

Department of Social Services

History

Virginia's early colonists established a system of poor relief similar to England's as the first step toward this country's welfare system. In 1883, the County purchased property now known as Dabbs House, to be used as an Almshouse for the poor. Almshouses or charitable housing were provided to enable people (typically the elderly) who could no longer work to earn enough to pay their rent.

1908 the Virginia General Assembly created the State Board of Charities and Corrections. This Board was the forerunner of the State Department of Welfare and Corrections. The State assumed responsibility for providing services to delinquent children in 1914. In 1922, the Board of Charities and Corrections was organized and became the State Board of Public Welfare.

By 1924, Dabbs House no longer served as the County Almshouse and was used as rental property for a number of years.

The State Board of Charities and Corrections responsibilities increased greatly following the passage of the Federal Social Security Act in 1935. Financial assistance to dependent children and the aged was established.

Virginia followed this action by passing the Public Assistance Act of 1938. This act mandated the establishment of local departments of public welfare in every political subdivision of the state. It also put into operation uniform programs of financial and social services under a locally administered, state supervised system. The present responsibilities and structure of the Virginia public service system are based on the Virginia Welfare law (Title 63.1, Code of Virginia), revised and reenacted in 1968.

The first meeting of the Board of Public Welfare of Henrico County was held at the Court House, Thursday, August 4, 1938 at 10:30 a.m. Mrs. W. Earl Miller was appointed as the Chairperson of the Board and Mrs. Helen Davis was retained as the Superintendent of the Welfare Department. The Department's total budget in 1948 was \$48,274.65.

The Department of Welfare and Corrections were merged into the Department of Welfare and Institutions in 1948. (Previously, the State Board of Public Welfare had become the Department of Welfare). The former Department of Public Welfare became the Division of General Welfare with the new Department and in 1952, the Children's Bureau responsible for supervisor of juveniles committed to the State, was made a separate division of the Department.

During the 1960's vast changes and additions occurred in Federal assistance to State welfare programs and in regulations issued to implement that assistance. The Medicaid

and Food Stamp Programs were examples of the increase of Federal activities in the field during the decade.

Even greater and more comprehensive changes occurred in the 1970's, including the transfer of the Old Age Assistance, Aid to the Blind, and Aid to the Totally and Permanently Disabled programs to the Social Security Administration. These programs became known as Supplemental Security Income. Other changes which occurred in the 1970's were the separation of financial services and social services, and the passage in 1975 of Title XX of the Social Security Act (Purchase of Services).

In 1974, the growing complexity of both the welfare and corrections programs led to the division of the Department of Welfare and Institutions. A new Department of Welfare was created to carry responsibility for supervision of the programs of financial assistance and social services. A new Department of Corrections was also created, which included the Division of Youth Services.

In July 1982, the Department of Welfare changed its name to the Department of Social Services.