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**Memorandum**

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To: Derek Wu

From: Dylan Craig

Date Created: 6/11/2024

Last Updated: 6/17/2024

Subject: CommonHelp 2005-2012

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**Executive Summary:**

*Insert here\*\**

**Notes:**

* Rollout of Commonhelp between 2003-2006 (first 3 phases)
  + Overlap between CommonHelp and VaCMS (Virginia Case Management System)
    - VaCMS is a tool used by caseworkers to manage and administer various social services programs in Virginia
  + [Deloitte was originally brought](https://www.govtech.com/health/virginia-launches-online-public-assistance-system.html) on by VDSS to build a website so that residents could apply online for child-care benefits
    - *Maps onto Phase 1 based on email communications*
  + Eligibility Screening Tool available [August 29, 2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20040829090716/http://dssiad.dss.state.va.us/EligibilityScreening/) at the latest
    - *I’m guessing this is what CommonHelp originally was*
    - Screening service for several social assistance programs
      * *Includes more than ChildCare, so this is not the earliest iteration of this online tool?*
    - [October 7th, 2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20121007120116/https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/index.cgi) is when CommonHelp seems to replace this Eligibility Screening Tool
* Connection between 2012/2013 launch of CommonHelp and streamlining of application process for MAGI Medicaid
  + [Affordable Care Act](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/eligibility/index.html) established a new methodology for determining eligibility for Medicaid, based on Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI)
    - Effective January 1, 2014
      * *CommonHelp seems to have launched in October 2012, well enough in advance of the effective date*
        + Virginia did an [early MAGI implementation](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/83436) in late 2013
  + [In 2009, percentage of errors](https://www.govtech.com/health/virginia-launches-online-public-assistance-system.html) on a Medicaid eligibility application was 16 percent
  + Between [March 21, 2015](https://web.archive.org/web/20150321184735/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/) and [June 1, 2015](https://web.archive.org/web/20150601123017/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/) the CommonHelp site was updated to include a separate door for Health Care Only applications
    - *Unable to go more in depth on the earlier*

Process:

* Revisited Prior CommonHelp Memo
  + *Not super useful, largely reaffirms 2012 launch date, nothing prior to 2012*
* Checked Virginia Budget bills
  + [Total development of CommonHelp](https://www.govtech.com/health/virginia-launches-online-public-assistance-system.html) was at one point $10,779,739
    - *Can’t find article date*
    - *Can’t find CommonHelp figures in Virginia Budget Bills from 2003-2005*
* Search Terms
  + “MAGI” “CommonHelp”
    - Nothing really talking about these two in tandem
  + “MAGI” “Virginia”
    - [Virginia Early MAGI Implementation](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/83436) approved 9/30/13, effective 10/1/2013, and expired 12/31/2013
      * *CommonHelp site posted at the latest in 2012*
  + “CommonHelp”
    - Used Google Search tools to filter for only 2003-2007
      * *Only results in sites that are continuously updated (common VDSS sites). Can use WayBack Machine on these sites to find first reference of CommonHelp or to track changes in online forms that seem to be what is referred to as “CommonHelp”*
  + “ADAPT” “Virginia” “TANF”
    - “*ADAPT” is an Application/Benefit Delivery Automation Project system*
      * *Automates the processes involving the determination of eligibility for SNAP, TANF, etc.*
    - *No real mentions on publicly available sources, likely because this is not a customer facing product I’m assuming*
* Social Media Check
  + No mention of CommonHelp on then Twitter from 2006 to 2010
  + [First mentions are of CommonHelp “launching” in 2012](https://x.com/search?q=CommonHelp+until%3A2013-12-31+since%3A2006-01-01&src=typed_query)
* Archive.today
  + Another waybackmachine type site
    - *Oldest screenshot is 2015 so not very useful*
* Wayback Machine
  + [VA TANF](https://wayback-api.archive.org/web/20240000000000*/https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/index.cgi)
    - [*In 2006 there was an online screening tool*](https://web.archive.org/web/20060924041835/http://dssiad.dss.state.va.us/EligibilityScreening/) *which looks functionally a lot like CommonHelp, but you had to still fill out an application for benefits which seemed to be a pdf*
    - [*October 7th, 2012*](https://web.archive.org/web/20121007120116/https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/index.cgi) *is the first screenshot of this website that mentions CommonHelp and seems to replace the previous online screening tool*
* [County News Release on CommonHelp](https://www.sussexcountyva.gov/news/article/august/23/2013/news-release%3A-sussex-county-department-of-social-services-)
  + Dated August 23, 2013
  + Announcement by Governor Bob McDonnell

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Outline of Communications with DSS

* *What was the system for processing benefit applications before CommonHelp?*
  + Paper applications, via the local agency, fax, mail or email (CoverVA)
  + Information entered into ADAPT which then automates the eligibility determination process
* *Did the application methods before CommonHelp (e.g., office visits) remain available after its launch?*
  + Yes
* *Which benefit programs were included in CommonHelp at its launch, and were additional programs added later? If so, which ones and when?*
  + Phase 1 - Child Care was the first program in CommonHelp around 2003 this was because CC was the first program in VaCMS.
  + Phase 2 - included Screening and New Applications for Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and EAP. This occurred around 2005.
  + Phase 3 included Reporting Changes, Renewal/Recertification around 2006.
  + Phase 4 - included a separate door for Medicaid applications (MAGI) around 2013
  + Phase 5 - Uploading Documents in CH around 2015
* *Was CommonHelp launched statewide or initially in specific counties? Was the rollout staggered, and was it piloted in certain locations or for specific individuals?*
  + Launched statewide
* *Does CommonHelp handle only initial applications, or does it also manage recertifications?*
  + Initial applications, reapplications, recertifications, report changes, retrieve notices, upload documents
* *How did CommonHelp change the assignment of applications to caseworkers and their evaluation process?*
  + Established integrity in application receipt, streamlined the process, and prepopulated case management systems with CommonHelp data. Workers only update or add information from interviews or other sources.
* 2012/2013 launch of CommonHelp
  + Separated the door the users could enter for MAGI Medicaid
  + Prior to that, had to go through same door as other social assistance programs (SNAP, TANF, Medicaid)
  + [Launch of No Wrong Door for Medicaid](https://www.nowrongdoor.virginia.gov/faq.htm)
    - Different providers serving the same person can securely share data using CRIA (Communication, Referral, Information, and Assistance)

**CommonHelp Timeline:**

*\*\* Dates are largely based on screenshots from the Wayback Machine*

* [5/31/2001](https://web.archive.org/web/20010531131910/http://www.dss.state.va.us/benefit/benefit_form.html)
  + PDF “Request for Assistance” available including all programs below:
    - TANF
    - Medicaid
    - State/Local Hospitalization
    - Food Stamps
    - General Relief
    - Auxiliary Grants
    - Refugee Resettlement Program
    - Emergency Assistance
  + Separate Energy Assistance Application
  + Separate Application for Medical Assistance for SSI Recipients
  + Separate Application for Medicaid for Medically Indigent Families and Children
  + Other change/redetermination/appeal request forms
* [11/20/2002](https://web.archive.org/web/20021120213401/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/benefit/index.html)
  + VDSS “Programs & Services for Financial Assistance” webpage features an “Am I Eligible?” link where one can check their eligibility for assistance
    - Unfortunately, clicking this link jumps the archive up to 8/29/2004
* [12/10/2002](https://web.archive.org/web/20021210222213/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/family/childcare.html)
  + VDSS Child Care Website shows no mention of an online eligibility or application tool
    - Other programs like Food Stamps hadn’t shown a link either at this point so Child Care might still have been offered as eligible for online screening
* [02/07/2003](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://web.archive.org/web/20030207161133/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/benefit/foodstamp.html&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1718391083002345&usg=AOvVaw2D3gIo7jD362Wr6hDY82Db)
  + “Am I Eligible” link appears on the specific page for Food Stamps
* [04/11/2003](https://web.archive.org/web/20030810145511/http://www.dss.state.va.us/family/childcare.html)
  + “Am I Eligible?” link appears on the specific page for Child Care
* [04/17/2003](https://web.archive.org/web/20030417144151/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/benefit/benefit_form.html)
  + Application for Benefits PDF for following programs
    - Food Stamps
    - TANF
    - Medicaid
    - General Relief
    - Emergency Assistance
    - State and Local Hospitalization
    - Auxiliary Grants
    - Refugee Resettlement Program
* [02/16/2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20040216162045/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/benefit/benefit_form.html)
  + Energy Assistance Application broken up into following
    - Application for Crisis Assistance
    - Application for Fuel Assistance
* [06/30/2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20040701021057/http://www.dss.state.va.us:80/benefit/benefit_form.html)
  + Application for Cooling Assistance added
* [08/29/2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20040829090716/http://dssiad.dss.state.va.us/EligibilityScreening/)
  + “Am I Eligible for Assistance?” tool for following programs
    - Children’s Health Insurance
    - Child Care
    - Energy Assistance
    - Food Stamps
    - Medicaid for Medicare Part A Beneficiaries
    - Medicaid for Pregnant Women
    - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
    - Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)
* [10/11/2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20041011051648/https://www.dss.virginia.gov/)
  + Link to Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) added
    - Benefits screened for include
      * Medicare
      * Social Security Disability
      * Social Security Retirement
      * Social Security Survivors
      * Special Veterans
      * Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
    - This appears to be a federal initiative by the SSA
* [10/24/2004](https://web.archive.org/web/20041024203507/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/form/pdf/famis_1.pdf)
  + Children’s Health Insurance (FAMIS) PDF Application available
    - Not sure where this was linked from specifically
* [04/30/2005](https://web.archive.org/web/20050430110225/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/vnan/index.html)
  + Online application (The Virginia Food Connection) allows Virginia residents to apply for multiple benefits from the following programs
    - Food Stamps
    - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
    - The Emergency Food Assistance Program
* [03/27/2006](https://web.archive.org/web/20060327025343/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/form/)
  + Energy Assistance - Weatherization pdf application added
* [06/14/2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20120614055641/https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/assistance.cgi)
  + Child Care Assistance still does not show an online application
    - Rather a “Child Care Service Application and Redetermination Form” must be submitted to the local department of social services
* [8/26/2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20120826121414/http://www.dss.virginia.gov:80/benefit/ea/index.cgi)
  + Option to screen for eligibility and/or apply online for Energy Assistance
    - Links to CommonHelp Website
* [09/16/2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20120916031316/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/index.cgi)
  + Option to screen for eligibility and/or apply online for TANF
    - Links to CommonHelp website
* [9/26/2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20120926161155/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/vnan/index.html)
  + SNAP removed permanently from The Virginia Food Connection
* [11/6/2012](https://web.archive.org/web/20121203163618/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/)
  + First saved archive of CommonHelp
    - Likely was posted at least by 8/26/2012
  + Included following programs for single application:
    - TANF
    - Child Care Services
    - Energy Assistance
    - SNAP
    - Medical Assistance
      * Aged, Blind or Disabled
      * Children’s Health Insurance (FAMIS/FAMIS Plus)
      * Medicare Part D Costs
      * Pregnant Women
      * Savings Program (Medicaid for Medicare Beneficiaries)
* [6/2/2013](https://web.archive.org/web/20130602200712/http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/vnan/index.html)
  + The Virginia Food Connection site no longer available
    - Likely replaced by CommonHelp entirely
* [5/7/2015](https://web.archive.org/web/20150507134722/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/)
  + Separate “door” for health care coverage applications on CommonHelp available
* [07/14/2016](https://web.archive.org/web/20160714132503/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/)
  + Added Auxiliary Grant to CommonHelp website
    - Doesn’t look like this is added to the Application based on “New to Commonhelp” link
* [02/02/2024](https://web.archive.org/web/20240207222238/https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/)
  + Added Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP) to CommonHelp website
    - Doesn’t look like this is added to the Application based on “New to Commonhelp” link

**Questions for Meeting (6/18)**

* In November of 2002, on the VDSS’ “Programs & Services for Financial Assistance” webpage, there was a link titled “Am I eligible?” where I assume potential applicants could screen themselves for eligibility
  + Was this eligibility screening the first iteration of “CommonHelp”?
    - It would go on to last until around September of 2012, when social assistance webpages would then redirect to CommonHelp instead
  + Is there some documentation of this eligibility screening tool being only available for Child Care at this time? Phase one suggests that this online screening tool initially existed only for Child Care but it appeared on the main site for “Programs & Services for Financial Assistance”
    - It only appears on the Child Care page specifically in April of 2003 at the latest, when it had already appeared on the Food Stamps page
* Phase 2, where programs like Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, etc. were added was said to occur around 2005 but the “Am I Eligible?” link appeared on the Food Stamps webpage as early as February of 2003
  + Is it possible that Phase 2 actually started in early 2003?
* Phase 2 was also suggested to include not just eligibility screening but online applications as well
  + My experience going through the archived versions of the site suggests that actual online applications, with the exception of a separate online application for some food assistance programs, did not occur until the launch of CommonHelp in 2012
    - Rather, below the eligibility screening tool, potential applicants were advised to fill out a form and deliver it to their local department of social services
    - Did online applications actually exist somewhere from 2005 to 2012?
* Phase 3, where “Reporting Changes, Renewal/Recertification” was added around 2006 is something I can just not find
  + I can only find the eligibility screening tool, an online application titled “The Virginia Food Connection”, and a separate eligibility screening tool for Social Security and Medicare programs titled “BEST”
  + I do see options for checking benefits, reporting changes, and renewing benefits on the CommonHelp Website once it launched in 2012
* An online application for Food Stamps, WIC, and the Emergency Food Assistance Program titled “The Virginia Food Connection” was launched at the latest in October 2006
  + Was this part of CommonHelp, or a separate initiative entirely?
* Phase 4 describes a separate door for Medicaid Applications (MAGI) launching around 2013 on the CommonHelp website
  + This separate door for Health Care Only applications appeared around May of 2015
  + The ACA MAGI provision itself only went into effect on January 1st, 2014 and was tested by Virginia from September 2013 to the end of that year
  + Is there documentation that this separate door existed somewhere in the application process in 2013?
* It’s difficult to piece together a great timeline of when PDF’s were available online for social assistance programs. They may appear on the “Forms and Assistance” webpage, on the “Financial Assistance” webpage, or on another page entirely
* Unable to verify Phase 5 which allowed documents to be uploaded to CommonHelp