Communications Group.



## Food Stamps Make America Stronger

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