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## **Issue brief released on child sexual abuse in Virginia**

*Issue brief examines child sexual abuse statewide and highlights prevention strategies*

**Richmond, Va.** — The Family and Children’s Trust Fund released an issue brief on child sexual abuse in Virginia. The brief, which was developed in partnership with the Virginia Department of Health, highlights national research and effective statewide practices in Virginia regarding how adults and communities can prevent, recognize and respond to child sexual abuse.

“The prevention of child sexual abuse has changed over the years. We know more about what works and what does not work,” said Hayley Mathews, Executive Director of the Family and Children’s Trust Fund. “Talking openly about healthy sexual development is critical to providing truly effective sexual violence prevention. Empowering parents and trusted adults to have accurate information about physical development, healthy behaviors, and sexuality is a protective factor that can aid in the fostering of healthy attitudes and behaviors in children from a young age,” said Mathews.

Prevention efforts that seek to address the root causes of child sexual abuse and challenge norms are now widely supported. Sexual abuse impacts children of all socioeconomic and education levels and across all racial and cultural groups. During state fiscal year 2012, there were 52,675 children reported as possible victims of abuse and/or neglect in Virginia. Of the approximately 6,000 founded investigations of child abuse during that same period, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) reported that 13.6% of the cases were due to sexual abuse.

In addition to focusing on prevention, the brief provides information that helps adults recognize and respond to normal and problematic sexual behavior and the physical and behavioral signs of abuse. The brief also highlights collaborative work taking place at The Collins Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

The [Family and Children’s Trust Fund](#) is a public-private partnership that raises and distributes funds to prevent, treat, and raise public awareness of family violence. Since 2011, The Family and Children’s Trust Fund has published issue briefs to combine national research with Virginia-specific information in an effort to increase understanding about various aspects of family

violence across the lifespan. To view the brief, visit The Family and Children's Trust Fund site or [click here](#).

*Interviews are available upon request. For additional information, please contact Joron Moore-Planter at (804)726-7934 or [Joron.Moore@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Joron.Moore@dss.virginia.gov).*

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