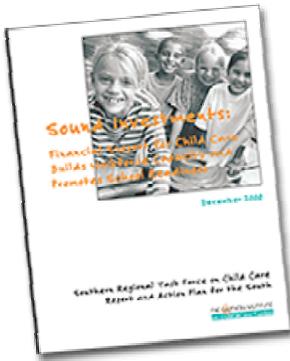


**APPENDIX O
VIRGINIA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

**Survey Results on the Status of Implementation Efforts
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 through May 31, 2003**

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Goal 1 - Federal, State, Local and Private Funds Should Be Sufficient to Meet 100% of Need for Direct Child Care Assistance, Based on Initial Eligibility Levels at 85% of the State Median Income. Redetermination Levels Should Allow Families to Retain Child Care Assistance Until They Reach 100% of State Median Income.

(Action Step 1.1) - Educate federal and state policymakers on the need for action.

2003 Response:

Governor Warner of Virginia has a strong interest in promoting the importance of quality early care and education throughout the Commonwealth. Several Governors' initiatives are underway that involve Child Care. Through the efforts of the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (Department), the Child Care and Development Division is receiving more focus and priority within the Department. The Department is actively engaged in discussions with one of our child advocacy organizations on the need to educate state legislators and citizens on the importance of quality child care.

(Action Step 1.2) - Educate the business community on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet 100% of need.

2003 Response:

The Department is convening an action team that will include a cross section of public and private representatives to coordinate activities and funding for increasing school readiness and the quality of care in the Commonwealth. The business community will play a strong role as we move forward in our efforts to build an early care and education system.

(Action Step 1.3) - Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Fund to fulfill current policy allowing federal matching funds for child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income.

2003 Response:

Virginia is watching the current federal CCDF reauthorization efforts closely. Our Governor provided input and comments on several of the bills last fall. Virginia, like most states, is primarily interested in increasing the amount available in Discretionary funding.

(Action Step 1.4) - Increase state funding to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families who seek child care assistance.

2003 Response:

At a time when other states have seen state funding for child care reduced, Virginia has been able to maintain level funding for the subsidy program. The Department is reviewing other states' programs to explore other options for funds that may be counted as state match in order to maximize federal funding.

(Action Step 1.5) - Mobilize federal, state and community resources in support of families who need child care assistance.

2003 Response:

The Department produces booklets and brochures, contracts with a statewide resource and referral network, and issues technical assistance mail-outs to providers to educate parents, inform communities and expand resources available to families needing assistance. The Department also participates in the school readiness indicators project, which will establish and monitor indicators of child, family and community school readiness.

Goal 2: States and Communities Should Broaden Their Child Care Eligibility and Subsidy Policies to Meet the Economic, Work and Education Needs of Families

(Action Step 2.1) - Establish co-payments not to exceed 10% of gross family income.

2003 Response:

Virginia's co-payments are already set at 10% of gross family income.

(Action Step 2.2) - Provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines.

2003 Response:

Income eligible students who participate in an approved education or training program are eligible for child care assistance.

(Action Step 2.3) - Explore broad use of income exemptions to address affordability of child care.

2003 Response:

Virginia is exploring the use of an extended eligibility period that would permit eligible families to receive child care services without review of income unless there are significant changes in the family's income. Policy will be implemented this year that will eliminate income testing for Head Start families after initial eligibility is determined.

(Action Step 2.4) - Eliminate asset testing (e.g. automobile or savings account) from criteria for child care assistance.

2003 Response:

Virginia does not have an asset test for child care assistance.

(Action Step 2.5) - Index income eligibility levels for inflation.

2003 Response:

Virginia is evaluating options for increasing the maximum income levels to 250% of the federal poverty level for areas of the state with higher costs of living.

Goal 3: Outreach Initiatives Should Be Designed and Aggressively Implemented to Assure That Families Have Accessible and Easy-To-Understand Information on Child Care Assistance and Are Provided Assistance in Applying.

(Action Step 3.1) - Provide information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, venues and the media.

2003 Response:

Through a contract with the statewide resource and referral network, families are advised of the child care subsidy program and how to apply for assistance when they request resource and referral services. Local departments of social services participating in community fairs showcase information about quality care and subsidies. Consumers can complete an eligibility assessment on the Department's website; they can obtain an application via the web. Virginia's State CCDF Plan is available for review through the web, and includes information on subsidy rates. The Child Care and Development Division issues technical assistance mail-outs which include subsidy information to child care providers.

(Action Step 3.2) - Ensure that information is accurate, family friendly, employer friendly, culturally sensitive and provided in multiple languages, as appropriate.

2003 Response:

Department brochures on selecting and monitoring child care have recently been translated into Spanish. Procedures are currently under review with a goal of streamlining the application process for families.

(Action Step 3.3) - Present information in a manner that would remove the stigma associated with receiving subsidies.

2003 Response:

Some local DSS offices offer extended operating hours to accommodate parents' work schedules so that the parents don't have to miss work and explain their absence.

(Action Step 3.4) - Provide literature and assistance to help parents make informed provider choices.

2003 Response:

The Department provides booklets and brochures to parents to educate them on making informed decisions about child care.

A video on selecting and monitoring child care has recently been completed and should be distributed this summer to local departments of social services and various public locations. The Department is funding toolkits for new parents, which include information on selecting and monitoring quality child care. The Department is also funding a “warm line” for parents and caregivers, which will offer information on development, health, nutrition and care of infants and toddlers.

(Action Step 3.5) - Coordinate ongoing and strategic outreach activities among common organizations and providers.

2003 Response:

The Department plans to convene an action team comprised of state agency, private organization and business representatives to develop a statewide plan for early care and education. Outreach will be one of the topics covered by the action team.

(Action Step 3.6) - Offer cross-training and information to providers, community organizations, faith organizations, and state agencies to inform them about child care assistance programs and how to assist families in filing applications.

2003 Response:

Local departments of social services coordinate with many Head Start programs to facilitate applications for child care assistance through scheduled Head Start orientation sessions. Staff with the Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development receive training on the child care assistance program and assist families who have children with special needs or families who are homeless apply for the program.

Goal 4: The Child Care Application and Redetermination Processes Should Be Uncomplicated and Family Friendly.

(Action Step 4.1) - Simplify applications for child care assistance.

2003 Response:

Virginia’s application for child care assistance is a one page application which takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

(Action Step 4.2) - Allow filing by mail, phone, fax or internet.

2003 Response:

Filing is permitted by mail. The validity of an application made without an original signature must be investigated before phone, fax or internet applications can be accepted.

(Action Step 4.3) - Minimize requests for documentation at initial application and utilize documents already on file.

2003 Response:

Documentation of employment or enrollment in an education/training program and verification of income are the basic requirements at initial application. If that information is already available within the local department of social services, applicants do not have to provide it a second time.

(Action Step 4.4) - Provide applications at multiple sites.

2003 Response:

Applications are available through all 121 local departments of social services and participating Community Services Boards and on the Department's website. Applications will be mailed to anyone who requests one.

(Action Step 4.5) - Offer non-conventional hours of operation for eligibility offices and provide toll-free phone lines to include evening and weekend hours.

2003 Response:

A number of local departments of social services remain open evenings to offer services during non-conventional hours. Hours of operation are at the discretion of local governments.

(Action Step 4.6) - Explore presumptive eligibility or otherwise provide immediate eligibility contingent upon final approval.

2003 Response:

Presumptive eligibility is being explored for families who are transitioning off Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and expedited eligibility is being explored to allow families to begin employment immediately.

(Action Step 4.7) - Eliminate requirements for a face-to-face interview both for initial application and for redetermination.

2003 Response:

A face-to-face interview is not currently a requirement.

(Action Step 4.8) - Provide consultation on making appropriate choices when excessive requests for provider changes are filed.

2003 Response:

Child care social workers in local departments of social services provide consultation and may provide mediation with families and providers when numerous provider changes occur.

(Action Step 4.9) - Establish a 12-month redetermination period where there are no changes in income or job status.

2003 Response:

An eligibility determination is required annually. Quarterly contacts are made with the family or the provider to assure that services are meeting the needs of the child and the parent.

(Action Step 4.10) - Continue eligibility for full subsidy for 12 weeks if family loses employment but can document that a job search is underway.

2003 Response:

Continued eligibility during job search is currently under consideration. Action may be deferred until CCDF reauthorization is finalized in order to incorporate possible new federal requirements.

Goal 5: Establish a Coordinated, Seamless Eligibility System So That Funding Sources Are Invisible to Families and Support Continuity of Child Care.

(Action Step 5.1) - Eliminate the need for families to reapply when eligibility categories change by automatically searching to exhaust all eligibility categories before closing cases.

2003 Response:

Eligibility is seamless for participants in the TANF and the Food Stamps Employment and Training (FSET) programs. Due to limited funding and the possibility of waiting lists, families must apply for other fee child care services separately.

(Action Step 5.2) - Explore the potential for policy and procedural changes to achieve linkages with or combined applications for child care assistance, Head Start, Pre-K and Title I.

2003 Response:

On the agenda of an action team headed by the secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Department of Education. Head Start, child care and the Department of Education have had one meeting so far. We are very interested in bending funding and streamlining processes between programs.

(Action Step 5.3) - Continue eligibility in programs with multiple funding sources to assure continuity of care in the event that eligibility has expired or terminated in one program.

2003 Response:

Refer to Action Step 5.1.

(Action Step 5.4) - Work collaboratively with all public and private programs and funding sources to assure that children receive stable and consistent early child care services.

2003 Response:

The Department plans to convene an action team comprised of state agency and private organization representatives to develop a statewide plan for early care and education.

Goal 6: Establish Customer Service Outcome Goals and Set Standards to Ensure that All Families are Treated With Dignity and Respect and Are Served in an Efficient Manner.

(Action Step 6.1) - Provide professional and well-trained eligibility staff who are culturally and linguistically sensitive.

2003 Response:

Child care staff are generally social workers in local departments of social services. Skills training such as, “Child Care Challenges – Dealing with Disruptive Behavior,” “Working with Providers” and “Documenting Child Care Cases,” is available to all staff through the Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities.

(Action Step 6.2) - Facilitate quick eligibility determination through reasonable caseloads and/or administrative structure.

2003 Response:

Local departments of social services receive funding for administrative child care functions, separate from other administrative funds, to help offset the costs of case and caseload management.

(Action Step 6.3) - Conduct periodic, independent and thorough consumer satisfaction assessments, assuring the confidentiality of information collected.

2003 Response:

The statewide resource and referral network will be asked to assist the Department in conducting a consumer satisfaction survey in the next year.

(Action Step 6.4) - Provide adequate support for child care resource and referral services.

2003 Response:

The Department contracts with the Virginia Child Care Resource and Referral Network to provide families with assistance for locating and obtaining child care services.

Goal 7: Design the Subsidy System So That Rate Structures Assure That Families Receiving Child Care Assistance Have Access to All Types of Child Care and Disallow Charges Above Established Co-Payments.

(Action Step 7.1) - States should cap reimbursement rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years that accurately reflects the price of all types of care in communities across the state.

2003 Response:

The child care reimbursement rate is not currently set at the 75th percentile due to budget constraints. The market rate survey completed in December 2002 is currently being analyzed with the goal of returning reimbursement rates to the 75th percentile.

(Action Step 7.2) - Establish and evaluate reimbursement policies that encourage provider participation and are responsive to family needs.

2003 Response:

Just now looking at this. No action has been approved at this point.

(Action Step 7.3) - Prohibit providers from charging above the established co-payments.

2003 Response:

Many providers do not charge families above the established co-payments; however, to allow families access to all legally operating providers, a prohibition against charges above the co-payment is not possible. Providers may not charge recipients of child care subsidies more than they charge the general public.

Goal 8: Create Partnerships With Employers to Expand Child Care Assistance for Working Families.

(Action Step 8.1) - Educate employers about the bottom line benefits associated with public and private child care assistance.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 8.2) - Enlist business leaders to champion the involvement of southern businesses and to serve as mentors to other businesses.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 8.3) - Provide information to employers on all available tax benefits related to child care assistance, including deductions for donations to tax-exempt child care organizations, capital costs for constructing a child care center and establishing a pre-tax dependent care assistance plan.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 8.4) - Facilitate collaborative initiatives that enable employers to share ideas as well as pool their resources to address child care needs.

2003 Response:

The Department plans to convene an action team comprised of state agency, private organization and business representatives to develop a statewide plan for early care and education. Expanding available resources will be one of the topics covered by the action team.

(Action Step 8.5) - Provide matching funds or other tax or financial incentives for employers to invest in child care.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 8.6) - Establish incentives for employers to create child care benefit programs for their employees or to contribute to child care purchasing pools in their state or community.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 8.7) - Reduce the administrative burden on employers participating in any joint public/private child care assistance program.

2003 Response:

No response.

Goal 9: Provide Child Care Assistance to Working Families Through Federal and State Tax Laws.

(Action Step 9.1) - Make the federal child dependent care tax credit refundable.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 9.2) - Establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits in states with income taxes.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 9.3) - Raise federal and state child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the price of quality care.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 9.4) - Index for inflation the state and federal child and dependent care tax credit income eligibility and expense limits.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 9.5) - Ensure that child and dependent care tax credits are clearly identified and easy to claim by filers using either the short or long form.

2003 Response:

No response.

(Action Step 9.6) - Encourage the use of effective state tax strategies to provide financial support for child care.

2003 Response:

No response.

Goal 10: States Should Have Effective, Coordinated Systems to Guide Child Care and Early Childhood Policy Decisions and Direct Use of Resources.

(Action Step 10.1) - Facilitate greater coordination in eligibility policies across child care and early childhood education programs at state and local levels.

2003 Response:

No response.

The Department collaborated with Head Start to coordinate and streamline eligibility policies. The Department regularly collaborates with state pre-K programs through the Department of Education. Local departments are asked to identify their collaborative partners through a local child care plan.

(Action Step 10.2) - All southern states and the District of Columbia should participate in a collaborative effort to develop and collect common data elements across states.

2003 Response:

The Department is working to develop an automated system for the child care program which will permit the collection of data.