

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

November 7, 2012

1:00 p.m.

House Room C

MINUTES

Attending:

Delegates Christopher Peace, Mamyé BaCote, Robert Brink, Peter Farrell
Senators Harry Blevins and Stephen Martin
Citizen members Charles Slep and Frank Royal

Not Attending:

Delegates Anne Crockett-Stark and Beverly Sherwood
Citizen member Gary Close

Note: One Senate seat is vacant.

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Meg Burruss, Joyce Garner, Leah Hamaker

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Delegate Christopher K. Peace

Delegate Peace called the meeting to order and welcomed the Commission members. He noted that the main purpose of today's Commission meeting is to receive a presentation from the Office of Comprehensive Services for At-Risk Children and Families. Delegate Peace stated that, over the past decade, Virginia has seen an increase in the cost of serving at-risk children through the Comprehensive Services Act. One way to control costs is to utilize data to maximize resources and produce better outcomes for the children being served.

Delegate Peace stated that, following Ms. Clare's presentation, the Commission would hear from Dr. James Stronge of William & Mary. Dr. Stronge would summarize the Commission's two-year study – *Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries*. The Commission will vote on the study's recommendations at the December 3rd Commission meeting.

II. Data Integration and Analysis for the Department of Social Services and the Office of Comprehensive Services

Susan Cumbia Clare, Director

Virginia Office of Comprehensive Services

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Clare briefed the members about the Virginia Comprehensive Services Act (CSA). She noted the intention of the law was to create a collaborative system of services and funding that is child-centered, family-focused and community-based to serve troubled and at-risk youth and their families. She reviewed the administration of CSA, as well as the populations served. Ms. Clare then shared numbers for total state and local CSA expenditures. She noted that, in recent years, actual costs were lower than projected costs after peaking at close to \$400 million in Fiscal Year 2008. Ms. Clare then discussed the tiered match rate system that was implemented in Fiscal Year 2009 to incentivize the use of community-based services. Since that time, there has been a reduction to the number of residential placements, increased family-based placements, fewer youth placed in foster care, and decreased CSA expenditures.

Delegate Peace asked if all localities were embracing this match system. Ms. Clare replied

that all localities have, even with a decline in expenditures. Delegate BaCote asked about the funding. Ms. Clare noted that services were funded primarily through state funding for all youth. Delegate Peace asked about where the money was being spent as well as inappropriate use of CSA funds. He noted that Pittsylvania County returned \$7.7 million in CSA funds. Ms. Clare noted that the locality had a ten-year corrective action plan with a ten-year repayment plan. Delegate Farrell asked whether a locality was ever denied CSA funding. Ms. Clare stated that, effective July 1 of this year, the Office had started an audit process. This enables the Office to work with localities and help them find a pathway to come into compliance if the need was present. Mr. Slemp asked about covered services. Ms. Clare stated that CSA covered services for youth in foster care included substance abuse, mental health, behavioral health, special education services, as well as family support services to prevent foster care.

Ms. Clare informed the members that the focus of CSA monitoring has changed. The Office has implemented a comprehensive internal audit plan. Ms. Clare also noted that the General Assembly had funded the Office's work to conduct a performance audit review of CSA to identify strengths and gaps in state and local compliance procedures regarding eligibility, program, and fiscal requirements. Ms. Clare then discussed the Proof of Concept Data project. The Proof of Concept was conducted by SAS Institute, Inc. and sponsored by Casey Family Programs. The project is integrating data from multiple systems (OASIS, VEMAT, CANS and local financial data from volunteer localities) to analyze services, youth functioning, and expenditures. The data was analyzed using models to shed light on what the Commonwealth was purchasing, while acknowledging a variety of variables such as gender, age, locality, assessment scores, placements and service codes. Seven localities representative of the Commonwealth were selected. Ms. Clare highlighted positive and negative relationships between the variables that may impact permanency. Delegate BaCote asked whether the Office looked at all age groups and Ms. Clare stated yes. Delegate Peace stated that this project offered many opportunities and that this data would be very helpful to localities seeking to balance stewardship of government funds and the provision of high quality services. The project has documented several findings including localities that produce less favorable outcomes for youth despite high spending and localities whose per child expenditures exceed regional or state norms. In addition, this data will help identify "high risk" providers.

Mr. Slemp asked if there was an efficient way for localities to communicate data to the Office. Dr. Royal noted that if localities were doing well, perhaps this would enable them to communicate best practices to other localities. Delegate Farrell asked how long it would take to compile the information including transmitting the data, normalizing it and capturing all data. Ms. Clare stated about three to six months. Delegate Farrell asked about the computer software systems being used. Ms. Clare stated that the vendor was assisting the Office of Comprehensive Services with collecting and formatting the data.

III. 2012 Legislative Studies

Study of the Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with leading Industrialized Countries

Amy Atkinson, Executive Director

James Stronge, Ph.D., Heritage Professor in Educational Policy

School of Education, College of William & Mary

Dr. Stronge outlined the findings from the study and the work of the Advisory Group during Year Two of this study. He noted that America is well known for its quality of life, economic productivity, and number of Nobel prizes. Dr. Stronge outlined the comparison countries and comparison data sources. He then informed the Commission members on the findings linked to educational inputs, such as length of school day, days in the academic year, and annual expenditures. He then outlined other inputs researched including teacher selection characteristics and teacher salaries.

Delegate BaCote asked when students learn languages in the comparison countries. Dr. Stronge stated that students start learning second languages in primary grades. In the United States, only a very few schools start teaching a second language in the primary grades. Mr. Slemp asked about the length of the school day and whether these numbers covered learning time or included all time spent in the schoolhouse. It was noted that, in the United States, there was frequently lost time in classes.

Delegate Farrell asked about teacher selectivity and the finding that only 40 percent of teacher prep programs institute a minimum grade point average. He asked whether the United States attracted the “best and the brightest” into the profession. Dr. Stronge stated the United States could do more to attract highly qualified teachers. Delegate Peace asked could this could be remedied within budgetary constraints. Dr. Stronge stated that the existing system could be modified incrementally. Delegate BaCote stated that teaching was not a highly-regarded profession. Senator Blevins asked how things were different in Asian countries. Delegate Peace asked whether there were any differences observed between school divisions that have appointed school boards versus elected school boards. Dr. Stronge stated he did not locate any research supporting this difference. Delegate Farrell asked about the amount spent per pupil and the amount the United States was spending in comparison with the selected countries.

Ms. Atkinson then shared the draft findings and recommendations from the study handout. She noted that the members may wish to review the handout prior to the December 3rd Commission on Youth meeting. Delegate Peace commented that the Commission members would be voting on the study’s draft recommendations at that meeting.

Delegate Peace thanked Dr. Stronge and his team for their assistance with the study.

IV. Adjourn

Delegate Peace briefly outlined the process for public comment for the December 3rd Commission on Youth meeting and referred interested persons to the Commission’s website for further information. He noted the Commission would accept written public comment on all Commission studies through noon, Wednesday, November 28 and accept oral public comments at the December 3rd meeting. The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

There was no public comment at this meeting.