



Virginia Commission on Youth 2018 Legislative Studies and Initiatives

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program Recommendations

Recommendations	Public Comments
<p><u>Recommendation on Welfare Stigma</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>Amend the <i>Code of Virginia</i> 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 <i>Code of Virginia</i> 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.)</p> <p>(Submit legislation)</p>	<p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation and adds that, in addition, the <i>Code</i> amendment should include key priorities and principles that Virginia embraces for reform of its benefits programs for low-income families.</p> <p>Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE) TANF/Employment Support Programs Committee supports this recommendation as “simple, quick, and low-cost, but will have a lasting impact on the perception of the program.”</p>
<p><u>Recommendations on Parent Education on Financial Literacy and School Readiness Options</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>Request that the Virginia Department of Social Services present to the Commission on Youth the plan mandated by §63.2-226. This <i>Code</i> section requires VDSS, in consultation with the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Community</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh states that “teaching someone to learn financial literacy does not need to go through many courses to learn basic skills.”</p>

<p>College System, to develop and implement a plan to provide to citizens receiving any form of public assistance information regarding courses on financial literacy, offered online or through any other appropriate medium, that are available to such citizens at no cost to them, prior to the 2020 General Assembly Session.</p> <p>(By Letter)</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Submit budget amendment)</p>	<p>Virginia Poverty Law Center supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Fairfax County Department of Family Services supports this recommendation. “After benefits are lost, families can have less discretionary income despite their wages having increased.”</p> <p>Fairfax County DFS is currently developing a pilot program that coincides with the recommendations proposed by the Virginia Commission on Youth. As explained in their comments, their pilot aims to target the highest concentration of TANF recipients: single mothers ages 20-34 with children under five in two high population concentration zip codes. Their pilot will bring supports together and incorporate the creation of personalized benefit cliff mitigation strategies for each family. Fairfax County DFS stated that they would be available to share pilot findings after implementation.</p> <p>The Virginia Community College System shared that “a recent comprehensive report from the United Way found that 39% of Virginia households either live in poverty, or are Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed (ALICE) families – those who make more than the federal poverty limit, but far below today’s living wage.”</p> <p>Donna Sayegh comments that self-sufficiency programs are already in place with local governments.</p>

	<p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation suggests that if this recommendation is implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot design should be parent-informed and person-centered with identification and implementation of promising practices. • Self-sufficiency supports should be defined and measurable. • Pilots should document barriers to self-sufficiency. • Pilots should have the flexibility to develop and implement supports for families who are no longer eligible for TANF because they have made strides towards self-sufficiency yet may still not have reached stability.
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p>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.).</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Beth Tolley states that this recommendation should “include parent education on child development, positive parenting, positive discipline, as well as accompanying resources to support this approach (prevention of child abuse and trauma) which is particularly important for families under stress and for families with children with disabilities and/or developmental delays.”</p> <p>Also, “if not already doing so, partner with other divisions of DSS that are leading the area with the Greater Richmond Trauma Informed Community Network; and with the division the handles the Families are Magic program.”</p> <p>Donna Sayegh supports women needing to be taught how to use birth control. She also states “child care quality comes from the teaching of a two-parent household.”</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation believes that clear information should be available to and easily accessible by parents and that parents/users of services should inform best formats and channels for receipt of any information.</p> <p>Child Care Aware of Virginia supports this recommendation and adds that they would like to see the inclusion of their state-recognized and funded child care resource and referral network as a resource, in addition to the resources listed.</p>

Recommendations on Workforce Development Programs

Recommendation 1

Introduce a budget amendment to increase funding to the Virginia Community College System’s “Road to Success in Virginia Program.”

(Submit budget amendment)

The Virginia Community College System supports the proposed recommendations that dedicate TANF funds to increasing the skills and employment of individuals and families who are left out of the Commonwealth’s economy.

As explained in their comments, the Road to Success was piloted with TANF in four regions during FY18. In one year, the program recruited and trained 175 TANF recipients and exceeded Virginia’s Community Colleges employment target of 50%. “Increased funding ... will allow us to build on the program’s momentum and extend its reach to deliver much needed occupational training, soft skills preparation, career coaching, and other supports.”

Donna Sayegh shares that “Tidewater Community College, Portsmouth Campus, has a new Initiative: “TCC Skilled Trades Academy.” The Academy will provide citizens with expanded training opportunities in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, pipe laying, masonry, structural welding, maritime coating and painting, warehousing, and other in-demand skills.”

Recommendation 2

Introduce a budget amendment to provide TANF funding for the Virginia Community College System’s standard credentialing program, “FastForward.”

(Submit budget amendment)

The Virginia Community College System supports this recommendation and adds that this “program has delivered over 11,000 high-demand credentials in less than three years.”

<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p>Introduce a budget amendment to increase funding for the competitive grants for community employment and training programs.</p> <p>(Submit budget amendment)</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh explains that there are community employment and training programs in Portsmouth. However, there is a shortage in the manufacturing fields.</p> <p>Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE) TANF/Employment Support Programs Committee supports this recommendation encouraging funding for these programs to be made available statewide, not just in larger localities.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh states that the Virginia Employment Commission as well as temporary employment agencies need to be involved in this process.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation recommends that VDSS work with employers and community colleges to provide skills trainings that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are accessible within low-income communities (for example, making sure bus routes are available near low-income housing communities); • are flexible (outside of “normal” business hours and/or on weekends); • are less punitive and set up for participants’ success (if a participant misses a class, offer make-up opportunities rather than automatically drop them); • provide stipends to cover child care of their choice while attending trainings; • provide transportation based on need and not system availability; • work with high school counselors to communicate with juniors and seniors in high school about available trainings and employers/positions that offer a living wage; • directly link to available jobs, or to those that are provided by employers willing to pay trainees a salary in order to retain them as employees once training has been completed.

<p><u>Recommendations on TANF Programming</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh believes in terms of assistance the importance of involving the churches instead of the state is crucial. Additionally, she supports involvement of biological fathers in the upbringing of their children.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation and adds that VDSS should “also document which strategies work and for whom, and which strategies do not work and for whom, as well as measure the effects of child care quality, accessibility, etc. on families and children.”</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Internal staff work)</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh believes that a TANF recipient needs to provide to their social worker a monthly update on their employment and education efforts.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation on Staff Professional Development</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>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</p>	<p>Donna Sayegh provides information regarding fair process.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation and also suggests that eligibility and benefits service workers should be cross-trained to facilitate a working knowledge of all benefits programs. For example: benefits service workers should be trained in customer service including trauma-informed practices.</p>

<p>Opportunity Act (WIOA) workgroup to consider providing enhanced services for the TANF population through this workforce development initiative.</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE) TANF/Employment Support Programs Committee supports this recommendation as a priority. Staff needs additional professional development opportunities.</p>
<p><u>Recommendations on Child Care Subsidies</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Submit budget amendment)</p>	<p>Virginia Poverty Law Center supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation states that “we support the concept behind this recommendation, but also suggest that due diligence be done to identify the context of wait lists.” “Elimination of wait lists should be based on strategies that take specific/unique needs of communities into account.”</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p>Amend the <i>Code of Virginia</i> (§ 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.</p> <p>(Submit legislation)</p>	<p>Virginia Poverty Law Center supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Fairfax County Department of Family Services states that the most pronounced cliff comes from families losing child care subsidy assistance.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p>Amend the <i>Code of Virginia</i> (§ 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</p>	<p>Virginia Poverty Law Center supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Donna Sayegh does not support this recommendation.</p>

<p>services while they are earning a credential or degree to help them become self-sufficient.</p> <p>(Submit legislation)</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Virginia Poverty Law Center supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation states that “we support this recommendation and in addition, recommend that TANF recipients be provided with a higher child subsidy payment (and/or lower co-pay, as applicable) if their child attends a quality rated provider, to encourage and incentivize parents to select higher quality care when available. Tiered reimbursement could also be provided to subsidy vendors who are quality rated to incentive provider participation, which in turn could increase access to high quality child care for TANF families.”</p> <p>Donna Sayegh does not support this recommendation.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation on Availability and Support of Quality Child Care</u></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>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 those with odd-hour, special needs, and infant/toddler care, prior to the 2020 General Assembly Session.</p> <p>(By letter)</p>	<p>Child Care Aware of Virginia supports this recommendation and states “this review will allow the state to assess the reach and efficacy of the program, and hopefully determine its need for continuation and expansion by 2020.”</p> <p>Virginia Early Childhood Foundation comments that this recommendation does not “begin to address a problem that is hindering families today from accessing the child care they need to be able to gain training or reliably work.”</p> <p>VECF comments that they support actions to pursue a variety of strategies for addressing the problem including:</p>

- Develop and expand community networks and resources for systemic school readiness/early childhood education supports (e.g. Smart Beginnings, Mixed Delivery grants, Richmond Area Services Alliance, Davenport Institute).
- Consider access to child care as a key part of any workforce/economic development activity in the Commonwealth, including for example GO Virginia.
- Work with employers, especially large employers, to conduct cost-benefit analyses of offering on-site child care for employees who are parents of young children, and to consider and implement such strategies. Work with colleges and universities to consider and launch on-campus centers for both faculty and community families.
- Work with community developers to include access to child care as part of low-income housing redevelopment planning.
- Recognize and more fully support the role and value of faith-based providers (“religious exempt”) for parents’ child care needs, especially in rural communities. Reconsider licensing and regulatory policies to better incorporate and support the much-needed services of these providers.
- Provide funding to community centers (such as YMCAs) to provide additional “odd-hour” drop-in care on evenings and weekends, for no or low cost to TANF families and working families who are not eligible for TANF because they have made strides towards self-sufficiency.
- Incentivize family, friend, and neighbor child care providers to participate in activities that lead to becoming licensed providers.
- Support parents and other family members who provide care to young children, particularly those in underserved/rural areas, by providing regular and free developmentally appropriate community activities for young children, such as community-based play groups, toddler/preschool story times, etc. Information on developmentally appropriate activities that family caregivers can do at home could be shared, along with opportunities & promotion of parent/care-giver education training. Identify opportunities for family members and neighbors who provide child care services to participate in trainings.

Other Comments:

Virginia Poverty Law Center “supports raising the child-only TANF amount, as relatives who take in children as kinship care providers rely on this support for raising these children who often have intensive needs.”

Child Care Aware of Virginia is generally supportive of all the recommendations.

Additional Proposed Recommendation:

Virginia Early Childhood Foundation makes the following recommendation:

In the first quarter of 2019, the Governor’s Chief Workforce Development Advisor should convene a “TANF Summit” that includes families/parents who are eligible for, participating in, or former participants of TANF/VIEW; employers; community college leaders; Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) and other workforce development initiative representatives; etc. The goal of the summit should be to establish a strategic plan for addressing workforce development opportunities for the TANF/VIEW population. The plan would inform TANF/VIEW policy and program reform.