

Child Welfare and Parenting

- child abuse and neglect
- kinship care
- foster care and adoption

OUR AGENDA: Every child lives in a physically and emotionally safe environment and all families provide the support and resources necessary to foster each child's healthy development.

Facts:

- 1 In 2001, almost 9,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect, an average of one child being abused or neglected every hour.
- 2 31 children died as a result of child abuse or neglect.
- 3 7,585 children were in foster care in 2001.
- 4 Over 60,000 grandparents are responsible for raising their grandchildren in Virginia. Almost 16% of these households live in poverty.

We support:

- 1 Expanding effective family support for new parents through high quality home visitor programs.
- 2 Support for grandparents and other non-parent relatives who serve as primary caretakers for children.

Legal System and Juvenile Justice

- representation of children and youth in legal system
- family law
- juvenile justice

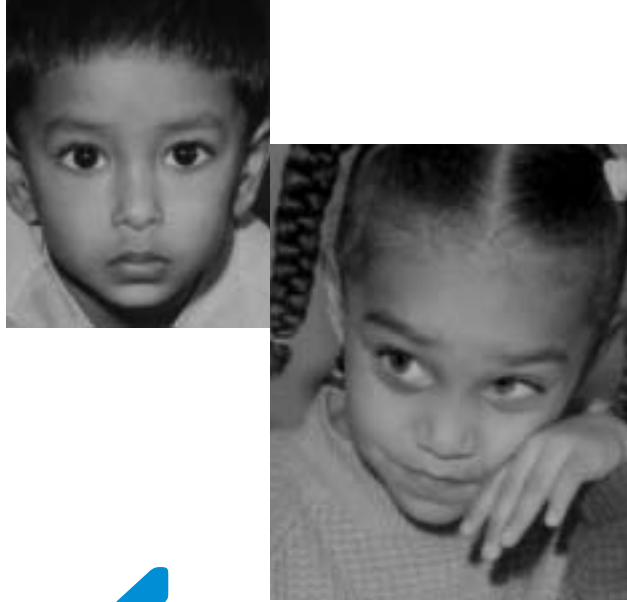
OUR AGENDA: All children involved in the legal or juvenile justice system are fairly represented and receive appropriate services to give them the opportunity to become contributing members of society.

Facts:

- 1 In Virginia, 47% of males and 57% of females who are incarcerated by the Department of Juvenile Justice have identified mental health treatment needs.
- 2 Virginia detains youth at almost double the national average yet does not provide the right to counsel at the initial detention hearing.

We support:

- 1 Ensuring equal protection and due process of law for all children and youth in a system which recognizes their differing capacities and promotes rehabilitation and learning.
- 2 Law which requires that children be provided counsel at the first detention hearing.
- 3 Raising the minimum age for capital punishment sentencing from 16 to 18 years of age.
- 4 Better training for court-appointed attorneys and public defenders representing children and youth.



Youth Development

- youth asset building
- out-of-school time enrichment
- career exploration and preparation
- safe communities for children and youth

OUR AGENDA: All communities will invest in youth as contributing and valuable members of society.

Facts:

- 1 Virginia is one of two states that do not collect comprehensive statewide data on risky behavior.
- 2 27,578 youth between the ages of 16 and 19 were idle (not enrolled in school either full or part-time and not working either full or part-time).
- 3 On school days, the prime time for violent juvenile crime is from 3pm to 6pm. The single most likely hour of the school day for a juvenile to commit an assault inflicting serious bodily injury or an assault with a deadly weapon is between 3pm and 4pm.
- 4 29,588 youth between the ages of 16 and 19 were high school drop-outs (not enrolled in school and not a high school graduate).

We support:

- 1 Biennial statewide administration of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in middle and high schools.
- 2 Formal linkages between schools and out-of-school programs to enhance academic achievement.
- 3 Funding for after school and summer programs to provide reading support and enrichment activities.

Children's Agenda

Campaign 2003:

Windows of Opportunity for Virginia's Children

The Children's Agenda Campaign is a nonpartisan effort to **1** increase voters' and policy-makers' attention to issues affecting children and youth, and **2** provide opportunities for Virginians to act on the behalf of the Commonwealth's 1.7 million children, who have no political voice of their own. • The Children's Agenda results from the participation of over 100 organizational and individual child advocates from across the Commonwealth who commit to developing a unified and focused voice for children.

The following organizations have endorsed the Children's Agenda:

Advocates for Children at Risk (ACAR)
ART 180
Boys & Girls Club of Metro Richmond
Brandt Management Group
The Campagna Center
CHIBB Foundation
Children's Hospital
Children's Law Center
Children's Museum of Richmond
CHIP of Greater Richmond
CHIP of Virginia
Family Lifeline
Greater Richmond SCAN
(Stop Child Abuse Now)
Hanover Department of Social Services
Infant Toddler Family Day Care
of Northern Virginia
JustChildren, a program of
the Legal Aid Justice Center

Mid-Atlantic Juvenile Defender Center
Million Mom March—Richmond Chapter
National Association of Social Workers
—Virginia Chapter
Northern Virginia Interfaith Coalition
for Justice (NVICJ)
Parents Across Virginia United to Reform SOLs
Piedmont CASA
Places & Programs for Children
Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads
Prevent Child Abuse Virginia/Healthy
Families Virginia
Success by 6/United Way of
South Hampton Roads
United Way of Central Virginia

Virginia Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
Virginia Association of Community
Services Boards
Virginia Association for Early Childhood
Education (VAECE)
Virginia Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Virginia Head Start Association
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Mentoring Partnership
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Virginia PTA
Virginia Women's Network
Volunteer Emergency Families for
Children (VEFC)
Voices for Virginia's Children (formerly Action
Alliance for Virginia's Children and Youth)
Youth Law Center



Health

- mental health
- substance abuse
- access to health care
- injury and violence prevention

OUR AGENDA: All children are born healthy and live in safe environments with access to appropriate, quality health care to meet their physical, emotional and mental health needs.

Facts:

- 1 The Governor's initial budget reductions of October 15, 2002 reduced community mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services by ten percent—representing a \$30 million reduction over the biennium. The result is that approximately 18,000 adults and children will lose all or some of their services.
- 2 As many as 100,000 young people in the Commonwealth suffer from serious emotional disturbances. According to the Surgeon General, two-thirds of children with mental health problems do not receive the treatment they need.
- 3 Virginia has only enrolled 58% of its eligible children in FAMIS, the child health insurance program for working families. As a result, the state has forfeited \$58 million in federal funds.
- 4 In 1999, 86 of Virginia's children between the ages of 0 and 19 died because of firearm incidents. This averages one child or teen killed by gunfire every 4 days.
- 5 Virginia's gun death rate is higher than the national average.
- 6 As many as one in four children in Virginia do not have a medical home (a primary care physician that provides comprehensive coordinated, family-centered, consistent care). This is even more common for children from low-income families.

We Support:

- 1 No further cuts to children's mental health services.
- 2 Improving access to a comprehensive array of mental health and substance abuse services for children and youth in Virginia.
- 3 Continuing to reduce barriers to children's enrollment in Medicaid and FAMIS.
- 4 Limiting children's access to firearms.
- 5 Access to a medical home for all children in Virginia, in order to improve child health outcome.
- 6 Improving access to dental care by increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates to levels comparable to private insurance.



Early Care and Learning (0-5)

- availability
- affordability
- quality
- professional development and training
- school readiness

OUR AGENDA: All children are cared for in nurturing environments that promote developmentally appropriate learning and school readiness.

Facts:

- 1 An assessment of kindergarten students in Virginia indicated that 27% entered school without the basic knowledge and skills needed to succeed in kindergarten.
- 2 Child care teachers in Virginia are paid among the lowest wages in the nation. Low compensation, high turnover rate, and low levels of education eviscerate the system, making high quality, affordable child care increasingly difficult for working parents to find.
- 3 Research shows that participants of high quality early child-care programs have higher math and reading scores, are more likely to attend a four-year college, delay pregnancy, avoid criminal behavior, and graduate from high school. This is especially true of children from low-income families.

We support:

- 1 The systematic linkage of high quality home visitor programs with Head Start and other quality early learning programs.
- 2 A regular assessment of early childhood education that includes valid and reliable data on the need for subsidies, reimbursement rates, quality and wages, and turnover rates of staff.
- 3 Strengthening licensing standards for all early childhood programs.
- 4 Improving the education and compensation of early childhood staff.
- 5 Providing access for all children to a variety of high quality licensed early childhood development programs.
- 6 A coordinated system involving the Secretariats of Education and Health and Human Resources dealing with the care and education of young children.

Economic Security

- family income support
- child support
- family self-sufficiency
- tax policy

OUR AGENDA: All families have adequate resources to obtain economic self-sufficiency.

Facts:

- 1 Approximately a quarter of a million children in Virginia live in poverty.
- 2 28% of Virginia families do not earn an income sufficient to adequately provide for their families.
- 3 Other than a 10% increase in 2000, aid to needy families (TANF) payments have not increased since 1985. There have been only 3 increases in the rate since it was established in 1972.
- 4 While the Virginia Department of Social Services collected \$436 million in child support last year (an 11.5% increase), there are still 225,000 delinquent parents who collectively owe over \$1.86 billion.
- 5 More than 30,000 low income working families in Virginia are eligible for child care subsidies but cannot get help because of lack of funding.
- 6 Most children living in poverty are in working families.

We support:

- 1 Adoption of a state refundable earned income tax credit.
- 2 Providing access to job related education and training which are necessary to move welfare recipients out of poverty.
- 3 Meaningful exemptions to the state's two-year time limit on cash assistance for parents who are unable to find employment that pays wages at least equal to the poverty line, or who lose such employment through no fault of their own.
- 4 Ensuring the 100% child support pass through is implemented.
- 5 Greater enforcement for the collection of child support payments.

For additional information, please contact:

» Kathy Glazer, Vice President
(804) 649-0184, ext. 28

Voices for Virginia's Children
formerly Action Alliance for
Virginia's Children and Youth
701 East Franklin Street, Suite 807
Richmond, VA 23219
www.vakids.org



K-12 Education

- quality schools
- special education
- parent and community involvement
- professional development

OUR AGENDA: Every child receives a quality education that fosters his/her intellectual, social, emotional and physical development in an environment that respects cultural differences.

Facts:

- 1 Virginia ranks 12th in the nation – near the top - in per capita personal income but ranks 44th in the nation – near the bottom - in state government spending for public schools based on that income.
- 2 Virginia currently spends \$885 less on the education of children in the highest-poverty districts than on the education of children in the lowest-poverty districts.
- 3 Seventy-nine percent of Virginia school divisions pay 10-year teachers \$35,000 or less, resulting in a negative impact on attracting and retaining teachers.
- 4 In 2002, 28% of third graders and 31% of eighth graders did not pass the SOL in English-reading.
- 5 Out of the 131 schools currently accredited with warning, 127 are in school divisions with a local composite index (LCI) below the state average (.45).

We support:

- 1 Raising teachers' salaries to the national average within four years.
- 2 Formal linkages or data sharing between publicly funded pre-school programs and public schools.