



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

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**VDSS Awarded Grant to Link Systems of Care for Victimized Children and Youth**

**RICHMOND, Va. (June 19, 2015)** – The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is pleased to announce that it has received a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime at the Department of Justice. An initial award of \$398,000 will support a 15-month planning phase, followed by additional awards to support a five-year implementation period. Virginia was one of two states selected to receive the grant, which will be used to implement and operate the Vision 21: Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth State Demonstration initiative.

Vision 21 is a comprehensive and systemic approach to permanently alter the treatment of crime victims in America. Drawing from a wide range of tangible yet difficult to access resources, including legislation, more flexible funding, research, and practice, this initiative endeavors to change how the needs of victims are met and how perpetrators of crime are addressed.

VDSS' goal is to use this program to ensure that every child entering any of Virginia's child-serving systems is assessed for victimization, provided comprehensive and coordinated services to fully address their needs. "With this program, our focus will be to assess and remove barriers such as governmental jurisdictions, funding sources, vastly differentiating program areas, and the lack of cross-systems knowledge," explained VDSS Commissioner Margaret Schultze. "Our priority is to continue to improve our practices to appropriately address the needs of child and youth victims and their families."

VDSS is the lead agency for this initiative and will partner with the Departments of Criminal Justice Services, Juvenile Justice, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Education as well as representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Children's Cabinet and the Department of Health. "The reason that so many agencies are involved is to ensure collaboration from the forefront," explained

Laurie Crawford, Vision 21 Project Manager. “The idea is that, no matter where a child or youth victim enters the system, they are identified and directed to appropriate and trauma-informed services.”

The first 15-month phase of the five-year implementation has been developed and is projected to include the rollout of a brief screening tool that can be used across systems; agency and state-level policy changes; and training for providers on how to support and sustain these changes.

*The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) [www.dss.virginia.gov](http://www.dss.virginia.gov) 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 (LDSS) throughout the state. 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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