



## PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY SHELTERING EXERCISE 2015

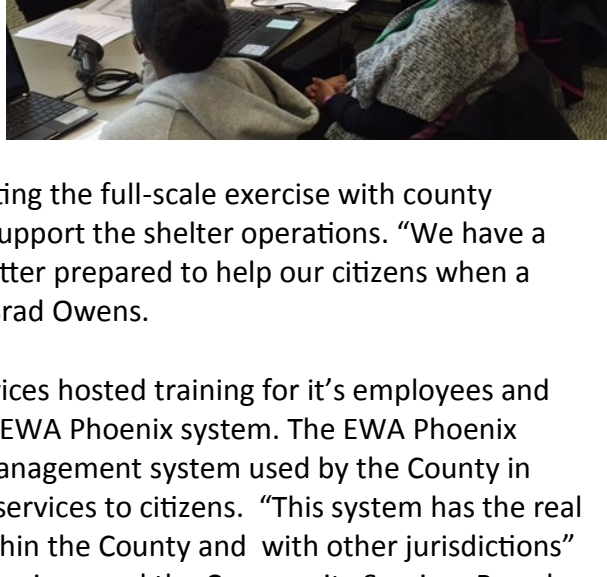


Whether it's a hurricane, tornado or snowstorm Prince George County is ready to serve its citizens. Prince George County employees conducted a full-scale exercise on setting up and managing shelters during a disaster.

"The County has had a plan for many years now that requires every county employee to play a role in protecting our citizens and restoring their way of life as quickly and efficiently as possible," said a statement released by Prince George Fire and EMS.

Prince George is responsible for protecting over 38,000 residents. The protection doesn't end when the snow stops or the wind quits blowing. Prince George County has many different plans that help citizens after the disaster has occurred. As county employees retire and new employees assume different roles and responsibilities, it is important for Prince George Fire and EMS to assess what its capabilities are as well as to identify what it can improve.

The Prince George County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator Percy Ashcraft have been extremely supportive of doing what it takes to protect the citizens of Prince George. Shelter Coordinator Shel Bolyard-Douglas routinely coordinates training for new employees on how to properly operate a shelter. Now the department is testing those processes to see how efficiently they work.

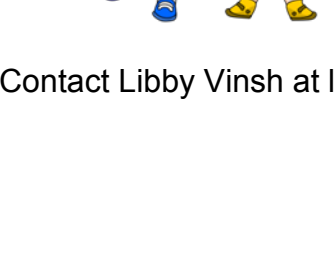


Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator

Donald Hunter was also instrumental in conducting the full-scale exercise with county employees, Red Cross and other agencies that support the shelter operations. "We have a great team and at the end of the day, we are better prepared to help our citizens when a disaster strikes," said Director of Fire and EMS Brad Owens.

In addition to the sheltering training, Social Services hosted training for it's employees and staff from the Crater Health District on the new EWA Phoenix system. The EWA Phoenix system will be the electronic registration and management system used by the County in emergencies requiring sheltering or supportive services to citizens. "This system has the real benefit of allowing us to coordinate services within the County and with other jurisdictions" said Bolyard-Douglas. Animal Services, Health Services, and the Community Services Board will all be able to document interactions in the shared program and coordinate the appropriate response for each emergency.

## SAVE THE DATE! April 9, 2016 TODDLER FAIR

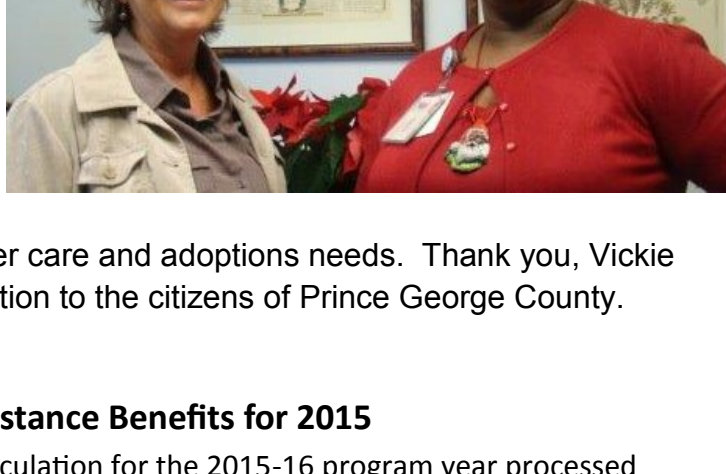


The Prince George Toddler Fair is coming soon. Please join us for a fun morning of activities that focus on children ages 0 to 5. Developmental, hearing, vision screenings will be available at no charge. The event will take place at Scott Park and the Appomattox Regional Library from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Want to be part of the planning team for the Fair?

Contact Libby Vinsh at [libby.vinsh@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:libby.vinsh@dss.virginia.gov) for more information.

## Employee Recognition

Two employees of the Prince George Department of Social Services were recently recognized at the annual Prince George Christmas Party for their 10 years of service to the county. Both employees, Vickie Clarke and Zina Gaines work as part of the service team. Vickie works primarily with citizens who are aged and disabled and Zina works with children and families with foster care and adoptions needs. Thank you, Vickie and Zina for your continued dedication to the citizens of Prince George County.

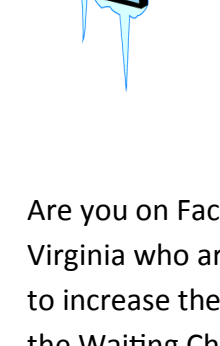


## Fuel Assistance Benefits for 2015

The annual Fuel Assistance benefit calculation for the 2015-16 program year processed successfully Thursday, December 10. Benefit amounts were calculated for all approved households. The results of the benefit determination/calculation are below:

- Number of approved households: 119,189 (last year 127,822)
- Total dollars allocated: \$45 million (last year \$45 million)
- Average household benefit: \$378 (last year \$352)

As included on the EAP implementation schedule, fuel credit authorizations will be mailed to regular vendors or released via secure file transfer to exchange vendors Friday/Monday, December 11/14. Client notices and direct pay checks are scheduled to be mailed Friday, December 18.



## #WaitingChildWednesdays

Are you on Facebook or Twitter? Then you can help us find forever families for children in Virginia who are currently awaiting adoption! Each Wednesday, you can support VDSS efforts to increase the exposure of children waiting for adoption by simply "liking" or "retweeting" the Waiting Child Wednesday post. This will greatly increase the chances of more families and individuals becoming interested in fostering and adoption! If you haven't already done so, be sure to Like VDSS on Facebook and follow them on Twitter!



## Quick Facts

### The Foster to Adopt Process

#### Step 1: Initial Contact

When you call 1-800-DO-ADOPT, the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia, you have taken the first step in the foster care and adoption process. After a few general questions, you may be referred to a local department of social services, or to a private child placing agency for more information.

#### Step 2: Orientation

You will be invited to a meeting to learn more about the types of foster care youth waiting for foster and adoptive families and about the foster care and adoption process. This may be a group meeting with other families who are interested in foster care and adoption, or may be an individual meeting with the agency Family Services worker. Feel free to ask questions. This is a time for you to get some of your questions answered.

#### Step 3: Training

A training curriculum which consists of 28 to 30 hours of instruction is required of every individual interested in becoming a foster to adopt parent. Several consecutive weeks of training are offered with Family Services workers and trained foster/adoptive parents as instructors. Some agencies utilize panels of former foster children, adoptive and/or foster parents to provide additional insight of parenting children from the foster care system. Also, other specialists such as therapists, mental and physical health clinicians, etc. offer information during the training.

#### Step 4: Home Study (Mutual Family Assessment)

During the home study, you will talk about your reasons for wanting to foster to adopt and the types of child your family can best parent. The Family Services worker will talk about the special demands of parenting a foster care child. All members of your family including your adult children may be involved.

The home study will be completed through a series of meetings-individual or group. At the conclusion of the home study, you and the Family Service worker will decide whether you are ready to foster to adopt and what type of child you can best parent.

#### Step 5: Forms

Foster care youth who have had termination of parental rights and exhausted appeals are legally free for adoption. Some agencies will share the application at the beginning of the training and others will offer it prior to the foster care youth being placed for adoption. Adoption forms vary from agency to agency. The forms may require responses to personal questions. Complete it, sign it, and return it to the agency. The Family Services worker will explain during the home study how the information you provided will help to determine the kind of child that will fit best in your family.

#### Remember:

The Family Service worker is not looking for families without problems. The worker is looking for families who have successfully coped with life experiences.

#### Step 6: Selection

The Family Services worker may show you pictures of available children and will tell you about each child. There are also listings of Virginia's waiting children available on <http://adoptuskids.org/states/va/browse.aspx>. When you find a child you are interested in, together, you and the child's agency will consider whether your family may be right for this child.

Deciding against adopting a particular child will not prevent you from being considered for other children.

#### Step 7: Placement

The placement process starts with visits between the child and the family. The number of visits before actual placement depends on the child's needs and ability in being able to move into a new situation. When the Family Services worker feels that the child is ready to transition to a new family and that the family is ready to receive the child, arrangements should be made in collaboration with the former foster home for placement in the adoptive home, as this is best practice.

#### Step 8: Supervision (Post Placement)

After the child is placed in your home, the Family Services worker will visit you at least three times within 90 days. The visits are to help you and the child adjust to this new situation. It helps you to assume your new role as parents.

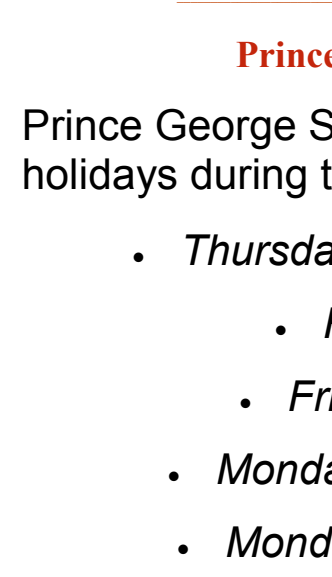
This is the time to talk with the worker about any concerns you may have.

Initial adjustment concerns are to be expected. Talk about them early on: waiting too long may cause problems later. The Virginia law requires the child to live in your home a minimum of six months and be visited at least three times or more, before the adoption can be finalized.

#### Step 9: Legal Procedures & Finalization

To finalize the adoption, it is best to get an attorney with adoption experience. The attorney will file a petition for adoption with the court. The court will request a report from the agency. The agency sends the report and the judge enters the final order of adoption.

## Prince George Citizens Make Christmas Special



The time between Thanksgiving and Christmas tends to be a very busy time in most Social Services agencies. Calls come in from families and individuals requesting help for the holidays. Prince George was blessed this year to have churches, businesses, individuals, and other county departments step up to offer their help and support for families and our seniors.

**Thank you for all the generous donations !**

## Community training in Child Care

- ◊ February 6, 2016—Friendship Skills & Inclusion (Prince George Library)
- ◊ March 5, 2016—Children's Nutrition & Exercise (Hopewell Library)
- ◊ April 7, 2016—Business Practice (Hopewell Library)

For information about child care training opportunities, please contact Mary Bell, Case Manager at 862-4273

**To apply for any benefits program : SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, or Energy Assistance :**

**[WWW.COMMONHELP.VIRGINIA.GOV](http://WWW.COMMONHELP.VIRGINIA.GOV)**

## Prince George Social Services Office Closings:

Prince George Social Services will be closed for the following holidays during the next quarter:

- Thursday & Friday, December 24-25th— Christmas
- Friday, January 1— New Year's Day
- Friday, January 15— Lee— Jackson Day
- Monday, January 18, Martin— Luther King Day
- Monday, February 15— Washington's Birthday



**From Our Home to Yours:**

**May Your Holidays be Safe**

**and**

**Full of Love & Laughter,**

**The staff of Prince George County**

**Department of Social Services**

