

DRAFT

**Poverty Committee Minutes
Gloucester Department of Social Services**

December 12, 2007

Attendees

Members

Trudy Brisendine, Chairman

Peppy Linden

Maggi Luca

Nettie Simon-Owens

Jim Schuyler

Staff

Anthony Conyers

Margaret Schultze

Karin Clark

Marianne McGhee

Erik Beecroft

Call to Order

The Poverty Committee was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairperson Trudy Brisendine.

Minutes

MOTION MADE by Ms. Luca and seconded by Mr. Schuyler to approve the October 2007 minutes as presented. Motion carried with all in favor.

Podcast Update

Members listened to one of a series of podcasts on EITC, which featured an interview with a volunteer preparer. Other podcasts in this series will address financial literacy, how EITC benefits the economy, the IRS perspective, and recruitment of volunteers. In addition, it is hoped that an EITC recipient will also be interviewed. The goal is to get all interviews completed before the end of the year, followed by production and sending to Voices of Poverty in a batch. VOP will be asked to air the series early on in the tax season. VOP will have flexibility to edit the podcasts to fit their time/content needs. Marianne indicated that the VOP site will be less detailed regarding process than VDSS' podcast site. Ms. Linden recommended having a non-Poverty Committee member review the podcasts prior to broadcasting. Members commented on the professionalism of the podcast, and commended Marianne McGhee and her staff for an excellent product.

Marianne listed the news organizations who agreed to pick up the podcasts. These include but are not limited to the VA Pilot and Free Lance Star. Discussion ensued regarding other venues for distributing the podcasts, in addition to VOP. There was agreement that it is not enough to just distribute brochures, but that potentially eligible

recipients need details, such as when/where to go for assistance and what documentation to bring. Members suggested reaching out to the following:

- Employers (possibly via Chambers of Commerce) regarding on-site intake;
- Colleges and universities, who are good resources for volunteers;
- National Public Radio, a great source for recruiting volunteers;
- Public access channels;
- Virginia Education Association -Ms. Simon-Owens offered to help get the message via an effort underway in her district involving 22 school divisions; and
- VML, VACO, Head Start, Title I organizations and child care centers.

Mr. Schuyler reminded members that VACAP is part of a non-profit news organization. He and Marianne will talk about making the podcasts available to that organization.

Members noted that the key to success is connecting potential eligible EITC recipients to resources in their own localities. Commissioner Conyers suggested that 2-1-1 Virginia would be a great way to make local connections.

Marianne asked members for their patience and flexibility, as her staff works on the podcast project. Ms. Linden commented that the project will have a major impact on poverty awareness in Virginia.

Marianne asked whether it is possible for community colleges to give credits to volunteers who take the EITC preparation course. Mr. Schuyler recommended that the community colleges might be a good source for next year.

Erik Beecroft presented statistics regarding 2006 EITC usage in Virginia, based on information that was shared between VDSS and the Department of Taxation. One out of three EITC recipients in 2006 was a VDSS client. 76,000 individuals were eligible for EITC, but did not claim. Eighty-three percent of those individuals did not file tax returns, having not earned enough to file. Members commented that, given Erik's data, focus should be on the local departments of social services. It was again acknowledged that any information that goes to potential recipients should include locality-specific details. If VDSS were to do a mass mailing, the information would be general and clients would have to be directed to call their local departments. This, in turn, might result in the local departments receiving more calls than they can handle. Commissioner Conyers was asked to use this data to reach out to local departments, requesting that they contact their clients regarding the EITC.

Ms. Brisendine asked members if they would like to get together again in January to address this issue. Members agreed they would.

EITC Update

Mr. Schuyler made members aware of a new report issued by The Commonwealth Institute which presents data on the working poor. The report is available for downloading at <http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org/>.

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Mr. Schuyler also told members about the *Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity* website (<http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org/>). *Spotlight* has invited the presidential candidates to answer questions concerning poverty and economic opportunity.

Staff Appreciation

Ms. McGhee and her team; Erik Beecroft, and Karin Clark were commended for their work on behalf of the committee. Commendations were extended to Marianne's two staff members, Carla Harris and James Applebach, for their work on the podcast project.

Adjournment

The committee meeting adjourned at 10:00.