



Virginia  
Commission on Youth

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# Strengthening Families Status of 2005 Legislation

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## Strengthening Families Study – Year Two

In 2004, the Commission on Youth was directed to:

- ✓ Compile and analyze state and local services available in the Commonwealth with the purpose of strengthening families;
- ✓ Assess barriers and unmet needs; and
- ✓ Convene a Statewide Advisory Group to assist in this effort.



## Strengthening Families Study – Year Two

### Additional Activities:

- Convened regional focus groups of experts;
- Met with other outside groups to assess Virginia's activities; and
- Reported findings and recommendations to the Commission prior to the 2005 General Assembly Session.



## Strengthening the Family Identified Issues

1. Lack of Statewide Coordination and Collaboration
  2. Need for Data on Virginia's Marriage and Divorce Rates
  3. Need for a Statewide Information Clearinghouse for Children and Family Services
  4. Need for Greater Education Efforts in Healthy Relationships
  5. Need for Education Efforts for Adults and Families
  6. Continuation of Current Family Strengthening Efforts in Virginia
  7. Lack of a Family Advocacy Network in Virginia
  8. Need for Ongoing Monitoring and Analysis of Strengthening Family Efforts
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Virginia  
Commission on Youth

Strengthening the Family  
Recommendations & Final Actions  
2005 General Assembly



## Finding - Lack of Statewide Coordination

### Recommendation – Strengthening Family Statewide Task Force & Plan

Direct the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, in conjunction with COY, to convene a Statewide Task Force for developing a plan to assess, identify, and communicate ways to strengthen families within the Commonwealth. Specific attention would be paid to coordinating existing efforts.

### Commission on Youth Action

Budget Amendment – Language Only  
(Item 298 #1h/#1s)

### Final Action

Not Included in Conference Report.



## Finding - Lack of Statewide Coordination

### Recommendation – Strengthening Family Statewide Summit *(Note-contingent upon first recommendation passing)*

In 2006, introduce a budget amendment directing the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, in conjunction with COY, to convene a Statewide Summit charged with assessing, identifying, and communicating ways to strengthen families in the Commonwealth.

### Commission on Youth Action

No Action Taken.



## Finding - Data Needed on Virginia's Marriage and Divorce Rates

### Recommendation – Collection of Data on Marriage and Divorce Rates

Direct the State Registrar of VDH to compile, publish, and distribute aggregate data on the number of marriages and divorces that occur each year within the Commonwealth. Such information will be reported by locality and include information regarding age, race, and any other pertinent information and be posted on the agency website.

### Commission on Youth Action

Legislation introduced (SB 1111-Senator Blevins)

### Final Action

Passed the General Assembly and Awaiting the Governor's Signature.



## Finding - Limited Access to Data on Virginia's Marriage and Divorce Rates

### Recommendation – Collection of Data on Local and Regional Service Barriers & Needs

Request, by letter, that the Virginia Municipal League (VML) and the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO), in conjunction with COY, conduct a statewide survey ascertaining existing partnerships and best practices that strengthen Virginia's families.

### Commission on Youth Action

Letters sent to VML and VACO requesting assistance. Meeting held with VML staff. Draft survey being compiled and reviewed by local representatives.

### Final Action

Activities to occur during 2005 with the results of the survey to be communicated to the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2006 General Assembly.



## Finding - Need for a Comprehensive Statewide Information System for Child and Family Services

### Recommendation – Information & Referral (I&R) Child-Serving Agencies Inclusion and Training,

Direct DSS to request all state and local child-serving agencies within the Commonwealth to be included in the I&R System. Any agency or entity that receives state general funds and provides services to families and youth shall also be included in this effort. All Secretariats that serve youth and families shall assist in this effort by requesting all affected agencies they oversee to submit current information to the I&R System. DSS shall communicate with and train all child-serving agencies within the Commonwealth about the availability of the statewide I&R System at least biannually.

### Commission on Youth Action

Budget Amendment – Language Only  
(Item 362 #1h/#6s)

### Final Action

Included in Conference Report (Item 362 #2C).



## Finding - Need for a Comprehensive Statewide Information System for Child and Family Services

### Recommendation – Information & Referral (I&R) Marketing and Website

Direct DSS to work with I&R providers and other public and private partners to develop strategies to market and promote Virginia's I&R System, along with the 2-1-1 phone campaign currently under development. Also, direct DSS, in conjunction with VITA and the Virginia I&R providers, to review Virginia's current I&R System webpage and propose a plan to make it more comprehensive and user-friendly.

### Commission on Youth Action

Budget Amendment – Language Only  
(Item 362 #7h/#7s)

### Final Action

Included in Conference Report (Item 362 #1C).



## Finding - Need for a Comprehensive Statewide Information System for Child and Family Services

### Recommendation – Information & Referral (I&R) Funding for 2-1-1

Appropriate funding for Virginia's I&R system to allow for implementation of the statewide, 24-hour 2-1-1 system. Funding shall be appropriated to cover the costs associated with launching the 211 system including expanding the hours of three of the six the regional I&R centers to 24 hour a day/7 day a week. Additionally, specify that DSS shall apply for any appropriate federal funding in order to allow for the implementation.

### Commission on Youth Action

Budget Amendment – \$270,500 GF and \$270,500 NGF  
(Item 362 #5h/#5s)

### Final Action

Not Included in the Conference Report.



## Finding - Need for a Comprehensive Statewide Information System for Child and Family Services

### Recommendation – Information & Referral (I&R) Connection Fee for 2-1-1

The Chairman of the Commission on Youth shall send a letter to the CEO of Verizon outlining the importance of the Virginia I&R System and request that Verizon waive its connection fee for 2-1-1.

The Chairman of the Commission on Youth shall send a letter to the Governor encouraging him to contact the CEO of Verizon to discuss the connection fee.

### Commission on Youth Action

Letters sent to affected parties.

### Final Action

Continue working with I&R representatives to locate additional funding sources for 2-1-1.



## Finding - Need for a Education for Adults in High Risk Populations

### Recommendation – Family- to-Family Mentoring

Request that DSS encourage localities to utilize “family-to-family” mentoring to help low-income families move toward financial self-sufficiency by providing training and technical assistance to adults in transition from welfare to work.

### Commission on Youth Action

Letter sent to DSS.

### Final Action

Continue working with DSS on this recommendation.



## Virginia Commission on Youth

### Finding - Need for a Education for Adults in High Risk Populations

#### Recommendation – Support Virginia’s Involvement in the National Governor’s Association Prisoner Rentry Policy Academy

Request the Secretary of Public Safety and Secretary of Health and Human Resources support Virginia’s participation in the National Governor’s Association (NGA) Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy and request the Virginia Policy Academy to incorporate messages about the benefits of healthy relationships and strong families in program formulation, as well as the importance of transition plans and services for juveniles returning to the community.

#### Commission on Youth Action

Letters sent to Secretary of Public Safety and Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

#### Final Action

Continue working with affected parties on this recommendation.

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## Finding – Need for Continuation of Current Education Efforts in Virginia

### Recommendation – Support Virginia’s Healthy Marriage and Stable Families Initiatives

Direct DSS to continue funding for the Healthy Marriage and Stable Families Initiative grants which provide community-based family preservation and supportive services designed to strengthen marriages and stabilize families. Such funds shall be allocated from the federal Safe and Stable Families program or other appropriate Department funds..

### Commission on Youth Action

Budget Amendment – Language Only (Item 360 #2H/#2S)

### Final Action

Included in Conference Report (Item 360 #1C).



## Finding – Lack of a Family Advocacy Network in Virginia

### Recommendation – Support Virginia’s Healthy Marriage and Stable Families Initiatives

Request OSHHR to lead a collaborative effort with other child-serving departments, parents, and advocacy organizations to develop and implement a statewide parent/family resource and advocacy program that is coordinated with existing programs.

### Commission on Youth Action

Letter sent to OSHHR.

### Final Action

The Secretary shall report on these efforts to the Chairman of the Commission of Youth prior to the 2006 General Assembly Session.



## Finding – Need for Ongoing Monitoring and Analysis

### Recommendation – Continuation of Study Efforts

Request that the Commission on Youth monitor efforts taking place in the Commonwealth regarding efforts to strengthen families and update the Commission on Youth on such developments prior to the 2006 General Assembly.

### Commission on Youth Action

Draft survey, continue working on the 2-1-1 initiative, and monitor agencies' activities.