



FY 2018 Recommended Budget Budget Question

Board Question #: 25

BUDGET QUESTION: How does Spotsylvania's DSS caseload compare to other localities of similar size?

RESPONSE: This question presents significant challenges in responding, primarily due to the economic conditions being just as significant as population in determining the public assistance demands on a local social services agency. For example, in determining comparable localities based upon population, localities with populations +/-20% of the population of Spotsylvania County include the counties of Hanover, Albemarle, and Stafford along with the cities of Hampton and Alexandria. Also would be included is the combined localities of Harrisonburg and Rockingham as they are served by a shared local department of social services and the combined population is comparable to Spotsylvania. However a snapshot of Fuel Assistance applications, selected because of its ease of retrieval of case counts for jurisdictions, demonstrates a significant range in case counts for these same localities, from a low of 468 in Stafford County to a high of 2,250 in the city of Hampton. This is a range of 50% less to 152% more than the Spotsylvania count of 891. The wide spread in numbers of applications is not due to agency's generating activity but is driven by the level of need within the community.

If a primary area of responsibility were selected to establish comparable localities, such as Medicaid applications received, the localities included would be the counties of Arlington, Stafford, Suffolk, and Roanoke, and the city of Lynchburg. With the exception of Stafford County, this would be a completely different benchmark group from that created using population. If another area of responsibility were selected, such as children in agency custody, the benchmark group would again likely reflect new membership, including the *exclusion* of Stafford County as their children in care count is approximately 1/3 that of Spotsylvania.

Due to the large variance in the factors that drive demands for services administered through local departments of social services, comparisons are best accomplished on cases per worker within each service area. It bears noting that for services workers geographic location can escalate the difficulty in accomplishing mandatory casework due to the availability of services within or near the locality that may be necessary to meet the needs of the case.

At this time, the Spotsylvania Department of Social Services does not have comparisons of caseloads with other jurisdictions except for in a limited number of areas and those comparisons do not take into account each locality's success in accomplishing mandatory events or meeting federal performance targets.