

# VIRGINIA

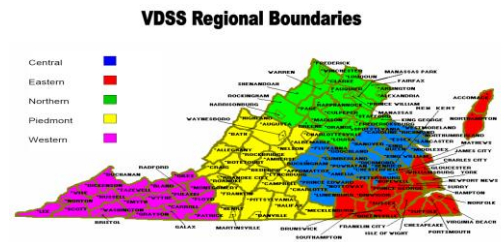
## REGIONAL SUPERVISION OF LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

### Demographic Profile

- Population: 8.4 million (2016 est.)
- Counties: 95 total + 38 independent cities (as of 2010); 75% live in urban counties

### State/Regional Supervision Profile

- State Supervised, Regionally Subdivided, Locally Administered
- Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS): Responsible for administering a variety of programs, including TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, Adoption, Child Care Assistance, Refugee Resettlement Services, and Child and Adult Protective Services.
- Regions
  - 5 regional offices; 20-25 counties per region
  - 120 local offices across the state
  - Regional staff provides program oversight, consultation, monitoring, analysis of performance, technical assistance, and/or training to support community and local organizations. Staff includes:
    - Director
    - Coordinator who focuses on CQI efforts, oversees recordkeeping and data collection, and leads special initiatives.
    - Program Consultants who have expertise in specific programs or functions. Each region has a PC for every program. They are responsible for supporting and guiding local administration. LDSS in the administration of specific programs/services.
  - Central office oversight/Director of Regional Operations and Local Support – position at the central office that is responsible for organizing, coordinating, and supporting the work being done at the regional level.
  - Regional offices function as both an extension of the central state office and an advocate for the local agencies. They also serve as a conduit between the local and central offices.
- Lessons learned
  - State experienced challenges when regions developed significant autonomy. They interpreted issues differently. They communicated and collaborated informally and inconsistently. Several changes were implemented to address these challenges, including:
    - Central Office Oversight
      - Direct accountability of regional directors to new position at state level (Director of Regional Operations and Local Support). One goal is to increase coordination and consistency across regions.



- Program Consultants
  - Positions now report to their Regional Directors on administrative aspects of work but also maintain a supervisor/supervisee relationship with Program Directors at the central office. The goal is to improve consistency of policy interpretation and practice across the state.
  - Shifting model so they work from home no more than two days a week in order to foster greater supervision and coordination of their efforts by the Regional Director.
- Formalized collaborations across regions: If intensive needs arise in one region, PCs from other regions may be deployed for temporary assistance and support. This type of assistance was provided informally in the past but more formal systems have been established.
- Instituting regular meetings of local/regional staff: Regional Directors will coordinate regular meetings between the local agencies and regional staff. All Program Consultants from that region are expected to attend to ensure that the conversations are holistic, well-informed, and coordinated across programs.
- Revised/clarified training responsibilities
  - State central office provides all new hire training.
  - Regional offices provide local “refresher” training in response to specific issues when necessary.
  - Regional offices provide local agencies with board member training materials.
- Constituent complaints have been centralized.
- Communication is a continuing challenge
  - Local agencies maintain relationships with central staff. Also, there are some redundancies/overlap with expertise and roles between regional and central staff. The local agencies sometimes seek guidance from central staff rather than regional staff. As a result, there are misunderstandings and inconsistencies.
  - Assessment is underway to develop a new, more formalized communication plan to ensure the communication chains are clear. One goal is to specify when local agencies should contact regional staff and when they should contact central staff. Another goal is role clarity for both central and regional staff.