

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program Recommendations

Welfare Stigma

Recommendation:

1. Amend the *Code of Virginia* to rename the “Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare” (VIEW) to the “Virginia Initiative for Education and Work.” (This full title is currently found in the *Code of Virginia* Sections 2.2-435.8, 2.2-2472, 63.2-100, 63.2-601, 63.2-608, 65.2-101, 65.2-500, 65.2-502, and 65.2-512.)

Parent Education on Financial Literacy and School Readiness Options

Recommendations:

1. Request that the Virginia Department of Social Services present to the Commission on Youth the plan mandated by §63.2-226. This *Code* section requires VDSS, in consultation with the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Community College System, to develop and implement a plan to provide information regarding courses on financial literacy, offered online or through any other appropriate medium, to citizens receiving any form of public assistance that are available to such citizens at no cost to them prior to the 2020 General Assembly Session.
2. Introduce a budget amendment to provide funding for VDSS to implement self-sufficiency pilots to learn how to make the transition smoother for families and to minimize the “benefit cliff.” The purpose of the pilot is to develop supports that provide a pathway for self-sufficiency through earning a living wage. Pilot programs may allow TANF cash assistance payments to be adjusted depending on the amount of income and services a recipient receives. VDSS shall report its findings with recommendations to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees and the Virginia Commission on Youth by November 15, 2020.
3. Support more parent education on quality child care and the Child Care Subsidy, Virginia Preschool Initiative, Early Head Start and Head Start Programs for low-income families. Support training for child care workers on how to approach parents about child care quality and available resources in the brief time that they have with parents. Encourage child care workers to provide information to families seeking child care assistance, including the child care microsite address (www.childcareva.com) with child development information, early intervention services, and the importance of quality child care; a link to a short video on child care quality (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjV5sRivmio>); and the VDSS brochure on “Choosing Quality Child Care.” Explore the possibility of creating a longer video or smart phone application on school readiness resources available and the importance of quality child care to be available to play on smart phones and

in waiting rooms and lobbies (social services' offices, birthing hospitals, pediatricians' offices, etc.).

Workforce Development Programs

Recommendations:

1. Introduce a budget amendment to increase funding to the Virginia Community College System's "Road to Success in Virginia Program."
2. Introduce a budget amendment to provide TANF funding for the Virginia Community College System's standard credentialing program, "FastForward."
3. Introduce a budget amendment to increase funding for the competitive grants for community employment and training programs.
4. Request that VDSS study the subsidized employment program and develop a process that encourages more employers to be involved with the program. Efforts should be made to help link TANF/SNAP recipients to employers with jobs that are in high demand in the marketplace, especially those jobs that provide a living wage. VDSS should develop a process for connecting employers that are willing to provide short-term and intentional training programs that lead to success and self-sufficiency. Request that VDSS report to the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2020 General Assembly Session.

TANF Programming

Recommendations:

1. Request that VDSS study the different aid categories and income eligibility requirements for TANF. In addition, request that VDSS recommend outcome measures that go beyond work requirements. Success should be measured on long-term earnings and self-sufficiency. Request that VDSS report to the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2020 General Assembly session.
2. Monitor the TANF Reauthorization: H.R. 5861. Work with the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) to recommend the elimination of outdated regulations that impede TANF workers in assisting TANF recipients to meet work and education requirements.

Staff Professional Development

Recommendation:

1. Support the Virginia Department of Social Services and the League of Social Services' Executives to continue their efforts on improving professional development for TANF and VIEW workers. Support recent efforts of the Department to provide job coaching training for TANF and VIEW workers through the community colleges.

Encourage the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) workgroup to consider providing enhanced services for the TANF population through this workforce development initiative.

Child Care Subsidies

Recommendations:

1. Introduce a budget amendment to gradually eliminate the wait list for fee child care participants. It is estimated that complete elimination of fee child care would cost the Commonwealth \$67.5M.
2. Amend the *Code of Virginia* (§ 63.2-611 C.) to extend transitional child care from 12 to 24 months. This would give former TANF recipients more time to become self-sufficient before assuming the full cost of child care.
3. Amend the *Code of Virginia* (§ 63.2-611 C.1.) to provide transitional child care to former TANF recipients participating in an education or training program leading to employment. This would allow former TANF recipients to receive child care services while they are earning a credential or degree to help them become self-sufficient.
4. Lower the co-payment scale for Transitional TANF child care cases, which currently requires recipients to go from having no co-payment to having a co-payment of 5% to 10% of their gross income, in order to help recipients gradually adjust to the cost of child care.

Availability and Support of Quality Child Care

Recommendation:

1. Request that VDSS present to the Commission on Youth an update on the Child Care Provider S.T.E.P.S. Program (Shared Training, Education and Professional Development Services) pilot, which seeks to recruit more family child care providers in underserved/rural areas, especially with odd-hour, special needs, and infant/toddler care, prior to the 2020 General Assembly Session.