Virginia Department of Health – Progress Report
Addressing the Impact of an Aging Population

Section 2.1-5510 of the *Code of Virginia* requires each state agency to report annually to the Virginia Department for the Aging concerning its progress for addressing the impact of an aging population. The VDH strategic plan clearly recognizes the aging of Virginia's population as one of the key issues facing the agency now, and in the years ahead. The aging of the population has significant implications for a wide range of VDH service areas, including chronic disease prevention and health promotion, injury prevention, immunization, regulation of health care facilities, and emergency medical services. During FY2007, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) provided direct preventive care services to approximately 24,000 Virginians age 65 or older. In addition, VDH provided population based public health services to many additional elderly Virginians across the Commonwealth.

As Virginia's population ages, and encompasses an increasing percentage of the total population, VDH programs and services will likely be affected in a variety of ways. For example, there will be a growing demand for chronic disease management, long term care services, various types of acute care and rehabilitation services, and emergency medical services. There could also be increased demand for services such as breast and cervical cancer screening, and assistance with obtaining necessary prescription medications. In order to effectively address these demands, VDH will need to respond across a number of dimensions, including direct service delivery, regulatory and enforcement activities, health and medical facilities planning, and emergency preparedness and response.

Three of Virginia's 10 key agency performance measures pertain directly to public health services provided on behalf of the elderly:

- Pressure ulcer rate of residents of long term care facilities,
- Influenza immunization rates in adults 65 years of age and older, and
- Pneumococcal immunization rates in adults 65 years of age and older.

Pressure Ulcers. During FY 2007, the pressure ulcer rate was 10.03 percent. This represented some progress relative to the FY 2005 baseline of 10.5 percent, but did not reach the FY 2007 target of below 10 percent. VDH continues to work in close collaboration with a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders in order to develop and implement new strategies in order to reach this target by the end of FY 2009.

The VDH Office of Licensure and Certification (OLC) is an active member of the Virginia Pressure Ulcer Resource Team (VPURT). VPURT is an organization composed of health care professionals, doctors, nurses, aides, administrators and representatives from state agencies, professional organizations and health care manufacturers dedicated to decreasing the incidence of pressure ulcers in Virginia. The OLC assists VPURT via

data collection and analysis. The OLC participated in the VPURT Summit for leaders of the long term care health delivery system in November 2006.

In addition, the OLC collaborates with the Virginia Health Quality Center, which is the contracted Quality Improvement Organization for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, via joint classroom and WebEx training for long term care providers. The objective of this collaboration is to find examples of facilities which have lower pressure rates and determine how they are achieving these results.

The OLC is also a member of the Department of Medical Assistance Services Quality Improvement task group that is charged with finding the most effective way to use long term care (LTC) civil monetary fine monies to improve the quality of life and care for LTC residents. It may be beneficial to use these funds to educate facilities about procedures to utilize to reduce the rates of pressure ulcers.

Influenza and pneumococcal immunization. The influenza immunization rate for adults 65 years of age and older in FY 2007 was 69.1 percent. This represented modest progress relative to the FY 2006 baseline of 66.8 percent. The target is 80 percent which has to be achieved by the end of FY 2009. The pneumococcal immunization rate of adults 65 years of age and older in FY 2007 was 66.8 percent, representing minimal progress relative to the FY 2006 baseline of 66.5 percent. The target to be reached by the end of FY 2009 is 80 percent.

VDH continues to develop and implement a number of different strategies in order to reach these targets. These include:

- Partnership with the American Lung Association of Virginia on a media campaign for the public focused on flu and pneumococcal vaccine recommendations,

- Flu Finder Web site for health care providers to enter flu clinic times and for the public to locate vaccination sites,

- Provision of flu vaccine to free clinics statewide for administration to medically indigent clients at no cost, and

- Encouraging outpatient facilities, pharmacies, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and acute care facilities to implement standing orders programs for flu and pneumococcal vaccination.

The VDH Office of Family Health Services administers several programs to promote and protect the health of elderly Virginians. For example, the Division for Injury and Violence Prevention manages a program to prevent domestic abuse and includes elder abuse. The Division also administers two programs stressing fall prevention and fire safety, including the provision of smoke alarms for individuals that meet financial eligibility requirements.

The VDH Division of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control oversees programs for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, arthritis and the recognition of the signs of a stroke. The first two, although not specifically for the elderly, include modules for seniors and address their specific problems in coping with these diseases. There are also programs addressing obesity, including education as to how weight reduction can ameliorate their disease symptoms and even cause certain types of diabetes to go into remission. Arthritis is a major cause of morbidity and disability in Virginia, particularly among the elderly. The VDH arthritis program has developed and implemented a State Plan for lessening the impact of arthritis on its citizens, educating people on both preventing or prolonging the onset of the disease. The program also promotes exercise and weight loss regimens to alleviate aggravation for those already afflicted, in order to increase their quality of life.

Finally, the VDH Office of Family Health Services manages programs for senior women's health issues. Osteoporosis prevention is one such educational program. The Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides mammograms and Pap smears (as well as appropriate follow-up and referrals) for the medically underserved/uninsured women aged 40 and above, with greater than fifty per cent of the rationed appointments reserved for those over 50. Virginia has reached and continues to exceed the Healthy People 2010 goal for this particular indicator.