



VACAP NEWS

December 2023

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Happy Holidays from VACAP

We wish you a peaceful holiday season and happy New Year! We are amazed at all the great work of our members and the impact you have on families and the communities you serve. Reflecting over 2023, we took on new grant opportunities in digital opportunity/broadband, kicked off officially our diaper distribution and wrap around services program, the CASH Campaign helped clients receive \$19 million in federal refunds, three new regional meetings in May, second annual VACAP summit in October and strengthened the message on whole family in partnership with the Governor's administration and other stakeholders. We look forward to developing new partnerships in 2024, strengthening our existing partnerships and making this the best year yet for Community Action in Virginia. We feel energized every day watching your passion for this mission and the great work happening around the Commonwealth and can't wait to see what is in store for 2024.

VACAP Legislative Conference Register Now!

Join us in Richmond on January 23-24, 2024 as we need all agencies to plan to participate in this critical convening. The first day will focus on informational updates from state and federal leaders and preparing you to advocate for VACAP's whole family and CASH Campaign priorities during visits to the new General Assembly Building on January 24.

Register now: <https://cvent.me/kxdvMZ>

Save the Date! VACAP Regional Meeting Dates Announced

VACAP is pleased to announce two regional meeting dates in May for time to network with other peers and strategic partners. Save the Date for the meeting location closest to you or join both meetings!

May 1, 2024: Wytheville, VA

May 15, 2024: Williamsburg/James City County, VA

2024-2026 CSBG State Plan Now Available for Review and Comment Period Open

The comment period will run from December 1, 2023 – January 31, 2024. Please use this time to submit any feedback to our great state partners! Any comments, questions, or feedback can be submitted by using the form at this link: <https://forms.office.com/g/fHHBq8Qmaa>

All state plan documents can be viewed on the CSBG State Plan webpage on LearnWorlds: <https://vacsbg.learnworlds.com/24-26-csbg-state-plan>

If you have any questions or have trouble accessing the documents please do not hesitate to reach out to csbg@dss.virginia.gov.

DHCD Releases State Digital Opportunity Plan: Community Action Plays a Major Role

DHCD released the state Digital Opportunity Plan. They unveiled their goals of connecting people to resources and helping low-income Virginians connect to the current and soon to be built out broadband infrastructure. VACAP and Community Action agencies were mentioned in a list of stakeholders that serve as leaders in the digital opportunity space. One of the recommendations is DHCD setting up a statewide capacity building program to deliver digital opportunity programs and support for building the capacities of Community Action Agencies. The regional digital opportunity plans conducted by VACAP members were also included in the statewide plan. A big thank you to everyone for participating this summer and hanging in there with the fast-paced regional plans,

surveys and focus groups. VACAP will stay engaged with DHCD to learn next steps for members in this space.

Link to full plan:

<https://commonwealthconnect.virginiainteractive.org/sites/default/files/draftvirginiadigitalopportunityplan.pdf>

Link to VACAP's Summary of the plan: <https://www.vacap.org/members-only/>

Member News

STEPS, Inc., a participant in Virginia's Whole Family Approach Pilot Program, are presenting a number of special events for its clients this fall and winter. They will be partnering with Hampden-Sydney College for the third consecutive year for a gift giving program. Students and staff will "adopt" families of the Whole Family program by donating gifts to each household. Hampden-Sydney College has been a valued partner when it comes to making sure that every individual in the Whole Family program has a great Christmas! Donations will be provided to families in mid-December.

Good Reads & Newsworthy Updates

Community colleges are helping with housing, gas and food to keep students in class

By Lisa Rowan, Cardinal News

Free tuition programs might entice students to enroll in community college, but they don't cover gas or child care, or put food on the table. Here's what two community colleges in rural Southwest Virginia are doing to meet students' needs.

https://cardinalnews.org/2023/12/05/community-colleges-are-helping-with-housing-gas-and-food-to-keep-students-in-class/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Community%20colleges%20are%20helping%20with%20housing%2C%20gas%20and%20food%20to%20keep%20students%20in%20class&utm_campaign=Tuesday%2C%20December%205%2C%202023

Youngkin proposes increased state support for child care initiatives

By Markus Schmidt, Cardinal News

The governor wants the state to invest more than \$440 million a year for the next two years in the Building Blocks for Virginia Families initiative. It will be part of his proposed budget, which he will unveil on December 20.

https://cardinalnews.org/2023/12/07/youngkin-proposes-increased-state-support-for-child-care-initiatives/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Free+menstrual+supplies+at+school+are+required+by+Virginia+law++Compliance+can+be+a+challenge&utm_campaign=Friday%2C+December+8%2C+2023

VACAP Presents to VDSS State Board on Whole Family

On December 13, Erik Johnston, VACAP President and CEO, Kevin Otey, VACAP Board Chair, and COO of HRCAP, Monique Moore-McDonald, HRCAP Director of Program Innovation and Transformation, and Sheron Black, who graduated from Thrive’s whole family program presented to the board about the Whole Family initiative and gave a first hand account of the impact the program has on families at the request of Commissioner Avula. The Commissioner and Board Members are very supportive of the whole family approach in helping families achieve their goals. Community Action was commended for being leaders in the transformation of the Human Services delivery towards the whole family approach.



Community Action Leaders spotlighted at VDSS State Board Meeting, from L to R- Matt Fitzgerald (OEO), Erik Johnston (VACAP), Monique Moore-McDonald (HRCAP), Chris Napier (THRIVE), Kevin Otey (HRCAP). Photo credit: Kristen Dahlman (VACAP)

Federal Funding Update

On November 19, 2023, President Biden signed the years' second Continuing Resolution (CR), the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024, pushing the government funding deadline into the new year. Funding for the Department of Health and Human Services will expire on February 2, 2024 without further Congressional action.

The Continuing Resolution signed extends the funding and policy provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, including the provision "*that for services furnished under the CSBG Act with funds made available for such purpose in this fiscal year and in fiscal year 2022, States*

may apply the last sentence of section 673(2) of the CSBG Act by substituting “200 percent” for “125 percent”. This provision was originally extended through the first CR and is now extended again with the second CR. This means that the use of 200% remains allowable because it was not specifically repealed in the new CR.

Food Access Update

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is pleased to launch the new, permanent summer nutrition assistance program for children, known as Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT). Virginia is one of the participating states in Summer EBT that will start this summer. Summer EBT provides grocery-buying benefits to low-income families with school-aged children when schools are closed for the summer. An estimated 791,000 children will be eligible to receive this benefit with their families in Virginia.

More information on the program: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sebt>

NCAP 60th Anniversary Poster Contest

To commemorate 60 Years of the Birth of Community Action, the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP) is sponsoring a poster contest. Open to Community Action staff, board, volunteers, and their family members, the contest challenges competitors to visually demonstrate the important role of Community Action in fighting the conditions of poverty—whether the focus is on our historic accomplishments or on our future challenges and opportunities. Entrants may use the promise of community action as inspiration, recognizing the past but looking to the future and inspiring hope.

Poster entries must be received by January 10, 2024. Winners will be announced on February 2, 2024.

Poster Guidelines: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://communityactionpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NCAP-Poster-Contest-Guidelines-11-14-23.pdf>

Contest Entry Form: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://communityactionpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NCAP-Poster-Contest-Entry-Form-11-14-23.pdf>

HHS Environmental Justice Community Innovator Challenge

HHS is creating a national competition to identify innovative and effective approaches to enhance community-driven efforts to address the health consequences of communities burdened by environmental and climate change-related hazards.

Desired outcomes include

- Development of community-driven strategies and application of data-driven tools to advance health equity

- Address environmental hazards including those related to climate change, cumulative impacts of environmental and other stressors

Phase 1: Design of Concept (Idea) or Development of Approach (Pilot Project) -

Submissions during Phase 1 may take one of two structures: 1) design of an innovative concept (idea) to enhance community-driven efforts to mitigate environmental health disparities and advance environmental health equity within a specific population; or 2) development of an effective approach (pilot project) to support a previously developed innovative concept. Up to 12 submissions may be selected to each receive a prize of up to \$25,000.

Phase 2: Small-Scale Testing or Implementation -

Participants selected to receive a Phase 1 prize may enter phase 2 to test dissemination and uptake of their approaches at a small scale/community level. Additionally, separate participant entries (not submitted in Phase 1) of well-developed approaches for community-driven efforts to mitigate environmental health disparities and advance environmental health equity will be accepted. Up to 10 submissions may be selected to each receive a minimum prize of \$70,000.

To enter the competition, participants are required to send a registration email to EJChallenge@HHS.gov by January 30, 2024 for Phase 1.

Complete information: <https://www.challenge.gov/?challenge=hhs-environmental-justice-community-innovator-challenge&tab=overview>

Open Enrollment of Marketplace.Virginia.gov Open

The open enrollment period for 2024 began on November 1 and ends on January 15, 2023.

Coverage could be more affordable than you think. That's because financial help is available. Most people on the Marketplace will qualify for financial assistance. And most people currently enrolled in a Marketplace plan may qualify for more tax credits than in previous years.

Free help is available. If you have any questions about signing up or want to talk through your options with a trained professional, free help is just a call or click away. The Call Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – just call 1-800-318-2596. Or visit <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov> where you will find organizations in your area that have trained enrollment navigators.

Virginia has expanded Medicaid. More information about Medicaid health coverage and eligibility rules is available at www.coverva.org. This website includes an eligibility screening tool to help you assess whether you qualify for the expanded Medicaid coverage.

If you are 65 or older, you can enroll in Medicare health and drug plans until December 7th. Go to Medicare.gov for more information.

Microsoft Technology Grants and Discounts for Nonprofits

Microsoft Tech for Social Impact is dedicated to providing affordable and accessible technology to help nonprofits of all sizes achieve their mission. Some examples of discounts:

- Improve cybersecurity, reduce costs, and empower staff and volunteers to work from anywhere with Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams. Free for up to 10 users and discounted pricing of \$5.50 (USD) per user/month for additional users.
- Move to the cloud with the Azure grant for nonprofits. Leverage \$2,000 (USD) Azure services credits per year and access the complete portfolio of Azure products and cloud services.
- Easily develop mobile and web apps to support your mission—even if you have no technical or development experience. Power Apps is now free for up to 10 users with discounted pricing of \$2.50 per user per month for additional users.

Apply for discounts and grants: <https://nonprofit.microsoft.com/en-us/getting-started>

Take a look at all the discounts:

https://info.chronicle.com/OTMxLUVLQS0yMTgAAAGP_O3DYj9nVmS3Bqktr9z8SsxITlOVgdnpO-S9bMliQC8cAwAAj_kaMs6d8gcc7mzJ0IDYtMY=
