



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Group: Children's Advocacy Center

Advisory Group Meeting

August 18, 2026, 1:30 p.m.

East Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building

Attending:

Mackenzie Babichenko; Jenni Booker Baker; Chaya Cobb; Delegate Karrie Delaney; Delegate Lindsey Dougherty; Julie Dubee; Oriane Eriksen; Senator Barbara Favola; Joe Flores; Jenna Foster; Robin Foster; Darci Fritz; Lanis Geluso; Maria Jankowski; Kelly Johnson; Charlé McCauley; Sherri McKinney; Clyde Portis; Greg Preston; Hope Richardson; Catie Robertson; Kathi Roark; Bret Schardein; Delegate Holly Seibold; Rebecca Simmons; Ren Spotts; Delegate Anne Ferrell Tata; Rebecca Vinroot.

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson; Will Egen; Matthew Nwaneri; Oli McGowan, intern

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. Senator Favola had members of the Advisory Group introduce themselves.

II. Perspectives on the Children's Advocacy Center Model

The Advisory Group heard from several practitioners on the impact of the children's advocacy center model:

- Rebecca Simmons, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) – explained that the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) is the heart of the children's advocacy center model, bringing together relevant professionals for a coordinated, child-focused response. children's advocacy centers do not replace partner agencies but provide a venue for children and families to access resources. She noted that children's advocacy centers help provide continuity of care that can otherwise be lost when partner agencies experience staff turnover.
- Oriane Erikson, Director, Children, Youth and Families Division, Fairfax County Department of Family Services – Children's advocacy centers have improved the quality of child abuse investigations and CPS safety decisions through specialized forensic interviewers, a child-focused

environment, centralized access to trauma-informed services, and reduced duplication of interviews.

- Lanis Geluso, Sargeant, Virginia Beach Police Department – Without a children’s advocacy center, children are typically interviewed multiple times by untrained personnel in the home, which can affect the reliability of a child's answers. Children’s advocacy centers reduce these issues, help identify false allegations, and can provide Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) therapy.
- Mackenzie Babichenko, Commonwealth's Attorney, Hanover County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office – As the point where cases culminate at trial, prosecutors benefit from the higher-quality evidence children’s advocacy centers produce, which also causes the least harm to the child.
- Dr. Robin Foster, Director, Child Protection Team, Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU – Children’s advocacy centers provide trained medical evaluation and coordinate follow-up care for children and non-offending family members, which helps close resource gaps for rural populations. She noted Virginia has very few child abuse pediatricians statewide.
- Chaya Cobb, Survivor and Former Recipient of Children's Advocacy Center Services — As a parent who received children’s advocacy center services during a family crisis, she described how children’s advocacy centers help families navigate life after abuse occurs.

III. Survey of Children’s Advocacy Centers and Overview of Funding

Will Egen, Senior Policy Analyst

Mr. Egen presented survey findings on children’s advocacy center funding structures. Discussion covered the distinction between government-based and non-profit children’s advocacy centers. Mr. Egen reviewed children’s advocacy centers FY26 funding and FY27 outlook. His presentation also discussed past and current state funding for children’s advocacy centers and the effect of decreased Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. Mr. Egen’s presentation is available on the Commission on Youth’s website under the meetings tab.

IV. Advisory Group Roundtable Discussion – Development of Draft Recommendations

The Advisory Group reviewed and discussed a set of draft recommendations. Mr. Egen presented 18 draft recommendations for discussion. Draft recommendations presented to the Advisory Group can be found under the date for the meeting on the Commission’s website.

Following Advisory Group discussion staff agreed to make changes to draft recommendations based on the discussion of the Advisory Group. An updated version of the draft recommendations will be presented to the full Commission on Youth at the September 22, 2026 meeting.

V. Next Steps and Adjournment

The meeting adjourned right after 3:30 p.m.