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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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## **Headway being made in delivery of services for children and families**

*Child and Family Services Review underway in Virginia*

Richmond – The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) has completed the first phase of a federal review of the child welfare system in the Commonwealth. The second phase is set to begin July 13.

The "self assessment" phase (first phase) of the Child and Family Services Review has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and has been posted on the VDSS Web site at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/reports/children/cfsr.cgi>.

"This review provides an opportunity to examine and enhance the child welfare system in Virginia and develop strategies in support of our mission to keep kids and families safe," said VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr. "Our self assessment shows that our system has strengths and opportunities to better serve children and families."

The Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is reviewing child welfare systems in all states to determine how well they are complying with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. The reviews focus on the ability of states to create positive outcomes for children and families and on the results achieved through programs and services.

Virginia's self assessment was developed using data from VDSS and the [120 local departments of social services](#) throughout the Commonwealth to evaluate current programs. Input from focus groups, surveys and a statewide stakeholders group also was used.

The review assesses child protective services, foster care, adoption and family preservation programs. "The safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children are of particular interest to us," said VDSS Director of Family Services Paul McWhinney.

The purpose of the review is to:

- Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements;
- Determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services;
- Assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes;

- Ensure the safety, permanency and family and child well-being of those served.

The second phase of the review begins July 13 and ends July 17, 2009. Federal officials will visit three localities – Fairfax County, the City of Hampton, and Tazewell County - and pull 65 cases to examine.

"Virginia is focused on enhancing child welfare programs to improve the lives of children and families. VDSS, our local departments of social services and our many partners across the Commonwealth are committed to this effort," McWhinney said.

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