

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH
Study on Foster Care

Adopted Recommendations

Workforce Recruitment and Retention

1. Introduce a budget amendment for additional staff positions at VDSS to administer a Training Academy for Family Services Specialists as recommended in the 2018 study conducted by the University of Denver, Butler Institute for Families.
2. Introduce a budget amendment to expand Virginia's Child Welfare Stipend Program to include stipend positions funded with state-only dollars, which will allow these stipend graduates to fulfil their stipend agreements in child welfare positions to include child protective services and ongoing/prevention services. These state-funded stipend positions will not have the federal requirement to have an employee work 51% of their job in Title IV-E.
3. Introduce a budget amendment to increase the minimum salary for Family Services Series positions and provide a salary adjustment for current Family Services employees.
4. Request that the Virginia Department of Social Services present to the Commission on Youth an update on the status of VDSS technology, to include Compass, OASIS, and any efforts by the Department to allow Title IV-E to be processed electronically. Introduce a budget amendment to implement a new technology system to replace OASIS.
5. Amend § 16.1-1506 of the *Code of Virginia* to extend the family assessment requirement from 45 days to 60 days with no additional extension.

Fostering Futures

6. Amend the *Code of Virginia* to codify the Fostering Futures program, as currently authorized in the Virginia State Budget language, ensuring that Federal Law is properly addressed. Include a provision allowing video conferencing as an option for monthly visits between LDSS and participants. Include in the legislation enactment clauses directing the Virginia Department of Social Services to make certain actions:
 - Determine what services are appropriate for participants.
 - Develop requirements to be included in the Voluntary Continuing Services and Support Agreement (VCSSA). Requirements should include maintaining

- contact with the youth's case manager, and making rent payments on time. Case managers should tailor the VCSSA to the youths' situation and needs.
- Allow discretion for LDSS to disenroll youth from the Fostering Futures program for substantial violation of the VCSSA.
- Develop a budget worksheet and/or payment forms to monitor how participants are using their allotted funds and increase oversight of maintenance payments when needed.

Kinship Care

7. Support the ongoing systemic review process being done by the Administration for Children and Families of kinship navigator programs and encourage the addition of well-supported, supported, or promising kinship navigator program to be included in the Family First Clearinghouse.
8. Support the continuation of the current federal funding for Virginia's regional kinship navigator program.
9. Direct VDSS to develop a statewide Kinship Navigator program in Virginia, which will provide information, resource, and referral services to children and kin caregivers.
10. Request that VDSS add an input box to OASIS to mark when a youth is diverted to a "facilitated care arrangement."
11. Request that VDSS as part of the upcoming diligent search RFP obtain feedback from LDSSs on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and what is needed to make a search tool successful.
12. Amend §63.2-1305 of the *Code of Virginia* to add fictive kin to the definition of relative for the purpose of the KinGAP program.
13. Amend § 63.2-1305 of the *Code of Virginia* to create a state-funded Kinship Guardianship Assistance program that waives the requirement for potential guardians to serve as a licensed foster parents for six consecutive months and limit eligibility for this program to children who are least likely to be placed in a permanent home or who have been in foster care for an extended period of time.

This recommendation was made by JLARC in their 2018 report. It was not introduced as legislation during the 2019 session.

14. Amend the Appropriation Act to increase funding for the General Relief program.
15. Direct VDSS to create a state funded program to provide facilitated care reimbursement payments to kinship and fictive kin families who have custody over kin due to the child being identified as being at imminent risk of entering foster care. Local departments shall track these families and provide case management as necessary.
16. Direct the Commission on Youth to study adding guardianship as a permanency option in Virginia by creating an Advisory Group to:

- a) Look at the benefits as well as obstacles this change would create.
 - b) Determine what is the potential impact on school enrollment and medical care.
 - c) Investigate what would be the rights of the parties in such an arrangement.
 - d) Explore the possible implementation of state funded guardianship assistance.
17. Direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to create an emergency approval process for kinship caregivers and develop foster home certification standards for kinship caregivers using as a guide the Model Family Foster Home licensing Standards developed by the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Generations United, and the National Association for Regulatory Administration. The adopted standards should align, as much as reasonably possible, to the Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards, and should ensure that children in foster care 1) live in safe and appropriate homes under local department of social services and court oversight; 2) receive monthly financial assistance and supportive services to help meet their needs; and 3) can access the permanency options offered by Virginia's Guardianship Assistance Program.

Foster Care Family Recruitment and Retention

18. Direct VDSS and CSA to establish a grant program to incentivize the recruitment and retention of foster care families within local departments of social services. Grants will be awarded to local agencies who demonstrate a strategy to recruit families that will meet the needs of the children they serve. These families should be trained and supported by the local DSS, the community, and local service providers to provide the necessary trauma-informed services for children with emotional, medical, or behavioral needs. The grant application shall identify a targeted marketing strategy, supporting community partners, and additional supports that will be provided to foster families recruited under this grant. Local departments may contract with private providers to deliver the daily support and supervision of these families. The local agency will be exempt from paying the local match for services provided to families recruited and trained under this grant. Two or more local agencies will be permitted to form partnerships under this grant program.
19. Request an update from VDSS on the recruitment and retention of foster care families by November 2020, to include an update on the creation of a stronger framework and parameters for LDSS around family supports (to include but not be limited to a provision for a dedicated recruiter and trainer; trauma training, parenting strategies, and respite care for foster care families; and social support mentors the foster children). Request VDSS to provide (i) an estimate of funding necessary to implement the statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining foster parents; and (ii) identify all possible sources of funding that could be used to support statewide recruitment and retention efforts.