



Virginia Commission on Youth 2016 Legislative Studies and Initiatives

Virginia's Adoption Home Study Process ADOPTED RECCOMENDATIONS IN BLUE

Findings/Conclusions	Adopted Recommendations
<p>Finding 1 – The Mutual Family Assessment template is the preferred format for use in approving provider families.</p>	<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> Introduce a bill to mandate the Mutual Family Assessment home study and addendum developed by the Virginia Department of Social Services as a uniform home study format for statewide use among local departments of social services. Provide flexibility to allow the Virginia Department of Social Services to update this format in the future when necessary.</p>
<p>Finding 2 – There is no statewide database of current foster families, and agencies are unable to verify if an applicant has previously applied to be a resource family.</p>	<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> Support the Virginia Department of Social Services in its acquisition and implementation of a new comprehensive child welfare computer system. Ensure the ability of a case worker to make an intake query to see if an applicant family has previously applied to be an adoptive, foster, resource, respite family at another agency.</p>
<p>Finding 3 – Parents have two rights of appeal in certain domestic relations cases including termination of parental rights.</p>	<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> Request the Virginia Bar Association's Commission on the Needs of Children study the implications of the removal of the right to appeal, to Circuit Court from Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, certain cases involving termination of parental rights. Relevant Code of Virginia Section: (§ 16.1-296(D)).</p> <p>As part of this study, look to the concept of having Juvenile and Domestic</p>

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	Relations District Courts become courts of record for matters involving child custody and termination of parental rights. This could be accomplished by requiring court reporters be present in these specific proceedings with appeals going directly to the Virginia Court of Appeals.
Finding 4 – Foster care-to-adoption is vital in promoting the goal of permanency.	<u>Recommendation 1</u> Support a messaging campaign at the Virginia Department of Social Services that promotes adoption through foster care.
Finding 5 – Barriers during the adoption placement timeframe include the home study approval process and matching families with youth.	Take no action.
Finding 6 – Adoption savings funds are being used to assist local departments of social services in completing the foster care and adoption home study process.	<u>Recommendation 1</u> Support the Virginia Department of Social Services efforts related to the hiring of regional home study specialists whose role is to assist local departments of social services by completing the foster care and adoption home study process.