



Child Welfare Program Continuum

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QUICK GUIDE

Child Protective Services

- Assists families who are unable to safely care for their children. Services encompasses the identification, assessment, investigation, and treatment of abused or neglected children.

Prevention Services

- Services designed to strengthen families and prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect. Examples include counselling, food assistance, and parenting education.

Foster Care

- Children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting that is able to meet the child's needs. Services address the issues that led to the child's removal in order to return the child home as quickly as possible or achieve permanency timely.

Foster Care and Older Youth

- Programs for older foster youth prepare the youth for a successful transition to adulthood.

Foster and Adoptive Family Recruitment

- Foster parents must be at least 18 years old, must have the time and energy to give to a child, and must meet all approval requirements.

Adoption

- Services provided include adoption assistance, placement supervision, post adoption support, birth family searches, case management, and support groups for adoptive families.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

Virginia Children's Services Practice Model



The Virginia Children's Services System Practice Model sets forth a vision for the services that are delivered by all child serving agencies across the Commonwealth, especially the Departments of Social Services, Juvenile Justice, Education, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Office of Children's Services. The practice model is central to our decision making; present in all of our meetings; and in every interaction that we have with a child or family. Decisions that are based on the practice model will be supported and championed. Guided by this model, our process to continuously improve services for children and families will be rooted in the best of practices, the most accurate and current data available, and with the safety and well-being of children and families as the fixed center of our work.

The basic tenets of the practice model are:

- We believe that all children and communities deserve to be safe.
- We believe in family, child, and youth-driven practice.
- We believe that children do best when raised in families.
 - We believe that all children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.
- We believe in partnering with others to support child and family success in a system that is family focused, child-centered, and community-based.
 - We believe that how we do our work is as important as the work we do.

Child Protective Services

Child Protective Services (CPS) in Virginia is a continuum of specialized services designed to assist families who are unable to safely care for their children. It encompasses the *identification*, *assessment*, *investigation*, and *treatment* of abused or neglected children.



Responsibilities of Child Protective Services:

- * Receive reports of child maltreatment.
- * Respond to valid reports of child maltreatment.
- * Facilitate services to children and families.
- * Support and strengthen families.

CPS Response to Valid Reports:

Response priority determined by nature of allegations and other risk factors.

R1	Within 24 hours
R2	Within 48 hours
R3	Within 5 business days

Validity Criteria: * Age * Caretaker Status * Jurisdiction * Abuse or Neglect

Differential Response:

Assess child safety

Strengthen family

Prevent future maltreatment

Family Assessment

The family assessment is a process of gathering and evaluating information and formulating conclusions regarding family functioning and needs related to child safety and risk of future abuse or neglect.

Investigation

The investigation is a process of gathering and evaluating evidence to determine if child abuse or neglect occurred.

Provision of Services:

The goals of CPS services are to prevent further child maltreatment, assure safety of children, and maintain children in their families.

* Safety-related Services * High and Very High Risk * Voluntary Services

For more information:

[VDSS Guide to Mandated Reporting](#)



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Prevention Services

Prevention Services are an integral part of the continuum of all child welfare services in Virginia. They include, but are not limited to, providing information and services intended to accomplish the following: goals:

- * Strengthen families.
- * Promote child safety, well-being, and permanency.
- * Minimize harm to children.
- * Maximize the abilities of families to protect and care for their children.
- * Prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect.
- * Prevent out-of-home care, including preventing foster.

Examples of Prevention Services:

<u>Children:</u>	<u>Parents/caregivers:</u>
• Counseling	• Mental & emotional health
• Therapeutic services (mentoring, etc.)	• Substance abuse
• Food assistance	• Parenting education/training
	• Employment

Types of Prevention Services:

Tertiary

Provide interventions for children experiencing maltreatment.

Secondary

Programs targeted at families in need to alleviate identified problems and prevent escalation.

Primary

Programs targeted at entire population in order to provide support & education before problems occur.

Core values & principles: Respecting the parent-child relationship; Individualized approach to casework practices and service delivery; Emphasis on trauma informed approach; and Valuing the voices of families & children

Funding Sources:

- * Promoting Safe & Stable Families (PSSF)
- * Children's Services Act (CSA)
- * Family Preservation and Support Program (FPSP)
- * Family Services Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

* Voluntary Services

* Resources & Support

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) - Prevention Services Contacts

Keisha Williams (Prevention and Family Recruitment Program Manager): (804) 726-7550 or k.williams@dss.virginia.gov

Craig Patterson (Prevention Program Consultant): (804) 726-7530 or craig.patterson@dss.virginia.gov



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DFS Division of Family Services



Foster Care

The focus of foster care services is on safety, permanency, and well-being. Children are placed in foster care through a court order transferring custody to the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) or through voluntary placement by the parent or legal custodian. Foster care placement is intended to be a temporary rather than a long-term solution to family problems. It is developed in collaboration with the family and based on the needs and best interest of the child.

Permanency Goals

- **Reunification**
- **Custody to Relative**
- **Adoption**

Concurrent Planning is a structured approach to case management that requires working towards two goals at the same time to achieve timely permanency. Involvement of relatives is essential in these efforts.

The Court Process

All foster care cases are monitored at regular intervals by a juvenile and domestic relations court who approves foster care plans, monitors families' progress, and assesses the custody status of the child. The goal is for all children to achieve permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.

Court Timeline:

45-day Dispositional Hearing

4 months later

→ Foster Care Review Hearing

5 months later

→ Permanency Planning Hearing

Services to the Child & Family

Services are provided to the child and family to address the issues that led to the child's removal in order to return the child home as quickly as possible or achieve permanency timely. Frequent needs include parental substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Additionally, interventions should be trauma-informed and evidence-based whenever possible. Services can be funded through a variety of sources including federal, state, and local funds.

Placements:

Children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting that is able to meet the child's needs. Kinship foster homes should be the priority. Placements should be in close proximity to the child's family. Siblings should be placed together. Placement settings include: kinship foster homes, foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, group homes, residential treatment facilities., and supervised independent living arrangements.

Family Engagement

LDSS partners with the youth and family in a deliberate manner. These practices include Family Partnership Meetings and Child and Family Team Meetings. Family engagement involves all aspects of partnering with youth and families in a deliberate manner to make well-informed decisions about safety, permanency, lifelong connections, and well-being. Family engagement is founded on the principle of communicating openly and honestly with families. Engagement goes beyond mere involvement; it is about motivating and empowering youth and families to acknowledge their own underlying needs, positive capacities, and supports. True engagement supports families in taking an active role in creating change. It means engaging the child's birth parents, prior custodians, and family members, as well as other community members and adults significant to the family.



Foster Care and Older Youth

- Independent living services are provided to all youth age 14+
- Youth participate in an independent living needs assessment
- Services provided as a result of the assessment include money management, educational/vocational programs, housing education, and health education
- John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (ages 14-23) - Also known as the Independent Living Program
 - Provides assistance to youth in foster care to develop the skills necessary to make the successful transition from foster care to adulthood

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

- For youth who are in foster care who are 14+, or who have left foster care (or Fostering Futures) after the age of 18 and have not yet turned 26
- Provides funding for post-secondary education or vocational training program
- Up to 5 years—does not have to be consecutive; youth may access at any time
- May be used for: tuition and fees; room and board; required equipment/materials/supplies; books and testing materials; transportation; child care; special study projects related to education; other related expenses

Fostering Futures

- Program that allows youth to remain in foster care until the age of 21
- Voluntary program that provides placements for youth 18-21
- Youth may remain in their foster home or choose to receive a maintenance payment to assist in paying rent on their own

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase youth financial self-sufficiency
- Improve youth educational attainment
- Increase youth positive connections with adults
- Reduce experience with homelessness among youth
- Reduce high-risk behavior among youth
- Improve youth access to health insurance



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
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Family Services



Foster and Adoptive Family Recruitment

Foster, adoptive, and kinship families play an important role in ensuring the safety, well being, and permanency of children served by the child welfare system in Virginia. Every effort is made to help children remain with their family, however, when children enter foster care they are most often placed in a foster home. Foster parenting is provided on a temporary basis until children can be reunified with their prior custodian, placed with a relative, or adopted.

Types of Services:

- ◆ Foster Care – Temporary, 24 hour care for children and youth placed in foster care.
- ◆ Respite Care – Therapeutic support service designed to offer short-term relief to foster families caring for children.
- ◆ Foster-to-Adopt – Adoption of a child or youth currently placed in foster care whose goal is adoption.

Requirements to Foster:

You must be at least 18 years of age or older to be approved as a foster parent. Foster parents can be single, married, divorced or widowed. Individuals and/or couples must have the time and energy to give to a child and must meet all the approval requirements, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✦ Attend a one-time orientation meeting to learn what foster parenting is all about.
- ✦ Complete a Mutual Family Assessments (MFA) home study, pre-service training, and application for family home license.
- ✦ Submit to a national Fingerprint Criminal Record check, child abuse and neglect history check, and a DMV check of each adult member of the household.
- ✦ Provide three character references.

Foster Parent Support:

Local departments of social services (LDSS) offer the following supports to foster parents when providing daily care and supervision to children:

- ◆ Maintenance payments
- ◆ Supplemental training
- ◆ Resources that may include foster parent support groups and referrals for community based services

[Virginia Department of Social Services \(VDSS\) - Foster & Adoptive Family Recruitment Contacts](#)

Keisha Williams (Prevention and Family Recruitment Program Manager): (804) 726-7550 or k.williams@dss.virginia.gov

Paulette King (Foster & Adoptive Families and Family Engagement Policy Consultant): (804) 726-7503 or paulette.king@dss.virginia.gov

Adoptions

WHAT IS ADOPTION?

Every year, many children in Virginia are left without a permanent home. They need parents and families of their own. Adoption is a lifelong commitment to a child. When children in foster care cannot be safely returned home to their parents, an adoption plan is possible.

WHO CAN ADOPT?

- ◇ 18 years old or older
- ◇ Willing to learn about the unique needs of the child or children you are interested in adopting
- ◇ Patient and loving
- ◇ Energetic, flexible and giving
- ◇ Able to provide a safe environment
- ◇ Able to meet the needs of a growing child
- ◇ Able to make a lifetime commitment to a child

Who are Virginia's children awaiting adoption?

- ◆ Children who deserve loving, permanent families
- ◆ Children who are ethnically diverse, and from backgrounds that include African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and others
- ◆ Children waiting for adoptive families while in foster care
- ◆ Children between the ages of 14 and 17 (nearly one-third)
- ◆ Children between the ages of 6 and 13 (nearly one-half)
- ◆ Children who may have physical, mental, or emotional challenges
- ◆ Children who are part of sibling groups and need to be placed together

SERVICES PROVIDED

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ◇ PHOTO LISTING | POST ADOPTION SUPPORT |
| ◇ TRAINING | BIRTH FAMILY SEARCHES |
| ◇ HOME STUDY | CASE MANAGEMENT |
| ◇ ADOPTION ASSISTANCE, (IF ELIGIBLE) | SUPPORT GROUPS |
| ◇ PLACEMENT SUPERVISION | |