VIRGINIA SOCIAL SERVICES 2035
December 2019
Introduction

What will human progress, human need, and social services be in Virginia in 2035? What implications does it have for today's strategies for public and private human service providers and community partners? The Virginia Social Services 2035 Scenarios offer a tool for the social services community to explore these questions for Virginia in order to better inform future-oriented, long-term strategies and efforts. For this purpose, these scenarios consider a range of forces, challenges, and opportunities shaping social services and offer a plausible set of expectable, challenging, and visionary pathways for how social services and social service providers may change over the years to 2035.

These scenarios will be used at a Scenario Workshop on December 5th, 2019 where participants will consider how successful their current directions and strategies would be in each scenario, what adjustments are needed, and develop recommendations focused on the near term and the long-term future.
These Virginia Social Services 2035 scenarios are an important part of a larger project on the future of human services – conducted by the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) and supported by the Kresge Foundation. In addition to developing scenarios for the human services community in eleven cities and counties and two states, IAF has developed a set of national human service scenarios. The national scenarios and these Virginia scenarios will allow social service leaders, practitioners and partners to consider their own work in the context of these alternative futures, to challenge their assumptions about the future, to identify emerging risks and opportunities, and to formulate more robust strategies with a greater potential to advance their mission over the decades to come.

**Why Scenarios?**

The future is uncertain. However, scenarios – different stories describing how the future may unfold – can be used to bound that uncertainty into a limited number of paths. These paths help us think about different probabilities in a larger space of possibilities. Scenarios also force us to consider the systems surrounding our topic and to clarify our assumptions. People who work with scenarios find more creative options than those who plan based only on the past and present. Strategies, plans, and actions can also be “future tested” against the different scenarios to assure robust initiatives rather than continued efforts based on outdated assumptions. Scenarios are thus a powerful method for systematically addressing the uncertain future.

**Methodology**

The Virginia Social Services 2035 scenarios presented on the following pages were developed by IAF with the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS), other state agencies, and community partners. In creating these scenarios, we reviewed social services programs and activities, plans and documents, and did interviews with human service providers and partners. We explored “driving forces” and developed preliminary forecasts for the state, economy, employment, the environment, technology, as well as trends within specific areas of social services (jobs, work and workforce development, child and family services, income supports). We used those forecasts for a series of interviews with 34 experts (see Appendix A) in the social services and related fields to refine the preliminary forecasts and develop the distinct scenarios presented below.

We used IAF’s unique “Aspirational Futures” approach which calls for exploring and developing scenarios in each of three zones (see **Figure 1** below):

- A “zone of conventional expectation” reflecting the extrapolation of known trends, the expectable future (scenario 1); What is the “most likely” future for Virginia and social services?
- A “zone of growing desperation” which presents a set of plausible challenges that an organization or field may face, a challenging future (scenario 2); What are key challenges over the next 15 years and how might they play out for state residents and their wellbeing?
• A “zone of high aspiration” in which a critical mass of stakeholders pursues visionary strategies and achieves surprising success (Scenarios 3). Given key forces, including job loss to automation, changing attitudes and values and accelerating technology change, how is poverty eliminated or drastically reduced; how would social services evolve in these scenarios with reduced demand, more effective technology while being more “generative”?

Figure 1: Scenario Zones for IAF’s “Aspirational Futures”

As we developed the scenarios there were aspects of the driving forces, key changes, that call for greater explanation than the scenario narratives allow. This larger explanation is given in the Appendix at the back of this scenario report:

• Abundance advances – a cluster of technologies that, if applied appropriately, can lower the cost of living by providing in-home and in-community production of food, energy, and many home goods (in Scenario 3)

• Job loss to Automation – estimates range from 14.5% to 47% of U.S. jobs could be lost to automation by 2030 (we’ve assumed 15% of jobs in Scenarios 1 and 3 and 25% in Scenario 2)

• Extended Income Support Programs – Income support programs are restructured, including increased benefit and eligibility levels and allowing recipients to receive benefits for longer periods of time. These, combined with innovative approaches to services, living wage, and “abundance advances” help support many to move beyond poverty above the ALICE Survival Threshold (in Scenario 3)

• Equity Rising - “equity rising” involves a widespread attitude change that leads, among a significant portion of the US and Virginia populations, to more support for equity and
inclusion. This change of “mind and heart” contributes to changes in policy, communities and among neighbors that overcome past discrimination and unfair lack of opportunity (in Scenario 3).

As you read these Virginia Social Services 2035 Scenarios consider how probable each is. And consider how preferable each is – which would you like to take place?

**Scenario 1: Modest and Uneven Progress (Expectable)**

**The Macroenvironment** - The two decades between 2015 and 2035 were turbulent, with national economic growth of 1 to 2% in most years, interspersed with mild recessions. Virginia’s economic growth exceeded the national average, but there were wide differences across rural and urban areas in economic, job, and population growth that paralleled their growth patterns in the 2010s.

In 2020, Virginia had 8.65 million residents. Northern Virginia had over 3 million people, while Richmond and Hampton Roads each had over 1.5 million residents. They represented 70% of the state’s population. Rural, non-metro areas represented only 12% of the population and in the 2020s many of these areas continued their population decline. By 2030, the state had 9.3 million residents. Virginia’s job growth varied across the rural, semi urban, and urban localities of the state, with the majority of job growth concentrated in urban localities. The localities with highest job growth (those with a net growth greater than 15% between 2019 and 2030) included Fairfax, Prince William, Stafford, King George, and Louisa. There were several efforts to increase economic growth across the state, including the southern and south western areas, but many rural communities saw their decline in population and economic prospects continue through the 2020s and into the 2030s.

The “age wave” hit the state in the 2020’s, but this too was not evenly distributed. The share of older Virginians—those aged 65 and over—grew from 12% in 2010, to 15% in 2020, and 18% in 2030. This was in part due to the aging of the “baby boomer” generation and in part due to declining birth rates. In 2030, there were 1,723,000 residents aged 65 and over in the state. Rural areas tended to have higher percentages of seniors. In 2020, statewide 15% were 65 or older, yet in rural areas like Lancaster, Northumberland, Middlesex, Highland, and James City more than 30% of their residents

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3 Weldon Cooper 2019 Population Projections
were 65 or older. The percentage of older adults increased in these types of counties as their total population declined in the 2020s as younger residents left the county.

Statewide, aging was accompanied by a rise in certain diseases and disability. For example, Alzheimer’s rose from 150,000 in Virginia in 2019 to 190,000 in 2025 and further for the next decade, becoming the largest contributor to disabilities in the state. During the 2020s, the state evolved its policies to better support this aging population and their families. Still, many challenges persisted in meeting the needs of the increased older population, including addressing a major affordable housing shortage.

Climate change had major implications across the nation, including unique and new challenges for Virginia. By 2030 sea level had risen nearly a foot in Virginia. This brought eroded beaches, worsened coastal flooding, and increased salinity of some freshwater sources. Coastal ecosystems were especially disrupted. In some areas this was worsened due to sinking land near the coasts and rivers, exacerbated by drawing down the shallow aquifer near the bay. Inland flooding periodically hit urban areas, overwhelming drainage systems and causing damage. Sea level rise impacted the economy along the coasts and tidal rivers, but disproportionately affected VDSS clients.

Severe storms brought significant river and stream flooding several times in the 2020s. Virginia had a past with such damaging flooding, like the James River flooding following Hurricane Gaston that inundated parts of Richmond. That event was thought to be a one in 500-year event, but these severe events came several times in the 2020s across the state. In addition to the James River basin, the Roanoke River and the Dan River basins and the towns and cities along their edges experienced major flooding events. Beyond river flooding, these storms periodically caused storm water drainage and creek backups that make some roads impassable.

For agricultural producers, yields were challenged through higher heat, periodic droughts, severe storms, and accompanying stream and river flooding. In the 2020s some prolonged droughts and periods of high heat were accompanied by wildfires. Several areas of the state had over 75% of their area classified as wildland urban interface including Covington, Lexington, Galax, Martinsville, Danville, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Norton, Stafford, and Emporia. While burn bans and other protections were put in place during the droughts, a few communities still had costly fires during the 2020s.

Climate change challenged and harmed many across the state. Coastal communities were more impacted than other areas of the state and the saw some outmigration. However, overall, harmful

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7 http://cmap2.vims.edu/SeaLevelRise_Depth/SLRDepth_revised4.html
8 Communities at Risk from Wildfire. https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=82c9a07d6a7147a98b4efbe68428defb
impacts of climate change were disproportionately felt by older adults, women, low-income people, and communities of color\textsuperscript{9}.

Affordable housing remained an issue throughout the state through the 2020s and 2030s. Across the state in 2017 there was a shortage of 140,000 affordable rental homes for very low-income renters. That year, for every 100 very low-income renters in the state there were only 40 affordable housing units available.\textsuperscript{10} Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation.\textsuperscript{11}

There was public housing throughout the state, but it was concentrated in Northern Virginia, the Richmond area, and Hampton Roads. During the 2020s there was some interest in increasing federal spending on public housing, but it was ultimately constrained by the federal debt. Housing choice voucher programs were spread more widely, in each area of the state. The vouchers increased slightly in the 2020s along with higher payment levels.

Across the state various mixes of approaches were tried in the 2020s: adjusting zoning to allow a higher number of unrelated individual to live in the same home or to allow secondary living units to be built on the property; encouraging sustainable, energy efficient, low cost construction of new units (including setting up “solar gardens” or installed solar; using 3D printing or other sustainable construction methods); regulating Airbnb and similar services to prevent homes being taken out of the affordable rental pool; building “tiny home” cluster housing; requiring or incentivizing landlords to accept housing vouchers.

In Fairfax County, where affordable housing was a major issue, a County task force had noted that by 2030 15,000 homes would be needed. These homes would need to be affordable to households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income ($70,300 a year for a family of four in the late 2010s). The County took their recommendations, including setting a goal of 5,000 new homes as a floor, increasing real estate tax rate by a “Penny for Affordable Housing Fund”, ensuring no net loss of “market affordable” rental apartments.\textsuperscript{12}

The state worked to encourage home ownership with multiple programs that would for first time buyers, provide or contribute to their down payment and closing costs if they met the income threshold.

But through the 2020s, while there were slight increases in affordable housing in most regions of the state, nowhere (with the exception of the localities losing population) did it keep up with the growing demand.

\textsuperscript{9} Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, \url{https://jointcenter.org/blog/more-documentation-climate-change-disproportionately-affects-minority-and-low-income}

\textsuperscript{10} \url{https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/virginia}

\textsuperscript{11} \url{https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/}
\url{https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/housing/news/2019/03-13/affordable-housing}
Apart from housing, the information revolution roared on in the 2020s; the internet and social media claimed more time and attention allowing remote interactions and telepresence. Virtual reality became as ubiquitous in the 2020s as the internet and social media had in the 2010s. Smart phones were most widely used to access social media and virtual reality, supporting communication, learning, entertainment, community engagement, and home and financial management.

Disparities in access to broadband continued in low-income and some rural communities. In 2018, Virginia's rural areas all had satellite access and had made great strides in acquiring wireless, 4G wireless, DSL, cable, and even some fiber optic capabilities, though quite a few rural pockets remained where even wireless telephone was not available, much less broadband or cable. In the 2020s, 5G was rolled out first to cities, which increased disparities. But, broadband did reach all Virginians in the 2020s. Though they had slower broadband speeds, rural Virginians were positively impacted by ongoing information advances. Virtual training and work became more common across the state, including rural areas. Lack of health care services in some rural areas had worsened, but in the 2020s telemedicine and virtual visits gave rural areas better access to health care, including Medicaid services.

Intelligent agents on smart phones became, for most Virginians in the 2020s, an ever-present companion, serving as assistant, knowing our preferences, speaking our language, anticipating our needs, and giving warnings. Intelligent agents in education, medical care, and behavioral health became smarter and increasingly more effective. Public comfort and use of intelligent agents as virtual counselors increased, although they did not replace human providers. While technology tools benefited many, these advancements also partially or fully displaced workers in many jobs.

Social Services Overall – Social services evolved in the 2020s, driven in part by a clearer sense of what is needed for success for individuals and families. More than being above the poverty line, families need adequate housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care. In Virginia in 2015, 342,000 households lived below the poverty level, and another 859,000 households, although employed, could not afford housing, child care, food, transportation and health care. Together these meant that 39% of Virginia households were asset limited and income constrained – below the ALICE Threshold for basic survival (ALICE = Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

This 39% of the state’s household lacking a basic survival income was a major factor shaping demand for social services throughout the 2020s. Other drivers included shifts in population location and age, economic changes, climate change, access to health care, and substance use and abuse.

Diseases of despair, including those accompanied by addiction, grew in many parts of the state. These were especially prominent in areas where economic prospects continued to decline. For some, a lack of

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14 https://www.nbc29.com/story/40991624/5g-wireless-likely-to-take-longer-to-reach-rural-areas
hope contributed to diseases of despair and substance abuse. The nature of the drugs used continued to evolve in the 2020s, with heroin, fentanyl, and meth increasing their share of chronic use and contribution to deaths. In some areas, epidemics of addiction plateaued. In other areas, cycles of abuse continued.

Regardless of which drug or alcohol was used, addiction remained a major cause for child neglect and abuse and subsequent foster home need. Drug related foster care entries rose from below 20% in 2010 to 30.6% in 2018. This percentage continued to rise through the 2020s. Alcohol related foster care entries had hovered around 5% through the 2010s and continued at that level through the 2020s. Kinship placements remained a priority, but many grandparents or other family members were themselves aging, suffering from chronic conditions, lacking retirement funds, or facing a growing share of their meager social security payments taken to pay their Medicare premiums.

Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) pursued their mission of helping families triumph over poverty and having meaningful impacts in the lives of many Virginians. The Department, and their partners, were successful in achieving improvements in outcomes but faced periodic challenges related to budget, workforce, and physical constraints.

Some of this success came through the Department’s innovations. Using a “whole family” approach the Department, in league with local agencies, other state agencies, non-profit and business partners sought to ensure the needs of all family members were met. Data sharing in the ecosystem, enhanced enrollment, and predictive analytics were deployed building on the Department’s CommonHelp enrollment system. Using the ALICE Index as a framework, the Department was innovative in combining services and pursuing greater preventative measures. This included new waivers, like the Addiction and Recovery Treatment Services (ARTS)\(^\text{16}\), which expanded access to a continuum of substance use disorder services for those enrolled in Medicaid. This program enhanced data collection and monitoring for outcomes and enforced new evidence-based practices. This served as an example for other programs, including those for children and foster care prevention. In regard to family income, these innovations were complimented by Virginia’s raising of the minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2024 and to a living wage in the second half of the 2020s.

Whole family approaches led to every agency increasingly working across generations for co-creation of plans and success. A peer to peer support network emerged to help caseworkers and families achieve success. Ultimately, social services were able to lower the need for police or emergency services.

In general, across the state, human service providers became more efficient and productive, integrated and collaborative. This was due partially to more sharing of data and their deeper multigenerational, entire family, approach to services.

\(^{16}\) [https://www.magellanofvirginia.com/for-providers/arts-information/](https://www.magellanofvirginia.com/for-providers/arts-information/)
Federal funding for social services, after some cuts during the Trump Administration, rebounded in the early 2020s, but the enlarged national debt and yearly deficits kept pressure on discretionary spending, with periodic reductions in some federal spending on social service programs. The national impacts were felt in Virginia and the state struggled to fill the gap left with decreased federal funding. Human service organizations enhanced their collaboration with schools, businesses, and community partners. This was crucial during periods of funding cuts for human services as the partnerships allowed for better resource sharing and greater impact. The objective was to help families and individuals move towards self-sufficiency, both in times of economic growth and during periods of economic downturn or transition.

Data integration and cross-agency partnerships became more common and important – across federal, state, and local government agencies, schools, and health care providers. In Virginia, for example, VDSS undertook an Application Platform Assessment to use technology solutions for improved deployment speed, greater efficiencies, and reduced risks and costs. Data integration was used for predictive analytics that enabled human services to better prioritize or triage services when they were underfunded and could not meet all needs. In many cases, predictive analytics enabled human services to anticipate and prevent incidents such as child or elder abuse.

Enrolling in social services was ultimately streamlined, with eligibility analysis and shared data. This, along with predictive analytics, freed social workers of many logistical and paperwork tasks. Case workers were able to spend more time with family members receiving services (whether face to face or by tele-visits) in implementing the state’s “Whole Family” approach. All aspects of social services were aided by technology to varying degrees, but automation and technology did not replace the human element of human services.

**Jobs, Work and Workforce Development**

As noted, Virginia’s economy varied across the rural, semi urban, and urban counties of the state, with the majority of job growth concentrated in urban localities. There were several efforts to increase economic growth across the state, including in the South and South West Virginia areas, but many rural communities saw their decline in population and economic prospects continue in the 2020s. Earlier forecasts had identified industries with the largest projected growth by 2024 to be: health care and social assistance; professional, scientific and technical services; educational services, accommodation and food services; retail trade, construction and administrative and support services. This was generally what happened in the first half of the 2020s, however, some of these employment areas experienced or were approaching partial automation. For example, health aides, technicians and wellness occupational categories by 2024, nationally had begun what would be a fifteen percent increase.

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displacement rate over the decade\textsuperscript{19}. So, while there was not sudden mass unemployment in those fields, there were periods of growth followed by periods of shrinking.

Overall, the expectable growth forecasts from the Virginia Employment Commission had argued that between 2016 and 2026 total employment in the state would grow 10.19%, from 4,097,000 to 4,515,103.\textsuperscript{20} This forecast and subsequent growth was, as with the rest of the country, significantly affected by automation and expert systems. By 2030, there had been a net loss of 15% of jobs in the state. This disrupted previous projections for employment. Jobs that lost the greatest numbers to automation included retail salespersons, office clerks, bookkeepers, accountants and auditing clerks, and cashiers, among others\textsuperscript{21}. Occupations which declined across the state in the 2020s in addition to those national job categories were: postal service mail carriers; farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers; farmworkers; cooks (fast food industry); computer programmers; tellers; switchboard operators; and others\textsuperscript{22}. As well as better-educated, better-paid workers (along with manufacturing and production workers) highly affected by AI technologies, particularly market research analysts, sales managers, computer programmers, and personal financial advisers.\textsuperscript{23}

Middle-skill positions were an area of potential growth, but many of these were also vulnerable to job loss from automation. As of 2016, there were 2.4 million middle-skill jobs in Virginia - meaning positions which required education beyond high school diploma but not a bachelor’s degree. Under conventional forecasts, that number was expected to increase by 200,000 by 2026\textsuperscript{24} however, automation lowered that increase to about 185,000.

Another changing aspect of work was the change from “jobs.” Much of the work opportunities in the 2020s came not as employment (i.e. full-time or part-time jobs often with benefits) but rather as piece work in the “gig economy.” For those with “jobs” in the traditional sense, Virginia increased the minimum wage in the first half of the 2020s, reaching $11.25 per hour by 2022\textsuperscript{25} and $15 per hour by 2024. To benefit “gig workers” Virginia implemented pay protections and some benefit mechanisms (especially worker injury insurance and retirement savings mechanisms). While these pay and benefit mechanisms were important, gig workers collected 30 to 50% less in income and benefits than full-time workers.

\textsuperscript{19} McKinsey 2019 \textit{The Future of Work in America}
\textsuperscript{20} \url{https://virginiaworks.com/occupational-projections?page79862=1&size79862=12&page80257=1&size80257=12&page81630=1&size81630=12}
\textsuperscript{21} McKinsey \textit{The Future of Work in America}
\textsuperscript{22} McKinsey \textit{The Future of Work in America}
\textsuperscript{23} Mark Muro, Jacob Whiton, and Robert Maxim November 20, 2019, What jobs are affected by AI? Better-paid, better-educated workers face the most exposure; \url{https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-jobs-are-affected-by-ai-better-paid-better-educated-workers-face-the-most-exposure/}

\textsuperscript{24} Virginia Employment Commission, cited in University of Virginia, It’s Time to Think About Middle-Skill Jobs and Education, \url{http://statchatva.org/2019/07/18/middle-skill-jobs-and-education/}

\textsuperscript{25} \url{https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?191+sum+SB1017}
Urban and rural areas across Virginia remained unequal in their job growth. For example, across the nation, urban areas captured 60% of job growth through 2030 while mid-size cities had modest growth and rural areas had stagnant or declining job numbers. This pattern held in Virginia as well.

Virginia’s workforce development system programs and locations evolved including schools, community colleges, Virginia Career Works centers, Local Workforce Investment Boards, Federal Career & Technical Training, WIOA, and other laws. To build a more equitable and prepared workforce in Virginia, career and technical education (CTE) programs in high schools and community colleges worked with employers to direct their courses toward occupations with the greatest employment potential, including health care, while avoiding jobs likely to be replaced by automation.

A major advance in the 2020s was getting high school students to be able to intern or have work experiences in health care settings. The workforce development system also focused on skills for seeking and managing multiple gig work assignments simultaneously, rather than managing a single job from one employer at a time. Virtual training and remote work increased, as did partnerships between workforce development programs and community colleges.

Attracting businesses became more community-focused, seeking to ensure that money invested stay in communities. Many communities in rural Virginia sought to bring telework jobs to their residents. Wise County was the major success story in attracting and maintaining telework.

For Wise County, it started in the schools. Their primary and secondary schools played an important part of workforce development. Early educational efforts, such as Smart Beginnings and Virginia Quality Initiatives, to ensure greater kindergarten preparedness, made children more ready to learn. Math, science, and language literacy were important targets. High schools encouraged college readiness as well as certifications or a direct path into jobs.

However, quality and outcomes of education varied widely across the state as did graduation rates. Students from rural county school systems were less prepared than other school systems, with a few exceptions. As noted, one exception was Wise County where the school system teamed with UVA Wise. The county emphasized STEM education that prepared students for certification in various computer and cybersecurity areas, as well as moving to UVA Wise for a bachelor or master’s degree in these fields. They started this in the late 2010s as CGI, a global IT company with major cyber security clients in the US and particularly the Northern Virginia area, hired UVA Wise grads and had them work remotely from Southwest Virginia. This success expanded in the 2020s as ultimately several hundred high paying jobs were created in the region.

But the Wise experience was not common or easily replicated across the state. Many rural areas in the state struggled to get sufficient broadband capacity and businesses to create tele-work in their communities. Some counties, in addition to Wise County, were successful in attracting call centers that brought good paying jobs until these call centers were automated in the mid-2020s. Some other communities that did have the right mix of broadband and prepared workforce got telework job in the community, but these were few in number and none replicated Wise County’s level of success.
Income Supports 1.

Income support programs were needed in Virginia. In 2018, about 10.6% of the population in Virginia had incomes below the poverty line, and 13.7% of the state’s children had families living below the poverty line. Poverty levels varied across the counties and regions in the state. Overall, poverty rates were higher in rural areas than urban or semi-urban. Within urban areas in NOVA, Richmond, and Hampton Roads, there were concentrated pockets of high poverty.

Poverty had been shaped by racism, exclusion, lack of opportunity, and inadequate education. In the 2020s, it was further affected by job loss to automation, social and political changes, climate change, and demographic changes. Poverty was better understood through the ALICE framework, which moved beyond the Federal Poverty Level consideration to include housing, health care, child care, and transportation needs at a survival level, and then at a level of stability. The survival budget was a bare-minimum budget. The stability budget includes better quality housing, child care that is licensed and accredited, food at the USDA Moderate Food plan, leasing a car, health insurance, and access to a cell phone. To address this, throughout the 2020s local and state efforts focused on encouraging economic growth, attracting businesses, promoting the hiring of local residents, and workforce preparation.

Income support programs remained needed and in place throughout the 2020s and 2030s. Federal and state programs included TANF, SNAP, EITC, Virginia EITC, LIHEAP, Medicaid and FAMIS, and Child Care. Delivery evolved, focusing on whole family strategies, including engaging young children. This involved greater early educational efforts and helping Virginians prepare from a very young age to be successful in the workforce.

While eligibility and funding levels for some income support programs—particularly the TANF program—increased in the 2020s, overall the number of Virginians below the ALICE threshold grew and the need for social services outstripped what the programs could provide.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) maintained its bipartisan support and continued to support low-income families by reducing or eliminating their federal taxes. Federal EITC payment levels were held flat during the late 2010s and grew slightly above inflation in the 2020s. Virginia EITC was converted to a refundable $300 for each exemption claimed on the tax form for low-income households. In the 2020s many with low wage jobs lost their job to automation, particularly in fast food restaurants, retail sales, and some aspects of hospitality. This reduced the number of people benefiting from the federal and state EITC.

Food and nutrition income support programs evolved as well. In 2014, 919,000 (or, 11% of the state’s population) participated in the SNAP program, including 43% of the state’s children. SNAP continued throughout the 2020s and payment levels were adjusted annually through the federal process.

27 https://www.tax.virginia.gov/low-income-individuals-credit
28 VA Hunger Solutions, http://vahungersolutions.org/snap/
which considered the poverty level while the state worked to have the ALICE Threshold recognized and used as the marker for increasing payments.

The related state program SNAP Employment and Training (SNAPET or SNAP E&T), likewise continued. While voluntary, failure to participate could prevent some from receiving SNAP and other services. SNAPET programs included vocational training, GED and high school completion support, job placement assistance, supportive services such as transportation and job retention services. These programs targeted jobs that would not be automated and for which the person could be trained and had the relevant capacities.

But even after the training, in many communities, job shortages remained and/or the people offered specific jobs did not have reliable transportation. To address this, remote or virtual work and training expanded across the state. Some workforce was recruited for remote training after graduating high school. These programs did increase the readiness of many rural residents to do remote work, but as noted, only a few communities were able to attract businesses to hire their residents. Other efforts focused on employing those enrolled in income support programs included having recipients of SNAP and TANF work in community programs, such as providing children meals during the summer months.

In terms of nutrition programs, in the 2020s total funding levels for SNAP were raised and applying for SNAP was made much easier and quicker. Better information systems linked individuals and their data with other government programs. An increasing number of services, such as benefit program applications and Medicaid enrollment, were conducted electronically through VDSS’ customer web portal, CommonHelp. This facilitated public access to services, reduced wait time and processing errors, and allowed greater access to data for program staff. Once an individual or family reaches broad based eligibility categorically, they are automatically qualified for SNAP and other relevant programs. Data integration continued for social services and income supports. Multiple agencies shared data, which helped in evaluating outcomes across programs and in designing the best plans to serve the entire family. Data sharing often began at a local level, but Virginia worked towards integration on the local, state, and national levels. Every agency in the social services network worked to provide measurable outcomes for the whole family; peer to peer networks of client support emerged in many communities as well.

Health and human service agencies began coordinating their care and services with SNAP and other programs; as did other state and federal programs. For example, a Medicaid participant who would benefit from certain foods or nutritional supplements would be encouraged to buy and prepare those foods. Once protections for privacy, security, and discrimination were put in place in the mid-2020s,


social service data sets were better equipped to use more personal, financial, and community data for better outcomes.

**Child and Family Services 1.**

Child and family services in Virginia, provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services\(^{31}\), local Departments of Social Services, and other partners, include child welfare services, foster care and adoption services, child care assistance, day care, Head Start, community supports for children and families, domestic violence help, and abuse and neglect prevention and intervention programs.

Demand for these services was shaped by substance use and abuse, economic recessions, periodic environmental challenges, and rising unemployment due to increasing job loss to automation. Federal funding for some of these services fluctuated across the years. Service delivery was supported and improved in the 2020s due to greater integration of data and communication across public and private service providers, and between health and social service sectors, as well as better insights into the effect of quality child and family services especially during 0 to 5 years.

In Virginia, in 2016, there were 5,941 validated victims of child abuse or neglect; a rate of 3.2 per 1,000 children which was a slight decrease from the prior year\(^{32}\). The number of children living apart from their families in out-of-home placements increased 3.3% in 2016 in comparison to the number of children in out-of-home care in 2015\(^{33}\). Through the 2020s, average annual caseloads for child protective services remained at or above 50,000 for the state, with partial increase due to greater awareness of the program. The state worked to address root causes of physical neglect, such as substance use disorder, mental health problems, poverty, or co-occurring disorders.

The need for foster care persisted, partially driven by the substance abuse of parents. Children and family services related to substance use or abuse remained a problem. While drug abuse accounted for around 30% of all foster placements and alcohol use around 5%\(^{34}\). As noted, substance use and abuse remained a major factor for infant and child foster care through the 2020s. Kinship placements were preferred and remained common. In many families, grandparents took guardianship of the children, whether or not they formally gained custody. In Fairfax County alone in 2020, it was estimated that there were 5,000 families with these informal kin placements. In 2019 the General Assembly passed a law requiring child welfare agencies to “take all reasonable steps to provide notice to relatives of their potential eligibility to become a kinship foster parent.” This law enabled relatives of at-risk children to receive all the services that are available to unrelated foster parents, including payment at the full foster

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31 [https://www.dss.virginia.gov/](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/)
33 Child Welfare League Virginia’s Children 2018
care rate for the care of the child.\textsuperscript{35} Yet in many cases, the grandparents were not prepared to take on the role as primary caregiver. And while they did receive foster care payments, these grandparents were living on stagnant and often inadequate Social Security or retirement payments. Throughout the 2020s their Medicare premiums continued to grow and take a greater share of their total income.

Tele-medicine was influential in assisting many across the state, including Medicaid recipients, to have better access to health care, including to address their behavioral health needs. Psychiatrists did tele-visits, working with the patient’s pediatricians, primary care providers, and specialists to better address the needs of children and family, including those with co-occurring disorders.

In regard to child support collection, VDSS continued to operate one of the most successful and productive child support systems among the 50 states. Child support collections continued to meet the 65% target through the 2020s, exceeding its federal incentive target of $5 collected per $1 spent on administration.\textsuperscript{36} The program was not only cost-effective but contributed significantly to the household income of the custodial parent.

Delivery of child and family services evolved. As noted, whole family strategies were common across Virginia\textsuperscript{37} in the 2020s which linked the parents and/or grandparents, where relevant, in identifying needs and setting priorities (e.g. job training, housing assistance, behavioral health support for the parent).

Data integration across local agencies allowed better awareness of each child’s and family’s needs. By the 2020s, data sharing included other human service agencies, schools, and some health care providers. Privacy and discrimination protections enabled this data sharing. However, data integration did not arrive uniformly across the state. Certain jurisdictions and leadership embraced integrating data more than others and much integration were issue-specific at first but became more systemic over time.

Social services in the 2020s were accompanied by more integrative and generative approaches, and with stringent privacy protections, a virtual national database of child abuse cases and victims and other family services clients was launched. When combined with local data on factors such as neighborhood violence, school truancy, business closures, health care and other human services used, local human service providers could use data mining, do geospatial risk analysis and predictive analytics to determine what services would best improve outcomes for individuals and families as well as set agency and program priorities. Those who had access to the information were intentional about ensuring the information was used for prevention and appropriate intervention and not as a tool for profiling.

\textsuperscript{35} https://www.fredericksburg.com/opinion/editorial-more-virginia-kids-in-foster-care/article_83ade330-3289-5342-a20a-c7f3f75e3920.html
\textsuperscript{36} ibid
\textsuperscript{37} Voice for Virginia’s Children, https://vakids.org/our-news/blog/families-work-everything-works-better-two-generation-approach
While behavioral health did use “virtual counselors” to provide mental health care to some individuals by mid-2020s, child and family services more often used these systems to target and support their work. Tele-health expanded. Human interaction remained fundamental but became more assisted by technology. By automating some of the tasks of child and family service workers’, those workers became more effective and more able to spend time directly supporting families.

While other Federal programs had been reduced in the late 2010s, Federal spending on child care and early childhood development programs, including Head Start, increased slightly. The increase plateaued in 2021 after more state and federal funds were added. Virginia committed in the late 2010s to ensure access to early childhood education for all 4-year-olds and many 3-year-olds in the state. The Head Start State Collaboration Grant was developed “as a partnership at the state level to support the development of multi-agency and public private partnerships” for childhood systems. In 2019, 11,734 Head Start (HS) slots were funded (giving 29% of eligible children ages 3-5 access to HS), while 2,587 Early Head Start (EHS) slots were funded (giving 6% of eligible children under 3 access to EHS). In the 2020s there was incremental increases in funding that raised the percentage of eligible children receiving HS or EHS.

In the 2020s, child care quality increased and technology made it more effective. Child care, Head Start, and PreK providers were better supported and services across the state became more streamlined, including through monitoring processes to enhance quality of care. Interactive learning technology, using affective computing that responds to the emotional state of the child, tablet apps (like ABC Mouse), and personalized learning activities, stimulated engagement and charted development. Technology tools enhanced child care providers’ ability to monitor, track and reinforce each child’s development and personalized learning. In child care settings, tablets or other screens were not used by kids 2 and under and screen time was limited for the remainder. This use of technology was based on the ongoing evidence of the technology’s positive and negative impacts on brain function and learning. Similar sets of tools supported child care and health start providers, both large companies and small local centers, with management tools for bills and payments, attendance, recruiting teachers, and HR/benefits.

https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/headstart.cgi
Scenario 2: Uphill Both Ways (Challenging)

The Macroenvironment - Virginia experienced repeated challenges in the decades leading up to 2035, during which the need for social services grew, even though funding did not. The U.S. economy overall grew slowly for most of the two decades to 2035, with periodic recessions. In 2023, there was a major Recession which was particularly challenging to employment, tax receipts, and social service spending. Funding for social services was also devastated due to the increased federal deficit, so spending remained depressed through the 2020s.

The digitization of life continued the movement from the internet, social media, and smart phones to virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and cognitive computing. This improved many aspects of life and learning – but it also led to job loss to automation. There was a net loss of 25% of total jobs from the economy. These losses were in addition to the usual cyclical job losses during a recession.

While the recession harmed many, including causing many families to fall into poverty, the impacts were disproportionately felt across the state. In some areas, such as Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads the high number of federal government and military jobs insulated the region during the recession (though not during federal sequestrations or shutdowns). However, in many areas, jobs were lost that would be difficult to get back. Federal and state spending cuts reinforced local disparities in school systems across the state.

Beyond the recession, changes in defense policy posed challenges to the state. During the 2020s defense policy and military strategy evolved. The assumption that the U.S. should be ready to fight two conventional land wars at the same time was adjusted to recognize the diminishing prospects for conventional ground wars. Instead irregular actions, generally by special forces/operators occurring in many locations simultaneously, would become the rule. Likewise, large naval fleets whose location and movements could easily be tracked were no longer cost justifiable. Drones and autonomous vehicles were increasingly used in engagements. As irregular military engagements increased, so did cyber warfare and cyber defense. All of these factors, along with the major recession lead to major cuts in defense spending in the mid 2020s – this had a dramatic effect on the Hampton Roads area as bases not already closed or downsized because of climate change, closed. Northern Virginia suffered from these Defense related cuts as well, slowing their growth and forcing reductions in state and locality spending and social services.

The recession and government spending cuts necessitated some increases in self-sufficiency and cost-saving efforts, particularly family and community food production as well as the trading of services and other resources in low-income communities. But this was not viable in every community across the state.
Climate change had major implications across the nation, including unique and new challenges for Virginia\textsuperscript{40}. By 2030 sea level had risen almost a foot and a half.\textsuperscript{41} During the 2020s this brought eroded beaches, worsened coastal flooding, and increased salinity of some freshwater sources. Coastal ecosystems were disrupted. In the Hampton Roads area, there were many affected military bases and neighborhoods. The Port of Norfolk was able to keep functioning, though some of the rail lines coming to the port were periodically closed. Portions of Langley AFB and Fort Eustis (and their Joint Base) were periodically flooded.

Significant river and stream flooding occurred almost every year through the 2020s with severe storms. The 2010s had seen such flooding, an example was the James River flooding following Hurricane Gaston that inundated parts of Richmond. That was thought to be a one in 500-year event, but these severe events came several times in the 2020s across the state. In addition to the James River basin, the Roanoke River and the Dan River basins and the towns and cities along their edges experienced major flooding events. These storms periodically caused storm water drainage and creek backups that rendered some roads impassable.

In the 2020s hurricanes increased in their frequency, intensity and variability. In 2024 a major hurricane devastated the state. Hurricanes had historically been the major cause of extreme flooding in the state. The largest storm related loss of life in the state came in 1969 when Hurricane Camille swept in from the Gulf of Mexico and came over the state from the west dumping up to 40 inches of rain in short period. Many rivers flooded across the state, with the worst being the James River in Richmond with a peak crest of 28.6 feet (8.7 m). Many rivers in Virginia and West Virginia set records for peak flood stages, causing numerous mudslides along mountainsides. In the mountain slopes between Charlottesville and Lynchburg, more than 26 inches (660 mm) of rain fell in 12 hours, but the worst was in Nelson County where 27 inches (690 mm) fell. In Nelson County alone, 133 bridges washed out, while in some places entire communities were under water. Waynesboro on the South River saw eight feet of water downtown, and Buena Vista had more than five feet. A total of 153 people were killed and nearly 4,000 families were affected.\textsuperscript{42}

The flooding and damage from the 2024 hurricane paralleled that of Hurricane Camille but went from the coast to the mountains in Virginia. A large, slow moving category 3 storm came in from the East making landfall in the Hampton Roads area, heading east then turning north around Roanoke. It repeated much of the intensity of Camille’s rain and flooding. In more recent history, it paralleled the inundation that Hurricane Harvey brought to the Houston area in 2017.

The pre-landfall evacuation was a major challenge as many people fled out of the Hampton Roads area on I64, then had to decide to go north or south on I95. There were few safe shelters along the way for evacuees nor for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed, particularly in the Hampton Roads area. When the storm hit, the damage started in the coastal areas with a six-foot storm surge. The


\textsuperscript{41} http://emap2.vims.edu/SeaLevelRise_Depth/SLRDepth_revised4.html

\textsuperscript{42} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Camille
elevated seas pressed up the James and other rivers, preventing those rivers from emptying, causing major flooding miles upstream. Along the coast buildings and infrastructure, particularly roadways, tunnels and railways, were damaged. Some took months to repair; others were not rebuilt. Langley AFB runways and facilities were severely damaged and the base, along with NASA Langley relocated. Roadway and rail line damage took months to repair. Vulnerable communities were hardest hit. Many lost homes or apartments and had to be relocated.

In the 2020s, agricultural producers saw their yields challenged through higher heat, periodic droughts, severe storms and accompanying stream and river flooding, and saltation of fields near rising salt and brackish water. And some tourist areas lost business to closed lakes and beaches because of water pollution from pfiesteria and other algal blooms.

Some prolonged droughts and periods of high heat were accompanied by wildfires. Several areas of the state had over 75% of their area classified as wildland urban interface including Covington, Lexington, Galax, Martinsville, Danville, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Norton, Stafford and Emporia. While burn bans and other protections were put in place during the droughts, several of these communities had costly fires in the 2020s.

Overall the impacts of climate change were disproportionately felt by older adults, low-income areas, women, and communities of color. Many local governments were severely impacted – increased expenses, decreased property tax revenues, lots of damaged public infrastructure, credit downgraded. Some smaller rural economies were devastated and unable to recover, particularly those economies dependent on tourism and/or agriculture/aquaculture.

Social Services Overall - Poverty and inequality of all types - income, wealth, health, educational outcomes, involvement in the judicial system, etc. - increased. Political gridlock, or otherwise inability to act, blocked policy responses to these emerging challenges. Child poverty increased, particularly after the 2023 recession. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) grew in the 2020s, as did the need for social services because of ACEs experienced in the 2000s and 2010s.

VDSS and the social service community held steadfast in their commitment to helping families triumph over poverty even in these challenging times. Faced with the recurring cuts to human service programs, even while needs grew because of increased job loss, poverty, and environmental emergencies social services pressed even harder to move funds and services across silos to best meet the needs of the decreasing number of individuals and families they were able to serve. While Virginia political institutions remained supportive of social services, the decline in state revenue led to period reductions in state dollars for social services. The federal government through the 2020s had shifts that led to increases as well as cuts in many of social service programs. The federal government in 2023 and 2024 sought to repeat the federal stimulus after the 2008 recession but was also limited by its increased debt and decreased tax revenues.

43 Communities at Risk from Wildfire.
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=82c9a07d6a7147a98b4efbe68428defb
Systematic oppression and racism continued with harm and unequal opportunities. Around Virginia, diseases of despair— including opioid addiction and other substance use diseases, depression, and suicide— grew, particularly in rural areas even harder hit by the recession, and among many laid off workers, including some displaced social service workers. For many, there was a lack of hope, related to lack of economic prospects, lack of health care, or lack of social services support, which worsened these diseases of despair.

Despair contributed to increased hostility; tensions which boiled over into outbreaks of violence in different forms. Political turmoil was common, resulting from anger due to the sense of a lack of dignity and empowerment. Some violence was a result of desperation, as people resorted to crime for their survival. Some violence stemmed from protests, driven by emotional pain and exasperation of increased inequity and oppression. And some violence was a result of domestic terrorism, with technology empowering the spread of radicalization of certain dangerous nationalist groups’ agenda. Virginia leaders were moved to do more to address these actions, but sectors of many communities were further isolated and the overall sense of community frayed.

VDSS and human service organizations were forced to “do less with less;” to automate what they could; to collaborate to ensure that the funds and services provided were deployed most effectively for each individual and family’s unique needs; and to reinforce their overworked and underpaid employees on the importance of their mission. Many human service non-profit organizations went out of business in the 2020s.

Overall about 15% of human service jobs were lost to automation and cognitive computing in the 2020s. Some automation was helpful, and other times automation of services further profiled, caused barriers and disjointed connections between families and case workers. Many other jobs were cut when state or federal funding was decreased.

Jobs, Work and Workforce Development 2
Employment and income equality in Virginia were challenged in the 2020s. The major recession in 2023 hit Virginia hard. Many lost their jobs. The divide between high income and low-income greatly widened. As a result, there was some out migration from high cost areas, which further depleted the economy in these areas, even while outmigration continued from many of the state’s rural counties. Those that relocated to lower cost areas were often unable to find employment and good wages, and so there were barriers to building or rebuilding wealth. This was made worse by accompanying job loss to automation. And, as noted, there were other factors which led to economic decline: flooding, the 2024...

hurricane, decreases in defense spending and base closings, wildfires, reduced agricultural output, and diminished tourism business.

The workforce development system components all worked to improve their efforts, with some, mixed success. Career and technical education (CTE) in schools and community colleges improved and became more virtual. K-12 curriculum helped better equip many with life/work skills. However, huge variation in quality across Virginia school systems remained. Rural county schools’ quality lagged behind their urban county counterparts. However, some counties maintained or advanced their school programs incongruent with statewide trends. For example, a leading exception was Wise County, which continued to prepare students for computer science and cyber security careers and attracted telework companies and their high-paying jobs to the region.

### Income Supports 2
The need for income support increased even while the funding for those programs, including TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid, saw their levels reduced, and eligibility tightened. Caseloads for income support program workers grew. Providers were somewhat better prepared to address the recession of 2023 than the Recession of 2008, but some challenges were new and unanticipated.

TANF experienced cuts and limitations under a national conservative political leadership in the 2020s. The job categories TANF recipients could seek were narrowed, even while automation was eliminating jobs in many of the remaining approved categories.

As noted, some communities and families responded by becoming more self-reliant, including growing more of their own food. However, many food growing efforts weren’t applicable across different rural or urban environments. Beyond food, many households did more on the informal or underground economy as neither employment nor adequate government assistance could be found. This included legal and illegal activities.

More people required emergency assistance, medical assistance, and temporary disability assistance but there were fewer financial resources and medical services available.

As the state’s economy slowed and many families’ incomes declined, the SNAP program suffered significant cuts. Switching SNAP into a block grant further reduced its economic and nutritional impact, disproportionately harming low-income populations.

Lack of economic prospects – and a lack of hope - led more Virginians to succumb to diseases of despair. This was coupled with reduced access to health care and substance abuse rehabilitation treatment programs. Many families, and at times entire communities, were devastated.

### Child and Family Services 2.
The need for child and family services grew for most of the two decades to 2035. Poverty, racial and ethnic disparities, and cuts to human services were among factors increasing need. Inequity increased
approaching the 2020s. In Virginia poverty increased, particularly in concentrated areas. Job loss to automation added to the growth of poverty throughout the 2010s and 2020s.

The increase in poverty contributed to greater child abuse and neglect, domestic abuse, addiction, teen pregnancy, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and depression. The adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) kids were experiencing would negatively affect their gene expression for years to come. And need for foster care grew while the need for placements outpaced the ability to recruit secure foster care homes in a timely way. Coincidently, the permanent placement rate declined during the 2020s.

Disconnected youth – those not working or not enrolled in school - increased across the state. In 2018, 10% of all 16 to 24-year old’s in the state were disconnected. While white males were the largest segment of this disconnected youth, black youth were disproportionately disconnected, representing 33% of the disconnected youth, but only 22% of all 16 to 24-year old.\(^45\) The percentage of disconnected youth grew in the 2020s as did racial inequities.

The substance use disorder (SUD) epidemic grew in Virginia. Opioid and opiate addiction increased dramatically throughout the 2020s and became an increasingly major contributing factor harming children directly and through their parents’ addiction. Impacts of the opioid epidemic included increased number of children and infants in foster care, increased number of mortalities, and increased spread of diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C\(^46\).

For many, a lack of hope – in relation to economic outlook, or otherwise – led to self-medication. This perpetuated a cycle for many families – a cycle in which the inability to pass a drug test prohibited employment and lack of employment continued despair and self-medication. With more family members out of work, there were more instances of abuse and neglect.

Job loss to automation and economic downturns made jobs scarcer, and failure to raise the minimum wage enough to keep even with inflation kept many full-time workers near or below the self-sufficiency level. More families moved to find work or better pay, leaving behind their larger family support systems. Familial homelessness increased among those who moved and those who did not move but lost their homes or apartments.

Adult protective services and refugee assistance services were cut repeatedly. Other programs that experienced cuts, or elimination, included: programs to provide transportation assistance, home repairs funding, and job training.

Child care and PreK problems became more pronounced with Federal cuts, particularly after the recession. The Virginia Preschool Initiative provides state funds to schools and community-based


programs for at-risk four-year-olds unserved by the Federal Head Start program. During and after the recession, the state reduced these expenditures. More parents who had lost their job and couldn’t find a new employment reassumed care for their children at home. Quality improvement and child care and PreK teacher professionalization slowed.

In some parts of the state, faith-based, philanthropic and other community groups, such as Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, Church World Services, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, International Rescue Committee, and Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, increased their efforts to address some of these unmet needs. However, these organizations were often facing funding and operational challenges themselves.

During these challenging years, child and family services worked to improve their services, even as their programs funds and staff were reduced while needs grew. Human service providers automated much of their work to deal with staff cuts. Human service areas used integrated data and predictive analytics to target the best set of services from their dwindling pool of programs and funds. This information is integrated from other community services – particularly, social services, health care, and schools. But there were times when the information systems were not updated or reliable. Human service providers encouraged family self-sufficiency through home and community food production; trading time and services; and sharing 3D printing for making many of the things they need.

48 https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/ons/
Scenario 3: The Triumphant Commonwealth (Visionary)

The Macroenvironment - While national economic growth was 1 to 2% annually, interspersed with mild recessions, there were simultaneously major economic, social, and technological transformations in the 2020s. The economy shed 15% of jobs to automation, the rising sense of unfairness evolved to widespread support for equity and inclusion, and technology evolved to lower the cost of living and to give low-income families the opportunity to self- and co-produce much of their needs, such as energy.

Policies transformed in the areas of social services, health care, environmental policies, criminal justice, and others.

Approaching 2020, the U.S. economy did well, with low unemployment but job growth slowed. In Virginia jobs grew well in the late 2010s and unemployment was under 3.0%. In the 2020s job loss to automation increased, even as more labor shifted to the “gig” economy. Virginia increased the minimum wage beyond $15 an hour to a livable wage by the mid-2020s. This had the effect of incentivizing some businesses automate a year or two sooner than they would have otherwise, slightly speeding up job loss. For gig workers, the state put in place some pay protections, as well as some benefit mechanisms, e.g. short-term unemployment, retirement savings.

Given increasing structural unemployment across the country, income supports were restructured and extended. TANF and SNAP programs raised their eligibility limits, increased their benefits, and extended the length of time benefits could be received. Subsidies for housing, Medicaid, disability payments, and child care subsidies were maintained. Income support programs became more flexible in the ways that families and individuals could choose to spend the money, offering more dignity of choice towards empowerment. Financial literacy and wealth building became a focus for training for low-income families from schools, employers and social services.

Social services providers, including DSS, embraced innovation including pioneering new and impactful waiver programs to address and prevent issues related to substance use disorders and child protective services.

This brought positive impacts to Virginians, including helping more families move out of poverty, beyond the ALICE level of survival and into the level of stability, as well as allowing for greater entrepreneurship and new ways of contributing to local economies and communities. Local businesses were better supported. The state put in place some policies, e.g. rent control, to ensure the income support payments and living wages had their greatest impact for low-income families.

https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST5100000000000003?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true
Along with changing policies and economics, there were major changes in terms of helping Virginia embrace equity and heal from racial trauma. Virginians took control of the narrative around the state’s systemic racism, while celebrating human resiliency and embracing a more honest dialogue and equitable future. Persistent poverty, discrimination, and differences in opportunity came to be viewed as not only wrong, but as a barrier to shared prosperity, and people across racial and demographic lines demanded change.

Virginia helped create more wealth equity through connecting under-employed to new opportunities and developing more economic opportunities, whether through paid work (jobs or “gig work”), or other forms of contributing to the community. DSS enabled work for recipients of SNAP and TANF, including in positions that aided the community, such as delivering meals to children in summer months and recognizing raising children, caring for elders, and other volunteering. Virtual work and virtual training became common and helped connect the workforce across the state to training and opportunities throughout the state. This proved important across the state, particularly in rural areas that still lacked new business or employment opportunities.

Early education was improved, along with college, career, and contribution preparedness – for all Virginia residents. Other barriers to employment, such as lack of transportation and child care, were better addressed. Investing in housing environments and education in areas with high concentrations of poverty across rural and urban areas, and growing mixed income neighborhoods, helped foster stability and allow systemic changes and dramatic decreases in poverty.

Climate change had major implications across the nation, including unique and new challenges for Virginia. By 2030 sea level had risen nearly a foot. This brought eroded beaches, worsened coastal flooding, and increased salinity of some freshwater sources. Coastal ecosystems were disrupted. In some areas this was worsened due to sinking land. For agricultural workers, yields were challenged through higher heat, periodic droughts, severe storm and accompanying stream and river flooding. In the 2020s some prolonged droughts and periods of high heat were accompanied by wildfires that devastated some Virginia communities.

Climate change challenged and harmed many areas across the state. The James River flooding around Hurricane Gaston, was thought to be a one-in-500-year event. But these extreme events came several times in the 2020s across the state. In addition to the James River basin, the Roanoke River and the Dan River basins and the towns and cities along their edges had major flooding events. Overall, harmful impacts of climate change would have been disproportionately felt by older adults, low-income areas and communities of color. However, support for equity and inclusion influenced approaches to environmental policy as well as relief and mitigation efforts. As the effects of climate change grew, so did equity focused resilience and sustainability efforts.

Due to these state and local resilience efforts in the 2020s, the most vulnerable communities were better adapted and had adequate response and recovery plans in place to mitigate the worse impacts of the event itself and to recover more quickly from the disaster. This included, in some cases, relocation...
of extremely vulnerable populations from the areas with the highest risk. These communities were involved in the planning and execution of relocation.

In the 2010s there was a major shortage of affordable housing; many renters and owners were cost burdened. Across the state in 2017 there was a shortage of 140,000 affordable rental homes for very low-income renters. That year, for 100 very low-income renters in the state there were only 40 affordable housing units available.\(^{50}\) In 2015 50% of renters in the state paid more than 30% of their income on rent while 23% of owners paid more than 30% on their mortgage and utilities.\(^{51}\) The 2020s and 2030s saw affordable housing stock increased significantly, many low-income families were able to become homeowners.

The state did have public housing (in fact, some of the oldest in the nation was in Richmond), concentrated in the urban areas in Northern Virginia, the Richmond area, and Hampton Roads. During the 2020s after decreases in defense spending and federal tax increases, there was increased federal spending on housing. For public housing in Virginia this led both to new more attractive and livable multifamily units as well as remodeling or rebuilding older complexes – again into livable and at times mixed income neighborhoods. VDHA largely with federal funds, supported the financing of the construction of 5,000 to 6,000 affordable rental units a year, adding 90,000 by 2035 (after having financed 125,000 rental units in the state since its creation in 1972).

Housing choice voucher programs covered all areas of the state. VHDA had provided just under 10,000 in 2018.\(^{52}\) The number of vouchers available and their payment levels were increased in the 2020s. The legislature enabled cities and counties to require landlords to take these vouchers; to establish rent control for multiunit facilities; and to require affordable units in multifamily buildings and new subdivisions. Some local governments in NOVA, the Richmond area and Hampton Roads implemented these.

Around the state various mixes of approaches were tried in the 2020s to increase availability of affordable housing:

- Adjusting zoning to allow a higher number of unrelated individuals to live in the same home or to allow secondary living units to be built on the property;
- Encouraging sustainable, energy efficient, low cost construction of new units (including setting up “solar gardens” or installed solar;
- Using 3D printing or other sustainable construction costs);
- Regulating Airbnb and similar services to prevent homes being taken out of the affordable rental pool;

\(^{50}\) [https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/virginia](https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/virginia)

\(^{51}\) ALICE Virginia Report, page 67

\(^{52}\) [https://indd.adobe.com/view/08e75769-f342-4204-ad3d-b8dbf78b4139](https://indd.adobe.com/view/08e75769-f342-4204-ad3d-b8dbf78b4139)
• Building “tiny home” cluster subdivisions.

In many neighborhoods adding ADUs or allowing more people in the same home led to more traffic. While some neighbors objected, most welcomed the new neighbors (recognizing that all deserved affordable housing). Home values increased in most of these neighbors as they now included an income generating unit.

In Fairfax County where affordable housing was a major issue a County task force noted that by 2030 another 15,000 homes needed to be added that would be affordable to households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income ($70,300 a year for a family of four in the late 2010s). The County followed their recommendations, building 5,000 new affordable homes by 2030, increasing the real estate tax rate by a “Penny for Affordable Housing Fund”, and ensuring no net loss of “market affordable” rental apartments during the 2020s.

The state worked to encourage home ownership with multiple programs that would, for first time buyers, provide or contribute to their down payment and closing costs if they met the income threshold. VHDA successfully aided several thousand first time home buying families in getting their home each year in the 2020s.

Technology and sustainability efforts contributed to lowering the cost of living. Virginia increased its use of renewable energy production and in-home and in-community battery storage. Low cost solar energy production and storage was enabled by breakthroughs in solar panel efficiency, in alternatives to lithium for battery storage, in material advances that allowed needed electronic and other components to be manufactured from abundant raw materials. Most homes in the state, including public housing and rental units were solar powered by the late 2020s. Dominion Energy and other energy companies in the state functioned as utilities and facilitated access to low cost energy.

Drawing upon the state’s agricultural history, Virginia encouraged domestic food production which helped ensure access to healthy food, bring together community members, and raise awareness around nutrition and healthy living. Food production was enhanced in farming, urban agriculture, community gardening, and in-home food production. Aeroponics and other often low cost, high tech growing supported increased vegetable production. Cultured meat and meat substitutes provided access to sustainable sources of protein, in addition to traditional meat. Some of these supplemented nutritional needs, but many efforts served primarily to connect community members.

Beyond food, 3D printing allowed families to manufacture many of their needs. This 3D printing could be done in many places: across the Public Library system; community centers; and in neighborhood homes with printers shared by families in the community. 3D printing could produce home


components and even whole homes – by the mid-2020s 3D printing of energy efficient, low cost small homes was becoming increasingly common in rural and urban areas. Virginia was innovative and mindful about ensuring these technologies were scalable and adaptable across both rural and urban communities and low enough in cost to benefit vulnerable families. This paralleled the social recognition of what was expected to be accessible to all -- housing, food, health care, education, and essential information and technology.

**Social Services Overall** - Social services transformed and aided individuals and families to use and benefit from the changing economy, technology, and community. Social services joined with education, justice, and health care, to support individuals and families, to help them make the most of their resources (for many, the increased income supports plus any other money they made; their personal assets, and their community assets), and to be more self-sufficient (producing or co-producing some of their needs). Financial and wealth literacy training programs were provided through social services.

The need for social services remained but was reduced. Abuse and neglect of spouses, kids, and elders was greatly reduced. These reductions were due to greater economic stability, greater access to health care including substance use treatment and behavioral health care, and increased support programs for families, greater support for equity and inclusion, expanded income supports, removal of stigma for receiving such payments, and enhanced sense of self-worth and contribution.

Diseases of despair were reduced by giving all, particularly low-income, disadvantaged communities hope, some resources and the opportunity to create their own well-being. This included intentional workforce and life force development efforts to re-energize local communities. New streams of local economic development flowed through entrepreneurship communities and their multiplier effects. These were coupled with enhanced parenting and child care provider skills, quality education, support for sufficient broadband access in all communities, and other policies.

VDSS was successful in its mission of “people helping people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities.” Great strides were made toward achieving “a commonwealth in which individuals and families have access to adequate, affordable, high quality human/social services that enable them to be the best they can be.” This was aided through greater prevention efforts, customization and personalization of service delivery, and personalized coaching and mentoring of those confronting poverty or other adversities.

While reduced, barriers to thriving such as child abuse, physical and mental disabilities, and homelessness persisted through the 2020s. Human services addressed these more effectively, supported by information, analytics and technology for greater prevention and individual and community self-reliance. There was more prevention-focused work on healthy families and direct visitation programs, early identification of those at risk (without profiling) and enhanced use of technology to support persons with physical or intellectual disabilities. Human progress extended beyond survival and focused on how people can physically and emotionally thrive. Human services
moved beyond self-sufficiency to support this wellness and thriving. Health care access expanded (including Medicaid and Medicaid buy-in option) and moved towards prevention and wellness.

Internally, human services used predictive analytics to anticipate a family’s needs, optimize services for the family, identify and foster the most effective community partnerships, and, when needed, to triage among programs or clients if funding or services were being reduced. While some income supports, e.g. EITC, went directly to the individual or family, human services had greater flexibility in combining funds or coordinating services across siloed programs and optimizing the services an individual or family most needed and optimizing the outcomes.

Some human service tasks were automated (including the social workers/case manager’s analysis of available programs, client eligibility, and determining the most effective communication style and language to motivate the client). Human service workers specialize in providing human connection and were often supported, rather than replaced by, automation and technology tools.

Predictive analytics with data integrated from schools, health care, public safety, and social services provides analysis and forecasts for what capacities, skills (emotional and technical), and services each individual family member requires. The data system can anticipate what each person in the whole family needs for education or training and support them towards their fulfilling their capacity with work or contribution. Social service providers have become adept at enabling generative development – with the client doing most of the “generating” for positive outcomes.

**Jobs, Work and Workforce Development 3**

Job, work, and workforce development, as with the economy as a whole and many areas of state and federal policy, were transforming. The economy was shedding jobs as it became more automated and shifted others to gig work. Local manufacturing/3D printing gave people and communities the chance to create their own “stuff” from home equipment, to electronics, to whole homes and home components. While good paying jobs were sought after and Virginia worked to increase equity in access to good jobs and pay.

But the transformed income support services and structural unemployment changed the focus solely on paid “work” to recognize a range of efforts – raising kids, caring for elders, volunteering, as meaningful contributions, as meaningful work. And the ability to provide some of your family’s needs directly by food production or 3D printing, as well as trading time and services with your neighbors lowered the cost of living. These, along with paid work and careers were recognized as meaningful work.

Education and “workforce” development were redesigned. Virginia pioneered cradle to career curriculum. Each child was supported from an early age to be able to succeed in making a contribution, gaining personal meaning, and increasing personal and family self-sufficiency, through paid work, caring for children or elders, or volunteering in the community, as well as meeting some of your needs through self-producing or co-producing food and other “stuff”. Classic job and certification preparation, internships continued, aided by virtual reality and personalized learning that recognized
the student’s learning styles and preferences. Volunteering and contributing beyond paid work were also in the curriculum from an early stage. And financial and wealth literacy became an important part of this learning that could be applied to home purchasing, building a rainy-day fund, and other important decisions.

Workforce development became lifeforce development, teaching how to support yourself, family and community. And how to not only survive, but to thrive. The value shift happening nationally and in Virginia that included more support for equity and inclusion aided this expanding view, as well as acceptance of each person, as they are.

In rural Virginia – this expanded view was accompanied by their unique forms of enhanced self-reliance. Income support payments already went farther in most rural communities – and communities understood how to get those increased dollars circulating in the community to bring multipliers of local assets and wealth.

**Income Supports 3.**

In the 2020s income support programs changed. It became clear that with job loss to automation and other factors, a growing percentage of people would not be able to get paid work. Values were shifting, increasing support for equity and inclusion. As a result, income support programs were restructured, including raising the income levels for eligibility, expanding payment levels, and increasing the amount of time they could be received. The economy and the notion of self-reliance, personal meaning, and contribution were transformed.

Income supports empowered many by giving them some dignity of choice in improving their livelihoods. For some, this meant being able to afford a vehicle. For others the ability to consistently purchase healthy food. Across Virginia, networks of support emerged to help make income supports and other income most impactful by helping communities share resources, time and services (some used formal time banking systems and apps).

Financial and wealth literacy programs were provided to help families use their income most effectively and understand the wrap-around services they need.

Other assistance programs, including expanded Medicaid and access to health care, greater housing assistance and stock of affordable housing, discounted child care, and disability payments, all were continued or expanded. Financial and wealth literacy programs increased, as did efforts to prevent predatory lending.

However, financial supports alone did not alone address barriers to thriving. Additionally, strategies to empower the entire family helped address root causes of barriers to thriving for families. Income supports were changed to address the “welfare cliff”, meaning families were not penalized with fully losing benefits when they reached higher income levels from jobs or gig work. As noted, housing, expanded Medicaid, child care, and disability subsidies aided families. There were parallel regulations
put in place – for example, rent control to prevent landlords from raising rents to match income support payment increases.

“Abundance advances” lowered the cost of living. There are low cost renewable energy and 3D printing of home goods, electronics, and even small homes helped make living in Virginia more affordable and equitable. Abundance advances were developed consciously and with equity in mind and made to be usable for people of all backgrounds and lifestyles. For example, low cost solar and other renewable energy production and storage was installed in or around apartment complexes in the 2020s with savings passed on the renters, thanks to incentives and regulations aimed at landlords and energy companies acting as supportive utilities, or by housing authorities.

Additionally, food growing in both rural and urban environments increased. Some of this included technology such as aeroponics, hydroponics, and vertical agriculture. In some neighborhoods, community food production efforts led to the emergence of community leaders that help build well-being and implement evidenced best practices for food and nutrition security.

However, some food insecurity remained in the 2020s, as did homelessness, pockets of poverty, and child and elder abuse (albeit diminished).

As noted, financial and wealth literacy increased as an important life skill. Training in this began early in K-12, continued into community college and university training, and adult training. Social services, in implementing their whole family strategies, assess the degree of financial and wealth literacy and provide or facilitate access to the training needed. And social services increased their training for effective use of technologies and sharing that lower the cost of living and build wealth. And social services reinforced each family member’s increasing their own sense of personal meaning from their personal contributions – whether from paid work or volunteering.

**Child and Family Services 3**

Child and family services in Virginia include child welfare services, foster care and adoption services, child care assistance, day care, Head Start, community supports for children and families, domestic violence help, and abuse and neglect prevention and intervention programs.

The demand for these services was shaped by greater promotion of well-being for all Virginians, through strengthening families and providing benefits that help individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency.

Data integration across local agencies allowed better awareness of each child’s and family’s needs. By the 2020s the data sharing included other human service agencies, schools, and some health care providers. Privacy and discrimination protections enabled this data sharing. In Virginia, certain counties were leaders in this data sharing. After their success the state and other localities stepped up their sharing.
A major positive factor reducing the need for child services was greater family income stability, which helped lead to a reduction in family violence and child abuse, lower teen pregnancy rates and increased high school graduation rates. Successful expansion of low-cost housing options (from expanding and rebuilding public housing complexes into mixed income, attractive communities, enhanced Section 8 vouchers, requirements for affordable housing as part of any multiple family building or subdivision; tiny home subdivisions; 3D printed homes; expansion of ADUs55) and home ownership (expanded house down-payment savings plans) increased family stability.

Taking care of children or elders, relatives or otherwise, became a more recognized form of contribution and both formal and informal parenting and caregiving networks evolved in communities, often aided by technology.

More substance abuse treatment options and prevention efforts were in place that reduced addiction. The state viewed the problem as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice issue. Medical and behavioral treatment was available to all, aided by expanded Medicaid, Medicaid buy-in option, telehealth and virtual health care. Reduced substance abuse led to a decrease in demand for child welfare services.

In the 2020s, more Virginia families remained above the ALICE Threshold by the combination of better employment options, livable wages for jobs or sufficient earning from “gig work”, more consistent income support payments, and access to affordable housing and behavioral health care and technology that lowered the cost of living. This allowed families and individuals to address their basic needs and move up the “hierarchy of needs” to reach a place of thriving (aided by greater equity and inclusion in their communities).

Substance abuse and the need for foster care or kinship placement declined 30%, though it still remained. Kinship placements were preferred in these cases. State and federal payment levels for foster parents or kin taking children increased in the 2020s.

Whole family strategies, addressing needs across generations through co-creation, were common in the 2020s which linked the parents and/or grandparents, where relevant, in identifying needs and setting priorities (e.g. job training, housing assistance, behavioral health aimed at the parent, financial literacy, technology use training). Virginia’s Family and Children’s Trust Fund (FACT) program, which focuses on intergenerational violence including child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuses, received more contributions and funding and played a role in developing effective predictive analytics and prevention programs.

In the 2020s, child and family service resources - both human and financial- were delivered in a tailored, case specific manner. The predictive power that artificial intelligence programs provided social service workers also enabled far more effective case management and early interventions that

55 https://www.arlnow.com/2019/05/20/county-board-paves-way-for-more-accessary-dwellings-units/
helped reduce issues such as family violence. Health care and human services enhanced their partnerships across service deliverers, both public and private, including partnerships with employers.

Social services identified vulnerable communities and circumstances that prompt preventative actions and directed people towards the most appropriate services, without profiling or violating boundaries. These services were rigorously evaluated for outcomes, enabling both quality improvement and cost reduction throughout the 2020s.

Child care and PreK improved in important ways. Efforts such as Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) helped to expand PreK accessibility, and then the program was made universally available in early 2020s (with income-based payments). The impact of PreK on learning was enhanced over the decade by better supported child care providers, and the use of learning technology which was smartly designed to enhance, and not replace, human connection, and AI applied to the child care curriculum/child monitoring.

In the later 2020s, children’s medical records included their gene data and microbiome data, and these were linked to the unique development of each child and enabled child care providers to monitor child development and get ongoing assessments of what the child needs. The large child care companies and small local businesses in child care and Head Start, got powerful management tools to aid with attendance management, billing and payments, HR/benefits management, and recruiting.

Child care and PreK were affected by the recognition that child care is a public good like K-12 education and that children 0 to 4 needed education and child development as much as K-12 students. K-12 cost about $11,000 per year per student. In 2019, child care for 0-4 year olds in Virginia averaged more than $14,000 annually. By the mid 2020s Virginia ensured that all 4-year-olds were in pre-K and most 3-year-olds were in subsidized quality child. 0 to 2 care expanded with means tested co-pays that continued the practice of not including as income certain support payments.

The need for out of home child care services decreased as more family members were not working but had better income supports. Those parents and neighbors did more care for their children and co-op care. Families and co-op day care were aided by AI management as were child care businesses. This included integration of each child’s health care data and forecasts on how to optimize each child’s development.

The child care workforce crisis evolved during the 2020s. While Head Start teachers with a bachelor’s degree in the state averaged $33,932 (or about $15 an hour) in 2019, child care paid providers made about $10 an hour, often without benefits. Child care quality varied widely and there was frequent turnover among workers. The Virginia’s minimum wage rose to $15 by 2023 and continued to rise to be a living wage. This was applied to all full and part time jobs, including child care. While much


work, including some child care shifted to “gig work” this work also gained some pay protections and benefit mechanisms were put in place. All workers were affected and the price of child care rose proportionally. Federal and state subsidy levels increased proportionately. But for some families in with middle incomes (not fully subsidized and not affluent enough to cover the remaining costs), having one parent provide child care was an attractive option. There was an increase in home and co-op child care. This trend did not, however, come in contrast with supporting all adults in pursuing their defined pathways for meaning and contribution- including employment. Rather, more parents were better positioned to choose in in-home work or out-of-home work as it best suited their families’ needs.

At the other end of the age spectrum, while reduced, the need for adult services persisted through the 2020s and 2030s. More instances of adult mistreatment were identified through primary care screenings, which enabled prompt intervention, often preventing or lessening recurring mistreatment. Adult protective services focused on plans that enhance the threatened adult’s choices. Adult protective service providers and social workers were better supported, through greater technological and financial resources, to arrange for health, housing, social, and legal services to stop mistreatment or prevent further mistreatment58.

58 https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/as/aps.cgi
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