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Local Departments of Social Services - Here to Help

The [Virginia Department of Social Services](#) (VDSS) offers programs and services designed to develop healthy families and communities. There are more than 120 local Departments of Social Services (DSS) in cities and counties throughout Virginia. Although each local DSS is autonomous, services provided in localities are based on programs established by local, state, and federal laws and policies. Local Departments of Social Services offer many different services and those services will vary slightly from locality to locality. Included here is a brief summary of some of the services directly impacting older adults.

Adult Services

Adult Services provides case management and other assistance to adults who are Virginia residents over the age of 60 or who are physically or mentally impaired. Adult Services includes both home-based and community-based services.

Home-based services: Home-based services are the long-term care services that are provided or purchased by a local Department of Social Services to help people stay independent and in their own homes as long as possible. Usually, a caseworker will help coordinate the pieces of the long-term care puzzle including money management, support services, health care & financial assistance. The three basic components of Home-based services are:

- **Companion Services** are personal services provided in the home to help an individual with activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). Companion Services may include help with eating, dressing, bathing, meal preparation, and shopping.
- **Homemaker Services** relates to help that might be needed to maintain a household and could include home maintenance, nutrition, or consumer education.

- **Chore Services** are those non-routine home maintenance tasks that extend beyond the day-to-day house household tasks. For example, minor home repairs, snow shoveling, painting or window washing are considered chore services.

Community-based services: There are services in the community that require screening and assessment before placement. Assessment is critical to determining eligibility for certain services and essential to designing an effective plan of care. Adult Services staff at local departments are trained in the use of the Virginia Uniform Assessment Instrument (UAI) to assess an individual's:

- Functional status
- Physical status
- Psychosocial status
- Support systems
- Physical environment

Through assessment and case management, the local Department of Social Services can help coordinate:

- Nursing home pre-admission screening
- Assisted living assessments
- Adult foster care placements
- Adult day care services
- Nutrition services
- Respite care
- Case management

Adult Protective Services (APS)

The Code of Virginia establishes an Adult Protective Services Program for persons, without regard to income, who are over the age of 60 or for adults who have physical and/or mental disabilities. APS investigates situations where there have been reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of seniors 60 years or older or adults over the age of 18 who are physically or mentally disabled.

The local Department of Social Services investigates adult abuse reports and is also empowered to provide health, housing, and legal services to stop the abuse and

prevent further abuse. To report suspected adult abuse, neglect or exploitation contact your [local Department of Social Services](#) or call the [Virginia Department of Social Services'](#) 24-hour toll-free hotline at 1-888-83-ADULT (1-888-832-3858).

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence services help people who have survived domestic violence. Typical services include emergency housing, crisis counseling, peer counseling, support, advocacy, and public awareness. The state Department of Social Services also supports a statewide, 24-hour Family Violence hotline at 1-800-838-8238.

Public Assistance

Local Departments of Social Services are also the central coordinator of Federal and State Public Assistance Programs. Each of these programs has income and other criteria that may be necessary to meet before receiving help. To determine your eligibility for public assistance, you can contact your [local DSS office](#).

- **Food & Nutritional Assistance** programs are available to assist in purchasing food to supplement the food budget of low-income households.
- **Medical Assistance** programs provide payment of medical care to health care providers for people who have no health insurance and meet certain income criteria. Benefits are provided to individuals who are aged, disabled, blind, on TANF, in foster care, or are pregnant and meet stringent income and resource guidelines.
- **Energy Assistance** provides fuel assistance to help with the cost of heat, cooling assistance resulting from extreme heat, weatherization assistance with energy efficiency and air infiltration. Eligibility is based on income and heating source. Learn more about [Energy Assistance](#).
- **Auxiliary Grants** provide supplemental payments for aged, blind, or disabled individuals living in assisted living facilities. Learn more about [Auxiliary Grants](#).
- **General Relief** is an assistance program that is not offered in every locality, but it is a locally designed program that provides temporary financial assistance for emergency situations.
- **State-Local Hospitalization** provides direct payments to hospitals for indigent people who are not eligible for Medicaid.

Licensing:

VDSS serves as the licensing body for several adult and child facilities including Adult Day Care and Assisted Living Facilities. All Adult Day Care programs and Assisted Living Facilities must adhere to licensure requirements through the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Information and Referral: 2-1-1 Virginia

When you dial [2-1-1](https://www.211.org/) in Virginia, you will be connected, toll-free, to a trained professional who can provide fast, free, confidential referrals to a wide variety of health and human services in your community. It is one of the fastest ways to get connected with the services that your need:

- Basic human needs - food banks, shelters, rent or utility assistance, energy assistance, temporary financial assistance
- Physical and mental health resources
- Work initiatives
- Support for seniors and people with disabilities
- Support for children, youth, and families
- Nutrition Programs
- Volunteering in your community
- Tax credits
- Jobs

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