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## **Nemours Grant Takes Aim at Childhood Obesity in Virginia** **Five organizations join forces in unique partnership**

Richmond, Va. (Jan. 21, 2014) – Virginia was one of three states selected for a significant grant to implement strategies to reduce childhood obesity in the Commonwealth. Nemours, an internationally recognized children’s health system, has selected the [Virginia Early Childhood Foundation](#) (VECF) and its grant partners: Child Care Aware of Virginia, the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Department of Social Services. The grant is valued at up to \$300,000 for the first year of a potential five-year period, a potential total amount of up to \$1.5 million.

“The implementation of this grant over five years offers enormous potential to reverse the alarming rise in childhood obesity rates in areas across the state,” said William A. Hazel, Jr., MD, Secretary of Health and Human Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia. “VECF and the grant partners will build upon the existing strong relationships in the early childhood health system to empower early child care providers with tools and training about childhood obesity prevention.”

The collaboration of five independent groups to secure funding from a national grant foundation represents a unique and exciting partnership opportunity, according to Kathy Glazer, President of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, which will serve as the lead partner and fiscal agent. “Through our collective effort, we can bring powerful emphasis to improved nutrition and healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding support and reducing screen time,” she said.

“We are delighted to join forces to make childhood obesity prevention a systemic and locally-embedded component of early childhood efforts in Virginia,” said The Honorable John H. O’Bannon III, M.D., member of the Virginia House of Delegates representing the 73<sup>rd</sup> District and Chairman of the [Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth](#). “Child care providers can help young children and their families learn and practice daily habits that lay the groundwork for a lifetime of good health.”

The rollout of projects and strategies, beginning in February 2014, will be targeted to child care providers in three areas of Virginia: Richmond region (including Richmond, Petersburg and Hopewell), South Hampton Roads (including Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk), and Virginia Peninsula (including Hampton and

Newport News). These areas were identified for Phase One of the grant due to the high percentages of childhood obesity as well as poverty.

“Our grant process is highly competitive and the judging team was extremely impressed by the collaborative partnership among these like-minded organizations that will lead this initiative in Virginia,” said Julie Shuell, National Project Director of the [Early Care & Education Learning Collaborative \(ECELC\) for Nemours](#). “We are confident that VECF and the grant partners will implement long-term strategies for healthy changes that will significantly impact school readiness for young children, as well as further the mission of ECELC in targeted areas of the Commonwealth.”

“We salute our partner agencies that have come together to provide leadership on this important effort,” concluded Glazer. “Together we can ensure a healthy start for Virginia’s young children – the best foundation for school, life and workforce success.”

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**About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation:** VECF creates results-oriented partnerships to ensure that young children are healthy and prepared for school, life and workforce success. To learn more about VECF and the Smart Beginnings initiative, visit [www.smartbeginnings.org](http://www.smartbeginnings.org).

**About Nemours:** Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the [Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children](#) in Wilmington, Del., and [Nemours Children's Hospital](#) in Orlando, along with major pediatric specialty clinics in Delaware, Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Established as [The Nemours Foundation](#) through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours offers pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy and prevention programs to all families in the communities it serves. For more information, visit [www.nemours.org](http://www.nemours.org).