

Virginia Department of Social Services

Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

2019-2024

2023 update

Introduction

Virginia's social services system is state supervised and locally administered, with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) providing direction, oversight, and support to the 120 local departments of social services (LDSS) which serve the children and families of Virginia. VDSS partners with the LDSS, and faith-based and non-profit organizations, to support the continuum of placement services and provide resources to temporarily meet the needs of children while their parents work to address the issues which brought the children into care. LDSS and Licensed Child Placing Agencies (LCPA) are responsible for approving foster and adoptive families based on specific Code requirements and regulatory standards. Virginia's resource families are dually approved to foster and when appropriate, adopt, and the approval process is a mutual endeavor between the LDSS or LCPA and the family requesting approval.

The Virginia Children's Services Practice Model

The Virginia Children's Services System Practice Model sets forth a vision for the services that are delivered by all child serving agencies across the Commonwealth, especially the Departments of Social Services, Juvenile Justice, Education, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Office of Children's Services. The practice model is central to all decision-making, present in all meetings, and in every interaction that takes place with a child or family.

1. We believe that all children and communities deserve to be safe.
2. We believe in family, child, and youth-driven practice.
3. We believe that children do best when raised in families.
4. We believe that all children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.
5. We believe in partnering with others to support child and family success in a system that is family-focused, child-centered, and community-based.
6. We believe that how we do our work is as important as the work we do.

Virginia's practice model aligns with VDSS' commitment to improve foster care practices in Virginia and its mission to protect children and promote healthy families. By strengthening partnerships with public and private child welfare agencies and key stakeholders VDSS will promote a Kin First culture that prioritizes placement of children in family-based settings.

Alignment

As part of VDSS' goal to strengthen Virginia's Child Welfare system there have been ongoing, statewide efforts to provide local departments with supports and tools needed to increase the pool of available foster families. The Child and Family Services Review

conducted in 2017, the subsequent Program Improvement Plan and most recently the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee completed in 2019, have provided clear direction for Virginia to implement a Diligent Recruitment Strategic Plan.

CFSR/PIP

Conducted between April 1, 2017 and June 1 2017 the third round of the Virginia's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), indicated that although progress was made towards improving Virginia's child welfare system, there remain significant areas in need of improvement. VDSS's CFSR Program Improvement Plan (PIP) identified areas of concern to include:

1. Foster families who can provide for the identified needs of the child;
2. Placing children with relatives while in Foster Care;
3. Moving children from Foster Care to permanency; and,
4. Achieving permanency in a timely manner.

Review of placement data for the cohort of children who entered and exited care from July 2011 through March 2017, showed 40% of children with one placement, 21% of children with two placements, and 20% of children with three or more placements. The data further showed that the number of placements went up as the child's length of time in care increased; although this aggregate number would also include cases where placement changes were related to the goal.

A significant need, as identified by LDSS staff, are foster family placements for teenagers (approximately 38% of the foster care population) with foster parents who are trained and have supports necessary to meet the needs of older children (e.g., intensive case management, specialized services for children, etc.). LDSS supervisors and workers participated in Town Halls across the state and reported that they struggle to find appropriate foster family placements for sibling groups, African American children, and youth (approximately 30% of the foster care population). It was further reported that treatment foster care families are no better equipped to support children who exhibit difficult behaviors than are locally approved foster families resulting in many children being placed in congregate care facilities.

The lack of data related to the number of locally approved families and treatment foster care families along with the lack of information related to the age and needs of children in foster care is a significant barrier to ensuring that all children who enter foster care in Virginia live in a family. Virginia also does not have aggregated racial or ethnic demographic data for resource families. As a result, the state is unable to ensure that the pool of resource families reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the children needing foster and adoptive families.

Strategy 3.2 in the PIP specifically addressed these issues through a comprehensive Diligent Recruitment Strategic Plan developed by a workgroup made up of state/regional staff, LDSS staff, stakeholders, and foster parents. This plan was intended to address data collection to allow Virginia to determine the number and types of foster and adoptive families needed as it relates to the foster care population.

Adoption Call to Action

In 2020, the Division of Families Services Practice Program areas: Foster Care, Adoption and the Resource Family programs aligned division outcomes and resources along with Virginia's five-year Child and Family Services Strategic Plan, Child and Family Services Review (Program Improvement Plan), and Virginia's Diligent Recruitment Strategic Plan to develop Virginia's plan for the Adoption Call to Action Initiative (ACTA).

Regional Permanency Practice Consultants conducted a review of the cases of all children placed in congregate care and identified 550 children who were placed in congregate care not due to medical necessity. Of those children, Virginia identified 33 children under the age of 12, for whom termination of parental rights has been obtained and have the goal of adoption. The 33 children became the focus of the ACTA. Over the course of nine months, the ACTA initiative was managed by the Adoption Policy Specialist. Due to the complexity of the cases and limited time of the initiative, the goal was to have 40% or 13 of the 31 youth placed in prospective adoptive families by December 2020. The regional Adoption Negotiators worked with their regional peers; permanency practice consultant and resource family consultants along with the LDSS monthly to monitor progress of placing youth safely in prospective adoptive families. Of the 33 children in the ACTA initiative; 23 (70%) identified an adoptive family or have been placed with an adoptive family. Below is a regional breakdown:

Region	# children identified	# children placed/visiting
Central	8	8
Eastern	3	2
Northern	9	5
Piedmont	8	3
Western	5	5

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)

In December 2018, JLARC submitted the report [“Improving Virginia’s Foster Care System”](#), which highlighted the need for the state to invest in a resource family program with the goal of ensuring that every child in foster care lives in a family. In particular, the report identified a lack of a strategic plan for recruiting foster families and a lack of a statewide inventory of foster families as failings in the current system. The report made the following recommendations for the General Assembly to consider for foster family recruitment and retention efforts:

RECOMMENDATION 4 The Virginia Board of Social Services should promulgate regulations to require staff of local departments of social services to at least annually conduct a search for relatives of every child who (i) is not placed with relatives and (ii) has no clear permanent placement options. The amended regulation should further require that relative searches be conducted when a child’s placement changes, if such a search has not been conducted in the 90 days prior.

RECOMMENDATION 6 The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) should issue clear guidance that presents the options available to local departments of social services to facilitate the approval of relatives to serve as foster parents. Guidance materials should be issued to all local departments and regional VDSS staff.

RECOMMENDATION 7 The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Title 63.2, Chapter 9 of the Code of Virginia to require every local department of social services to provide semiannually to the Virginia Department of Social Services a list of all licensed foster families who reside in their locality. The list should, at a minimum, include foster families’ contact information, preferences regarding the age, number, and needs of children each family would consider fostering, key demographic information for each family, the number and ages of children each family is currently fostering, the total number of other children in each family’s home and their ages, and biological relationships (if any) between each family and the children they are fostering.

RECOMMENDATION 8 The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Social Services to develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining foster families.

RECOMMENDATION 9 The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to establish six positions—five regional staff and one at the central office—at the Virginia Department of Social Services responsible for

implementing the statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining foster families and supporting local recruitment and retention efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 11 The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Social Services to (i) conduct an immediate review of the circumstances of every child in foster care currently in congregate care, to identify children who do not have a clinical need to be in congregate care; (ii) communicate its findings to each local department of social services; (iii) direct the local departments to make concerted efforts to identify appropriate family-based placements for these children; and (iv) direct the local departments to move identified children to an appropriate family-based placement, if feasible.

Virginia's Response to JLARC Recommendations

Based on JLARC's recommendations a Diligent Recruitment Workgroup comprised of supervisors from five local departments along with representatives from the Capacity Building Center for Sates, Newfound Families, and Virginia's Kids Belong, the Governor's Office/VA Fosters, VDSS Regional Practice Consultants and Home Office staff was organized in early 2019. The workgroup was convened to begin developing a data-driven strategic recruitment and retention plan that prioritizes placement of children who enter foster care with relatives whenever possible. Prior to the release of the JLARC report, VDSS had begun data clean-up of its current Online Automated Services Information System (OASIS) to address the lack of accurate Resource Family data. These efforts will continue as VDSS moves toward developing a more reliable data base to track key demographic information of all foster families statewide.

The 2019, General Assembly Budget Appropriation Act allocated funding to hire a Resource Family Program Manager along with five Regional Consultants. Virginia has since filled these positions and now has a Program Manager and a dedicated staff member in each of its five regions to support local recruitment and retention efforts. In March 2020, the Resource Family Policy Specialist position became vacant and went unfilled for the remainder of the calendar year as Virginia implemented a hiring freeze. The Division of Family Services moved quickly to fill vacant positions when the hiring freeze was lifted, and the Policy Specialist position was filled in March 2021.

The Office of the Governor established the Virginia Fosters initiative with the goal of approving 1000 new foster families. In May 2020 the position of Director became vacant and remains unfilled; however, the employee work profile (EWP) is currently under

review and Virginia will move to fill the position within the coming months. Virginia Fosters will partner with LDSS to develop recruitment plans in order to expand the pool of foster families statewide.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC PLACEMENT ACT (MEPA)

Virginia is required to comply with federal laws that promote the best interests of children by ensuring that they have permanent, safe, stable, and loving families that will meet their individual needs, without regard to the child's or the prospective parent's race, color, or national origin. The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994, as amended, prohibits the delay or denial of any adoption or placement in foster care due to race, color, or national origin of the child or the foster or adoptive parents. It also requires States to provide for diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom families are needed. To meet MEPA's diligent efforts requirements, States must have a comprehensive plan detailed that includes:

7. A description of the characteristics of waiting children;
8. Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community;
9. Diverse methods of disseminating both general and child-specific information;
10. Strategies for assuring that all prospective parents have access to the home study process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community;
11. Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities;
12. Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
13. Non-discriminatory fee structures; and
14. Procedures ensuring a timely search for prospective parents awaiting a child, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that the placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

Plan Development Process

VDSS' Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) meetings began in 2018. Initially these meetings consisted of the VDSS Executive State Leadership team. The Executive team reviewed past and current initiatives to ensure that recommendations and requirements outlined in the CFSR/PIP, CFSP, JLARC and Family First Act, would align with the Diligent Recruitment Plan (DR). During the progression of these meetings internal and external stakeholders were invited to join the PIP

meetings to gather their input in developing the statewide strategic DR plan. A DR Advisory Committee was convened which included state and local child welfare staff and private providers. Through these collective efforts of state and local child welfare staff, key stakeholders, and private providers, focus groups were convened to assist in the development of a strategic diligent recruitment and retention plan. Additional input and recommendations were gathered from the Youth Advisory Board, which consists of current and former youth in foster care, to gain a better understanding of the types of families needed. The DR Advisory Committee led to the development of a smaller DR workgroup that was charged with developing a DR five (5) year Strategic Plan. This workgroup in collaboration with the Capacity Building Center for States (CFS) continued working on the development and implementation of the DR plan.

By utilizing a root cause analysis, specific barriers to recruitment of foster families were identified and addressed through the development of goals and strategies. A diligent recruitment plan was created that will support a significant increase in kinship placements while also supporting recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.

Problem Statement and Theory of change

Problem: Children/youth in foster care in VA are not always placed in a family-based setting/placement that is able to meet their needs- resulting in siblings being separated and older youth residing in congregate care settings. Specifically, AA children and youth and children/youth with special needs are not being placed in families that can meet their needs.

Diligent Recruitment Strategic Plan Theory of Change

VDSS/LDSS will systemically utilize a structured diligent recruitment and retention process (policy and guidelines), apply training skills and provide specialized foster parent supports so workers have the ability to assess, train and make appropriate placements

And

Improve state-wide capacity to collect data in order for staff to use data-driven decision-making pertaining to placement

So that

VDSS/LDSS use the skills, tools, process, data to identify kinship and foster families that can meet the needs of sibling groups, minority children, older youth, and children/youth with specific needs and the types of families needed in the geographic areas where they are most needed

So that

Recruitment efforts can be targeted to increase the availability of the right families where they are needed with kinship placement being the first priority

And

Workers will immediately assess and quickly approve kinship and foster families

So that

Children are placed with the right families in the right geographic areas who can meet the child/youth's specific needs

And

Families receive specific supports to meet the needs of the children in their homes.

Goal: All children/youth in foster care in Virginia (especially AA, older youth, and children with special needs) will live in a kinship or foster family that will meet their needs, and children/youth will benefit from their connections to their siblings, families, and communities.

Characteristics of Children in Care

Source: VDSS Office of Research and Planning Foster Care Children Demographic Report

The tables below provide demographic data and characteristics of the children placed in Virginia's foster care system. As of December 31, 2022, there were 5,060 children in foster care, 4,219 children age under 18. See tables below for additional information.

Table 1

Race of children in Foster Care

Year	Black	Percent Black	White	Percent White	Am Indian Alaska Native	Percent Am Indian Alaska Native	Asian	Percent Asian	Hawaiian Pacific Islander	Percent Hawaiian Pacific Isl	Multi-race	Percent Multi-race	Hispanic	Percent Hispanic
2019	1642	29.8%	3273	59.3%	2	0.0%	36	0.7%	6	0.1%	473	8.6%	611	11.1%
2020	1487	28.4%	3114	59.4%	3	0.1%	49	0.9%	7	0.1%	491	9.4%	587	11.2%
2021	1376	27.9%	2924	59.3%	11	.2%	42	.9%	7	.1%	474	9.6%	547	11.1%
2022	1390	27.5%	3000	59.3%	2	0.0%	46	0.9%	10	0.2%	524	10.4%	543	10.7%

Table 2
Age of children in Foster Care

Year	Under 1	Percent Under 1	Age 1 thru 5	Percent 1 thru 5	Age 6 thru 9	Percent 6 - 9	Age 10 thru 12	Percent 10 - 12	Age 13 thru 15	Percent 13 - 15	Age 16 thru 18	Percent 16 - 18	Age 19 & Over	Percent 19+
2019	274	5.0%	1279	23.2%	841	15.2%	634	11.5%	843	15.3%	1166	21.1%	480	8.7%
2020	241	4.6%	1239	23.6%	776	14.8%	558	10.6%	791	15.1%	1108	21.1%	530	10.1%
2021	237	4.8%	1102	22.4%	684	13.9%	537	10.9%	774	15.7%	1030	20.9%	565	11.5%
Year	Under 1	Percent Under 1	Age 1 thru 5	Percent 1- 5	Age 6 thru 9	Percent 6 - 9	Age 10 thru 12	Percent 10 - 12	Age 13 thru 15	Percent 13 - 15	Age 16 thru 17	Percent 16 - 17	Age 18 & Over	Percent 18+
2022	216	4.3%	1169	23.1%	716	14.2%	554	10.9%	813	16.1%	751	14.8%	841	16.6%

Table 3
Average Time in Care (in months)

Year	Average Time in Care (in Months)	Return Home	Placement with Relatives	Adoption	Permanent FC	Independent Living	Another Planned Perm Living Arrangement	Continued FC	To Be Determined	Guardianship	No Goal Entered
2019	18.73	10.71	16.90	30.58	26.30	18.52	26.73	0.00	6.75	0.00	4.13
2020	20.04	11.74	16.90	31.17	28.48	18.74	23.41	0.00	7.92	0.00	5.98
2021	20.76	11.11	18.76	32.41	29.73	20.80	28.51	0	8.45	0	12.52
2022	20.07	10.20	17.75	32.88	30.87	22.01	18.74	0.00	6.67	0.00	9.20

Goal 1: Increase the pool of kinship and foster families statewide

Objective	Activities	Alignments	Time Frames	Benchmarks	Measures of progress	Implementation supports – staff training needs, technical assistance, evaluation processes, etc.	2022 Update
A. Prioritize data cleanup, collection and utilization	i. Establish data input process and procedures	JLARC 7	January 2024 Ongoing	Data dashboard in place with current kids in care and	Statewide Participation	Work collaboratively with COMPASS team to develop protocol for	Virginia launched a centralized foster parent recruitment portal known as “Faster Families Highway” (FFH) in April 2022. Implementation began in the Piedmont Region and concluded with the Central

	<p>ii. OASIS cleanup of resource family records to accurately reflect the number and location of locally approved families</p> <p>iii. Use of COMPASS to maintain data that reflects the geographic location and ethnic and cultural information of both locally approved foster families as well as Treatment Foster Care families</p>			available families		<p>collection of required data</p> <p>Implement a statewide SOP for entering Resource Family data</p>	<p>Region implementation in November 2022. The FFH has provided VDSS with the ability to monitor response to foster parent applications, approved families, and utilization statewide, regionally and locally. Demographic information related to prospective as well as approved foster parents is being collected and reported to VDSS by the contractor monthly.</p> <p>VDSS will continue to evaluate whether the information maintained in the Faster Families Highway will allow for more effective management of data including the location of Virginia's locally approved foster families.</p>
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	approved by LCPAs						
B. Increase the frequency of kinship approvals statewide	<p>i. VDSS will establish clear guidance for LDSS to facilitate approval of relatives at time of removal or when identified</p> <p>ii. LDSS will utilize guidance to increase the frequency of</p>	JLARC 6 JLARC 4 PIP 3.2	<p>July 2021</p> <p>Completed January 2021</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>VDSS will revise guidance to provide clear direction related to child specific approval of kin</p> <p>LDSS will develop and utilize a process of approving kinship</p>	<p>100% of PIP agencies will develop a process to initiate child specific approval of kin</p> <p>Statewide Implementation</p>	<p>Resource family unit along with PIP agencies will review and suggest changes to home approval guidance that promote and clarify the process of approval of kin</p>	<p>Regional Practice Consultants have continued to support LDSS improving their ability to discover, engage and place children who enter foster care with relatives. During 2022 local departments utilized 463 waivers to place 549 children with relatives.</p> <p>Currently 14% of children under the age of 18 are placed with kinship foster parents, while 11% of all children in foster care are placed with a relative, up from 8.1% during 2019.</p>

	relative approvals			families as outlined in guidance			
C. Recruit foster families in the right geographical areas that can meet the specific needs of children and youth	<p>i. VDSS will provide data to LDSS to include demographic characteristics of kids in care to include geo-mapping of removal homes</p> <p>ii. LDSS will annually develop data driven recruitment plans that are targeted to the needs of their children and the location of</p>	JLARC 11	<p>January 2021</p> <p>Completed September 2021</p> <p>January 2023</p> <p>January 2024</p>	LDSS will utilize data specific to the needs of their children and families to implement recruitment plans	<p>25% of agencies will develop data driven recruitment plans that reflect the needs of their children and families</p> <p>75% of agencies will develop data driven recruitment plans that reflect the needs of their children and families</p>	Resource family practice consultants will assist LDSS in utilizing data to develop annual recruitment plans.	<p>All LDSS now have access to the demographic characteristics of children in foster care. All LDSS are supported by CRAFFT in developing data driven recruitment plans.</p> <p>Through implementation of the FFH, local departments now can engage community partners in general, targeted and child specific recruitment plans using QR codes on printed materials and links to the FFH on community partner websites.</p> <p>Additionally, 25% of LDSS have continued to partner with three organizations to develop data driven recruitment plans in partnership with LDSS. Each engaged in child-focused, targeted, and general kinship,</p>

	the children's families.		January 2024 Ongoing		Statewide implementation		foster and adoptive family recruitment in four VDSS geographic regions, Eastern, Central, Piedmont and Northern under RFP #FAM-20-093. Jewish Family Services, Connecting Hearts, served the Central region, Extra Special Parents provided recruitment services in the Piedmont region, and Virginia One Church, One Child operated in the Eastern and Northern regions.
	ii. LDSS will develop child specific recruitment plans for children placed in congregate care, children with special needs and sibling groups.		January 2021 Completed December 2020 January 2023	LDSS will target recruitment of families who can meet the specific needs of children identified as hard to place	25% of agencies will develop strategies to identify families for children identified as hard to place. 75% of agencies will develop strategies to identify families	Resource family practice consultants will assist LDSS in case mining to identify relatives and fictive kin who may be considered for placement. Locally approved families and Treatment Foster Care families will be	Recruitment efforts related to RFP #FAM-20-093 resulted in 112 unduplicated foster care families matched to youth residing in congregate care in search of a LDSS or LCPA approved family-based foster care placement. Targeted recruitment resulted in 225 families being identified in communities lacking adequate family-based placements. 102 families were matched with youth for whom TPR has

			<p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		<p>for all children who enter foster care.</p> <p>Statewide Implementation</p>	<p>explored in order to identify families willing to accept placement and work with the local department to meet the specific needs of children.</p>	<p>been achieved and were residing in congregate care.</p> <p>Virginia’s Kids Belong “I Belong Project” (IBP) in collaboration with Regional Resource Family and Permanency Practice consultants coordinated child specific video and picture events targeting children for whom TPR had been achieved and are currently placed in congregate care. The IBP shoots were strategically coordinated every 6 weeks in areas throughout the state near congregate care facilities where targeted children were placed. Regional Practice Consultants worked with LDSS to identify the children eligible for video shoots and supported efforts to coordinate transportation to and from the locations of the shoots. As a result, 72 children in need of adoptive families participated, resulting in 833 family inquiries during 2022. There</p>
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							has been a 201% increase in inquiries from 2021 to 2022
	iii. VDSS will provide Virginia's Kids Belong and Virginia Fosters with demographic data of children in foster care.		April 2020 May 2022 Community Engagement Coordinator Hired	Virginia's Kids Belong and Virginia Fosters will identify LDSS that it will assist in developing a data driven recruitment plan	Virginia's Kids Belong and Virginia Fosters will develop recruitment strategies to find families that reflect the needs of the LDSS	Resource Family Program manager will meet at least monthly with Virginia's Kids Belong and Virginia Fosters staff to provide data and assist in the development of recruitment strategies and plans.	In collaboration with the office of Governor Glen Youngkin, VDSS hired a Community Engagement Coordinator in May 2022. The coordinator will lead Governor Youngkin's efforts to develop a public awareness campaign featuring "Virginia's Kids Corps" that will highlight ways that communities and individuals can work with LDSS to support biological, foster, and kinship families to keep families intact.
	iv. VDSS will include Licensed Child Placing Agencies (LCPA) in regional recruitment plans to focus their efforts on identifying families for		April 2021 Completed April 2021	LCPAs will be included in Regional Recruitment planning	Increased participation and involvement of LCPAs in state sponsored meetings	Resource Family unit will include LCPAs in each region in developing recruitment plans	During 2022, VDSS has engaged LCPAs in the Central and Piedmont regions in discussion about the development of an enhanced treatment foster care pilot program. During 2023, VDSS will develop an Enhanced Treatment Foster Care pilot program to provide 12-15 families available across Virginia through

	children with special needs including intense behavioral challenges and children in congregate care.						contracts with LCPAs who demonstrate the ability to develop and support professional foster parents to support children with special needs, and intense emotional and behavioral challenges.
D. Increase the frequency at which pre-service training is offered to prospective foster families	i. Consortium for Resource, Adoptive, and Foster Family Training (CRAFFT) will work with Practice Consultants in each Region to develop a consistent and ongoing preservice training schedule		January 2021 Ongoing target for completion January 2023	A calendar outlining an annual pre-service training schedule will be published on the VDSS website	Each region will develop a pre-service training schedule that families seeking approval can access	Practice Consultants will work with CRAFFT and PIP agencies to develop training schedules that include at least two pre-service trainings annually	During 2022, the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill which will require the LDSS to work collaboratively to develop and maintain a pool of foster homes in order to increase the likelihood that children in foster care can be placed near to their home communities. Guidance developed to support the LDSS in implementing this requirement included direction to consider collaborating among the LDSS and with state pre-service trainers to ensure that there are increased options for prospective foster parents to participate in training relatively quickly after expressing interest. In 2023, a

							<p>statewide training calendar will be developed by CRAFFT in partnership with LDSS within each region. The FFH will provide data related to prospective foster parent inquiries that will allow CRAFFT and LDSS to collaborate to schedule pre-service trainings in locations most accessible to families who enter the FFH and are most prepared to become approval.</p>
<p>E. A Diligent Recruitment Advisory Committee will be developed to review guidance and policy related to resource families</p>	<p>VDSS will establish a Diligent Recruitment Advisory Committee</p>		<p>August 2020</p> <p>Completed August 2020</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings will rotate between regions to ensure that LDSS, kinship and foster families in each region have the opportunity to offer input</p>	<p>Advisory Committee meetings will be scheduled in each region</p>	<p>Resource Family practice consultants will identify kinship caregivers along with foster parents in each region who will serve on the Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Regional Resource Family Advisory Committees have continued to meet quarterly within each region. Advisory committees have reviewed and provided input related to tools and resources VDSS has provided LDSS related to engagement of family and assessment of kinship caregivers. The Advisory Committees continue to provide an opportunity for LDSS to share ideas and support each other in improving the recruitment, approval, and support of</p>

							foster parent including kinship foster parents. This task is complete.
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Goal 2: Support, develop and retain foster families who are equipped to meet the needs of Virginia’s children

Objectives	Activities	Alignments	Time Frames	Benchmarks	Measures of progress	Implementation supports – staff training needs, technical assistance, evaluation processes, etc.	2022 Update
A. Utilize data to understand how to develop support and retention plans	i. Utilize data to identify the number of kinship and resource families statewide and where they are located	JLARC 8	January 2024 Ongoing	State and regional data dashboard in place and utilized to understand where families are located	Statewide Implementation	Resource family unit will utilize regional roundtables to assist LDSS in developing plans of support and retention for foster families in their region.	Resource Family consultants along with CRAFFT will continue to conduct quarterly roundtables to support LDSS in developing foster parent retention strategies. In

							partnership with the office of Governor Glen Younkin Virginia's Kids Corps campaign will launch in the summer of 2023 to prepare volunteers to provide wrap around support to foster and kinship families in order to retain them.
B. Develop the ability of approved families to serve older youth and children with special needs	i. VDSS will utilize CRAFFT to provide training necessary for kinship families and foster families to meet the needs of children with special needs, and children with significant		July 2020 Projected date of completion January 2023	LDSS will utilize data and case reviews at least annually, to identify children placed in congregate care and understand the barriers to placement in a family	Statewide Implementation	Resource family practice consultants will work with PIP agencies and CRAFFT coordinators to develop in service training plans specific to the needs of children placed in congregate care	Congregate Care case reviews remain ongoing. During 2023, an Enhanced Treatment Foster Care pilot program will be launched to develop professional foster parents

	behavioral challenges						equipped to meet the needs of children who would otherwise be placed in congregate care. Also during 2023, VDSS will issue a Request for Proposal to engage private agencies in developing Kin and Fictive Kin recruitment strategies to support LDSS reinvesting in family search and engagement for youth residing in congregate care.
	ii. A Tradition of Caring will be utilized during pre-service training		April 2022	CRAFFT coordinators will train LDSS staff to implement A	Each region will have LDSS staff trained to provide A Tradition of	Practice consultants will help LDSS identify staff who may administer A Tradition of Caring when necessary.	LDSS staff within each region have been trained to administer A

	of all kinship foster parents		Completed January 2022	Tradition of Caring	Caring training to kin and fictive kin caregivers	CRAFFT coordinators will also provide A Tradition of Caring training upon request from LDSS.	Tradition of Caring for kin and fictive kin caregivers. Regional CRAFFT coordinators have also continued to administer the curriculum at the request of LDSS approving kin caregivers. This task is complete.
	iii. VDSS and LDSS will partner with Licensed Child Placing Agencies to develop a kinship support model that offers LDSS the opportunity to		January 2024 Ongoing	LCPAs will develop wrap around supports for kinship foster parents as needs are identified by LDSS	An LCPA within each region will be identified to provide support services to kinship foster parents	Resource Family unit along with DR Advisory Committee and LCPAs will identify best practice models with focus on support of kin	VDSS continues to encourage LDSS to purchase LCPA case management and other supportive services for children placed immediately with kinship

	purchase wrap around services						foster families. During 2023, through a Kin and Fictive Kin recruitment for youth in foster care request for proposal, VDSS will engage private providers in support local departments search and engagement efforts and provide ongoing support to kinship foster parents caring for their relative children.
C. Prioritize retention of foster families using state and regional	iv. Virginia's Kids Belong in partnership with VDSS will develop regional foster parent support,		January 2022 Completed January 2022	Virginia's Kids Belong will develop community partnerships within each region focused on providing	Statewide implementation of support and retention plan	Resource Family unit will meet monthly with Virginia's Kids Belong staff to provide necessary data to develop comprehensive	Collaboration between VDSS and Virginia's Kids Belong has continued and expanded during 2022. Regional

retention plans	respite and retention plans			support to kinship and foster families		plans of support and retention of families	Coalitions are operating within each region that engage, faith, government and business leaders in public awareness campaigns, kinship and foster parent support projects as well as foster parent recruitment. This task is complete.
	v. LDSS will utilize the Foster Parent Bill of Rights to establish a standard of practice and a dispute resolution process to		July 2021 Completed July 2021	Foster care and resource family staff will utilize Foster Parent Bill of Rights to increase the capacity to partner with and respond appropriately to foster parent's concerns in	Statewide Implementation	Resource family consultants will provide practice assistance to LDSS in developing a dispute resolution process that prioritizes retention of foster families	The Foster Parent Bill of rights was developed, and the dispute resolution process implemented during 2021. This task is complete.

	reduce foster parent turnover			order to reduce foster parent turnover			
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Goal 3: Invest in a well-trained workforce that is knowledgeable and skilled to support kinship and foster family recruitment, use and retention.

Objectives	Activities	Alignments	Time Frames	Benchmarks	Measures of progress	Implementation supports – staff training needs, technical assistance, evaluation processes, etc.	2022 Update
A. Utilize a data driven decision making model that emphasizes a Kin First culture	i. LDSS will continue relative search throughout the foster care case and include both Maternal and Paternal relative searches.	PIP 3.2.2 JLARC 4	October 2022 Ongoing	Guidance will be revised to include relative search and documentation efforts in OASIS/Compass	Statewide Implementation	Resource Family Practice consultants will review OASIS records to ensure ongoing relative search and provide practice assistance as necessary.	Regional Consultants continue to review relative search and engagement screens to monitor relative participation in Family Partnership Meetings.

							During 2022, the ongoing review and focus on placing children with relatives has led to submission of 463 temporary waivers to allow for immediate placement of 549 children with kinship foster parents.
	ii. LDSS will prioritize approval of relatives anytime a child enters foster care	JLARC 6	<p>July 2021</p> <p>Completed July 2021</p> <p>March 2024</p>	Anytime a child is not placed with a relative upon entry into foster care, LDSS will document reasons for decision not to place the child with a relative	<p>100% of PIP agencies will submit Kinship Exception reports whenever a child is not placed with a relative</p> <p>Statewide Implementation</p>	Regional Resource Family Practice Consultants will review Exception Reports and provide practice assistance as needs are identified	Resource Family Consultants have supported the development of internal Kin First policies within LDSS statewide. During 2022, guidance was updated to outline a process of relative notification, assessment, and denial. The process

			Ongoing				establishes the ability of relatives to appeal the LDSS decision to not approve them to care for a kin child in foster care to the Office of Fair Hearing and Appeals.
B. Enhance the understanding of the importance of placing children in families and with relatives whenever possible	i. VDSS will provide LDSS staff with training specific to working with Kinship Caregivers		January 2022 December 2024 Trainings were made available during April 2021	All LDSS CPS and Foster Care supervisors and staff will complete training to improve understanding of the value of kinship care	Statewide implementation	Resource Family Unit will develop a curriculum designed to facilitate an understanding of the importance of placing children who enter foster care with relatives whenever possible to be available in the Knowledge Center.	CWS 4080 Kinship Care in Virginia is now available in the Knowledge Center. VDSS will include these trainings in mandated new worker trainings during 2023.

						Resource Family Consultants will monitor completion by LDSS supervisors and staff during 2022.	
	ii. VDSS will provide LDSS staff with training to focus on finding and engaging relatives		January 2022 Completed April 2021	All LDSS CPS and Foster Care supervisors and staff will complete training to enhance their ability to locate and engage relatives when children enter foster care	Statewide implementation	Resource Family Unit will develop a curriculum designed to enhance the ability of LDSS staff to identify and engage both Maternal and Paternal relatives to be available in the Knowledge Center. Resource Family Consultants will monitor completion by LDSS supervisors and	CWS 4060 Family Search and Engagement is available in the Knowledge Center and available to FSS and FSS Supervisors. The curriculum includes scripts to be utilized by FSS in facilitating conversations with family members to support the process of learning about family structure, relationships and traditions.

						staff during 2022.	VDSS will include these trainings in mandated new worker trainings during 2023.
	iii. VDSS will provide LDSS staff with training to focus on supporting kinship families		January 2023 Ongoing	All LDSS CPS and Foster Care supervisors and staff will complete training to improve understanding of how to effectively support relative and fictive kin caregivers	Statewide implementation 50% of supervisory staff within LDSS will complete trainings related to family engagement and kinship care.	Resource Family Unit will develop a curriculum designed to improve LDSS staff's understanding of how to meet the needs of relative and fictive kin caregivers to be available in the Knowledge Center. Resource Family Consultants will monitor completion by LDSS supervisors and staff during 2022	During 2022 CRAFTT facilitated 5 Traditions of Caring preparatory trainings for 106 local department family services specialists to support their understanding and use of the curriculum in order to support kinship foster parents. VDSS will include these CWS 4060 Kinship Care in Virginia and CWS 4080 Relative Search and Engagement

							trainings in mandated new worker trainings during 2023.
	iv. VDSS will develop and distribute tools to assist LDSS in developing processes of assessment and approval of kin		January 2022 Completed January 2022	LDSS will utilize tools to improve their ability to assess, approve and support Kinship Families	Statewide implementation	The Resource Family Unit will facilitate quarterly Regional Roundtables to distribute and provide practice assistance related to the utilization of tools	In partnership with regional CRAFTT coordinators, the resource family consultants have facilitated quarterly Regional Roundtables for LDSS staff to support assessment and approval of kinship caregivers. Family discovery interview questions, mobility mapping instructions, a permanency assessment tool, questions to engage parents

							<p>in identifying their natural support networks and guides for scripts for social media outreach to engage family have been made available to all LDSS. During 2022 VDSS developed the Virginia barrier crime determination guide and conducted and recorded a webinar to support the ability of local department staff to review Virginia State Police criminal name checks to determine if children may immediately be placed with relatives upon</p>
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							entering foster care.
	v. VDSS will develop a Mutual Family Assessment training to be completed by anyone writing a home study		January 2022 Completed April 2021	LDSS and LCPA staff whose responsibilities include writing home studies will complete Mutual Family Assessment training	Statewide Implementation	VDSS will develop a curriculum that provides instruction related to thorough assessment of the competencies of foster families, to be delivered by CRAFFT within each region	CWS 3103 Mutual Family Assessment has been updated and is currently being offered quarterly within each region. This task is complete.
C. Improve rates of retention of Family Services Specialists by acknowledging their work and supporting them	i. Virginia's Kids Belong in partnership with VDSS will develop regional partnership designed to acknowledge the work of Family		April 2023	Virginia's Kids Belong will hold quarterly events to celebrate the work of Family Services Specialists within each region	Virginia's Kids Belong will develop partnerships between Business, Non-Profit and Faith Based organizations within each region	Resource Family unit will meet monthly with Virginia's Kids Belong staff to develop plans to acknowledge the work of Family Services Specialists in each region	VDSS in partnership with the office of Governor Glen Youngkin will launch the Virginia Kids Corps public awareness campaign. The campaign will

	Services Specialists in each region						include a focus on the child welfare workforce and the importance of retention. Virginia's Kids Belong has also expressed intent to resume its Foster Friendly Business initiative that began in 2020 but was discontinued as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
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Calendar Year 2022

Virginia has seen the percentage of children in foster care who are placed with relatives increase to 14% for those under 18, while the number of children in foster care who are placed in congregate care has decreased to 8%. The Virginia General Assembly passed into law a requirement that relatives seeking approval as foster parents receive written notification outlining the process of seeking approval. LDSS are also required to notify relatives who are denied approval of the reason for the denial in writing. This process

establishes the ability to relatives who are denied approval to appeal the decision of the LDSS to the Virginia Office of Fair Hearings and Appeals. To support LDSS' consistent assessment of relatives for approval as foster parents so that children who enter foster care may immediately be placed, VDSS developed a Permanency Assessment Tool (PAT.) The PAT guides LDSS staff through the process of conducting a strengths-based assessment with relatives or fictive kin being considered for approval in order to facilitate an understanding of how the LDSS should engage natural supports and community-based services to overcome barriers that could prevent placement. VDSS also developed a Barrier Crimes Determination Guide to support the efforts of LDSS staff to evaluate the presence of barrier crimes while assessing relatives and fictive kin for immediate placement of children.

Virginia has implemented a statewide centralized foster parent recruitment portal through a contract with Adoption-Share to allow for sustained general, targeted and child specific recruitment of non-relative foster families. The portal known as Virginia's Faster Families Highway (FFH) is a data driven application designed to provide a state with a centralized repository of family resources to promote family reunification or placement permanency for children in foster care. Implementation of the FFH began in the Piedmont Region during April 2022 and concluded in the Central Region in November 2022 to provide all local departments of social services with access to "on ramps" to be utilized in community specific recruitment campaigns. Using QR codes and online links through LDSS and community partner websites, prospective foster parents complete a six-step process of sharing their information with their local department of social services. The FFH steers the evolution of a prospective foster family's understanding of foster care and adoption, trauma-informed care, licensure, and individual evaluation and family readiness prior to engagement with LDSS caseworkers. Once connected to a caseworker, a specific family is curated to the individual LDSS, recruited to training, and then trained and approved through the CRAFFT or LDSS training and approval process. During 2023 Virginia will continue to increase the number of children in foster care who are placed with relatives and in family-based settings through the development of local department and private agency partnerships to strengthen Kin First practices and preserve the connections that children have to their natural support networks and communities.