



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County

Program Title: Training for Results

Program Category: Health and Human Services

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Elijah T. Johnson

Title: Acting County Executive

Signature: 

# Training for Results Program

VACo 2022 Achievement Award

## Executive Summary

Prince William County, Department of Social Services (PWC/DSS) revamped its Public Assistance training program with a mission to improve public assistance case processing accuracy among its experienced staff. The Division-Wide Training Program (DWTP) became the primary vehicle to train experienced staff on various policy topics. The DWTP delivers one training topic per month to all staff. The trainings are supplemented with additional activities and materials to help staff understand, retain, and accurately apply information learned to their day-to-day casework. After delivering trainings under this model for several months, Public Assistance staff have significantly decreased their case errors, not only improving the County's accuracy rate but also providing even better service to its customers.

## Challenges and How Program was Carried Out

The Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Quality Control unit reviews a sampling of SNAP cases from each Virginia locality monthly to evaluate compliance with policy. In evaluating statewide SNAP error trends, VDSS identified the case elements of income and shelter expenses as two of the most common reasons for agency-caused errors. These errors were made by both experienced and less experienced staff.<sup>1</sup> Realizing that experienced staff were contributing to errors related to elements that, generally, should not be made by experienced staff the Prince William County Department of Social Services (PWC/DSS) Public Assistance Division (PA Division) revamped its training program to focus not only on regular delivery of policy refresher trainings but also on ensuring staff understood and retained the policy information presented during its training

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<sup>1</sup> Experienced defined as 3 or more years of experience determining eligibility for SNAP.

sessions. To this end, several innovative training programs were created to address the Division's training needs to include the Division-Wide Training Program.

The Division-Wide Training Program develops and delivers training on different policy topics each month offering several training sessions per month on the same topic to meet staff needs. Before trainings are delivered to line staff, they are first vetted by all members of the PA Division's management team. Constructive feedback from the management team is then used to improve upon the training materials.

To facilitate learning and retention of information, the trainers encourage participation during the training sessions with scenario-based questions and engage attendees with competitive games that offer a variety of rewards. At the conclusion of each training session, attendees are required to complete a five-question Knowledge Check (KC).

The KC scores are used to determine which staff members should receive further one-on-one support. Staff members who do not demonstrate proficiency on the KC must have three cases, relevant to the training material, reviewed by their supervisor. The supervisor is also responsible for meeting with the staff member to discuss each case after each case review. These facets of the Division-Wide Training Program reinforce understanding of policy, aid in retention of information, and provide opportunities for staff to demonstrate the ability to correctly apply policy to their cases. The Division-Wide Training Program offers further information retention opportunities on training topics with reference Tip Sheets and fun activities, such as policy-rich Word Search and Crossword puzzles.

The success of the Division-Wide Training Program is evidenced by the outcomes of an ongoing quality assurance initiative geared toward reducing income and shelter expenses errors caused by its staff. In concert with VDSS' efforts to do the same, the PA Division set out to reduce these types of errors in the fall of 2021. A baseline error rate was established from a random, targeted review of SNAP cases in

November 2021 in which two SNAP cases per staff member were reviewed. This review of cases found that 23% of cases had income or shelter expenses errors.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Division-Wide Training Program, the training team delivered three unique SNAP income and shelter expenses policy refresher trainings, which were supplemented by activities and games during the training sessions, Tip Sheets, Knowledge Checks, and subsequent one-on-one supervisory case support, as needed.

### **Conclusion**

After delivering the SNAP income and shelter expenses trainings, additional cases were randomly reviewed, and the PA Division's error rate for these elements fell significantly. Reviewing two cases per staff member per month once again, the February 2022 income and shelter expenses error rate was 5%, the March error rate was 4.8% and the April error rate was 3%.

The Division-Wide Training Program's impact on the success of the income and shelter expenses quality assurance initiative exemplifies the importance of a holistic and collaborative training program. Other governmental entities can mirror the program to train their staff and improve performance in a variety of areas.

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<sup>2</sup> Most income and shelter expenses errors do not impact the customers' eligibility for SNAP benefits, though their allotment amounts may change +/- once the error is corrected.

**Brief Overview:****Training for Results Program**

The Public Assistance Division's Training for Results program targeted to improve Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) processing accuracy by targeting income and shelter expenses components. Taking a collaborative and holistic approach, the Division-Wide Training Program (DWTP) was used as the primary vehicle to train experienced staff on various policy topics to bring the error rate down from 23% to 3% in less than 6 months.