CommonHelp Reference Guide for Community Partners

Fast Facts

- ✓ CommonHelp is a self-service, online application system which allows customers to:
  - ► Screen for potential eligibility
  - ► Apply online
  - ► Renew existing benefits
  - ► Report changes
  - ► Check benefits
- ✓ Using CommonHelp, a citizen will be able to submit a single application to apply for assistance for multiple programs
- ✓ CommonHelp is private and confidential
  - ✓ Applicant will need to create a user ID and password
- ✓ Programs available through CommonHelp:
  - ► Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  - ► Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP: formerly known as food stamps)
  - ► Medical Assistance (MA)
  - ► Energy Assistance (EA): (crisis, cooling and fuel)
  - ► Child Care Assistance

Screening for Potential Eligibility

- ✓ Click the "Am I Eligible?" button on the CommonHelp home page
  - ► Answer short questions
  - ► Results will display a list of programs for which the customer may or may not be eligible
- ✓ Screening takes about 15 minutes to complete
- ✓ Information used in screening is **not** stored
- ✓ Screening results may not be used to substitute as an application

Applying for Benefits

- ✓ Typically takes less than one hour

- ✓ May save and exit during application process and return at a later time (within 60 days of last access)

- ✓ Applications may be submitted after entering Name, Address, and electronic signature
  - ► However, the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) will need complete information in order to process the application. Encourage the customer to complete as much of the application as possible.

- ✓ The applicant is encouraged to have available:

  - ► Income from all sources
  - ► Social Security numbers and birth dates for all household members
  - ► Current or recent health insurance information
  - ► Housing and utility expense information
  - ► Dependent care information
  - ► Resource information, such as bank accounts, vehicles, property, life insurance, etc.

- ✓ The customer may be required to complete an interview with the LDSS

  - ► If an interview is required, the local agency will make contact with the customer regarding the details of the interview. Needed verifications will be requested at that time
  - ► If an interview is not required , the local agency will make contact with the customer regarding the needed verifications
  - ► Current processing times will apply

Submitting Applications

- ✓ Applicant must electronically sign and submit the application
- ✓ Anyone assisting the customer will not sign the application
- ✓ CommonHelp applications may not be printed and signed and given to the LDSS
  - ► If the customer wants to apply using a paper application, they may access the following link to print an application   (http://www.dss.virginia.gov/form)
- ✓ After submission, a Portable Document Format (PDF) version of the application may be printed.
- ✓ At this time, the customer is not able to scan and submit verifications with the electronic application