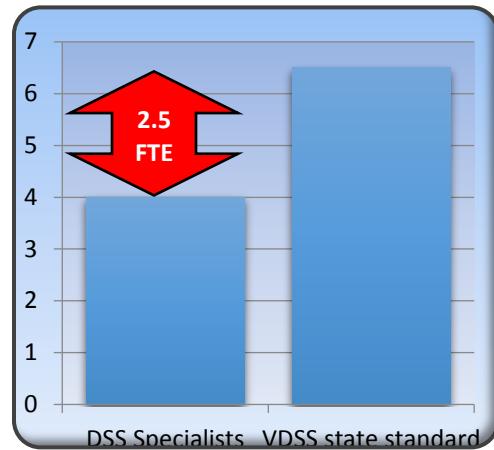


In September 2015, the Albemarle County Department of Social Services (ACDSS) restructured to better align its resources to support Benefit Programs and to position it to mirror the County's peer localities who have higher application processing statistics than ACDSS, especially in the State's case management system, Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS). This restructuring also supported the ACDSS Business Plan, which is the operational part of its Strategic Plan. The restructuring was intended to increase front-end support in the benefits determination process, eliminating some tasks currently managed by Eligibility Workers. Increasing front-end support with an additional DSS Specialist would ultimately support the Eligibility Worker at a lesser cost.



The State staffing standard has established a ratio of DSS Specialists to Eligibility Workers of 1:4.16. This standard exists to ensure efficient operations and the ability to comply with mandated standards. Currently, ACDSS has 4 DSS Specialists supporting 27 Eligibility Workers, a staffing gap of 2.49 FTEs or 38%. The number and kinds of tasks required to support the Eligibility Workers cannot be provided by the Eligibility Workers themselves.

The DSS Specialist plays a vital role in the management of eligibility cases and the time savings provided to the Eligibility Workers by the completion of specific clerical tasks. Some identified support functions include the preparation and mailing of monthly recertification notifications, the completion of the mandated system inquiries for Interim Reports, re-certifications and renewals, collaborating with community partners regarding benefit program participation, case set up, application registration in multiple VDSS systems, the preparation of transfer-out cases, the preparation of Medicaid reviews, and many other general support functions required of an Eligibility Worker.

With two additional benefit programs (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program transitioning into VaCMS comes the need for more front-end support as clearly stated and advocated for by VDSS leaders. Additionally, this is what has allowed Albemarle's peer agencies to perform at a higher level.

ACDSS has experienced a significant struggle with the Medicaid processing timeframes for both applications and renewals. From July 2015 through May 2016, ACDSS has only managed to achieve an 87.8% timeliness rate for application processing while the State target is 97% (applications are considered timely if processed within 45 days of receipt). While the State target for processing renewals is also 97% (renewals are considered timely if processed within the month they are due), ACDSS has only averaged a 94.9% timeliness rate. Over the past few years, the State has varied the emphasis placed on application timeliness versus renewal timeliness, shifting the priority placed on one over the other at any given moment. When ACDSS focuses on one, its performance in the other goes down. ACDSS's failure to meet these processing timeframes not only puts the County at risk for not meeting Federal and State mandates, but also leaves the County's most vulnerable citizens with an inability to meet their medical needs.

The Senior Eligibility Worker is needed to process and maintain an Adult Benefits caseload with special attention to the Long-Term Care caseload. An analysis of the workload for Adult Benefits renders a staffing shortage of 3.79 positions based on State standards while the caseload is increasing. All Adult Eligibility Workers are managing caseloads that exceed the State standard workload of 108.0. Time studies have shown that workers should carry caseloads that equate to 108.0 hours a month. However, the current Senior Eligibility Worker managing Long-Term Care cases has a staggering caseload weight of 172.7. The current staffing level is inadequate to ensure the timely processing of cases and delivery of benefits (response times) to maintain the growing Long-Term Care caseload, the members of which are among the most vulnerable in our community; ACDSS is not meeting the mandated processing timeframes for ongoing Medicaid cases.

With the necessary focus on SNAP cases (1991 lawsuit Robertson v. Jackson), coupled with the significant understaffing and growing caseloads, the ability to meet State targets for timeliness in Medicaid cases has declined. The failure to complete annual Medicaid reviews violates Federal regulations. Recently, ACDSS was required by VDSS to develop a Corrective Action Plan, which further highlights the pressure ACDSS is under as a result of understaffing and growing caseloads. As ACDSS is currently piloting SNAP within VaCMS, staff is becoming aware of the difficulties in working within that system. Although, historically, ACDSS has met timelines with SNAP application processing, staff anticipates that ACDSS performance will go down as staff negotiates the new system. This can only have a detrimental effect on ACDSS's already existing problem with managing Medicaid applications and renewals.

Eligibility Programs are a critical component of the County's vision, mission and strategic goals; they enhance the well-being and quality of life for residents through the highest level of public service consistent with the prudent use of public funds and support the health, stability and safety of individuals, children and families in the County. Accurate and timely processing are not only mandated, but are a major strategy in that it reduces family emergencies and improves customer outcomes. The eligibility programs provided are Federally-mandated and, as such, require adherence to State and Federal policies. The staffing shortage further limits ACDSS's ability to meet Federal timeliness and accuracy standards, and County citizens are experiencing a significant service gap. This request is designed to support the County's aspirations of achieving operational capacity, critical infrastructure, and economic prosperity, which ultimately supports a vibrant local economy. Case timeliness and accuracy equates to being good stewards of tax dollars.

Finally, failure to process benefits timely and accurately has a direct impact on the County's most vulnerable citizens. Lack of health insurance means that medical needs will not be addressed, which may result in an additional burden to our 911 and other Public Safety systems. Therefore, in essence, this request reaches across many County departments.

Expenses and Revenue associated with new positions:

<u>Senior Eligibility Worker</u>	
Salary and benefits	\$ 67,467.00
Salary and benefits, plus recurring expenditures	\$ 69,955.00
Total with one-time expenditures	\$ 75,165.00
<u>DSS Specialist I</u>	
Salary and benefits	\$ 44,814.00
Salary and benefits, plus recurring expenditures (no one-time expenditures)	\$ 47,302.00
Total Cost FY 17 for 2 positions	\$122,467.00
Total Cost FY 18 for 2 positions	\$117,257.00
<u>FY17 Revenue</u>	
New Funding – Federal Portion	\$ 35,205.00
New Unrestricted Federal Funding	\$ 52,057.00
New Funding – State Portion	\$ 35,205.00
<u>FY18 Revenue</u>	
New Funding – Federal Portion	\$ 35,205.00
New Unrestricted Federal Funding	\$ 46,847.00
New Funding – State Portion	\$ 35,205.00