



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mentoring Program for Refugee Youth Hosts Inaugural Capital Tour

Richmond, VA (August 21, 2019) - Seventeen refugee youth from across the Commonwealth of Virginia participated in the first Mentoring Youth in Virginia (MYVA) Capital Tour, hosted by the [Virginia Department of Social Services'](#) Office of Newcomer Services (ONS) on Friday, August 16. Designed to promote positive civic engagement and explore the Commonwealth's rich history, the day-long event featured tours of the Library of Virginia, Civil Rights Memorial, City Hall, State Capitol and Kanawha Canal as well as personalized discussions with the following civic leaders:

- S. Duke Storen, Commissioner, [Virginia Department of Social Services](#) (VDSS)
- Elham Khairi, Community Health Coordinator, [International Rescue Committee in Richmond](#)
- Joseph Jeu, Chief Administrative Officer, [VDSS](#)
- Osita Iroegbu, Senior Policy Advisor, [Office of Mayor Levar Stoney](#)
- Seyoum Berhe, Virginia State Refugee Coordinator, [VDSS ONS](#)
- Dr. Sandra Treadway, Librarian, [Library of Virginia](#)

Virginia is one of 34 states to receive youth mentoring grant funding by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services'](#) [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) for the MYVA program, which supports educational and vocational advancement for refugee-eligible youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Among the program's many support services, youth receive training in college and career preparedness and leadership development, and are matched with a trained mentor for a period of six months to one year.

"In Fiscal Year 2018, 584 refugee youth between the ages of 5 and 24 arrived in Virginia," said Commissioner Storen. "Our agency's core mission is '*people helping people*,' which can only be accomplished by helping support better futures for every individual living in Virginia," he added. "The hope and opportunity that awaits these children and youth is boundless. We are excited about what they will accomplish as they continue to grow, influence their communities and fulfill their dreams."

Currently, fifty-five refugee youth are participating in the MYVA program in eight locations throughout the state, including Arlington, Charlottesville, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Roanoke, Harrisonburg and Newport News.

To learn more about the MYVA program, contact the VDSS Division of Public Affairs at public.affairs@dss.virginia.gov. To view photos of the MYVA tour, click [here](#).

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The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) 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. The VDSS mission is "People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities."