



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Many Virginia children need loving homes

Learn more about positively impacting a child's life during National Foster Care Month

Richmond, VA — Nearly 8,000 of Virginia's children do not have a permanent home. These children need love, encouragement and support from caring families and individuals.

Governor Timothy Kaine has declared May as Foster Care Month in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) joins Governor Kaine in honoring foster care workers and salutes those who open their hearts and homes to these children, encouraging more families and individuals to do the same.

“The goal of Virginia's foster care program is to maintain family unity and ensure that all children grow up in safe, stable homes,” said VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers, Jr. “Children deserve and benefit from enduring, positive relationships with caring adults. When children in crisis receive the care they need, they can grow into responsible, contributing members of society, which benefits us all.”

Children are placed in foster care when their home or family situation is troubled. Children in Virginia's foster care program are diverse and unique – there is no “typical” foster child. What they have in common is the desire for a permanent loving home. This is especially true for older children, teens and siblings.

First Lady Anne Holton launched her foster care initiative, “For Keeps,” earlier this year. “For Keeps” was created to identify and develop ways to find and strengthen permanent families for older children in foster care, or who might be at risk of coming into foster care. The initiative was founded on the belief that every child deserves and needs permanent family connections to be successful.

“As a juvenile court judge, I met so many older teens in foster care trying to navigate the adult world without the stable family foundations that so many of us rely on,” First Lady Holton said. “The ‘For Keeps’ initiative focuses on ensuring that older children in foster care to have permanent family connections and community support to ensure that they develop into successful, independent adults.” Specifics on the First Lady's initiative can be found at <http://www.forkeepsvirginia.org/index.php>

The need for loving foster parents is ongoing for both short and long-term placements. Local departments of social services offer training for families and individuals interested in becoming foster parents.

To learn more about making a positive difference in a child's life, visit:

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/index.html>

The VDSS Home Office is located in Richmond and administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state. The VDSS mission is "People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities."

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Interviews are available upon request. For additional story ideas and for information on how your media outlet can help raise awareness of the need for loving homes for foster children, contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.