



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** 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: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Increasing Access to Social Services Across the County

2024 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Chesterfield Public Library

Executive Summary

Libraries connect members of a community to information in many ways, such as: collections, Internet access, programs and referrals to resources. Two Chesterfield Public Library locations have partnered with Chesterfield-Colonial Heights Department of Social Services (DSS) to bring some of those community resources closer to home for the residents of Chesterfield County. This partnership was formed to reduce barriers for low-income residents in need of services. Every day, librarians help people find information about employment, housing, government programs and legal issues; however, librarians are not able to give legal or medical advice, provide transportation or complete forms. Through the Connect with Social Services initiative, customers are able to meet with DSS staff at convenient and accessible library locations. DSS staff are available to help them initiate services, determine eligibility for government programs, complete documents or inquire about the status of their cases.

Problem/Challenge

Chesterfield Public Library locations serve as community hubs, where customers from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances come to access free information. Libraries are also convenient places for other county agencies to connect with the community. However, few library staff speak Spanish, presenting a challenge to communicate with Chesterfield County's significant Spanish-speaking population. DSS provides a wealth of resources in English and Spanish to the community, such as

Medicaid, refugee assistance, employment services, fuel assistance and adoption information. The DSS office is not always convenient for customers to access as there is no public transportation nearby.

Description of the Program

In 2022, Chesterfield Public Library extended an invitation to DSS to use library locations regularly to meet with customers needing assistance. DSS had previously provided lists of resources for the library to share with customers, but offering individual appointments with DSS at two library locations would help customers take the next step to access the resources they need. The two locations that were identified both have significant Spanish-speaking populations and are located at opposite ends of the county, one in the northern area and the other in the far south. These locations were chosen to provide easy access for county residents and to bring bilingual DSS representatives to areas that need them.

The Connect with Social Services partnership between DSS and the library began in March 2023 at LaPrade Library in the north and expanded to Ettrick-Matoaca Library in the south in September 2023. From the beginning, the partnership had one main objective, to increase community access to DSS resources. Development of the program took several months. Library staff and DSS worked together to create a schedule that worked for both organizations. Each promote the partnership via word of mouth, printed materials and social media in both English and Spanish. The service is also included on the library's online event calendar and shared with local businesses and community event bulletin boards. Promotion of the partnership is ongoing. Chesterfield Public Library's centralized call center developed a communication plan to prepare for questions and registration requests from customers calling the library. Most appointments are made by customers in person while visiting the library.

When reserving a session for a customer, library staff collect contact information, how many people are in the household and basic information about the customer's needs. These details help staff reserve the

correct session length. Library staff also confirm appointments with customers the day before their session and inform DSS of the anticipated appointment schedule. During each session, a customer meets with DSS in an enclosed space that protects the customer's privacy and confidentiality. Each library location also strives to have at least one computer available for DSS customers to access further information after their appointments, if needed.

The majority of individuals who meet with DSS are facing financial hardships. Some are in danger of losing their homes, having essential utilities (e.g. water, electricity or heat) disconnected or being without food to feed themselves and their families.

The combined efforts of Chesterfield Public Library, DSS, local businesses and community organizations have all contributed to the growth of the Connect with Social Services initiative. DSS has been key to its overall success. The enthusiasm of DSS to find ways to connect with individuals and families that need assistance drives the library to continue this partnership and, hopefully, to expand upon it in the future.

The library's relationships with Community Police Officers, Parks and Recreation Community Centers, schools, local businesses and community organizations have also been vital to the success of the initiative because of their vested interest in the community. The Connect with Social Services partnership is making a positive impact for many residents of Chesterfield County. Costs of the Connect with Social Services initiative have been minimal. Printed promotional materials are negligible and fold into the established operating budget for the library.

The Connect with Social Services initiative has been a great success, meeting its objective from day one. Although the number of appointments varies from month-to-month, walk-in customers are always accepted. Feedback from customers who have used the service has been positive. One customer received assistance from library staff with creating a résumé for a job fair. The customer had developed

a neurological vision problem that made finding employment difficult. Library staff informed the customer that DSS takes appointments each month at the library, where the customer could learn about possibly getting help with expenses and job-seeking. The customer met twice with Social Services to get enrolled in the SNAP program and receive job assistance.

Families have had benefits restored through meeting with DSS at the library. Seniors have been able to connect with financial resources. Several people who have had appointments with DSS at the library have shared that the location was much easier for them to access than the DSS office.

Collaboration for Access

The two locations chosen for this initiative, LaPrade and Ettrick-Matoaca Libraries, serve areas with higher rates of poverty in Chesterfield County. Residents of these areas experienced greater than normal hardships during the COVID pandemic and continue to navigate hardships as they readjust to the suspension of benefits or disbursement of extra funds for their families during the height of the pandemic. They often need assistance bridging the gaps for housing, utilities and food until they are able to get into a more stable job, housing arrangement or both. DSS has the knowledge and access to programs that can help build these bridges and improve quality of life for the residents of Chesterfield County. The Connect with Social Services initiative brings DSS services to people in their native language.

It also reduces the stigma of visiting the DSS office. The partnership acknowledges that there are individuals and families who need services and programs available through DSS but cannot come to the DSS office due to a lack of transportation. DSS availability at the library provides opportunities for access that are vital to meeting the needs of marginalized county residents.

Supplemental Materials

Print flyers in English and Spanish:

CONNECT WITH SOCIAL SERVICES

Meet with Chesterfield-Colonial Heights Department of Social Services staff. Check on active cases, have general questions answered and get help applying for services like TANF, SNAP, and more. Reserve your appointment with library staff today!

 Fourth Thursdays

 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

LaPrade Library

9000 Hull Street Road



CCPL CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

CONECTA CON SERVICIOS SOCIALES

Reúnete con el personal del departamento de servicios sociales de Chesterfield-Colonial Heights en la Biblioteca LaPrade. Revisa casos activos, obtén respuesta a tus preguntas, y recibe ayuda en la aplicación de servicios como TANF, SNAP y más. ¡Reserva tu cita con el personal de la biblioteca hoy!

 El Cuarto Jueves del Mes

 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Biblioteca LaPrade

9000 Hull Street Rd



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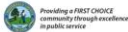
Connect with Social Services

Meet with Chesterfield-Colonial Heights Department of Social Services Staff. Check on active cases, have general questions answered and get help applying for services like TANF, SNAP and more.

Friday, December 13
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Ettrick-Matoaca Library
4501 River Road

Reserve your appointment with library staff today!
Call (804) 751-2275 or stop by the Ettrick-Matoaca Library.



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library.chesterfield.gov • (804) 751-CCPL

