



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

System Context

Virginia's child welfare system is state supervised and locally administered through the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and 120 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). The Division of Family Services (DFS) leads statewide practice by providing oversight, guidance, training, and technical assistance across prevention, child protective services, permanency, and quality assurance and accountability. Five regional offices further strengthen local capacity through targeted technical assistance and training. This infrastructure enables consistent practice, data-driven decision making, and partnership with communities to address the Program Improvement Plan's (PIP) priorities.

Vision: A commonwealth in which individuals and families have access to adequate, affordable, and high-quality human/social services that enable them to be the best they can be.

Mission: People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to share strong futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

Overview & PIP Priorities

Kinship is the foundation of Virginia's child welfare practice. It is woven across every strategy to keep children connected to family, supported by familiar caregivers, and anchored in relationships that promote safety, stability, and permanency. This kin-first culture informs both priorities: preventing entry by mobilizing family supports early and achieving timely permanency through sustained engagement with relatives and kin networks.

Guided by Virginia's vision of accessible, high-quality services and our mission of helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect, Virginia's PIP is built on the Commonwealth's strong performance in keeping children safely with their families and steadily increasing kinship placements. To extend these strengths, Virginia will pursue two priorities:

- 1) Reduce foster care entry by keeping children safely with their families; and
- 2) Shorten time in care by achieving timely permanency.

Each priority is supported by clear strategies, action steps, and measures that track progress and outcomes. While Virginia’s trajectory is positive, older and high-acuity youth continue to face greater placement instability and are more likely to enter congregate care, and the rate of youth aging out remains above the national average. Targeted support for these youth paired with expanded family-based options will enhance stability and reduce reliance on congregate settings.

Alignment with TB #14 and CFSR

Virginia officially opted into the Technical Bulletin #14 PIP Pilot on June 26, 2026. Throughout the pilot, VDSS will report monthly on the foster home-to-child capacity ratio, which as of June 2026 meets the 1:1 benchmark (5,254 homes to 5,233 children). The PIP is anchored in the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) framework, which helps states assess strengths, identify opportunities for improvement, and implement systemic changes that advance child and family well-being. This alignment ensures Virginia’s priorities are achieved through evidence-informed standards and continuous quality improvement. The requirements to report the federal measures are incorporated in the Appendix.

Stakeholder Partnership

VDSS affirms that strong partnerships drive better outcomes and that “how we do our work is as important as the work itself.” Collaboration with child welfare partners, including those with lived experience, is essential to achieving the best possible results for children and families. The PIP draws on the 2025 Statewide Assessment (SWA), CFSR Round 4 case reviews and stakeholder interviews, and the 2025–2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Local and state partners, courts, service providers, and youth and families contributed meaningful input to these processes. Ongoing engagement will continue through implementation via routine feedback cycles and data reviews, refining measures and strategies to sustain improvement.

Summary

Virginia will maintain the 1:1 ratio for foster homes throughout the PIP and advance strategies that deepen family engagement, expand kinship and family-based options for older youth, and reduce time in congregate care through community-based interventions. The plan will also improve access to prevention services, so families receive timely, needs-aligned supports

before removal is considered. Together, these actions leverage Virginia's strengths to enhance safety, stability, and permanency for children and families across the Commonwealth.

Priority 1: Reduce entry into foster care by keeping children safely with their families.

Strategy: Prevention

Goal: Keep children safely with their families through strong family engagement and community-based prevention services.

Action Steps:

- Expand access to services, including evidence-based services focused on addressing child and family needs such as youth behaviors, parental substance use and concrete supports.
- Increase kinship involvement by expanding access to and utilization of family finding and family engagement tools and practices.
- Complete safety and risk assessment tools timely to support service needs.

Measures:

- Utilization of Title IV-E Prevention Funds (quarterly)
- Percentage of CPS Investigations/Family Assessments that are assessed as high/very high risk and conditionally safe that are open to In-Home Services

Priority 2: Reduce time in foster care by achieving timely permanency.

Strategy: Targeted Kinship & Foster Home Engagement, Recruitment and Support

Goal: Increase kin and non-kin foster home placements for children in foster care to include placements for high acuity youth.

Action Steps:

- Reduce barriers for kin seeking to be approved as foster parents.
- Increase early identification, notification and engagement of relatives and kin, with ongoing search throughout the life of the case.
- Recruit, train, and approve foster families who are committed to supporting permanency goals of reunification and relative placement.
- Increase specialized foster homes to meet the needs of high acuity youth in the community.
- Expand ongoing and crisis supports to stabilize foster home placements including kinship wraparound supports.

Measures:

- Percentage of children first placed with kin
- Percentage of children placed in family-based settings

Strategy: Timely Permanency

Goal: Achieve timely permanency for children and youth in foster care.

Action Steps:

- Increase parent, youth, and relative involvement in case planning through structured and intentional family engagement.
- Identify and address barriers and bottle-necks in the processes to finalize legal permanency.
- Conduct case reviews for children in congregate care to identify and address barriers to placement in family-based settings.
- Expand access to child focused recruitment resources for children with the goal of adoption.
- Collaborate with lived experience groups to inform policy and case planning practices.

Measures:

- Percentage of discharges to relatives with assistance (KinGAP and State Funded Kinship Subsidy)
- Percentage of youth aging out of care
- Percentage of children first placed in congregate care
- Percentage of exits to reunification in 12 months or less
- Percentage of exits to adoption in 24 months or less

Appendix – Federal Measure Definitions

Measure	Definition
1:1 Ratio	The ratio of the count of all children who were in foster care on the last day of the month (denominator) to the count of homes available to those children (numerator).
Recent Maltreatment History	Of all children with a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report that reached disposition during the month, the percent who had a prior substantiated or indicated maltreatment report that reached disposition within the prior 182 days.
Maintaining Family Connections	Of all children in care on the last day of the month, the percentage of those children who were living with a relative or kin.
Congregate Care	Of all days children spent in foster care during the reporting month, the percentage of those days that were spent in congregate care.
Home Disruptions	Of all homes with a child placed in the home during the month, the percent of those homes with a disruption during the month.

*Minor formatting adjustments may have been made to this document for 508 compliance.
Content is unaffected.*