



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Group: The Use and Impact of Relief of Custody on the Care and Support of Youth

October 8, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

Tuckahoe Library

Attending:

Kimberly Ayers; Mackenzie Babichenko; Tara Berger (representing the Office of Delegate Tata); Renee Brown; Christopher Campbell; Judge Lee Chitwood; Delegate Josh Cole; Em Cooper; Nikole Cox; Rachael Deane, Jennifer Faison, Judge Hilary Griffith; Regina Harris; Rita Jones; Sandra Karison; Jan Parrish; Tanner Pilcher; Judge Florence Powell; Timothy Prioleau; Scott Reiner; Eric Reynolds; Kari Savage; Delegate Holly Seibold; Paulette Skapars; Judge Thomas Sotelo; Senator David Suetterlein.

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen, Kathy Gillikin

I. Welcome and Introductions:

The Honorable David R. Suetterlein, Senator, Senate of Virginia

Senator Suetterlein thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. The Senator asked all Advisory Group members to introduce themselves. Then, Senator Suetterlein asked Amy Atkinson to provide a brief background of the Virginia Commission on Youth's study on relief of custody.

II. Study Overview:

Amy Atkinson, Executive Director, Virginia Commission on Youth

Amy Atkinson directed everyone's attention to the handouts provided, highlighting the Study Plan handout. She explained that from the previous 2023 "Improving Foster Care" study, the Office of the Children's Ombudsman and the local departments of social services reported a rise in parents petitioning the court for Relief of Custody. At the November 20, 2023 Commission on Youth meeting, a recommendation was approved to discuss, review, and make recommendations regarding the relief of custody. The Commission staff were directed to convene an advisory group to assess relief of custody in Virginia, including all relevant stakeholders (Departments of Social Services, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Juvenile Justice; as well as local

departments of social services, the Court Improvement Program, Community Services Boards, and others. Next, Ms. Atkinson introduced Will Egen, Senior Policy Analyst with the Commission on Youth, to present the findings from the regional roundtables that were held this past summer.

III. Recap from Relief of Custody Roundtables

Will Egen, Senior Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth

Will Egen explained the timeline for the relief of custody issue and how information was gathered about the increased use of temporary and permanent relief of custody to place a child in foster care. Four regional roundtables were assembled that included representatives from the local departments of social services, Court Service Units, JDR judges, attorneys, private agencies, Community Services Boards, local CSA, local schools, impacted youth and caregivers, and advocacy groups.

Mr. Egen described the potential reasons for petitioners seeking relief of custody, discussed the data of number of petitions filed at the courts over the past 6 years. Finally, Mr. Egen discussed the common themes that were raised from the various roundtables.

Mr. Egen then provided the timeline for the rest of relief of custody study.

IV. Advisory Group Roundtable Discussion

Ms. Atkinson explained the process for discussing the draft recommendations at today's meeting and going forward. Draft recommendations will be discussed with the Advisory Group and presented to the full Commission with any changes at the October 22, 2024 meeting. Written public comment will be accepted through November 21, 2024. In-person public comment will be received at the November 25 Commission meeting. At that meeting, draft recommendations will be voted on by the Commission on Youth.

Mr. Egen presented 19 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: <https://vcoy.virginia.gov/meetings.asp>.

Following Advisory Group discussion staff agreed to make amendments, additions, and deletions 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 October 22, 2024 meeting.

V. Next Steps and Adjournment

Senator Suetterlein thanked the Advisory Group for their time and contributions. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.