

# VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

September 18, 2019

10:00 a.m.

House Committee Room C  
Ground Floor, Pocahontas Building

## MEETING MINUTES

### **Attending:**

Delegates Richard “Dickie” Bell, Chair, Emily Brewer, Mark Keam  
Senators Dave Marsden, Vice-Chair, Barbara Favola, Charles W. “Bill” Carrico Sr.  
Citizen members Avohom Carpenter, Chris Rehak

### **Attending Electronically:**

Delegate Todd Pillion and Deirdre “Dede” Goldsmith

### **Not Attending:**

Delegates Jay Jones, Chris Peace

### **Commission on Youth Staff Attending:**

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen, Kathy Gillikin, Samantha Teets, Intern

### **I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks**

*Delegate Richard P. “Dickie” Bell, Chair*

Delegate Bell welcomed Commission members and meeting attendees. He noted that several members on the Commission would be participating via telephone: Del. Pillion due to demands from his dental practice and Dede Goldsmith due to a family medical issue.

### **II. Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Presentation**

*Will Driscoll, Executive Director, Virginia Sports Hall of Fame*

Mr. Driscoll gave a brief overview of the purpose and history of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, and then explained the Hall of Fame’s new platform. Mr. Driscoll discussed the Hall of Fame’s involvement in Virginia high schools by awarding annual Student Athlete Achievement Awards to student-athletes that exemplify excellence in athletics, academics and community service. Mr. Driscoll then discussed the various benefits that come with playing sports such as, friendship, time management, and physical health. Mr. Driscoll then presented data showing that youth participation in sports is on a decline, and that the average age that kids quit playing sports is 10.5 years old. Mr. Driscoll

attributes this decline in participation to youth sports specialization, leading to burnout and injuries, as well as income inequality barring equal access to sports.

Mr. Driscoll highlighted concerns for mental health, noting that in today's age, social media presents unique mental health challenges that kids did not have to face years ago. For example, some kids may receive immediate negative feedback and critiques on their performance via social media. Mr. Driscoll then discussed one initiative the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame has undertaken, called "Changing the Game" which is designed to bring sports professionals together to discuss issues related to mental health at all levels of sport. Another initiative the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame is engaged in is a partnership with the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters to host coaches, clinics, as well as programs and forums to bring awareness to both the positive and negative effects of sports on mental health. Looking forward, Mr. Driscoll expressed his desire to partner with organizations such as the Boys and Girls club or the YMCA to help bridge the gap in sports participation with children from low income families.

### **III. Commission's Foster Care Presentation**

*Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director*

Ms. Atkinson gave a presentation on Virginia's Foster Care System. Ms. Atkinson's presentation touched on the study activities undertaken, the background of the topic, and the specific issues of workforce recruitment and retention, Fostering Futures, kinship care, and foster family recruitment and retention. In addition, Ms. Atkinson gave an overview of the Family First Prevention Services Act, foster care legislation from 2019, and provided an update on the implementation of the JLARC recommendations from their 2018 report. The presentation concluded by offering findings and draft recommendations on each of these issues based upon the Commission on Youth's study activities.

The draft recommendations will be made available for written public comment through Friday, November 22, 2019. The presentation and draft recommendations can be accessed on the Commission's web page under the September 18 meetings tab. A couple of recommendations were added or modified based on input from Commission members during the meeting. These additions are highlighted in red.

#### **Draft Recommendations:**

1. Provide VDSS with five additional full-time dedicated curriculum development staff (classroom and e-learning) to review, revise, and update all curricula within child welfare. Current courses should be evaluated to maximize opportunities for conversion or partial conversion to e-learning and/or distance learning/webinar formats, when appropriate. Content shall be reviewed to ensure it is current and relevant to child welfare workers. VDSS shall revise curricula and/or develop a training model with input and consideration of local

agencies' needs and concerns, to include condensing courses, where appropriate. VDSS shall ensure that all trainers have current or recent field experience and/or up-to-date subject matter expertise.

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. 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.
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.<sup>1</sup> Include a provision allowing video conferencing as an option for monthly visits between LDSS and participants. Include enactments to require Virginia Board of Social Services to promulgate regulations for Fostering Futures programs which address the following issues:
  - 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.
7. Request VDSS to update the "Fostering Futures Independent Living Arrangement Agreement" form to remove "Independent Living Arrangement" from the title and add an option for foster youth to remain in their current foster care placement.
8. 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.
9. Support the continuation of the current federal funding for Virginia's regional kinship navigator program.

10. Direct VDSS to develop a statewide Kinship Navigator program in Virginia, which will provide information, resource, and referral services to children and kin caregivers.
11. Request that VDSS add an input box to OASIS to mark when a youth is diverted to a “facilitated care arrangement.”
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Amend the Appropriation Act to increase funding for the General Relief program.
16. 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.
17. 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.
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.

#### **IV. Update on Family First**

*Carl Ayers, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Social Services*

Mr. Ayers gave an update presentation on the Family First Prevention Services Act. Mr. Ayers discussed how the federal legislation reframes the goals of the foster care system to focus on prevention services and supporting families. Mr. Ayers discussed foster care program changes including the limits to Title IV-E funding. Mr. Ayers also explained who is eligible for title IV-E prevention services funds. Next, Mr. Ayers discussed the services that are Title IV-E reimbursable, highlighting that these services must be trauma informed and evidence-based. Mr. Ayers explained the process that services go through to get approved for reimbursement. This process requires services to go through a clearinghouse to determine if the program is trauma informed and evidence-based. The clearinghouse ranks programs that meet their criteria as either (1) well supported, (2) supported, or (3) promising. Mr. Ayers then presented a list of programs currently ranked by the clearinghouse, noting that no kinship navigator programs have currently been approved. Mr. Ayers also presented a list of programs that are currently under review by the clearinghouse.

Next, Mr. Ayers discussed Family First implementation updates including the launch of the Family First Virginia website. Mr. Ayers noted the 12,440 hours of work that have already been invested in the implementation of Family First Act in Virginia and expressed that Virginia is now moving towards installation of Family First. In addition, Mr. Ayers expressed his desire to ease access to obtaining state contracts by developing a list of already approved service providers to help reduce the administrative burden on the Department of Social Services. Finally, Mr. Ayers reviewed Virginia's plans moving forward in the implementation of Family First.

#### **V. Adjourn**

The Commission on Youth meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. The next meeting will be on December 4 at 10:00 a.m. in the Shared Committee room.