

CCCS Subgroup on Access to and Quality of Child Care Final Workgroup Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Create a comprehensive and cross sector technical assistance system to provide business operations, quality improvement, and blended and braided funding (any combination of federal, state, local and/or private) guidance for all providers. The state should provide robust technical assistance through VDSS and VDOE (or be housed in a new coordinated governance model proposed by the Governance Workgroup).

Recommendation #2: Reduce the threshold for licensure of Family Day Home Providers from 5 to 3. Providers should be licensed when caring for 3 or more children to whom the provider is not related and when they are compensated for at least one of those children from any source. This mirrors the national average, and an appropriate threshold at which the provider's care becomes a business. Implementation of this reduction should be incremental and phased in so that DSS, providers and families can adjust appropriately. The policy change requires funding for DSS to implement fully.

Recommendation #3: Support strengthened penalties for violations of the licensure threshold. Without serious consequences for violations of the law, providers will continue to take more children than they can safely care for. As Virginia has seen, the consequences for such actions are often deadly for young children.

Recommendation #4: Require child care providers that participate in Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program and receive Child Care and Development Block Grant funds to be licensed. The Child Care and Development Block Grant of 2014 establishes significant new requirements for providers participating in the Subsidy Program, including compliance with health and safety standards, on-site inspections and monitoring, participation in mandatory training, compliance with group size and ratio requirements, and national FBI fingerprint criminal background checks. Requiring subsidy providers to be licensed by VDSS is the most efficient, effective and prudent way for Virginia to meet the federal requirements.

Recommendation #5: Revise the current application process of programs exempt from licensure, to include verification of health and safety standards. A verification process should be developed and applied where not currently in place and supported in code and regulation. Over the long term the information gleaned from these inspections should inform health, safety and quality standards for such programs.

Recommendation #6: Conduct a public awareness campaign to help parents access and understand quality programs. This should include unified messaging concerning quality early care and should be jointly developed by VDSS, VDOE and other stakeholders providing and promoting early care and education (or under the new Governance Workgroup proposed model). Electronic and social media should be utilized to the extent possible to disseminate information through multiple systems and touch points such as pediatric offices, government agencies, etc.

Recommendation #7: Recognizing that VSQI is one of the systems of state recognized quality, alongside State Recognized Accreditation authorized by the code of Virginia, and in light of the

CCDBG reauthorization, the group recommends expanding opportunities for providers to access VSQI to recognize and improve their program quality.

- VSQI management (VDSS and VECF) should continue the rollout of VSQI 2.0, a revision of Virginia's quality rating and improvement system, which focuses on intentional teaching, curriculum, teacher-child interactions and other factors that research indicates contribute to school readiness.
- VSQI management should continue with the planned implementation of expedited entry into VSQI for VPI and Head Start programs. Expedited entry involves crosswalking existing quality standards in these programs with VSQI standards to enable recognition of already existing quality requirements.
- VSQI management should explore automatic entry of VDSS licensed child care programs into the VSQI system. Licensed programs however, should retain ability to opt out of VSQI participation if they so desire.

Recommendations #8: Form two workgroups to support VDSS work.... VDSS will be active over the next year revising Virginia's Child Care and Development Fund Plan to meet new requirements established by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. The CCCS Access and Quality Workgroup is well poised to provide input from a diverse group of stakeholders and perspectives, as such we recommend the following:

: A CCCS group should convene specifically to support VDSS's child care needs assessment. The group should assist in the examination of:

- Underserved areas of the state, including areas with concentrated poverty
- Where greatest need exists for access to infant/toddler slots, nontraditional hours, care for children with special needs, and children who are homeless. Although not a part of the CCDBG mandate, the group should also consider the early care and education needs of military families not served on installations and families where a parent is in the guard/ reserve and needs care for guard drill weekends

Additionally, a CCCS workgroup should convene to support and inform the development of a statewide child care disaster plan, lead by VDSS.

Recommendation #9: A CCCS workgroup should convene to support and inform the bolstering of a comprehensive statewide professional development system because Virginia needs a strong, comprehensive and coordinated professional development framework for all early care and education practitioners. Virginia's early care and education programs employ a variety of training and professional development options, but the state lacks a comprehensive professional development framework. Any new governance models facilitating coordination among early childhood programming in Virginia should incorporate a strong professional development component, to build on the work of the VCPD. The VCPD concept should be formally recognized, endorsed and supported by the state. The most pressing professional development needs for early childhood providers in the Commonwealth are:

- Establish a competency-based professional development framework for early care and education practitioners
- Explore measures of quality in terms of education & qualifications across the areas of accreditation, certification/licensing, articulation agreements, coursework, credits, degrees; and competency recognition.

- Examine funding strategies to address (1) cost of professional development; (2) incentives to providers/owners and participants of PD; (3) cost of care provided by more highly qualified staff.
- This workgroup would support the Governance workgroup and/or the development of a new early childhood entity/ collaborative; VCPD's ongoing work; and VDSS as they develop a state plan.

Recommendation #10: Create or adapt the existing integrated data system (new or more robust VLDS) to capture the data and measure the impact of increased investments in professional development on child outcomes. Such a data system could be coordinated under a new governance model and should include:

- Common data elements collected, and integrated across both public and private sectors
- A database for training and technical assistance providers and the early childhood professional development registry (implementation is already underway by VDSS), and explore their integration with VLDS;
- Expanded participation of additional agencies in the Virginia Longitudinal Data System, including VDH and DBHDS.

Recommendation #11: Increase financial resources in the early childhood system to fully implement current policies and final CCCS recommendations.