

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH**

STUDY OF TRUANTS AND RUNAWAYS

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1999**





COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Commission on Youth

Delegate Thomas M. Jackson, Jr., *Chairman*
Senator Yvonne B. Miller, *Vice Chair*

Executive Director
Nancy H. Ross

January 8, 1999

Suite 517B
General Assembly Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219-0406

(804) 371-2481
FAX (804) 371-0574

TO: The Honorable James S. Gilmore, III, Governor of Virginia
and
Members of the Virginia General Assembly

The 1998 General Assembly, through House Joint Resolution 93, requested that the Virginia Commission on Youth "be directed to study the feasibility of using hearing officers, development of a long range funding plan, feasibility of enhanced penalties for juveniles and their parents, impact of vocational education on truancy, and data accountability systems."

Enclosed for your review and consideration is the report which has been prepared in response to this request. The Commission received assistance from all affected agencies and gratefully acknowledge their input into this report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.
Chairman

Delegate Eric I. Cantor
Delegate L. Karen Darner
Senator J. Randy Forbes

Delegate Phillip A. Hamilton
Senator R. Edward Houck
Delegate Jerrauld C. Jones
Delegate Robert F. McDonnell

Norma M. Clark
Gary L. Close
Michelle J. Harris

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L. Karen Darner
Phillip Hamilton
Jerrauld C. Jones
Robert F. McDonnell

From the Senate of Virginia

J. Randy Forbes
Yvonne B. Miller, Vice Chairman
R. Edward Houck

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from the Commonwealth at Large**

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Michelle Harris
Doug Jones

Commission on Youth Staff

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Judith Cash
Kimberly J. Echelberger
Joyce Garner
Nicole Turner
Melissa White

TRUANTS AND RUNAWAYS TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Commission on Youth

Delegate Eric I. Cantor, Task Force Chairman
Delegate L. Karen Darner
Delegate Phillip Hamilton
Delegate Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.
Delegate Jerrauld C. Jones
Senator R. Edward Houck
Mr. Gary L. Close

General Assembly Appointments

By the Senate

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Mr. Gary Conway
Mr. Richard L. Munchel
Ms. Stacey Strentz
Chief Charles R. Wall

By the House

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Delegate Ward L. Armstrong
Judge Gayl B. Carr
Mr. Frank J. Kern
Dr. Edward L. Kelly
Mr. Peter Walentisch

Ex Officio Appointments

Mr. Robert N. Baldwin
Mr. Clarence Carter
Rev. Gerald Glenn
Mr. Richard E. Kellogg
Dr. Paul Stapleton

Board of Education Members

Mr. Kirk T. Schroder
Ms. Lil Tuttle, proxy for Mr. Schroder
Ms. Jennifer Byler
Mr. Hugh Palmer

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I. Authority for Study

Section 9-292 of the *Code of Virginia* establishes the Commission on Youth and directs it to "...study and provide recommendations addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and their families." Section 9-294 provides the Commission the power to "...undertake studies and gather information and data in order to accomplish its purposes ...and to formulate and present its recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly."

The 1997 General Assembly enacted House Joint Resolution 490 requesting the Commission on Youth to conduct a study examining status offenders, children in need of services and children in need of supervision. The study resolution identified six areas for analysis: (i) Juvenile Courts' and local schools' communication and intervention with truants, (ii) review of Court's diversionary and probationary practices, (iii) assessment of the system's service capacity, (iv) analysis of other states' approaches to dealing with this population, (v) appropriateness of designating a lead agency, and (vi) development of recommendations for improving the system through legislative and administrative reforms. First year study findings are reflected in *House Document 64, Interim Report of the Virginia Commission on Youth on the Study of Truants and Runaways, 1998*.

The 1998 General Assembly, through House Joint Resolution 93, continued the study of Truants and Runaways. During the second year of this study, pursuant to the resolution, the Commission examined (i) the feasibility of using hearing officers to handle status offense cases of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, (ii) approaches to increase parental responsibility, (iii) the advisability of increasing sanctions for status offenders, (iv) the impact of vocational education on truancy, and (v) the development of a long-range funding plan for services to status offenders and their families. In fulfilling its legislative mandate, the Commission on Youth conducted the study.

II. Members Appointed to Serve

The authorizing legislation required the Commission on Youth to establish a Task Force to assist the Commission in its work. The twenty-three member Task Force established in the first year of the study continued to serve for a second year. Additional members representing the State Board of Education and a local school Board member joined the Task Force in its second year. The following members served on the HJR 93 Truants and Runaways Task Force:

Commission on Youth Members

Del. Eric I. Cantor (Henrico)
Del. L. Karen Darner (Arlington)
Del. Phillip Hamilton (Newport News)
Del. Thomas M. Jackson, Jr. (Carroll)
Del. Jerrauld C. Jones (Norfolk)
Sen. R. Edward Houck (Spotsylvania)
Mr. Gary L. Close (Culpeper)

Other General Assembly Members	Del. David B. Albo (Springfield) Del. Ward L. Armstrong (Martinsville) Sen. Charles R. Hawkins (Chatham)
Board of Education	Ms. Jennifer Byler (Cape Charles) Mr. Kirk T. Schroder (Richmond)
Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Judge	Judge Gayl B. Carr (Fairfax)
Court Appointed Counsel	Ms. Stacey Strentz (Stafford)
Local School Board	Mr. Hugh Palmer (Henrico)
Local School Division Superintendent	Dr. Edward L. Kelly (Prince William)
Local Dept. of Social Services Director	Mr. Peter Walentisch (Williamsburg)
Public Service Provider	Mr. Frank Kern (Chesapeake)
Private Service Provider	Mr. Richard L. Munchel (Goochland)
Local Law Enforcement	Chief Charles R. Wall (Virginia Beach)
Juvenile Court Service Unit Director	Mr. Gary Conway (Roanoke)
Ex-Officio Members	Mr. Robert N. Baldwin, Supreme Court of Virginia Mr. Clarence Carter, Dept. of Social Services Reverend Gerald Glenn, Dept. of Juvenile Justice Mr. Richard E. Kellogg, Dept. of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services Dr. Paul E. Stapleton, Dept. of Education

Five workgroups were formed to focus on the issues: Sanctions, Community and Court Processes, Data, Educational Options, and Funding. Each was comprised of state and local experts, constituency groups, and service providers. A listing of workgroup members is provided in Appendix B.

III. Executive Summary

In 1997, the Commission on Youth began a two-year study on the statewide service capacity and program needs of truant and runaway youth in Virginia. A Task Force comprised of legislators, representatives of state and local child-serving agencies, public and private service programs, the legal and law enforcement communities, and the State Board of Education was established to guide the study effort. In the first year, focus groups were held across the state to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Virginia's system to identify and intervene with runaway and truant youth. As a result of the first-year efforts, three primary areas were identified for

legislative intervention: improvement of the collaboration between local school districts and the Juvenile Court; expansion of educational options for students not succeeding in the existing educational system; and increased public sector accountability to work effectively with status offenders and their families.

In the second year, four workgroups were formed to develop recommendations and to develop statewide and national surveys on compulsory school attendance, the General Educational Development (GED) program, truancy intervention, and educational options for statewide administration to educators and Juvenile Court Judges. The Task Force toured model vocational and technical education centers in Virginia and were briefed on promising national models to intervene effectively with both truants and runaways. After two years of analysis, the solutions developed seek to expedite the process by which students' needs are identified and to provide schools, as well as communities, with the resources to meet those needs.

The recommendations offered below seek to reinforce a system in which parents, students, schools, courts, and communities are held accountable for school attendance. In addition, the recommendations include options to meet the diverse needs of students and families and the expectations for behavior, as well as the consequences for non-compliance, are clear to all parties involved. Detailed justification for the findings and recommendations is provided in Section VI.

A. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Virginia has one of the most restrictive waiver criteria and highest age requirement for compulsory school attendance.

Recommendation 1

Amend Section 22.1-254 to provide waiver criteria for compulsory school attendance for:

1. students age 16 who have parental permission, school support, and are enrolled in a GED preparatory or approved educational alternative program as determined in student's educational plan; or
2. students age 17 who have parental permission, an exit interview and employment.

Recommendation 2

Request the Department of Education to develop guidelines for local schools to use when meeting with students and parents to develop the education plan for a waiver pursuant to Section 22.1-254.

The Code has unclear cross-references to compulsory school attendance requirements.

Recommendation 3

Combine attendance requirements, exceptions and exclusions in Sections 22.1-254, 256, and 257 into one section.

There is limited statewide accessibility for preparatory courses and tests. GED test criteria for students under age 18 are unclear and are not uniformly applied statewide.

Recommendation 4

Establish the GED test program and test eligibility in the *Code of Virginia* with the eligibility criteria to include: a) minimum age criteria of age 16, b) parental permission, and c) a student's official withdrawal from school.

There are insufficient staff support and local/state financial resources devoted to the GED program.

Recommendation 5

Provide funding to ensure statewide access to and awareness of the GED preparatory and test programs for eligible young adults. (\$5,781,725)

Recommendation 6

Fund two full-time positions to provide centralized staff support at the Department of Education for the GED preparatory and test programs and for public information on these programs. (\$177,700)

C. ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

There is a lack of consistent school level/division level/statewide level reporting of truancy.

Recommendation 7

Amend Section 22.1-260 to include the uniform reporting of unexcused absences on an annual basis at the school level.

Recommendation 8

Request the Virginia Board of Education to include unexcused absentee rates in the unabbreviated version of the school report cards.

There is no definition of truancy in the Code. Expectations for school intervention for unexcused absences are unclear.

Recommendation 9

Amend Section 22.1-258 to define truancy as a student's absence (for all or part of a school day) which is unexcused by the parent or legal guardian.

Sending a child to school as part of the compulsory school attendance requirement and parental responsibility for resolving issues affecting their children's school attendance are not clearly stated in the Code.

Recommendation 10

Amend Section 22.1-254 to include explicit requirements that:

1. parents send their children to school; cite Section 22.1-262 and 263 (as amended);
2. students comply with this section and cite Section 16.1-278.5 regarding penalties for non-compliance.

The Code requirements for a school's intervention with truants and their parents are not consistently applied.

Recommendation 11

Amend Section 22.1-258 to require that, at a minimum:

1. School, at the 1st unexcused absence, makes reasonable effort to contact parent(s) to receive justification for absence and explain the consequences for the student and parent(s).
2. School, at the 5th unexcused absence, is required to make personal contact with the parent(s) to identify the issues causing the student's non-attendance and develop a plan outlining the responsibilities of the school, student and parent(s) to attend school. (Meeting is to occur within 5 school days after the 5th unexcused absence.) the school is to provide the parent and student a fact sheet outlining the legal consequences for the student's continued non-attendance. Commonwealth's Attorney is authorized to send a letter to the parent(s) notifying them of the legal consequences for the student's continued non-attendance.
3. At the 6th unexcused absence, the school must convene a multi-disciplinary team which may, at school's discretion, include non-school personnel to work towards resolution of a student's non-attendance. School can neither fail the student purely for attendance reasons nor file a truancy petition or petition against the parent(s) until these steps have been taken.
4. At 7th unexcused absence, the school is authorized to file a complaint with the Court or seek a warrant from a magistrate and provide documentation of their reasonable efforts.

The responsiveness of Juvenile Courts with respect to truancy petitions varies across the state.

Recommendation 12

Amend Section 16.1-260 to require Court Intake, upon receiving documentation of a school's reasonable efforts, to file a petition for a Court hearing on truancy or parental failure to comply with compulsory school attendance laws.

Recommendation 13

Amend Sections 22.1-262 and 263 to include a parent's unreasonable refusal to participate in school-recommended services to ensure child's school attendance.

Schools have insufficient resources (School Resource Officers and Court Liaison personnel) to intervene effectively with truants.

Recommendation 14

Provide funding for attendance officers to middle, combined, and high schools based on the percentage of at-risk students. (\$2,904,457)

Recommendation 15

Fund Court Liaison personnel based on the percentage of schools identified for truancy officers; Liaisons are to be housed in the Juvenile Court Service Units. (\$1,003,941)

Recommendation 16

Support the expansion of School Resource Officers across the state to assist in school attendance and safety issues.

Not every jurisdiction places truancy petitions on the docket throughout the year.

Recommendation 17

Request the School Superintendent/Judicial Liaison Committee advise their counterparts at annual conferences on the importance of placing truancy petitions on the docket on a 12-month basis.

Juvenile Court dockets have backlogs, making it difficult for truancy cases to be heard in a timely manner.

Recommendation 18

Continue to support the Supreme Court's Calendar Management Training and encourage the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court to focus on the larger courts in their next training cycle.

E. RUNAWAYS

Over one-third of Virginia's runaway shelter budgets comes from the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) grant funding. Other funding sources include local government monies, foundation contributions, fund raising, and private, corporate and individual gifts. Only one organization received designated General Fund dollars. Current Virginia RHYA recipients unanimously expressed a need to expand services to runaways.

There is no specific funding source within the state budget to provide services to truants and runaways. Current state and federal dollars cannot maintain services commensurate with the growth of truants and runaways. Federal funds to provide services to truants and runaways are diminishing and future funding cannot be guaranteed. It is not likely that income from foundations or other funding sources will supplant a decrease in federal and state funding.

"Habitual" is undefined for purposes of Court involvement with runaways.

Recommendation 19

Request the Department of Criminal Justice Services provide training to local law enforcement on custody and arrest policies for truants and to encourage that the law enforcement representatives of the *Newport News Street Watch Program* be involved in the curriculum development.

Law enforcement's custody and arrest policies for truants and runaways are inconsistent and not uniformly enforced.

Recommendation 20

Request the Virginia Sheriff's Association and the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police to provide training on custody and arrest policies for truants and runaways at their annual conferences.

Recommendation 21

Amend Section 16.1-228 to define "habitual" to include a child who is a runaway from home or a Court-ordered placement three or more times.

Recommendation 22

Request the State Police to conduct a study on the accuracy of arrest reports for status offenders as reported in the Uniform Crime Reports.

Recommendation 23

Amend Section 18.1-371, the Contributing to Delinquency of Minors Statute, to include adults who knowingly harbor runaways.

The need for runaway shelters in Virginia exceeds availability.

Recommendation 24

Request \$350,000 in funding for the state share of Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter Programs in Virginia.

F. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Technical assistance to local schools for work-based learning programs is reported to be insufficient. Seven percent of the school divisions meet only the minimum requirements for classes in the three program areas of vocational education. Of Virginia's secondary school students, 74% participated in vocational education during the 1996-97 school year. Students should have more access to vocational education opportunities, according to 81% of the Commission's survey respondents. More skill-specific vocational education classes would enhance the relevancy of education for students, reported 72% of the respondents.

Recommendation 25

Amend Section 9-329.1, Statewide Workforce Training Council, to include the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as one of the members.

Recommendation 26

Request the Governor establish a commission to examine vocational education.

IV. Study Goals and Objectives

HJR 93 required the Commission on Youth, through the Truant and Runaway Task Force, to examine five specific issues. The issues identified in the legislation are as follows:

- I. Examine the feasibility of using hearing officers to handle status offense cases of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court;
- II. Review approaches to increase parental responsibility;
- III. Assess the advisability of increasing sanctions for status offenders;
- IV. Examine the impact of vocational education on truancy; and
- V. Recommend the development of a long-range funding plan for services to status offenders and their families.

In addition, House Bill 713, which would have reclassified truancy as a misdemeanor offense and House Bill 714, which would have lowered the age for compulsory school attendance from 18 to 17 years, were referred to the study for review. Both bills were incorporated into the study activities of the workgroups.

In response to these study goals, the following objectives were established and pursued through the five workgroups: Community and Court Processes, Sanctions, Educational Options, Data Systems, and Funding.

Goal 1

Examine the feasibility of using hearing officers to handle status offense cases of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (*Court/Community Processes Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Identify national and Virginia models which use hearing officers to process non-delinquent cases;
- * Solicit Judicial opinion on ways to expedite status offense cases;
- * Identify local Virginia processes established to expedite the court handling of status offense cases;
- * Develop statewide consensus on the activities required for schools to have made reasonable efforts prior to filing a truancy petition; and
- * Review evaluation findings from localities receiving Calendar Management Training to assess its impact docketing on status offense cases.

Goal 2

Review approaches to increase parental responsibility (*Sanctions Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Identify national models through *Code* searches and literature review;
- * Analyze relevant Virginia sections respect to parental responsibility;
- * Review approaches utilized through Child Support Enforcement ; and
- * Identify Virginia programs addressing parental responsibility for potential replication.

Goal 3

Assess the advisability of increasing sanctions for status offenders (*Sanctions Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Solicit Judicial opinion on adequacy of current sanctions;
- * Conduct national *Code* search for model approaches;
- * Analyze *Code* with respect to current dispositional options available to status offenders and their parents; and
- * Review statewide dispositional trends for status offenders.

Goal 4

Examine the impact of vocational education on truancy (*Educational Options Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Expose Task Force to local or regional vocational education programs;
- * Identify current course offerings and grade availability throughout the state;
- * Solicit opinions from local educators and administrators on the adequacy and accessibility of vocational education;
- * Analyze other states' operation of the General Educational Development (GED) program;
- * Catalogue Virginia's use of GED by locality; and
- * Identify national vocational education/apprenticeship programs for replication.

Goal 5

Develop a long-range funding plan for services to status offenders and their families (*Funding Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Identify current federal and state funding sources for services to status offenders;
- * Assess the administrative support provided by child-serving agencies to programs serving status offenders and their families;
- * Review operational budgets at Virginia's runaway shelter programs; and
- * Review evaluation information from Department of Education's Truancy/Safe Schools & Drop-out Prevention Initiatives.

Goal 6

Assess advisability of lowering the age of compulsory school attendance (*Educational Options Workgroup*)

Objectives

- * Solicit opinions from educators and administrators on compulsory school age;
- * Review other state's compulsory school age laws; and
- * Solicit public comment on compulsory school age limits.

These goals and objectives were met through the methodologies described in the following section.

V. Methodology

A. TASK FORCE AND WORKGROUP ACTIVITIES

The 27-member Task Force met four times in the second year of the study. The first meeting was held at New Horizons Regional Education Center in Newport News and allowed the members to tour a regional vocational education center, as well as to hear from representatives from the business community, the Judiciary, and Court Service staff about their perceptions of service needs and program models for status offenders. The second meeting at Hermitage Technical School in Henrico County provided additional exposure to vocational education programming. The Superintendent of Henrico County Schools presented an overview of the prevention and alternative education options offered by the school division. The Task Force also learned of national models addressing runaway and truant service needs. Lastly, the Task Force began to define their expectations of schools' "reasonable efforts" with truants.

The third meeting was devoted to receiving the results of the statewide surveys and staff's analysis of national GED programs, compulsory school attendance laws, and vocational education programs. Their final meeting was devoted to the development of a legislative packet for the 1999 General Assembly Session. The legislative recommendations developed by the Task Force were presented to the full Commission on Youth on December 21, 1998.

Five workgroups were established to address the study mandate and develop recommendations for the Task Force. Their membership lists are provided in Appendix B. Workgroup members conducted background research, helped design survey instruments, gathered information on local programs and/or developed recommendations for review by the Task Force and Commission on Youth. Specific workgroup activities are listed in this section.

1. Educational Options

The Educational Options workgroup examined a number of issues that were identified during the first year of the study as potential factors impacting truancy. These issues included:

- lack of appropriate sanctions for truants and their parents;
- lack of consistent definitions and procedures for identifying truants;
- limited educational options and vocational education curricula in the secondary schools;
- lack of accessibility for the General Educational Development (GED) test; and
- stringent compulsory school attendance requirements for older students.

This workgroup met four times to draft survey instruments and to review several research analyses which were completed by Commission staff to address the issues referred for recommendation, including: a telephone survey and analysis of other states' GED programs, review of national GED test and certificate rates, an analysis of compulsory education laws in other states, an analysis of vocational education participation in Virginia's secondary schools, and analysis of surveys administered to Virginia educators. The findings of each of these analyses follow in Section VI.

Based on this information, the workgroup developed recommendations on educational options for the Task Force's consideration.

2. Community and Court Processes

The Community and Court Processes workgroup incorporated a variety of research approaches to meet the study mandate. Research consisted of a review of state and local school truancy program models, use of hearing officers, and standardizing schools' "reasonable efforts" to work with truants. This workgroup held three meetings between February and May 1998 at which they reviewed how national models and Virginia localities handle truancy cases. The workgroup reviewed the school systems' processes and timeframes to address truancy prior to referral to court intake, formal and informal court processes to divert juveniles from Court, models of school and Court collaboration to address truancy, and the use of hearing officers. Based on the review of the Court and school processes, several issues were identified for further analysis and forwarded to the Sanctions workgroup.

3. Sanctions

The Sanctions workgroup met six times between July and December 1998 and expanded the work of the Court/Community Processes workgroup. The initial meeting was devoted to clearly identifying the four populations for which enhanced sanctions had been suggested by the first year's focus groups: truants, runaways, parents who fail to cooperate with service providers, and adults harboring runaways. Subsequent meetings included review of existing Court procedures and dispositional options and the development of a standardized definition of schools' reasonable efforts. The workgroup was also responsible for the development of statutory recommendations for disposition of CHINS, CHINSup, and their parents. Lastly, the workgroup helped design the Judicial survey on truants and runaways.

4. Data Systems

Individual representatives responsible for data collection systems in public agencies were contacted throughout the study. Commission staff discussed both the capacity of existing data systems to adequately capture data on status offenders and the capability of the data systems. Commission staff met throughout the study with staff of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, which has oversight of the Comprehensive Justice Information project, and the Department of Education to encourage the incorporation of data on status offenders in newly-developed management information systems.

5. Funding

The Funding workgroup held meetings between February and May 1998 to identify the issues and discuss study activities. Staff briefed the workgroup on funding resources, data and research findings and literature review of national studies. Initially, the workgroup reviewed existing state and federal-supported services through which funding could be provided to localities. The workgroup also reviewed the types of services which are needed to serve truants and runaways and developed cost estimates and funding approaches for these services. An assessment of the adaptability of existing funding streams for services to status offenders and their families was also examined. Virginia's Truancy Reduction and Safe Schools initiatives, existing federal and state definitions for truancy and runaway programs, and oversight procedures and policy for truancy and runaways within Virginia State government were discussed. State funding that is directed towards services for status offenders was identified. The group also identified Virginia's Runaway and Homeless Youth Act recipients and analyzed their operational budgets.

B. SURVEY EFFORTS

1. Virginia Statewide Surveys

In the summer of 1998, the Commission on Youth conducted two statewide survey efforts to assist with the study mandates: a survey of Virginia educators and a survey of Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges. Responses to the statewide surveys were used to assist the study Task Force in identifying necessary modifications to the *Code of Virginia*. A presentation of selected results of all surveys follows in Section VI, with complete findings provided in Appendix C.

The Virginia educators' surveys were developed by the Educational Options workgroup members and reviewed for accuracy by staff from the Department of Education not involved directly with the workgroup. The ten versions of the survey consisted of a total of 131 questions which addressed the issues of:

- Truancy (definitions, interventions, and resources)
- Compulsory School Attendance
- Work-Based Learning Programs
- Career Guidance
- Vocational Education
- General Educational Development (GED) Test

The surveys asked each respondent group questions pertinent to their professional duties and responsibilities, thus every respondent group did not receive all questions.

For a consolidated list of questions, please see Appendix D.

The ten survey instruments were developed and disseminated to 1,167 educators throughout the state, including:

- superintendents
- principals (high, middle, combined, vocational education/technical center)
- vocational education directors
- GED test administrators
- adult education directors
- regional alternative program directors

Table 1 illustrates the overall response rate for the respondent groups.

Table 1

Education Survey Response Rate

Respondent Group	Response Rate
Superintendents	82%
Principals (High, Middle, Combined, Technical Center)	54%
Vocational Education Directors	55%
GED and Adult Education Directors	47%
Regional Alternative Programs	89%

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth, HJR 93 Education Surveys, Fall 1998

In addition, the Commission surveyed all Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges to ascertain their views on truancy, "reasonable efforts" and the need for additional sanctions for status offenders and their parents. The Judicial Survey (provided as Appendix E) also solicited Judges' opinions on the dispositions and sanctions and statutory guidance for status offenders. The survey response rate for Judges was 74%.

2. National GED Phone Survey

A national telephone survey of other states' GED programs was conducted in August 1998 by Commission on Youth staff. The respondents included state education officials and GED test examiners in other states. The response rate was 100% (50 states). Respondents were surveyed about the following issues:

- Location/availability of testing centers;
- Minimum age criteria for GED testing;
- Use of age waiver criteria;
- State or local decision-making for age waivers;
- Preparatory class availability and cost; and
- State financial support for program.

The cross-sectional results illustrated distinct systems of government authority and varying GED age waiver criteria across the 50 states. In addition, test fees and state appropriations were analyzed. These results follow in Section VI.

C. LITERATURE AND PROGRAM REVIEW

In February 1998, the Commission on Youth sent letters to 62 organizations across the country requesting information on juvenile status offender issues. Information was requested on the following:

- definitions of juvenile status offenses (both legally and behaviorally);
- funding for services for juvenile status offenders;
- identification of "model" status offender statutes;
- service trends in responding to juvenile status offenses; and
- parental accountability measures.

The literature review included materials on both state and national legislative policy issues and national program models. Professional journals, agency bulletins, and project manuals were included in the review. In addition, an extensive review of truant and runaway programs throughout the country was conducted. A listing of the organizations contacted is provided as Appendix F.

Truancy programs were initially identified through material provided by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the National Network for Youth, and the National Youth and Families Clearinghouse.

Profiles of 53 programs for runaway and homeless youth were reviewed. These profiles, provided by the National Network for Youth, illustrated a range and variety of services for runaway and homeless youth and youth in high-risk situations. A sample of program models which highlight both similarities and differences were selected for more in-depth analysis. These programs underscore common themes across the country and identified approaches for possible replication in Virginia. Programs were compared and contrasted, based on 1) the administrative agency; 2) program eligibility; 3) program services; 4) consequences; and 5) evaluation outcomes. While by no means an exhaustive list, the collection provided a sample of programs from across the country. When necessary, additional information was gathered from program representatives. The runaway models were also compared for the purpose of identifying common themes and trends and establishing a clear picture of the continuum of care for runaway and homeless youth.

Additional literature reviews were undertaken to include material on Vocational Education Programming and GED Testing. A review of states' program materials and national agency publications, including the *GED 1997 Statistical Report* and the *1997 Examiner's Manual for the Tests of General Education Development*, provided policy information and secondary data. GED information was used to compare and contrast Virginia to the nation. Also, a review of Internet information was also conducted and statistical information from the Federal Department of Education was examined. This material provided background information and a framework for further research.

D. BUDGET REVIEW

Virginia's budgets for fiscal years 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 were reviewed and analyzed with respect to services to status offenders. Local shelter budgets were also analyzed to understand how operational costs were supported through federal, state, local, and charitable funds. National analysis of funding support for these populations was also conducted. State and local financial support for a host of educational options was collected and analyzed. Cost projections to meet anticipated need for additional truancy officers and expanded GED services were forecasted.

E. VIRGINIA ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

The comprehensive analysis of vocational education and work-based learning programs in Virginia was conducted with secondary data provided by the Virginia Department of Education. Data was summarized from program area course enrollments from each high school, middle school, combined school, vocational education and technical center. The analysis included such variables as 1) demographics of the 1996-1997 vocational student population, 2) vocational education program participation rates in the nine program areas, and 3) work-based learning program participation rates in secondary schools. Results of the analysis will be discussed in detail in Section VI.

F. STATUTORY ANALYSES

Two statutory analyses were conducted as part of the survey effort. First, status offender laws for the 50 states and the District of Columbia were analyzed as to the types of behaviors which qualify as status offenses in statute. Second, the compulsory school attendance, the use of waiver criteria to a lower age and the types of criteria included in the statutes. Results of these analyses follow in Section VI.

VI. Study Issues

The HJR 93 Task Force examined two sets of issues during the second year: first, status offenders and, second, educational options for truant youth. This section presents background information and findings and recommendations on both issues.

A. STATUS OFFENDERS

Status offenders are juveniles whose behaviors, if committed by adults, would not warrant Court intervention. The HJR 93 study examined issues of status offending through perspectives and methods which are addressed in the following paragraphs.

All states have statutory provisions for status offenders, who are identified in states' statutes as "Minors In Need of Services," "Children In Need of Services," "Children In Need of Care," "Children in Need of Assistance," or variations thereof.

Typically, these statutes include the following types of behaviors:

- Truancy
- Running Away
- Curfew Violation
- Substance Abuse/Alcohol Violation
- Ungovernability

An overview of the definitions of status offenders in all 50 states and the District of Columbia is provided in Table 2. Other types of conduct which are less commonly included in status offender definitions include: children in need of rehabilitation, abandonment by parents, behavior which endangers the morals or health of (the minor) self or others, and children who absent themselves from Court order placement. Despite the variations in state laws, there are commonalties on the national level in how these populations are defined and the goals of federal funding programs to serve them.

As part of study activities for HJR 490 (1997-98), the Commission on Youth held eleven focus groups involving over 200 direct service providers throughout the state. The focus group sessions yielded valuable information on Virginia's current service system for Children in Need of Services (CHINS), Children in Need of Supervision (CHINSup), and status offenders. The first year study findings reported that

*In summary, the resources for the status offender population have been severely curtailed in all agencies. Schools, Courts, mental health and law enforcement are all overwhelmed in responding to a growing population. Truants and runaways fall to the bottom of the list for service priority. The lack of immediate intervention often causes the child's behavior to escalate. Court intervention is seen as the only means to access mental health services for clients. This has resulted in a situation whereby every locality group said, 'We wait until the child commits a criminal act and then we know there will be the resources and the authority to serve them.'*¹

The first year study findings also reported that 82% of the localities cite lack of financial or personnel resources and clarification about responsibility for payment for services as barriers to effective intervention with for truants and runaways. Eighty-two percent reported that their locality needed additional staff to identify and follow-up with truants and 55% reported a need for more foster care homes or crisis shelters to place youth. The most frequently cited restraints on accessing funding for the population were the Comprehensive Services Act funding criteria and private insurance policy restrictions. Because the status offender population is not a priority service area, providers often seek to re-label the client to access services for them.

Current Virginia information on the funding of programs for status offenders was collected from the Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), Department of Education (DOE), and the Federal Department of Health and Human Services for 1990-1996, and the Comprehensive Services Act funding data from FY 90 to FY 96 for the non-mandated population.

¹ House Document 64 Interim Report by the Virginia Commission on Youth on the Study of Truants and Runaways, 1998, p. 2.

Table 2

Overview of National Status Offender Laws

State	Truancy	Running Away	Curfew Violation	Substance/ Alcohol Violations	Offenses Applicable Only to Children	Ungovernability
Alabama	✓⊕				✓	✓
Alaska		✓				
Arizona	✓⊕	✓			✓	✓
Arkansas	✓⊕	✓				✓
California	✓⊕		✓			✓
Colorado		✓				✓
Connecticut	✓⊕	✓				✓
Delaware	✓					
D.C.	✓⊕				✓	✓
Florida	✓⊕	✓				✓
Georgia	✓⊕	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii	✓		✓			✓
Idaho		✓	✓			✓
Illinois	✓⊕	✓		✓		✓
Indiana	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Iowa	✓	✓		✓		✓
Kansas	✓	✓			✓	
Kentucky	✓⊕	✓			✓	
Louisiana	✓⊕	✓		✓	✓	✓
Maine		✓				
Maryland	✓⊕				✓	✓
Massachusetts	✓	✓				✓
Michigan	✓	✓		✓		✓
Minnesota	✓⊕	✓		✓		
Mississippi	✓⊕	✓				✓
Missouri	✓	✓			✓	✓
Montana	✓⊕	✓		✓	✓	✓
Nebraska	✓	✓				✓
Nevada	✓⊕	✓				✓
N. Hampshire	✓⊕	✓				✓
New Jersey	✓	✓				✓
New Mexico	✓	✓				
New York	✓					✓
North Carolina	✓⊕	✓	✓	✓	✓	
North Dakota	✓⊕				✓	✓
Ohio	✓⊕	✓				✓
Oklahoma	✓	✓				✓
Oregon		✓				✓
Pennsylvania	✓⊕					✓
Rhode Island	✓⊕	✓		✓		✓
S. Carolina						✓
S. Dakota	✓⊕	✓			✓	✓
Tennessee	✓⊕	✓			✓	✓
Texas	✓	✓		✓		
Utah	✓⊕	✓				✓
Vermont	✓⊕					✓
Virginia	✓	✓			✓	✓
West Virginia	✓⊕	✓	✓	✓		✓
Washington		✓	✓			
Wisconsin	✓			✓		
Wyoming	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓⊕ Truancy must be habitual to warrant court intervention.

There is not a designated funding source for status offender services in Virginia, with the exception of the Truancy/Safe school funds. Table 3 summarizes FY 99 General Fund support which child-serving agencies provide to this population.

Table 3

FY 99 Funding Sources For Virginia Status Offenders

Dept. of Juvenile Justice	Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act provides that funding can be used for a child in need of services (CHINS) or a child in need of supervision (CHINSup). This statute provides legislative authority to localities for developing program strategies for truants and runaways. However, it is the locality's discretion as to how and where these funds are spent, e.g., CHINS, CHINSup or juvenile delinquency. Currently only a portion of the total funding is directed toward status offenders. FY 99 allocation \$29,800,000
Dept. of Social Services	Volunteer Emergency Families for Children - expands shelter care network for neglected, runaway, homeless and at-risk children FY 99 allocation \$100,000 Independent Living Initiative for Foster Care - prevents homelessness among foster care youth FY 99 allocation \$568,000 No other specific dollars allocated to CHINS, but 10% of foster care case rolls are made up of CHINS population and some Family Preservation funds support programs for status offenders
Dept. of Criminal Justice Services	Grant awards from OJJDP to serve truants to local units of government range from \$55,000 to \$74,400 and include a variety of programs . Five grant programs serving CHINS or CHINSup were identified for this most recent cycle. FY 99 allocation \$328,400
Comprehensive Services (CSA)	CSA does not distinguish or link services when reporting expenditures and census. Status offenders are considered a non-mandated population.
Dept. of Education	The Truancy Reduction Intervention/Safe Schools initiative provides incentive payments for reducing truancy and supporting safety in elementary and middle schools. The DOE uses a four-year trend analysis of elementary and middle schools' attendance rates, as reported in the Department's Outcome Accountability Project, which identifies school divisions in the lowest quartile for elementary and middle school attendance. Funds are to be distributed to those identified school divisions according to a formula, with the state contributing its share, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, to each identified participating school division. FY 99 allocation \$2 million
	The Dropout Prevention Program supports local dropout prevention programs. Priority consideration is given to those localities with the most acute need for such programs as reflected by each locality's dropout rate and the improvement in such rate. Provisions for a local resource commitment of 40 percent is required, to match state grants. Local program plans which include systematic identification of potential dropouts, assessment of individual student needs, and provision of coordinated alternative programs to meet such is required. FY 99 allocation \$11 million

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Analysis of HB 30, 1998

While statutorily these two populations--runaways and truants--are both classified as status offenders, each population presents unique challenges to the public and private service community and is discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

1. Truants

Across the nation daily, students as young as elementary school age are absent from school without justification for a variety of reasons. With daily absentee rates in some cities as high as 30%, truancy has been identified as one of the major problems facing schools.

Truancy can be the first step to a lifetime of problems and has been called a "stepping stone" to delinquent and criminal activity.² Because students fall behind in their school work, many drop out of school. In some states, truant students are at higher risk of behavior involving drugs, alcohol, or violence. Chronic absenteeism is reported to be the most powerful predictor of delinquent behavior.³ Many police departments report that daytime crime rates are rising, in part because some students who are not in school are committing crimes such as burglary, vandalism, and shoplifting.

Truancy is costly. Students lose out on educational opportunities, thereby reducing their future earning potential. School districts lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal and state grants that are based on daily attendance figures. Businesses must pay to train uneducated workers. Taxpayers bear the costs for law enforcement and for support to unemployed or underemployed school dropouts.

In July 1996, President Clinton announced a two-pronged initiative to support schools and communities in preventing truancy. The *Manual to Combat Truancy*, prepared by the U.S. Department of Education, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice, was sent to every school district in the country. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education invited applications under a new \$10 million discretionary grant program on truancy. According to the manual, research indicated that students who become truants and eventually drop out of school put themselves at a disadvantage in becoming productive citizens. High school dropouts were 2½ times more likely to be on welfare than high school graduates and, in 1995, were almost twice as likely to be unemployed as high school graduates. Furthermore, high school dropouts who were employed earned lower salaries.⁴

Because truancy is often indicative of other, more serious problems in a child's life, many communities are implementing comprehensive truancy-reduction programs which involve schools, law enforcement, social services, businesses, justice systems, and youth serving agencies along with students and their families. Communities are implementing innovative approaches that recognize the need for parent involvement, hold parents accountable for their children's school attendance, and provide intensive monitoring and counseling for truant students and their families.

Model school, state, and community policies make it clear to students and their parents that there is zero tolerance for truancy. These policies clearly state that school attendance is the responsibility of students and parents and that both will be held accountable for their absences. Some states refuse to grant a driver's license to a truant, while truants brought before a judge in some localities can be mandated to attend counseling or a specially-designed education program.⁵ Some schools mandate

² Garry, Eileen. *Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems*, 1996.

³ Schuster, B. "L.A. School Truancy Exacts a Growing Social Price," *Los Angeles Times*, 1995, p. A12.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Manual to Combat Truancy*, 1996, p. 4.

⁵ Ibid.

course failure, suspension, or transfer to special programs after a certain number of unexcused absences.⁶

States hold parents responsible for their children's truancy in a variety of ways. Some authorize localities to fine or jail parents whose children fail to attend school. Others are requiring mandatory counseling or community service for parents as well as students. Several states also link eligibility for public assistance to children's school attendance.

In their *Manual to Combat Truancy*, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice identified five primary elements of a comprehensive community strategy and highlighted several local programs which have implemented these elements in order to deter truancy in their communities. According to the *Manual*, local communities must:

- Establish ongoing prevention programs in schools;
- Involve parents in all truancy prevention programs;
- Create meaningful incentives for parental responsibility;
- Involve the local justice system in truancy reduction efforts; and
- Ensure that students face firm sanctions for truancy.

For the HJR 93 study, a national review of truancy programs, including those identified by the Departments of Education and Justice, was conducted. A number of common themes for successful truancy programs were identified. First, the entire community must be committed to reducing truancy. In many localities, the District Attorney's Office has a key role in the truancy efforts, along with social services, public health, and the business community's working in conjunction with school personnel. A second theme stressed the importance of early intervention. Services were reported to be most effective when introduced early, at the onset of absences. Several programs recognized that the pattern for truancy is established early in a child's school career. Many programs begin intervention when a student has missed as few as three days without an excuse. Efforts targeted toward elementary school children, as well as middle and high-school students, were reported to be successful. Students at risk of truancy due to lack of school involvement, school failure, substance abuse, family problems, and other factors are identified early and monitored for attendance problems.

Across the country, schools are increasing the availability of academic and non-academic activities for students. Broad choices of extra-curricular activities are offered in attempts to engage more students in school life. Increasing the accessibility and type of vocational programs - the third theme - was also seen as contributing to the success of truancy programs. Students who were engaged in activities they found meaningful and practical were more likely to attend school.⁷

A fourth common theme was the involvement of the family. Services are family-focused and include counseling, parent education and support, and access to

⁶ Rohrman, D. "Combating Truancy in Our Schools - A Community Effort," *NASSP Bulletin*, 1993, p.15.

⁷ *Manual to Combat Truancy*, p. 3.

community services. Some programs offer parents the opportunity to participate in the delivery of services, as volunteer truant officers, support group members, and mentors.

Interagency efforts were most successful when coordinated by one lead agency. Clear delineation of responsibilities and lines of communication were seen as critical to ensuring collaboration. Finally, responsibilities and consequences for non-attendance for both parents and students were clear. Fines, mandatory community service, license revocation, and court referrals are examples of some of the consequences imposed to students and their parents by truancy programs across the country. The programs reviewed can be characterized as one of three different program models:

- ◆ **School-Based Team Approaches** bring law enforcement, social services, and court services into the school to focus on both student and parent issues. School personnel coordinate efforts and work with students and families to solve the problems that are keeping students from school. When efforts fail to work, school-based sanctions are imposed and court referrals may be made.
- ◆ **Truancy Centers** are based in the community, typically in youth-serving agencies which make their facilities available. Police officers stop and question youth who are found in the community during school hours and transport them to the centers. Professional staff assess the student's situation and determine the need for immediate services. Schools and parents are contacted and parents must accompany students back to school. Truancy center staff provide follow-up and referral to community services, if necessary.
- ◆ **Community Assessment Centers** are comprehensive efforts which combine the efforts of law enforcement, social services, and mental health to bring needed services to truants and other status offenders and their families. A multidisciplinary team offers assessments and ensures that services are provided in a timely manner. Students, parents, and service providers enter into contracts, identifying specific responsibilities related to school attendance. The teams monitor delivery of services, as well as progress, in meeting the terms of the contract and school attendance.

A comparison of ten model programs is found in Exhibit 1.

Many of the themes cited nationally are being replicated in Virginia. There are two dedicated funding streams to serve truants in the Commonwealth. The Department of Education (DOE) supports truancy initiatives with General Fund dollars and the Department of Criminal Justice services (DCJS) supports five programs with federal funding under the JJDP Act (Table 4).

As a part of the Juvenile Justice Reform of 1996, the Virginia General Assembly provided \$2.5 million to local schools with high absentee rates to develop Truancy Reduction and Safe School Programs. The DOE developed guidelines for the program. The guidelines provided that each grant request should include parental involvement and a self evaluation.

Exhibit 1

MODEL TRUANCY PROGRAMS

Program/City	Responsible Agency	Eligibility (Grades)	Program Services	Consequences	Outcomes
ACT-LA Los Angeles, CA	District Attorney's Office	K-6	Schools identify students with attendance problems. Letter from DA sent to parents requesting attendance at group meeting. 2 nd letter requests individual meeting with DA Behavioral contract signed. Continued monitoring by school officials Referral to in-house review board and DA mediation hearing, if necessary	Court case filed if all steps fail to get child in school.	91% of students demonstrated improved attendance after letter from DA. 8% demonstrated improved attendance after in-house review board hearing. Less than .002% required Court filings.
New Haven, CT	School/Court	6-8	Targeted students sent to truancy court. Panel of HS students question and try to identify solutions to student-identified problems. Student and Court sign written agreement. Youth and attorney mentors are assigned for follow-up. Students return to Court after 2 months to review contract and report progress.	Court case filed	Truancy reports decreased by 50%.
Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression (TABS) Santa Fe, NM Milwaukee, WI; THRIVE Oklahoma City, OK	Consortium of Sheriff's Office, Police Dept., Public Schools, and Boys & Girls Clubs	6-8	Law enforcement officers pick up truants and take to TABS centers for processing. Center staff contact parents. Parents and student work with school counselor to set goals for regular attendance. Parents receive letters from DA outlining school attendance laws and consequences. Counselors arrange social services if necessary.	Chronic truants: police issue citations to parents and require students to participate in counseling and diversion programs	73% of students returned to school on the next day. 66% remained in school on 15 th day. 64% were still in school 30 days later. Daytime burglary rate decreased by 33%. Aggravated battery rate decreased by 29%
Chanute, KS	County Attorney	6-12	Families referred by school Enter 90-day, 3-pronged program Intensive supervision of child Support and therapy group for students Support and education groups for parents	Court case filed May be taken into custody of Social and Rehabilitative Services	90% of students enrolled remained out of custody of Social Services and in school. 10% were subject to Court petition.

MODEL TRUANCY PROGRAMS (cont.)

Program/City	Responsible Agency	Eligibility (Grades)	Services/Description	Consequences	Outcomes
<i>Ramsey County, MN</i>	County Attorney/ School	6-12	<p>Students with 3 unexcused absences and parents attend group meeting; DA presents compulsory attendance law, consequences of poor attendance, Truancy Intervention Process.</p> <p>Attendance monitored by school.</p> <p>Failure to improve - referred to in-house review team.</p> <p>Admin, Social Worker, County Atty, student, and parents negotiate attendance contract.</p> <p>Referrals to Social Service agency if necessary.</p>	Petition filed in Court	<p>Of students referred to DA meetings, 70% improved attendance after meetings.</p> <p>20% referred to in-house review teams.</p> <p>10% referred to Court for truancy petitions.</p>
Truancy Outreach Program <i>Chicago, IL Public Schools</i>	School	9-12	<p>Parents and attendance coordinator work with truant students and parents - group support.</p> <p>Automated calling system used to contact parent of students with unexcused absences.</p> <p>Truancy hotline for individuals to report truants.</p> <p>Truancy vans used for sweeps.</p>	<p>Schools held accountable.</p> <p>Every principal with attendance rate below 95% required to develop Attendance Improvement Plan tailored to meet identified needs.</p> <p>Chronic truants referred to Court.</p>	
<i>Rehnert Park, CA</i>	School	9-12	<p>Patrol officers issue citations</p> <p>Students returned to school to meet parents and Vice Principal</p> <p>2nd citations - no penalty</p> <p>3rd citation - refer to support services</p>	<p>Parents assessed \$50 fine;</p> <p>Students referred to Juvenile Traffic Court.</p>	<p>Daytime burglary rate down 75% from 1979.</p>

MODEL TRUANCY PROGRAMS (cont.)

Program/City	Responsible Agency	Eligibility (Grades)	Services/Description	Consequences	Outcomes
Truancy Mediation Program <i>Gaston Co., NC</i>	Mediation Center	6-12	Children/parents given the option of mediation to avoid Court proceedings. Students referred to center pre-warrant. Meeting with interested parties and mediator. Students and parents sign resolution School social workers monitor attendance Unsuccessful cases closed by Mediation Center.	Warrant filed against parents or petitions filed against juveniles.	Center has helped resolve 427 cases. Success rate is 81%.
Truancy Prevention Services <i>Memphis/Shelby Co., TN</i>	Juvenile Court	6-12	Uses volunteer "officers" to investigate complaints, make home visits, work with school and family welfare agencies, conduct family needs assessments, and report findings and recommendations to Court. Plan specifies parent responsibilities regarding school attendance 2-step Parent/Pupil Education Program (PPEP) 1 st Step - Parent Training and Adolescent Responsibility classes 2 nd Step - Case meeting, mentoring/ counseling, psychological services, AOD treatment	Failure to comply may result in adjudication. School may request warrant for violation of compulsory school attendance laws against parent, or may assist parent in filing unruly petition/complaint against the child.	31% decrease in number of truancy complaints 1996 to 1997; 300% increase in number of adults charged with violation of CSA laws from 1996 to 1997.
Helping Hands <i>Atlantic County, NJ</i>	School	K-8	Truancy worker meets with students (with 5-15 days absent) and their families. Short-term family counseling (up to 8 sessions). Referral for additional social services if necessary.	Warrant filed against parents for violation of school attendance laws	84% of participating students had no recurrence of truancy

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Analysis of National Program Data, September 1998

The Virginia DOE awarded the City of Portsmouth a contract to provide technical assistance to these grant recipients, as well as to conduct an evaluation of the 55 truancy/safe schools programs throughout the state. Per the funding application for Truancy Reduction and Safe Schools Program issued by the DOE in June 1996, the local school division was to provide a mid-year program review by January 15, 1997 and an evaluation report by June 30, 1997. While a site visit has been made to each of the 55 localities receiving grant funds, neither an interim nor a final report has been completed at the time of this study report.

The programs funded by the DCJS are the only ones in Virginia which specify truancy intervention as the primary activity. These projects are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Department of Criminal Justice Services Truancy Programs

Jurisdiction	Funding Level	Project Description	Performance as of April 1, 1998
Richmond City	\$41,920	Curfew Assessment and Diversion Center, providing psychological testing, mediation, mentoring and enrichment services	Served 421 truants; 384 new; 105 curfew violators; 90 new; 28 psychological assessments; 15 in LRE program
Fairfax	\$78,315	Intensive Court supervision and case management services for truants	19 youth; development of procedural agreement with school system
Smyth County	\$56,250	Case management and daily monitoring of school attendance for truants	25 youth; school failure decreased 70%; 14 of the youth were court involved, only one has returned to court
Rocky Mount	\$35,154	School Liaison Officer case management and service linkage for truants	35% of youth identified (doesn't say how many) have improved attendance
Orange County	\$74,997	Specialized services to court involved truants	12 youth, absences have decreased an average of 46.6 to 13.6 days, participants are receiving B's and C's in school.

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Analysis of DCJS Grant Report Material, September 1998

In addition, across the state, there are a variety of school, community, and court-based procedures and programs established to respond to truancy. A sample of these innovative programs is provided as Appendix G.

As there are no statewide programs targeted to truants, the Commission on Youth disseminated surveys to educators and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges throughout the state. In the pages which follow, selected survey findings are presented. Appendix C contains the full survey findings.

The *Code of Virginia* sets forth school attendance requirements in two sections. The compulsory attendance section, §22.1-254 requires parents to send their children, ages 5 to 18 years, to school every day that the schools are in session and §22.1-257 sets the requirements for attendance officers to follow-up on student absences at 3, 5 and 7 days. However, the *Code* does not contain a definition of truancy. Therefore, local superintendents were asked to provide their divisional definition of truancy to determine the variance statewide in what constitutes unexcused absences warranting the attention of the attendance officer. The superintendent responses could be classified in one of the following four ways:

- 3/5/7 day attendance officer requirement in Section 22.1-258,
- “any absence without parental knowledge/excuse,”
- determination is made on a case by case basis, and
- absenteeism ranges from 2-28 days (consecutively or individually).

The majority of Virginia educators (82%) reported maintaining monthly records of truants based on their local definition; however 90% of the educators said that there should be a uniform statewide definition of a truant.

Adequate school personnel resources to identify and follow-up with truant youth was reported to be problematic for local school systems. Less than half (46%) of the superintendents said that each of the schools in their division had a truant (attendance) officers. In addition, in those middle and high schools with truant officers, two-thirds of the principals reported that the truant officers had additional job responsibilities. The most commonly reported school positions which function as truant officers were visiting teacher, school social worker, assistant principal and guidance counselor.

The *Code of Virginia*, Section 16.1-260(d) requires that schools exhaust “all appropriate non-judicial remedies which are available to them” prior to seeking court involvement through the filing of a petition for truancy. Two-thirds of the survey respondents reported that “reasonable efforts” in exhausting school remedies should be standardized to ensure fair and equal access to the Juvenile Courts. Educators reported the following steps should be completed by the schools to constitute “reasonable efforts”:

- 83% personal contact with the parent/guardian within 3 days of the absence;
- 80% parent/student/school conference within 5 days of the absence;
- 64% immediate contact with the child within a day of the absence; and
- 55% assessment by an interdisciplinary team.

Judicial expectations for reasonable efforts very closely mirrored those of educators. These expectations included a face to face meeting with student and parent (83%), notification with the parent by telephone (75%) and notification with the parent by letter (73%). In addition, a majority of the judges were satisfied with the priority the schools and law enforcement place on truants.

A large number of judges (77%) reported truancy petitions were placed on the Juvenile Court docket all year. However, 48% said they seldom/never use the contempt of court sanction in truancy cases.

In summary, the findings of the HJR 93 study related to truants are as follows:

- *There is no definition of truancy in the Code of Virginia.*
- *Local school superintendents report various definitions of truancy for the purposes of school intervention which ranged from 2 to 28 consecutive or individual days.*
- *82% of the educators report maintaining monthly records on truants.*
- *Less than half of the school divisions across the state have truancy officers.*
- *Principals reported that, in schools having truancy officers, 66% of the officers have additional job responsibilities.*
- *Parental responsibility for resolving issues affecting their children's school attendance is not clear in the Code.*
- *There is a lack of consistent school level/division level/statewide level reporting of truancy.*
- *90% of the state survey respondents said there should be a standard definition of a truant.*
- *66% of the school personnel reported "reasonable efforts" should be standardized across the state.*
- *School personnel's definition of "reasonable effort" include immediate contact with the child after the first absence (64%), personal contact with the parent within three days (83%) parent student conference within five days (80%).*
- *Only 51% of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges were satisfied with the priority that law enforcement and schools place on truants.*
- *Schools have insufficient resources (School Resource Officers and Court Liaison personnel) to intervene effectively with truants.*
- *Expectations for school intervention for unexcused absences are unclear.*
- *Sending a child to school as part of the compulsory school attendance requirements is not clearly stated in the Code.*
- *Parental responsibility for resolving issues affecting their children's school attendance is not clear in the Code.*
- *The responsiveness of Juvenile Courts with respect to truancy petitions varies across the state.*
- *Juvenile Court dockets have backlogs, making it difficult for truancy cases to be heard in a timely manner.*

Based on these findings, the HJR 93 Task Force approved the following recommendations related to truants and submitted them to the Commission on Youth for review and approval at their December 1998 meeting:

Recommendations

Amend Section 22.1-260 to include the uniform reporting of school truants on an annual basis at the school level.

Request the Virginia Board of Education to include unexcused absentee rates in the unabbreviated version of the school report cards.

Amend Section 22.1-258 to define truancy as a student's absence (for all or part of a school day) which is unexcused by the parent or legal guardian.

Amend Section 22.1-254 to include explicit requirements that:

- 1. parents send their children to school; cite Sections 22.1-262 and 263 (as amended), and**
- 2. students comply with this section and cite Section 16.1-278.5 regarding penalties for non-compliance.**

Amend Section 22.1-258 to require that, at a minimum:

- 1. School, at the 1st unexcused and any subsequent unexcused absences, makes reasonable effort to contact parent(s) to receive justification for absence and explain the consequences for the student and parent(s).**
- 2. School, at the 5th unexcused absence, is required to make personal contact with the parent(s) to identify the issues causing the student's non-attendance and develop a plan outlining the responsibilities of the school, student and parent(s) to attend school and explaining the legal consequences for the student's continued non-attendance. (Meeting is to occur within 5 school days after the 5th absence.) The school is to provide the parent and student a fact sheet outlining the legal consequences for continued non-attendance. The Commonwealth's Attorney is authorized to send a letter to the parents notifying them of the legal consequences for the student's continued non-attendance.**
- 3. At the 6th unexcused absence, the school must convene a multi-disciplinary team which may, at school's discretion, include non-school personnel to work towards resolution of student's non-attendance. School can neither fail the student purely for attendance reasons nor file a truancy petition or petition against the parent(s) until these steps have been taken.**
- 4. At 7th unexcused absence, school is authorized to file a complaint with the Court or seek a warrant from the magistrate and provide documentation of their reasonable efforts.**

Amend Section 16.1-260 to require Court Intake, upon receiving documentation of a school's reasonable efforts, to file a petition for a Court hearing on truancy or parental failure to comply with compulsory school attendance laws.

Amend Sections 22.1-262 and 263 to include parental unreasonable refusal to participate in school-recommended services to ensure child's school attendance.

Provide funding for attendance officers to middle and high schools based on schools' percentage of at-risk students. (\$2,904,457)

Fund Court Liaison personnel based on the percentage of schools identified for truancy officers; Liaisons are to be housed in the Juvenile Court Service Units. (\$1,003,941)

Support the expansion of School Resource Officers across the state to assist in school attendance and safety issues.

Request the School Superintendent/Judicial Liaison Committee advise their counterparts at annual conferences on the importance of placing truancy petitions on the docket on a 12-month basis.

Continue to support the Supreme Court Calendar Management Training and encourage the Office of the Executive Secretary to focus on the larger courts in their next training cycle.

Request the Department of Criminal Justice Services provide training to local law enforcement on custody and arrest policies for truants and to encourage that the law enforcement representatives of the *Newport News Street Watch Program* be involved in the curriculum development.

2. Runaways

Historically, the act of running away has been sufficient to bring a youth within the jurisdiction of the local Juvenile Court. Acceptance of a State's right and responsibility to exercise control over its youth dates back to the founding of the Juvenile Court in the late 1800's and the philosophy of *parens patriae*.

The doctrine of *parens patriae* justified the State's power to institutionalize children and youth who were unable to care for themselves, whose parents were either unwilling or unable to care for them properly, or who constituted not only a danger to themselves, but also a moral irritant to their communities. Institutions for wayward children date from the early 19th century and were established to protect and rehabilitate non-criminal youth offenders. Juvenile Court statutes, enacted in all but two states by 1925, reflected the belief that wayward behavior was a precursor to criminality and that every youth in need was entitled to judicial attention. The primary objective of these statutes was the rehabilitation of all juveniles deemed to be in need, whether they had actually violated state and local laws or - as a result of family circumstances - were morally or physically endangered or neglected and thus warranting State intervention.

With the 1960s, Juvenile Courts began to distinguish between status offenders and delinquents. Advocacy efforts and court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s

culminated in the enactment of the policy of removing status offenders from secure detention facilities. The federal government endorsed this policy in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974, which mandated the de-institutionalization of status offenders as a condition of state receipt of federal funds. As a result, the practice of holding runaways in long-term correctional facilities, adult jails, or detention facilities has been virtually eliminated.

Few states, however, have attempted to replace the old system of court-ordered institutionalization with special initiatives or alternative service systems designed to meet the needs of non-delinquent youth. Overburdened child welfare and traditional juvenile justice systems are currently ill-equipped to deal with these youth. As a result, many runaway, homeless, and incorrigible youth are ignored and fail to receive the services that they need. In some cases, the gains achieved by removing runaways and other status offenders from the juvenile justice system have been offset by an increased use of involuntary placements in other systems, such as mental health and chemical dependency institutions. Runaways and other status offenders are, in some instances, reclassified as delinquents as a means to access services and place controls over their behavior.

The federal government defines a "runaway youth" as a person under 18 years of age who absents himself/herself from home or place of legal residence without permission of parents or legal guardian. The federal government defines a "homeless youth" as a person under 18 who is in need of services and without a place of shelter where he/she receives supervision and care. "Runaway youth" and "homeless youth" are often used as interchangeable terms at the federal level. The number of "runaway" and "homeless" youth nationally varies from 500,000 to 1.3 million depending on how they are categorized.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) is component of the JJDP Act and authorizes funding for services delivered to youth through channels outside of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. A primary goal of the federal program is to resolve family problems through counseling services and to reunite youth with their families, when appropriate. Shelters supported by federal grants are required to provide counseling and aftercare services to runaway and homeless youth and their families, establish or coordinate with outreach programs, and ensure proper relations with personnel in the law enforcement, health and mental health care, social service, welfare and school systems. Under federal law, shelter services are available to both runaway and homeless youth. Virginia's licensing requirements limit the length of time a runaway can stay at a shelter to 30 days.

Shelters which receive federal funding under the RHYA are responsible for certain compliance requirements. Federal grant funds which support runaway centers across the country average less than one-third of a shelter's budget. Other funding sources include state and local government monies, foundation contributions, and private corporate and individual gifts.

Over the past 20 years, since enactment of the RHYA, an increasing number of federally-funded programs have targeted youth in crisis, including runaway and homeless youth. However, the RHYA remains the only source of funds for short-term shelter care for runaways. The RHYA grants are competitive, with priority given to those agencies that have experience working with runaways and homeless youth. Appropriated funds are apportioned by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services according to each state's relative population of youth under the age of eighteen. Therefore, the grant award for each state varies. Both private non-profit and public organizations can apply for these grant funds.

The RHYA funding has three basic components:

- Basic Centers Grant Program -- funds community-based centers that provide short-term crisis shelter, food, clothing, counseling, family reunification, aftercare and crisis intervention services to runaway and homeless youth and their families.
- Transitional Living Grant Program for Homeless Youth -- funds grant support and technical assistance to projects that help homeless youth ages 16-20 make the transition to independent living.
- Outreach Grants -- funds grants to serve youth who have been sexually abused or are at-risk of being sexually abused.

On the national level, projected amounts for FY98/99 are: \$75 million for Basic Centers Grant Programs, \$25 million for Transitional Living Grant Program for Homeless Youth, and \$15 million for Outreach Grants.

Only a handful of states (Alaska, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, New York and Tennessee) have adopted special runaway and homeless youth laws. These laws generally set forth criteria which govern the operation of runaway and homeless youth shelters within the state. With some variation, these laws address certain basic issues, including admission eligibility, parental notification requirements, family reunification services, access to medical care and other services and shelter liability. These services are funded from federal RHYA monies with a 10% non-federal match.

Commission on Youth staff conducted a review of 93 programs for runaway and homeless youth identified by the National Network for Youth. Programs varied in size, location, and services offered, but a number of common themes were identified. The youth's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and medical care are met immediately. The majority of programs for runaways provide this basic level of service. Many programs have established partnerships with school, community service organizations, health care providers, and the courts to ensure comprehensive, coordinated service delivery. A number of runaway programs have partnerships with the local business community for funding and job placement needs.

Many youth and families do not know where to look for help with problems or how to ask for it. Street outreach and hotline programs provide immediate information and referral to youth and families seeking help. Programs teach practical, usable skills to both youth and family members, including communication, decision-making,

resource identification, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Many programs also provide youth with opportunities to build skills and apply them in structured environments. Successful programs make use of youth as peer educators, advisory board members, computer technicians, tutors, and sports officials. Finally, aftercare and follow-up services tend to include counseling, family support, housing referral, health care, and employment assistance.

The continuum of care for runaway and homeless youth is outlined in Exhibit 2. In addition, a comparison of ten model programs for runaway and homeless youth is found in Exhibit 3. In general, these programs are managed by private, not-for-profit agencies, with funding provided by a wide range of both public and private sources.

Exhibit 2

**Continuum of Care for
Runaway and Homeless Youth**

Hotline, Street Outreach, Drop-in Centers

- Telephone crisis intervention
- Attention to basic needs: food, clothing, medical care
- Information and referral

Short-term Emergency Shelter

- Basic shelter for up to 30 days
- Referral to community services

Tailored Programs and Treatment Services

- Substance abuse services
- Services for sexually abused and/or battered youth
- Services for pregnant and parenting youth
- HIV prevention and treatment

Comprehensive Services

- Holistic approach addresses health, mental health, social service, education and employment needs
- Efforts to provide continuity of care to help youth and family gain stability
- Case management services

Long Term Residential Placement

- Foster care
- Group homes

Transitional/Independent Living Programs

- Housing
- Life skills
- Employment

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Analysis of National Network for Youth Data, October 1998

Exhibit 3

MODEL RUNAWAY PROGRAMS

Program/City	Organization	Target* Audience	Program Services	Funding Source	Partnerships
Covenant House <i>New York, NY</i>	Covenant House	11-21	Basic shelter services Referrals Transitional living services Mother/child services for pregnant and parenting youth Education, training, and job placement Aftercare services include counseling and housing referral	Federal and state government Contributions	Numerous New York City public agencies and business
Family Focus <i>Fairbanks, AK</i>	Fairbanks Native Association	11-21	Basic shelter Drop-in center with meals, showers, counseling, mailboxes Teen telephone crisis line Transitional living services Vocational and skill-building services Supervision of youth offenders who would otherwise be detained in locked facilities - shelter, counseling, electronic monitoring	Federal and state government	Juvenile Justice System Fairbanks Youth Facility
Friends of Youth Basic Centers <i>Bellevue, WA</i>	Friends of Youth	11-21	Basic shelter and counseling services provided by two 10-bed, family-model homes Homes maintained as family environment with group planning and daily house meetings Case management and counseling services designed to help keep youth from running away or living on the streets	Federal government United Way Local grants Contributions	Collaborative network including 24 other community service providers

* Target audience is runaway and homeless youth of ages specified.

MODEL RUNAWAY PROGRAMS (cont.)

Program/City	Organization	Target* Audience	Services/Description	Funding Source	Partnerships
Huckleberry House <i>Columbus, OH</i>	Huckleberry House	up to age 21	Hotline Crisis Intervention Emergency shelter Outreach program by van to those communities not reached by human service organizations Transitional living program.	Federal and state government United Way Youth Forum Contributions	Youth Forum Fight Back of Central Ohio Project Linden
Juma Ventures <i>San Francisco, CA</i>	Juma Ventures	14-24 and at-risk youth	Employment skills Training Job placement One-on-one counseling Referrals for community supports Aftercare services including employment service and job training	Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Franchises Foundations Corporations Contributions	Ben and Jerry's Homemade San Francisco Small Business Network Huckleberry Youth Programs Larkin Street Youth Center
Lighthouse Youth Crisis Center Outreach Program <i>Cincinnati, OH</i>	Lighthouse Youth Services	8-17	Media campaign to reach street, runaway, and gang youth Basic shelter Crisis intervention Short-term support and family reunification counseling	Federal, state and local government United Way Local foundations Contributions	Hamilton County Juvenile Court Hamilton County Family and Children First Council Lighthouse Youth Development Center
Looking Glass Youth and Family Services <i>Eugene, OR</i>	Looking Glass Services for Youth and Families	11-17 and their families	Basic shelter 24-hour telephone crisis intervention Drop-in crisis sessions Advocacy Shelter peer support network Volunteer opportunities in senior citizen leadership training project and youth advisory board	Local government United Way	Lane County service providers Local schools and government agencies

* Target audience is runaway and homeless youth of ages specified.

MODEL RUNAWAY PROGRAMS (cont.)

Program/City	Organization	Target* Audience	Services/Description	Funding Source	Partnerships
Oasis Center <i>Nashville, TN</i>	Oasis Center, Inc.	13-17 and their families	Safety and crisis intervention in voluntary, 2-week residential program Counseling Alcohol, drug, and suicide assessment School program Peer educator training HIV Prevention groups Substance Abuse Prevention groups.	Federal and state government Contributions United Way Program service fees	Metropolitan Health Department Downtown Clinic Mobile Crisis Response Team Hands On Nashville
Oneida County Runaway and Homeless Youth Program <i>Rome, NY</i>	Oneida County Community Action Agency	10-21	Curbside crisis counseling, information, and food Advocacy Transportation Shelter for up to 30 days with Volunteer Interim Host Families Reunification counseling	Federal and state government United Way	Empire State Coalition Planned Parenthood American Red Cross
Sasha Bruce Youthwork <i>Washington, D.C.</i>	Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc.	12-22 including youth at-risk	Basic shelter Transitional and Independent Living Program Computer-Assisted Literacy Program Family preservation services and family counseling Sports Officiating Training Court diversion program	Federal, state, local government United Way Foundations Corporations Contributions	Consortium for Youth Services Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness

Target audience is runaway and homeless youth of ages specified.

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Analysis of National Network for Youth Data, September 1998

Virginia has received funds from the RHYA for the past eight years, as illustrated in Table 5. In FY 97-98, Virginia was awarded \$966,043 for nine programs:

- Alternative House (Loring);
- This Way House (Alexandria);
- Loudoun Youth Shelter (Leesburg);
- Sanctuary House (Roanoke);
- Seton House (Virginia Beach);
- Children, Youth and Family Services of Charlottesville;
- Youth Crisis Network (Norfolk);
- Oasis House (Richmond); and
- Volunteer Emergency Families for Children [VEFC] (statewide).

Table 5

**VIRGINIA RECEIPT OF
RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT PROGRAMS (RHYA)
1990-1998**

Year	No. Programs	Total \$\$\$
1990	4	293,803
1991	5	478,442
1992	6	647,183
1993	8	757,643
1994	8	802,110
1995	8	729,791
1996	9	828,754
1997	9	966,043
1998	*	912,649

* Awards for 1998 were not announced as of this writing.

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth RHYA Analysis, 1998

Virginia also received \$271,812 for two programs under the Transitional Living Grant Program for Homeless Youth funding sections (Residential Youth Services in Alexandria and Alternative House in Loring). Alternative House was awarded an additional \$100,000 for Outreach Grants to serve youth who have been sexually abused or are at-risk of being sexually abused.

The RHYA Virginia Programs' primary focus is providing services to runaways and status offenders. Over one-third of Virginia's runaway shelters' budgets comes from the federal RHYA grant funding. Other funding sources include local government monies, foundation contributions, and private, corporate and individual gifts. (VEFC is the only program to receive designated state General Fund dollars.) All organizations would like to expand services, but to do so would require additional staff and funding. If

expanded services were available, they would include more in rural areas and the capacity to serve waiting lists, while Northern Virginia shelters mentioned the desire to expand outreach services to Hispanic community.

In summary, the findings of the HJR 93 study related to runaways are as follows:

- *Law enforcement's custody and arrest policies for truants and runaways are inconsistent and not uniformly enforced.*
- *"Habitual" is undefined for purposes of Court involvement with runaways, causing variations across the state in the Court processing of these cases.*
- *The need for runaway shelters in Virginia exceeds availability.*
- *From 1991 to 1997, runaway arrests increased 11% from 5,123 to 5,676,*
- *Actual arrest totals for 1997 are suspected to be higher, with Fairfax and Virginia Beach reporting a total of only 24 arrests.*
- *Virginia has not provided any General Fund support to the eight shelters across the state.*
- *Adults who knowingly harbor runaways are not included in Contributing to Delinquency statute.*

Based on these findings, the HJR 93 Task Force approved the following recommendations and submitted them to the Commission on Youth for review and approval at their December 1998 meeting:

Recommendations

Request the Virginia Sheriff's Association and the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police to provide training on custody and arrest policies for truants and runaways at their annual conferences.

Amend Section 16.1-228 to define "habitual" to include a child who is a runaway from home or a Court-ordered placement three or more times.

Request the State Police to conduct a study on the accuracy of arrest reports for status offenders as reported in the Uniform Crime Reports.

Amend Section 18.1-371, the Contributing to Delinquency of Minors Statute, to include adults who knowingly harbor runaways.

Request \$350,000 in funding for the State share of Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter Programs in Virginia.

3. Parental Responsibility

Enactment of parental responsibility laws at the state and national levels has been a growing trend in juvenile delinquency. These laws impose liability on parents for

the misconduct of their children. Most of these laws are focused on delinquent and not status offending behavior.⁸ These laws attempt to involve parents in the lives of their children by holding them civil and/or criminally liable for their children's actions. Routinely, penalties for these violations include: increasing parental participation in Court proceedings and counseling services, financial responsibility for court costs, and restitution/community service programs.

The objectives of parent responsibility laws are to affirm the importance of parents' providing for their children's necessities and to ensure they do not abuse or abandon their children, as well as be active partners in rehabilitation efforts. As part of their juvenile justice reform effort in 1994, Colorado reviewed the possibility of holding parents responsible for their children's truant behavior. In their deliberations it was agreed that parents should be held accountable for their child's truancy, but it was acknowledged that parents often did not have control over their children. They were not in favor of keeping discipline problem students in their school and as a result voted to repeal their state's compulsory education law.⁹

In Virginia, there are three areas--child support, receipt of welfare benefits, and child abuse--in which Virginia policy clearly defines parental responsibilities and identifies consequences for failure to uphold those responsibilities. In order to qualify for assistance under new the Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and Virginia's Incentive for Employment not Welfare (VIEW), parents must ensure that their children attend school. Failure to comply with compulsory school attendance requirements will lead to reduction or elimination of TANF benefits. Virginia also holds parents responsible for financial support of their children. The Division of Child Support Enforcement describes several steps to enforce payment of child support and sanctions for parents who fail to pay. Each of these areas will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

In order to remain eligible for benefits under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), parents are required to comply with the Compulsory School Attendance requirement set out in Section 22.1-254 of the Virginia Code. According to the requirements for eligibility in TANF, a child is deemed truant when information provided by or verified by the school shows that the child:

1. Failed to report to school for three consecutive days, or for a total of five scheduled school days per month, or an aggregate of seven scheduled school days per school calendar quarter, and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or guardian is aware of the child's absence, and a reasonable effort by school personnel to notify the parent or guardian has failed; or
2. Is not enrolled in any school at any time during the prior calendar month.¹⁰

⁸ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Justice Reform Initiatives in the States*, Washington, D.C., 1994-97, p. 18.

⁹ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, p. 55.

¹⁰ *TANF Manual*, p. 4.

The State Department of Social Services provides all local school divisions with dial-up access to a TANF recipients database. The local school division is responsible for notifying the local department of social services of TANF recipients, identified through the database, who are truant. Notification of truancy occurs as follows:

1. When the school attendance officer enforces the provisions of compulsory school attendance, (as defined in Sections 22.1-258 and 22.1-261) he/she will also notify the local department of social services. This occurs either:
 - a. after the attendance officer has notified the parent/guardian of the student's non-attendance, requesting the reason for the non-attendance and the parent/guardian has failed to respond, or
 - b. when the attendance officer develops a list of children not enrolled at the beginning of each school session; or
2. When the local school division, in carrying out the rules set by the local school board, determines that a child receiving TANF is truant, it will notify the local department of social services.¹¹

After receiving notice of truancy from a school, the local department of social services must notify the caretaker, in writing, of the child's truancy. The notice gives the caretaker five working days to contact the department and cooperate in the development of a plan to achieve compliance with compulsory school attendance laws. The notice further informs the caretaker that failure to contact the department may result in the truant recipient's ineligibility for TANF.

If the caretaker contacts the agency, the agency works with him/her to establish a plan to resolve the child's truancy and bring him into compliance with school attendance laws. The plan must include the following:

1. A determination of the reason for non-attendance
2. A time frame for achieving compliance;
3. a schedule of events which the caretaker agrees to complete; and
4. what performance constitutes compliance.¹²

The plan is developed in writing, with one copy given to the caretaker and one filed in the case record. The local department of social services is responsible for verifying that the caretaker is cooperating with the plan.

If no response to the written notice is received within five working days, the local department must make reasonable efforts to personally contact the caretaker. These efforts may include a direct telephone contact or a face-to-face contact to explain the requirement to develop a plan to return the child to school, and the result of not cooperating with the requirement. If the agency is unable to make contact, the caretaker is notified by mail that the truant child will be ineligible for TANF benefits.

If the caretaker fails to contact the agency, or refuses to cooperate in developing or cooperating with the plan, the agency must take action, effective the next month, to

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

remove the truant recipient from the TANF grant. The child's receipt of benefits through the caretaker are reinstated once the agency has verified that the caretaker is cooperating with a plan for school attendance. The TANF manual specifies that the child's failure or refusal to cooperate with the plan is considered non-cooperation by the caretaker, as the caretaker is responsible for the child's actions.¹³

Virginia holds parents responsible for supporting their children financially, whether or not the children live with them. The Virginia General Assembly approved a set of guidelines for determining child support amounts, and the Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) is responsible for helping to ensure that children receive the amount they have been awarded.

When a non-custodial parent (NCP) fails to pay his or her child support on a timely basis, the DCSE will begin proceedings to enforce the order. Typically, enforcement proceedings begin when payments are 30 days overdue.

A variety of administrative measures are used to enforce child support orders. These include:

- Wage withholding;
- Intercepting state and federal income tax refunds;
- Placing liens on real or personal property;
- Garnishing other income or financial assets;
- Suspending Virginia drivers' licenses and occupational licenses; and
- Reporting child support debt to credit agencies.¹⁴

Attempts are made to enforce both current child support debt and arrears through administrative actions before petitioning the court for enforcement. If necessary, the DCSE may request that the court order the NCP to post a bond to guarantee payment of support. If the NCP defaults in payment, the DCSE files a show cause petition. The court, at its discretion, may order commitment of the NCP to a correctional work facility. The sums earned by the NCP are used to pay support. The court may also impose a jail sentence on the NCP. Finally, foreclosure, the forced judicial sale of real or personal property, is used when all other enforcement remedies are not effective and the NCP has property in Virginia.¹⁵

B. EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

As the preceding pages indicate, there are unique challenges and issues presented by the two status offender populations. Conversely, there are a number of overlapping issues which apply to both truants and runaways. One of these areas is

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Virginia Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement, *Child Support and You*, August 1997, p. 7.

¹⁵ Virginia Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement, *Policies and Procedures Manual*, p. 24-29.

the issue of the provision of educational alternatives to keep young people engaged in the academic process. Many young people who absent themselves from school and home share a sense of disengagement in their schooling. Educational options—spanning from alternative scheduling, vocational options and general education development testing—all hold the promise of retaining young people in the public school system. The challenges to Virginia’s educational system in 1997 are unprecedented, with the enactment of the Standards of Learning and an increased multitude of social problems students bring to the schoolhouse door. The following pages provide detail on the current state of educational options nationally and in Virginia. Findings from the Commission’s statewide survey effort and legislative recommendations follow.

1. General Educational Development (GED) Program

The local focus groups in 1997 identified the GED test as an educational option that could be beneficial to truants. However, the local participants reported several problems that present barriers to students’ accessing this option. Some areas of the state were reported as not having the testing program available and, in other areas, there were waiting lists at the test centers due to a shortage of staff and funding. In addition, participants in certain localities reported applicants under the age of 18 years were not allowed to take the GED test. In order to access the accuracy of the focus group issues and to better determine whether the GED was a viable educational option in Virginia, the workgroup conducted three separate analyses. First, background research was conducted on the creation of the GED and the national criteria for the test. Second, Commission on Youth staff conducted a phone survey of the 49 other states and the District of Columbia to determine the test eligibility standards, the criteria for test center location, state and local administration and decision-making and funding for their GED testing programs. Finally, staff analyzed national and state test and certificate rates during the past year to determine applicant demographics and success.

The GED test program began as a means to provide high school credentials to veterans returning from World War II. At its inception, only military personnel could participate; however, civilians began to participate in the program in 1960. Today, the GED is designed to provide “an opportunity for recognition of the educational development” of individuals who have attended, but not graduated from high school.¹⁶ In 1997, over 750,000 persons participated in the GED testing program nationally.

The GED test is currently administered jointly by the American Council on Education (ACE) and state or local agencies or contract service providers. The GED test is developed by the American Council on Education, which relies on state or territorial GED administrators to coordinate both national, state or territorial policies. The test consists of a battery of five separate tests and measures skills in writing, social studies, science, interpreting literature and the arts, and mathematics. The ACE leases

¹⁶ Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia’s General Educational Development Testing Program Guidelines*, p. 1.

the tests to the states and sets two mandatory requirements: the applicant must be at least 16 years of age and no longer enrolled in school. In addition, states may establish additional criteria to determine test eligibility.

The level of local participation in decision-making regarding age waivers and the new test centers locations varies across the 50 states. While most states and the District of Columbia (87%) do not have testing centers in every locality, some have mobile test centers. As Table 6 illustrates, results from the national GED phone survey revealed the most important criteria for determining whether to open a new test center is determination of general need as reflected in the population of a locality. Additionally, the geographic distance between test centers is also used by 39% of the states when determining new test center locations.

Although ACE standards set minimum age eligibility at 16 years, the minimum age to register for the GED exam varies from state to state. In Exhibit 4, a summary of eligibility criteria is presented. The majority of states (61%) have an eligibility of 18 years for taking the exam;¹⁷ 14% require candidates to be at least 17 years of age.

Table 6

Ranked Criteria for New GED Test Center Location

Criteria	Definition	Order of Importance	
General Need	General population support Another center closing Central location	1	48% (24 of 51)
Client Access	Geographic distance from any test center too great	2	39% (19 of 51)
Population	Overcrowded centers	3	26% (13 of 51)
Demographics	Serving special population groups	4	18% (9 of 51)
Expenses	Center meets financial responsibilities	5	4% (2 of 51)

In Virginia, the age for test eligibility is 18 years of age. However, many states including Virginia acknowledge that special circumstances may warrant testing at an earlier age; therefore, 85% use waiver criteria for the age requirement. The most used criteria are letter/approval from a school official (67%), parental permission (51%), and military commitment (45%). In addition, some states require a combination of criteria be met for test age waivers. For example, in Virginia applicants under 18 years of age must provide one of the following:

1. a letter from an official of the last school the applicant attended stating they have been withdrawn from school for one year, or
2. a letter from an official of the last school the applicant attended stating they have been withdrawn from school for six months and have a letter

¹⁷ Some states allow students under 18 years of age to take the exam. However, if successful, they are not awarded the certificate until their class graduates.

from a high school review program stating the applicant's successful completion of the program, or

3. a letter from an employer, a recruiting officer of the armed forces, or admissions officer of an institution of higher learning or post secondary training and a letter from the an official of the last school attended recommending the applicant be tested.¹⁸

The decision to grant an applicant an age waiver is made by one of three different entities in the various states. The majority of states (54%) have a state official make the determination while 34% of the states allow a local official to make the decision on waiver eligibility. In addition, some states have a combination of a local recommendation and a state decision. In Virginia, the local school superintendent makes the decision on age waivers for applicants under 18 years.

Many states provide GED preparatory classes for test applicants. Such classes are particularly useful if students have difficulty with a pretest or fail to pass the exam on an initial attempt. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia reported providing preparatory classes and in 79% of these states the classes are free to the applicants. In the majority of the states, the classes are supported in part by federal funding from The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 Grants to States. This program also provides states with funding for English as a Second Language training and Adult Basic Education. The federal funds are apportioned based on the population of adults over 16 years who have not completed high school. States distribute funds to local providers through a competitive process which is based upon State-established funding criteria.¹⁹

The cost of the GED test to applicants varies widely among the states. Twenty-nine percent of the states and the District of Columbia reported that the cost of the test varied by testing center; however, 42% of the states charge between \$21 and \$40 for the complete battery of tests. The cost of the GED test in Virginia is \$35. The survey revealed that the financing of the GED test occurs in a variety of ways in other states. While the majority of the states (53%) reported the applicant must bear the cost of the test, some states provide the test for free, while others assess a fee based on a sliding scale of income. In Virginia, the applicant pays for the test and there is no sliding scale based on income or ability to pay.²⁰

¹⁸ *Virginia's General Educational Development Testing Program Guidelines*, p. 2.

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/Funding/f-ogrant.html>

²⁰ Self financed programs may use state or federal money to pay for state or local administration.

Exhibit 4

OTHER STATE GED CRITERIA

State	GED Eligibility Age	GED Waiver Age ¹	Decision Maker ²	AGE WAIVER CRITERIA											
				Pregnancy/Marriage	Special Need	Parental OK	Incarceration	School Official	Military	Employer	Post secondary instruction	Court Order	Prestest/ ABE Program	Other	
AL	18	16	B			✓		✓					✓		
AK	18	16	S			✓		✓							
AR	16	*	L			✓		✓						✓	✓
AZ	18	16	L			✓		✓							
CA	17.83	17	L				✓			✓		✓			
CO	17	16	S								✓	✓			
CT	17	16	S			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
DC	18	16	S					✓						✓	✓
DE	18	16	S							✓	✓	✓			✓
FL	18	16	L												
GA	18	*	S		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
HI	17	17	L			✓		✓							
IA	18	16	L			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
ID	18	18	L	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
IL	18	17	S	✓			✓			✓					
IN	19	17	U												✓
KS	18	16	S				✓	✓		✓		✓			✓
KY	19	16	B				✓				✓		✓		✓
LA	17	&	S	✓									✓		
MA	19	16	L					✓					✓		
MD	19	16	S					✓							
ME	18	17	L					✓		✓	✓				
MI	18	#	L			✓		✓		✓					
MN	19	*	S	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
MO	18	16	L				✓	✓		✓					
MS	17	*	B	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MT	18	16	S			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
NC	18	16	L		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
ND	18	16	B			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
NE	17	*	S			✓		✓		✓					✓
NH	18	16	B					✓		✓	✓				
NJ	18	16	S			✓									
NM	18	16	B			✓	✓	✓							
NV	17	17	S			✓		✓							
NY	19	16	U				✓								✓
OH	19	16	S			✓				✓			✓		✓
OK	18	16	L			✓		✓							✓
OR	18	16	S			✓		✓							✓
PA	18	16	S				✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
RI	18	16	B					✓		✓					✓
SC	18	16	S		✓		✓	✓							✓
SD	19	16	S					✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
TN	18	17	U	✓	✓		✓	✓							
TX	18	16	U			✓	✓	✓							
UT	18	17	S	✓			✓	✓			✓				
VT	16	16	U			✓		✓		✓					
WA	19	U	L		✓		✓	✓							
WI	18.5	17	L		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓
WV	18	16	S			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
WY	18	17	S			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
VA	18	16	L					✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Totals				7	9	26	21	34	23	20	20	11	8	23	

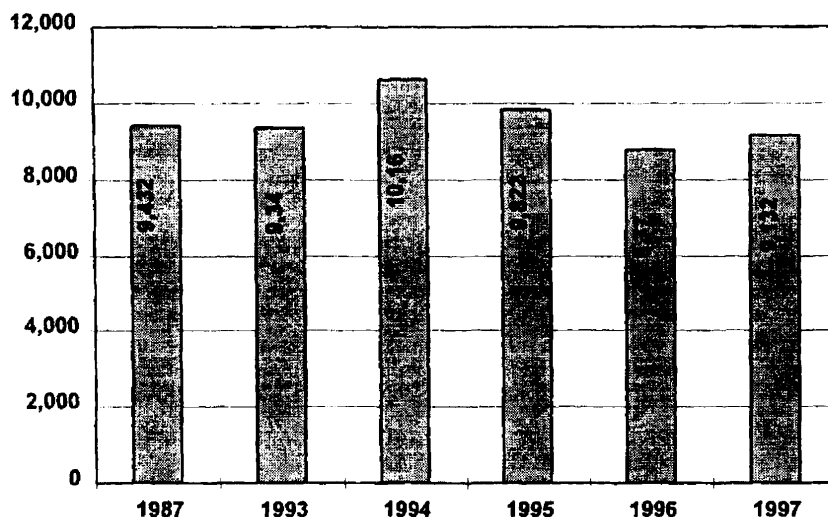
Sources: Virginia Commission on Youth Other State Survey, Summer 1998 and 1997 GED Statistical Report, GED Testing Service, American Council on Education.

¹ Age Waiver Codes: &=Age of marriage; #=Age of graduating class; *Age juvenile meets waiver conditions of state; U=Unknown
² Decision Maker Codes: S=State Official/Office; L=Local Official/Office; B=Both State and Local Offices; U=Unknown.

Nationally 784,671 applicants took the GED test in 1997 and 62% were awarded the certificate.²¹ In Virginia, 14,517 candidates took the GED exam in 1997 and 63% were awarded the certificate. As shown in Table 7, the number of GED certificates awarded in Virginia has declined 3.2% since 1987.

Table 7

GED Certificates Issued in Virginia 1987-1997



Source: *GED 1997 Statistical Report*, American Council on Education.

The average age for candidates taking the test in Virginia was 25.2 years, while the national average was slightly lower at 24.5 years. However, Virginia is below the national average in the number of youth under the age of majority taking and passing the GED. Virginia ranked 30th in the number of 16 and 17 year olds tested and 26th in the percentage of 16 or 17 year olds receiving a GED last year. During 1997, 13% of the GED test applicants in Virginia were 16 or 17 while 15.7% of the national testers were 16 or 17. In addition, 14% of the individuals receiving certificates in Virginia last year were 16 or 17 years old.

As Exhibit 5 illustrates, there is not a GED testing program in each locality. The 64 state-approved testing programs are in 58 local school divisions and an additional 6 state sites in rehabilitation centers, state hospitals or programs administered by the Department of Correctional Education in adult and juvenile facilities. The GED in Virginia is funded with state and federal funds. The state GED testing program appropriation is part of the budget for all of the adult education programs administered by the Department of Education. State appropriations for all adult education programs are scheduled to be level funded from fiscal year 1996 to fiscal year 2000 at \$1,051,800. There are no state funds for local GED preparatory program funds. The federal Workforce Investment Act grant funds in Virginia for 1998 are \$8,255,055 in

²¹ American Council on Education, *GED 1997 Statistical Report*, p. 21.

1998 and are expected to be \$8,754,392 in 1999.²² However, these federal funds are not strictly for the GED program, but must also cover program expenditures in Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education and English as a Second Language.

The HJR 93 surveys asked respondents questions concerning eligibility for and access to the General Educational Development (GED) test and preparatory programs. Survey results revealed a lack of enforcement of Department of Education (DOE) guidelines for test eligibility. The majority (79%) of the superintendents reported they did not use all of the DOE criteria when determining GED test eligibility. In addition, a third of the localities impose additional criteria when determining applicant eligibility for those testers under the age of 18 years. These criteria included successful completion of the pre-test, parent conferences, school board permission and principal's recommendation.

Although DOE guidelines prescribe criteria that allow for youth under the age of 18 years to be tested, 64% of the Superintendents reported they did not allow youth under age 18 to take the GED test. A review of local GED testing revealed that the lack of consistent enforcement of the DOE guidelines by Superintendents has resulted in inequalities in the opportunity for the test to be a viable alternative as presented in the compulsory school attendance law. During the 1996-97 school year, 2,102 school age youth in 61 divisions applied to take the GED test. Two-thirds of the school divisions allowed all the youth to take the test. However, some jurisdictions did not allow any youth under 18 to take the test. Newport News allowed the most testers under 18 years (196) while Augusta County did not allow any of the 29 applicants under 18 years take the test. The majority of the survey respondents (74%) suggested a need for uniform criteria in determining GED test eligibility to alleviate statewide inequalities in test access.

The majority (58%) of the educators wanted to increase access to the GED for youth under the age of 18. High school principals were the most supportive group with 70% wanting increased access. The reasons most often reported for increasing the GED access included the need to provide alternative opportunities for students and in recognition that traditional school does not fit the needs of all students. The educators not wanting to increase GED access reported increased access would discourage the standard diploma from being the priority of all students and encourage an early withdraw from school. There was near unanimity on the part of the GED professionals that if access to the test is increased for youth under 18 years the preparatory program should be available. Ninety-eight percent of the GED professionals reported the preparatory programs are beneficial to students taking the test and ensure greater success with passage.

²² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational Education and Adult Education, *Basic Grants to States*, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/Funding/f-ogrant.html>.

In summary, the findings of the HJR 93 study related to the GED test are as follows:

- *There is limited statewide accessibility for GED preparatory courses and tests.*
- *GED test criteria for students under age 18 are unclear and are not uniformly applied statewide.*
- *There are insufficient staff support and local/state financial resources devoted to the GED program.*
- *Department of Education's statewide oversight of GED preparatory and testing programs need to be expanded.*

Based on these findings, the HJR 93 Task Force approved the following recommendations and submitted them to the Commission on Youth for review and approval at their December 1998 meeting:

Recommendations

Establish the GED test program and test eligibility in the Code of Virginia with the eligibility criteria to include a) minimum age criteria of age 16, b) parental permission and c) student's official withdrawn from school.

Provide funding to ensure statewide access to and promotion of the GED preparatory and test programs for eligible young adults. (\$5,781,725)

Fund two full-time positions to provide centralized staff support at the Department of Education for the GED preparatory and test programs and for public information on these programs. (\$177,700)

2. Compulsory School Attendance

The 1998 General Assembly referred the compulsory school age issue in House Bill 713 to the Commission on Youth to examine as part of HJR 93 study. House Bill 713 was a measure to lower Virginia's compulsory school attendance age from 18 years to 17 years. The suggested change was prompted by reported problems with older, disruptive students who are currently required to attend school when they do not want to and are not academically achieving. Many of these students were reported to be truant or present behavioral problems for the schools. During the first year of the study, the majority (64%) of the local focus groups were not in favor of unilaterally lowering the age requirement in Virginia; however, the majority did support the use of multiple educational tracks and alternative programming.²³ Thus, Commission staff analyzed the 50 states' compulsory school attendance laws to assist the workgroup and Task Force members in addressing the compulsory school age and alternative educational options issues referred for study.

²³ House Document 64, pp. 24-25.

Virginia's compulsory school attendance requirements in Section 22.1-254 mandate parents of children 5 years to 18 years attend school. Virginia raised the compulsory school age from 17 to 18 years in 1989 in an attempt to better meet the educational needs of children with the goal of every student completing high school. The Virginia school attendance requirement may be satisfied by:

- private, denominational or parochial school attendance,
- a tutor/qualified teacher providing instruction,
- home school instruction, or
- placement in a state approved alternative programs of study or work/study.

The Virginia attendance requirements do not apply to a child who has obtained a high school diploma, it equivalent or a certification of completion or a child who the local Superintendent has required take a special program of prevention, intervention or remediation. In addition, Virginia provides several health and safety exemptions.²⁴

Other states' compulsory education laws were examined to determine the age, exception, exclusion and waiver criteria used. As Exhibit 6 shows, the majority of the states have compulsory school age requirements lower than Virginia. Twenty-eight states (56%) require attendance to age 16 years, seven states (14%) to age 17 years and fifteen states (30%) to age 18 years. However, Virginia is the only state with compulsory attendance to age 18 years that does not allow for waiver criteria to a lower age for non-health and safety reasons. As Exhibit 7 illustrates, the other states utilize a variety of criteria to allow children to waive the compulsory attendance age requirements. The most utilized criteria include: parental permission, placement in the GED or another alternative education program, suitable employment or an exit interview or school counseling. Most of these 15 states that allow for age waivers from the mandatory 18 years allow for the waivers to age 16 years. A more detailed analysis of the other state compulsory attendance laws can be found in Appendix H.

In its statewide survey of educators, the Commission on Youth asked a series of questions related to the compulsory school attendance requirements. As Table 8 illustrates, respondent group opinions on the issue of the age for compulsory school attendance varied. While a majority of the secondary school principals said the age should be lowered, overall 56% of the educators said the age requirement should remain at 18 years. The reasons most often reported for lowering the age requirement included:

- students don't want to be there and are disruptive to others;
- students will do better in the work force; and,
- students are not going to meet graduation requirements.

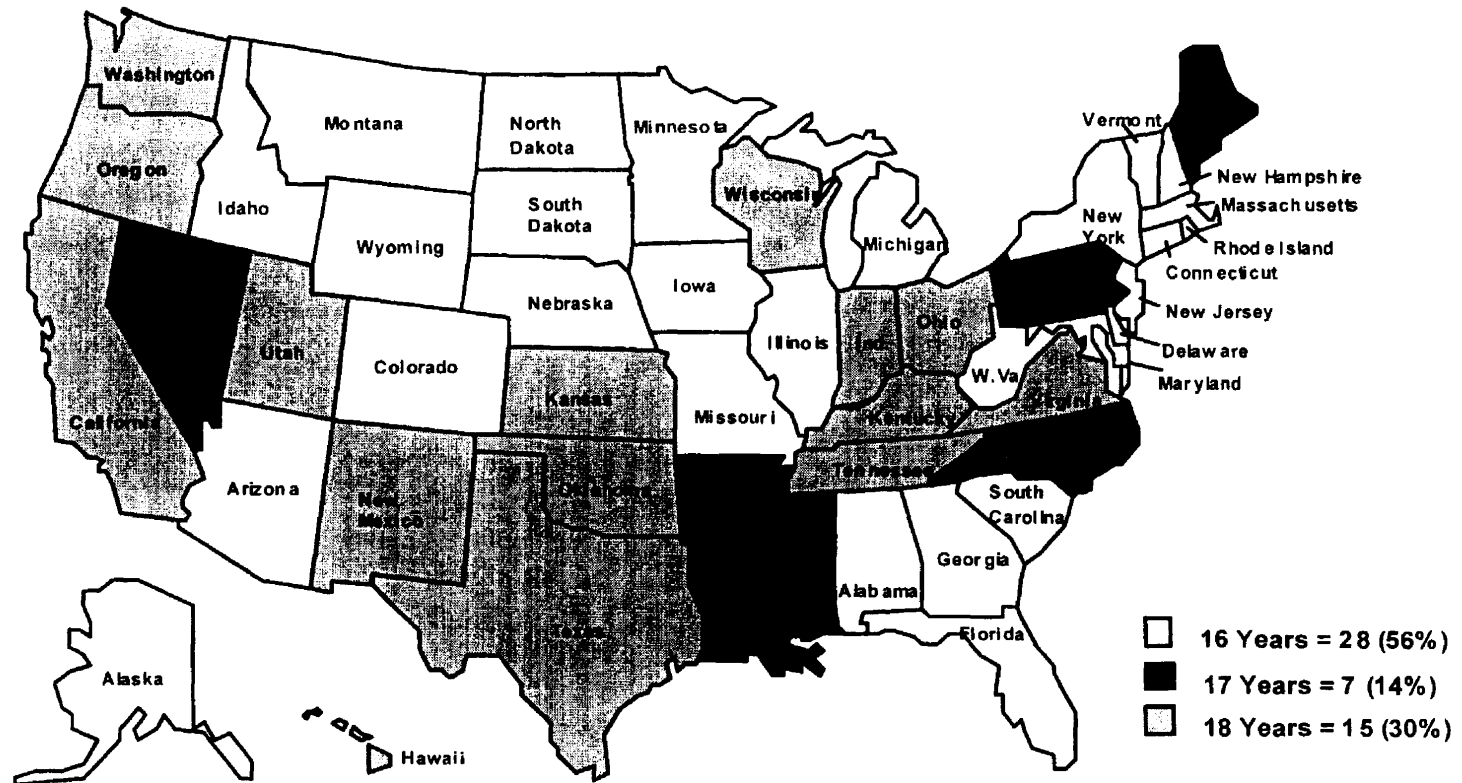
Of those respondents who wanted to lower the age requirement, 49% wanted compulsory attendance to be established at age 16 years and 42% wanted the age to

²⁴ Health and safety exemptions include criteria such as contagious or infectious diseases, commuting distance to the public school or public transportation, court-ordered alternative placements, and conscientious religious opposition to attending public school.

Exhibit 6

Compulsory School Attendance Laws

Thirty-five states (70%) have lower compulsory school attendance ages than Virginia; Virginia is the only state with compulsory attendance to 18 years that does not allow for waiver criteria to a lower age (for reasons other than health/safety).



Source: Virginia Commission on Youth analysis of other state statutes (Fall 1998) and Education Commission of the States, Attendance: Compulsory School Age Requirements (March 1997).

Exhibit 7

Waiver Criteria for States with Compulsory Attendance to Age 18

STATE	WAIVER AGE	WAIVER CRITERIA
CA	16	Minimum attendance requirement of four 60 minute hours of classes per week (continuation education classes, regional occupational centers or programs) Successful demonstration of proficiency equal or greater than the standards and verified approval of the parent/guardian (awards Certificate of Proficiency)
HI	15 (#1)	Child is suitably employed and has been excused by the superintendent
	16 (#2 & #3)	Child has engaged in behavior disruptive to other students, teachers or staff, or child's non-attendance is chronic and has become a significant factor that hinders the child's learning The principal, a teacher or counselor and the child's parents develop an alternative educational plan for the child
IN	16	Upon an exit interview and a written acknowledgement from the student and written permission of the parent and the principal
KS	16	Child with written consent from parent/guardian after attending a final counseling session Pursuant to a court order Child is regularly enrolled in an approved alternative educational program
KY ²⁵	16	Non-married children must have written parental permission after a school conference and participation in a one hour counseling session
NM	16	Child is excused by local school board upon a finding that the person will be employed in a gainful trade or occupation or engaged in an alternative form of education and the parent/guardian consents
OH ²⁶	14	Child is "performing necessary work directly and exclusively for the child's parents or legal guardian"
OK	16	Child has finished four years of high school work Joint agreement between the school administrator of the district and the parents that it is in the best interest of the child or community
OR	16	Child is lawfully employed full-time Child is lawfully employed part-time and enrolled in school Child is enrolled in a community college program or other registered alternative education program Child is an emancipated minor
TN	16 (#1)	Enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course leading to a GED or has received a GED
	17 (#2 & #3)	Child whose continued attendance, in the opinion of the local board of education, results in detriment to good order and discipline to other students Student enrolled in home school
TX	17 (#1)	Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination and (a) has parents permission to attend course, or (b) is under court order to attend course, or (c) has established a residence separate from their parents, or (d) is homeless
	16 (#2)	Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination, if child is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the child under a court order
UT	16	If child has completed the 8 th grade and is employed, child shall attend school part-time or home school District superintendent has determined the child is unable to profit from attendance at school because "of inability or continuing negative attitude toward school regulations and discipline"
WA	16	Child is regularly and legally employed and has parental permission or is an emancipated minor Child has already met graduation requirements Child has received a certificate of educational competence
WI	16 (#1)	Child, with parental permission, may on a part-time basis attend a vocational, technical or adult education program
	17 (#2)	Child with parental permission, shall enter into a written agreement to participate in a program leading to high school graduation or equivalency degree

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth Graphic and Analysis of Other State Laws, Fall 1998

²⁵ Married children do not have a compulsory education requirement; they must meet the standard for marriage.

²⁶ Statute allows for such excuse to be for "a future limited time"; however, no guidelines are prescribed in statute for the length of time.

be lowered to 17 years. The survey respondents suggested the following criteria if the age for compulsory attendance was to be lowered: parental permission (64%), career/academic counseling (55%), GED preparatory course and passage of the test (52%), employment (51%) and completion of a vocational program (44%). Finally, two-thirds of those educators surveyed said the age for compulsory attendance for youth in correctional institutions and programs should remain at 18 years.

Table 8

Survey Results: Compulsory School Age Requirements

Respondent Group	Lower Age	Do Not Lower Age	Missing
Superintendents	51 (47%)	53 (49%)	4 (4%)
High School Principals	91 (57%)	65 (41%)	3 (2%)
Middle School Principals	62 (37%)	98 (59%)	7 (4%)
Combined School Principals	1 (17%)	4 (67%)	1 (17%)
Vocational School Principals	8 (67%)	4 (33%)	0
Regional Alternative Programs	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	0
Adult Education Directors	17 (27%)	43 (67%)	4 (6%)
GED Testers	14 (36%)	24 (62%)	1 (3%)
Vocational Education Directors	30 (41%)	42 (58%)	1 (1%)
TOTALS	287	346	21

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth, HJR 93 Surveys, Fall 1998

In summary, the findings of the HJR 93 study are as follows:

- 73% of the focus groups mentioned the need for more educational alternatives for older youth not succeeding in the traditional classroom settings.
- Virginia raised the age for compulsory school attendance from 17 to 18 years in 1989.
- 70% of the states have a lower age requirement than Virginia: 28 states require attendance until 16 and 7 states require attendance until 17.
- Of the 15 states with compulsory attendance to age 18 years, Virginia is the only state that does not allow for waiver to a lower age.
- The following waiver criteria are most often used by the other states with compulsory attendance to 18: parental permission, placement in a GED/alternative program, suitable employment and interviews/counseling.
- 59% of the secondary school principals reported on the statewide surveys that the compulsory school age should be lowered.
- Virginia has one of the most restrictive waiver criteria and highest age requirement for compulsory school attendance.
- The Code of Virginia has unclear cross-references to compulsory school attendance requirements.

Based on these findings, the HJR 93 Task Force approved the following recommendations and submitted them to the Commission on Youth for review and approval at their December 1998 meeting:

Recommendations

Amend Section 22.1-254 to provide waiver criteria for compulsory school attendance for:

- 1. students age 16 who have parental permission, school support, and are enrolled in a GED preparatory or approved educational alternative program as determined in student's educational plan; or**
- 2. students age 17 who have parental permission, an exit interview and employment.**

Request the Department of Education to develop guidelines for local schools to use when meeting with students and parents to develop the education plan for a waiver pursuant to Section 22.1-254.

Combine attendance requirements, exceptions and exclusions in Sections 22.1-254, 256, and 257 into one section.

3. Vocational Education

In the first year of study, statewide focus groups identified vocational education as a possible option to reinforce students' staying in school. Ninety-one percent of the focus groups reported the need for more vocational education options including additional classes, training in traditional trades and classes earlier in a student's academic career. Additionally, 73% of the focus groups mentioned the need for more job skills, life skills and apprenticeship programs. Therefore, HJR 93 requested the study examine the impact of vocational education on truancy. To assist with this portion of the study mandate, Commission staff examined student class placements in the nine vocational education program areas and work-based learning programs for each of the 131 school divisions during the 1996-97 school year.

Vocational education is defined as

organized educational programs offering sequences of courses which may incorporate field, laboratory, and classroom instruction; and, it emphasizes occupational experiences designed to prepare individuals for further education and gainful employment.²⁷

Virginia public schools offer vocational education classes in nine program areas: agriculture, marketing, health and occupations, consumer homemaking (family focus), occupational home economics (career focus), technology, business, trade and industrial education, and special programs. See Appendix I for a brief description of each of these program areas.

²⁷ State Board of Vocational Education, Article 4, §22.227.01.

The majority of Virginia's secondary school students participate in vocational education. During the 1996-97 school year, 74% (224,078) were enrolled in a vocational class and in 1997-98, 68% (207,430) were enrolled in these classes²⁸. While the proportion of secondary student enrollment in vocational classes remains very high, the percentage of students participating in the classes dropped 7% during the past year. Additionally, as Exhibit 7 illustrates, there are wide disparities statewide in the proportion of the secondary student populations in the division which are enrolled in a vocational class. Student participation rates ranged from a high of 100% of the secondary students in a division to a low of 41%. Sixty-seven divisions reported having high student participation rates of 81-100%; 41 divisions reported medium participation with 61-80% and 23 reported low participation rates with 41-60%.

The majority of the vocational students during the 1996-97 school year were male (53%). Additionally, 22% were classified as academically disadvantaged, 15% economically disadvantaged and 10% disabled.²⁹ Twenty-two percent of the vocational students completed the program. A "program completer" is a senior who completes a program that includes a coherent sequence of vocational and academic or approved educational alternative courses.³⁰

Student participation in the nine program areas also varied on a statewide basis. The Standards of Accreditation require secondary schools to provide vocational education classes in a minimum of three program areas.³¹ Ten percent of the school divisions (13) reported student placements in each of the 9 program areas while 7% (9) divisions reported placements in three program areas. Statewide student participation in vocational education classes is the most prevalent in the program area of Business Education. As Table 9 illustrates, 38% of the secondary students in vocational education participated in a business education class while only 2% participated in a health and occupations class.

Work-based learning programs are school programs that provide students with opportunities for workplace experiences. These programs include internships, cooperative education, registered youth apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, business mentorships, and non-registered youth apprenticeships.³² During the 1996-97 school year, 86% (113) of the school divisions had placements in work-based learning programs. As Table 10 illustrates, co-operative education programs were the work-based learning program utilized by the most school divisions. Seventy-three percent of the divisions had a placement in these programs during the 1996-97 school year.

²⁸ Virginia Department of Education, Unduplicated Student Enrollment Statistics 1996-97 and 1997-98 School Years, October 1998.

²⁹ A student could be classified in more than one of these categories; for example, a student could be both academically disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged.

³⁰ Vocational courses are based on the guide to Vocational Program Planning in Virginia and academic courses are based on the Standards and Regulations for Public Schools in Virginia or an approved alternative education program. (Virginia DOE, October 1998)

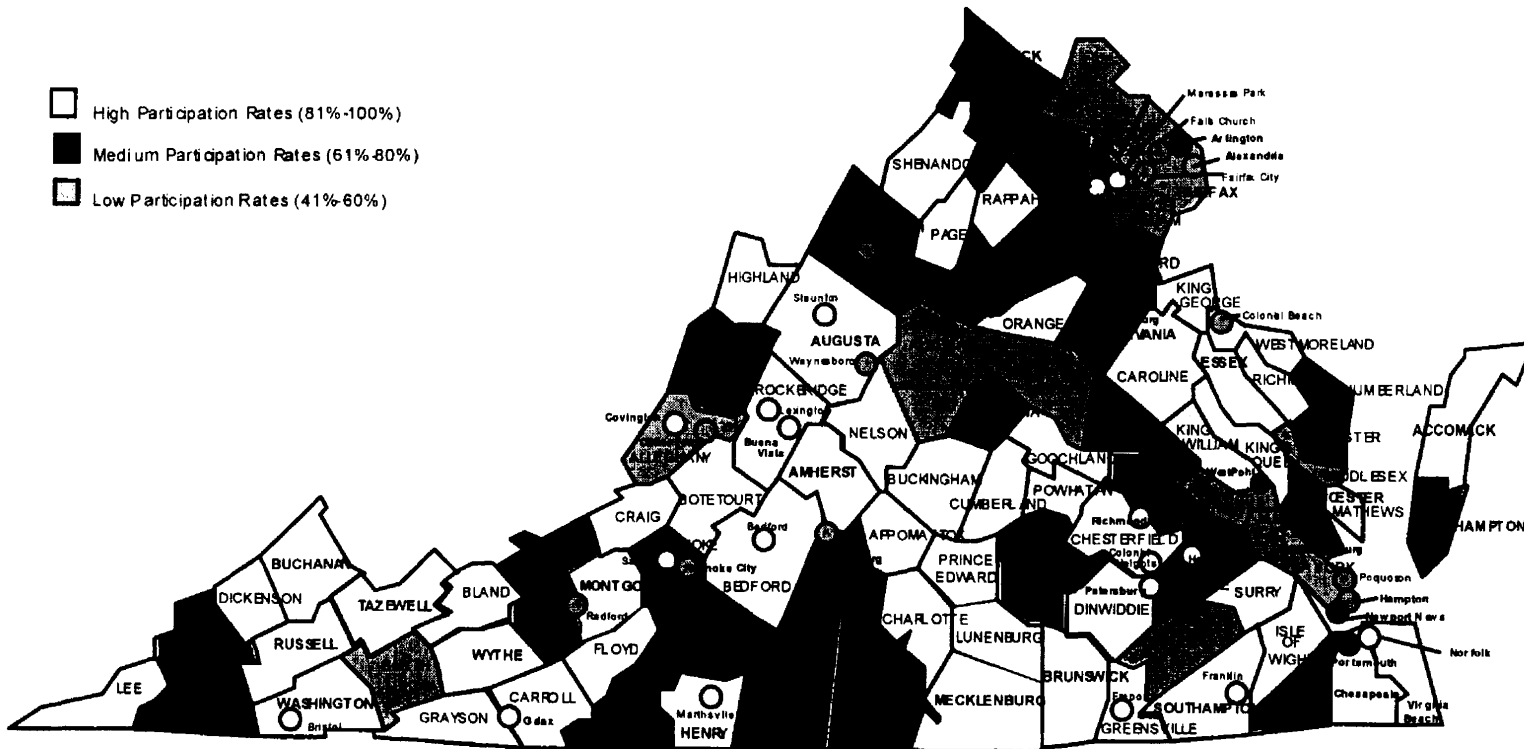
³¹ Department of Education Standards of Accreditation, 8VAC20-131-100(1).

³² See Appendix I for a list of vocational education program definitions.

Exhibit 8

Student Participation in Vocational Education

74% of the secondary school student in Virginia participated in vocational education classes during the 1996-97 school year; student participation in local programs ranged from a high of 100% to a low of 41%.



Source: Virginia Commission on Youth graphic analysis of Virginia Department of Education Data.

Table 9

Secondary Student Participation in Vocational Education 1996-97 School Year

Program Area	Statewide Student Participation
Business Education	38%
Technology Education	17%
Consumer Homemaking (Family Focus)	13%
Trade and Industrial Education	12%
Marketing Education	8%
Agriculture Education	5%
Occupational Home Economics (Career Focus)	4%
Health and Occupations Education	2%
Special Programs	2%

Table 10

Work-based Learning Programs In Local School Divisions 1996-97 School Year

Type Program	School Divisions Utilizing Program
Cooperative Education	96 (73%)
Tech Prep	68 (52%)
Work Study	31 (24%)
Apprenticeship	17 (13%)

Source: Commission on Youth Analysis of Virginia Department of Education Data, October 1998

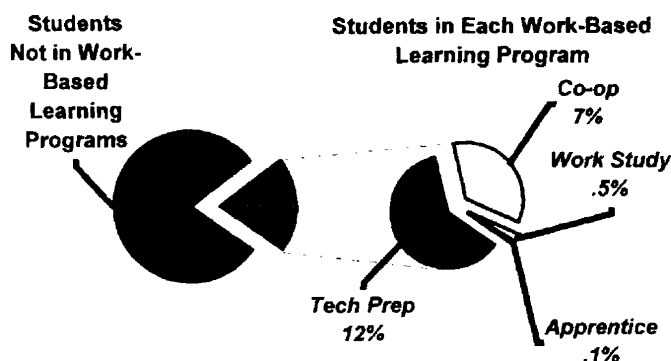
Twenty percent of the vocational education students were enrolled in a work-based learning program during the 1996-97 school year. As Table 11 illustrates, the largest percentage of statewide student placements (12.4%) were in Tech Prep programs. The statewide percentage of placements in these programs is heavily influenced by the student participation from several of the larger school divisions.

The comprehensive analysis of vocational education and work-based learning programs provides a synopsis of Virginia's alternative education programs. The analysis identifies the demographics of the 1996-1997 vocational student population. It also identifies program participation rates for nine vocational education programs and work-based learning program participation rates.

Virginia educators were asked a series of questions concerning vocational education and work-based education programs. Survey respondents reported strong support for increasing vocational education opportunities with 81% reporting students should have more access to vocational education. The reasons most often given for

Table 11

Student Participation in Work-based Learning Programs 1996-97 School Year



Source: Commission on Youth Analysis of Virginia Department of Education Data, October 1998

the increased access included:

- industry skill demands and need for a better work force,
- students can learn about careers choices and opportunities, and
- curriculum provides alternatives for non-college bound students.

Most survey respondents (72%) said access to more skill-specific vocational classes would enhance the relevancy of education for students. Additionally, a majority recommended students at the middle school level have more opportunities to enroll in skill-specific vocational courses.

Table 12

Survey Results: Expansion of Work-Based Learning Programs

Respondent Group	Expand Programs
Superintendents	84 of 108
High School Principals	118 of 159
Combined School Principals	3 of 6
Vocational School Principals	11 of 13
Vocational Education Directors	67 of 73
Regional Alternative Programs	24 of 26
TOTALS	307 of 385 (80%)

Source: Virginia Commission on Youth, HJR 93 Surveys, Fall 1998.

The majority of superintendents (59%) reported their division had a position with the responsibility to establish and market work-based learning programs; however, 55% said their division had not received technical assistance in establishing these programs. Local educators reported wanting increased work-based learning opportunities for

secondary students. As Table 12 illustrates, 80% of the respondents surveyed wanted expanded work-based programs.

In summary, the findings of the HJR 93 study are as follows:

- *Technical assistance to local schools for work-based learning programs is reported to be insufficient.*
- *Student participation in local vocational education programs varies widely statewide.*
- *Availability of vocational education program options varies by school districts.*

Based on these findings, the HJR 93 Task Force approved the following recommendations and submitted them to the Commission on Youth for review and approval at their December 1998 meeting:

Recommendations

Amend Section 9-329.1, Statewide Workforce Training Council, to include the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as one of the members.

Request the Governor establish a commission to examine vocational education.

VII. Acknowledgments

The Virginia Commission on Youth extends its appreciation to the following agencies and individuals for their assistance and cooperation on this study.

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Glenn Ratcliff, Director of Human Development

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Edwin Solis, Research Associate

Executive Secretary's Office of State Supreme Court
Larry Davidson, Data Systems Manager
Kathy Mays Coleman, Judicial Planning

Healthy Families of Virginia, Prevent Child Abuse Virginia
Johanna Schuchert, Coordinator

Henrico County Schools
Dr. Mark Edwards, Superintendent

Hermitage Technical School, Henrico County

Erica Miller

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June Taylor

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Kathy Jeffries, Executive Director

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Bruce Bright, Court Service Unit Director, 2nd District

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Virginia Council of Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges Council
The Hon. Nelson T. Durden, President, Hampton

Volunteer Emergency Families for Children (VEFC)
Anne B. Earle, Executive Director

Youth Crisis Network, Norfolk
Ben Fuller

981311836

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 93

Offered January 21, 1998

Continuing the Commission on Youth's study of status offenders, children in need of services, and children in need of supervision as the Commission on Youth's study of truants and runaways.

Patrons—Cantor, Albo, Armstrong, Darner, Deeds, Hamilton, Jackson and Jones, J.C.; Senators: Hawkins, Houck and Miller, Y.B.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 490 directed the Commission on Youth to establish a task force to study status offenders, children in need of services, and children in need of supervision; and

WHEREAS, during its first year of inquiry, the task force held focus group meetings in eleven localities across Virginia, receiving valuable input from direct service providers and over two hundred participants; and

WHEREAS, the focus groups heard a variety of concerns about the Commonwealth's ability to provide immediate and effective intervention for truants and runaways to prevent their downward spiral into criminal behavior, chronic substance abuse, dropping out of school and other destructive activities; and

WHEREAS, the findings of the focus groups and other research activities have prompted the task force to issue recommendations to improve the response to this population; and

WHEREAS, these recommendations include: increasing the range of community base interventions for runaways, truants, and their families prior to court involvement, broadening sanctions available to the court for youths and their parents, expanding the availability of academic options, strengthening accountability systems in the child serving agencies, improving the court docketing systems, and providing training to front line personnel; and

WHEREAS, the task force has also identified specific issues for inquiry for a second year of study; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Commission on Youth's study of the status offenders, children in need of services, and children in need of supervision be continued as the Commission on Youth's study of truants and runaways. The members appointed to the task force pursuant to Joint Resolution No. 490 shall continue to serve, except that any vacancies shall be filled by the original appointing authorities as provided in the enabling resolution.

During the course of its study, the Commission shall examine (i) the feasibility of using hearing officers to handle status offense cases of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, (ii) approaches to increase parental responsibility, (iii) the advisability of increasing sanctions for status offenders, (iv) the impact of vocational education on truancy, and (v) the development of a long range funding plan for services to status offenders and their families.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1999 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

981311836

HJ93

1/21/98 17:46

**HJR 93
STUDY OF TRUANTS AND RUNAWAYS**

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Hon. Eric I. Cantor,* Task Force Chairman
 Delegate of Virginia
 Suite 400
 2500 E. Parham Road
 Richmond, Virginia 23228

The Hon. David B. Albo
 Delegate of Virginia
 P.O. Box 6412
 Springfield, Virginia 22150

The Hon. Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.*
 Delegate of Virginia
 P.O. Box 333
 Hillsville, Virginia 24343

The Hon. Ward L. Armstrong
 Delegate of Virginia
 P.O. Box 1431
 Martinsville, Virginia 24114-1431

The Hon. Jerrauld C. Jones*
 Delegate of Virginia
 Suite 300
 125 Saint Paul's Boulevard
 Norfolk, Virginia 23510

The Hon. L. Karen Darnier*
 Delegate of Virginia
 969 South Buchanan Street
 Arlington, Virginia 22204

The Hon. Charles R. Hawkins
 Senator of Virginia
 P.O. Box 818
 Chatham, Virginia 24531

The Hon. Phillip Hamilton*
 Delegate of Virginia
 P.O. Box 1585
 Newport News, Virginia 23601

The Hon. R. Edward Houck*
 Senator of Virginia
 P.O. Box 7
 Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553

The Hon. Gary L. Close*
 Commonwealth's Attorney
 Culpeper County
 135 West Cameron Street
 Culpeper, Virginia 22701

Mr. Gary Conway
 Court Service Unit Director
 23-A Court District
 P.O. Box 112
 Roanoke, Virginia 24002

The Hon. Gayl B. Carr
 19th District Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court
 4000 Chain Bridge Road
 Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4043

Dr. Edward L. Kelly
 Superintendent
 Prince William County
 P.O. Box 389
 Manassas, Virginia 22110

Ms. Jennifer Byler
 Virginia Board of Education
 2040 Bayview Point Lane
 Cape Charles, Virginia 23310

Mr. Frank J. Kern
 Project Director
 Tidewater Detention Homes of Virginia
 420 Albemarle Drive, Civic Center
 Chesapeake, Virginia 23320

* Commission on Youth member

Mr. Richard L. Munchel
Executive Director
Elk Hill Farms
PO. Box 99
Goochland, Virginia 23063

Mr. Hugh Palmer
Henrico County School Board
497 N. Juniper Avenue
Highland Springs, Virginia 23075

Mr. Kirk T. Schroder*
Chairman
Virginia Board of Education
LeClair Ryan
707 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Stacey Strentz, Esq.
1259 Courthouse Road
Suite 104
Stafford, Virginia 22554

Mr. Peter Walentisch
Director of Social Services
401 Lafayette Street
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

The Hon. Charles R. Wall
Chief of Police
Virginia Beach Police Department
Municipal Center
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456-9002

*proxy: Ms. Lil Tuttle
407 Pleasant Hill Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23236

Ex Officio Members

Mr. Robert N. Baldwin
Executive Secretary
Supreme Court of Virginia
100 North Ninth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Clarence Carter
Commissioner
Virginia Dept. of Social Services
730 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219-1849

The Rev. Gerald Glenn
Director
Virginia Dept. of Juvenile Justice
P.O. Box 1110
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Mr. Richard E. Kellogg
Commissioner
Virginia Dept. of Mental Health, Mental Retardation
Substance Abuse Services
109 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dr. Paul Stapleton
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Virginia Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

WORKGROUP MEMBERS

Community and Court Processes

Mr. Ron Belay

Court Service Unit Director
29th Court Service Unit
501 Wenonah Avenue
Pearisburg, Virginia 24134

Ms. Ebbie Linaburg

Principal
Peter Muhlenberg Middle School
1251 Susan Avenue
Woodstock, Virginia 22664

Ms. Barbara Burton

Foster Care Supervisor
Henrico Dept. of Social Services
P.O. Box 27032
Richmond, Virginia 23273

The Hon. William R. Moore, Jr.

Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
P.O. Box 81
Isle of Wight Courthouse
Isle of Wight, Virginia 23397

The Hon. Audrey Franks

Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
1600 North 17th Street
Oliver Hill Courts Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Michael Terkeltaub

Executive Director
549 Southlake Blvd.
Richmond, Virginia 23236

Ms. Julia Jones

Assistant Principal
Russell Junior High School
19400 Christanna Highway
Lawrenceville, Virginia 23868

Dr. Wallace Saval

Superintendent
Petersburg City Schools
141 East Wythe Street
Petersburg, Virginia 23803

Data

Mr. Ron Jordan

House Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Alan Saunders

Office of Comprehensive Services
730 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Greg Lilley

Dept. of Criminal Justice Services
805 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Doug Wells

Dept. of Education
Monroe Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Cyril Miller

Supreme Court of Virginia
100 N. Ninth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Funding

Mr. Doug Cox

Virginia Dept. of Education
Special Education Dept.
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Mr. Jim Dedes

Director, Probation Services
19th Judicial District
4000 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Mr. Jim Gillespie

At-Risk Youth and Family Services
Coordinator
Suite 200
7987 Ashton Avenue
Manassas, Virginia 20109

Ms. Marsha Hubbard

Virginia Dept. of Education
Special Education Dept.
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Ms. Marion R. Kelly

VA Dept. of Criminal Justice Services
805 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Charles Kennedy, II

Director of Truancy Prevention
Roanoke City Schools
P.O. Box 13145
Roanoke, Virginia 24031

The Hon. Dean Lewis

701 Princess Anne
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

Mr. Curtis Nolan

Anchor Group Home System
313 East Market Street
Martinsville, Virginia 24112

Mr. Ramon E. Pardue

Chief Executive Officer
St. Joseph's Villa
8000 Brook Rd.
Richmond, Virginia 23227-1338

Mr. Alan Saunders

Office of Comprehensive Services
730 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. John Weigel

Director, Hopewell Courts Facility
Suite G05
100 East Broadway
Hopewell, Virginia 23860

Sanctions

Acie Allen, Jr., Esq.

P.O. Box 502
Dillwyn, Virginia 23936
Ph 804-983-3969; Fax 804-983-1740

Corp. Sandra Barksdale

Arlington Police Dept.
1425 N. Courthouse Road
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Ms. Rosemarie Bonacum

Juvenile Services Division Unit
VA Dept. of Criminal Justice Services
805 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Jim Dedes

Director, Probation Services
19th Judicial District
4000 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030 22030

Mr. Dan Falwell

VT/SSW
P.O. Box 3122
Charlottesville, Virginia 22093

Ms. Judith V. Hensley

District Manager
Winchester District Office of Child
Support Enforcement
Dept. of Social Services
24 Ricketts Drive
Winchester, Virginia 22601

Mr. Larry Lacina

Program Director, Youth Services
Family and Children's Service
1518 Willow Lawn Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23230

Ms. Martha Lambert

Prevention Supervisor
Goochland-Powhatan Community
Services Board
P.O. Box 189
Goochland, Virginia 23063

Ms. Ebbie Linaburg

Principal
Peter Muhlenberg Middle School
1251 Susan Avenue
Woodstock, Virginia 22664

Ms. Freida Ann McNeil

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority
107 S. 5th Street
Richmond, Virginia 23227

The Hon. William R. Moore, Jr.

Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
P.O. Box 81
Isle of Wight Courthouse
Isle of Wight, Virginia 23397

Dr. Warren A. Stewart

Superintendent
Goochland County Schools
P.O. Box 169
Goochland, Virginia 23063-0169

Ms. Valerie Thompson

Probation Supervisor
2nd Judicial District
2305 Judicial Blvd Building 10A
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456

The Hon. Michael J. Valentine

Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
Courthouse
4000 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Mr. John Weigel

Director, Hopewell Courts Facility
Suite G05
100 East Broadway
Hopewell, Virginia 23860

Vocational Education and Educational Options

Mr. David Blount

Director, Governmental Relations
Virginia School Boards Association
2320-B Hunters Way
Charlottesville, Virginia 22911

Dr. Neils W. Brooks

State Director, Office of Vocational
and Adult Education Svcs.
Virginia Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Dr. Kay Brown

Specialist, Career Connections
Virginia Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Dr. Ned Carr

Executive Director
New Horizons Regional Educational
Center
520 Butler Farm Road
Hampton, Virginia 23666

Mr. Harvey "Bubba" Crone

Principal
Hermitage Technical Center
8301 Hungary Spring Road
Richmond, Virginia 23228

Ms. Robin DeJarnette

Government Relations Director
Virginia Family Foundation
6767 Forest Hill Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23225

Ms. Terri Fleming

Dept. of Instruction
Fairfax County Public Schools
7423 Camp Alger Avenue
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

Mr. James A. Gray

Office of Vocational and Adult Education Svcs.
Virginia Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Ms. Marilyn Harris

Legislative Liaison
Virginia Dept. of Correctional Education
101 North 14th Street
James Monroe Building, 7th Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Jerry Hicks

Executive Director
Virginia Council on Vocational Education
P.O. Box 317
Highland Springs, Virginia 23075

Dr. Opal LeMaster

Training Administrator
Newport News Shipbuilding
16 West River Point Drive
Hampton, Virginia 23669

Ms. Bette Neale

Virginia Superintendents' Association
P.O. Box 858
West Pointe, Virginia 23181

Ms. Dianne B. Sargent

Legislative Chair
Virginia PTA
5780 Hines Road
Richmond, Virginia 23231

Ms. Judy Singleton

Office of Governmental Relations
Fairfax County Public Schools
10700 Page Avenue
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dr. Patricia Ta' Ani

Adult Secondary Education/GED Administrator
Virginia Dept. of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

VIRGINIA STATEWIDE SURVEYS

Statewide Response Rate²

Educators:	57% (661 of 1,161)	
Superintendents	108 of 132	(82%)
High School Principals ³	161 of 285	(56%)
Middle School Principals	167 of 289	(58%)
Combined School Principals	6 of 19	(32%)
Vocational Center Principals	13 of 50	(26%)
Vocational Education Directors	73 of 132	(55%)
GED Testers	40 of 67	(60%)
Regional Alternative Programs	26 of 29	(89%)
Adult Education Directors	<u>67 of 158</u>	(42%)
	661 of 1,161	(57%)

Juvenile Court Judges: 74% (71 of 96)

Truancy

- Superintendents reporting their school divisions keep monthly records on the number of truants

90 (83%) Yes
18 (17%) No

- Schools reporting they keep monthly records on the number of truants

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
High Schools	137 of 159 (86%)	22 of 159 (14%)
Middle Schools	136 of 167 (81%)	31 of 167 (19%)
Combined Schools	0 of 6 (0%)	6 of 6 (100%)
Vocational Schools	<u>7 of 13</u> (54%)	<u>6 of 13</u> (46%)
TOTAL	280 of 345 (81%)	65 of 345 (19%)

- Whether there should be a statewide definition of a "truant" to maintain uniformity of enforcement

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
Superintendents	101 of 108 (94%)	7 of 108 (6%)
High School Principals	145 of 159 (91%)	14 of 159 (9%)
Middle Schools Principals	148 of 167 (89%)	19 of 167 (11%)
Combined Schools Principals	5 of 6 (83%)	1 of 6 (17%)
Vocational Schools Principals	11 of 13 (85%)	2 of 13 (15%)
Regional Alternative Programs	<u>23 of 26</u> (89%)	<u>3 of 26</u> (12%)
TOTAL	433 of 479 (90%)	46 of 479 (10%)

¹ Source for all data: Virginia Commission on Youth, HJR 93 Surveys, Fall 1998.
Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

² Not all questions were asked of all respondents; selections were based on areas of responsibilities/expertise. Therefore, the number of analyzed surveys will vary by question.

³ Two High School Principals sent letters in the form of a response; therefore, the analyzed number of surveys with data = 159.

- Superintendents response to whether each school in the division have a truant officer
50 (46%) Yes
58 (54%) No
- Whether the truant officer in each school has job responsibilities in addition to their truancy work

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
High School Principals	106 of 159 (67%)	53 of 159 (33%)
Middle Schools Principals	111 of 167 (66%)	56 of 167 (34%)
Combined Schools Principals	0 of 6 (0%)	6 of 6 (100%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>5 of 13</u> (38%)	<u>8 of 13</u> (62%)
TOTAL	222 of 345 (64%)	123 of 345 (36%)

- Whether the following steps should be completed by schools to constitute “reasonable efforts” prior to seeking a court petition for truancy under §16.1-260 (d)

1. Immediate personal contact with the child (within 1 day)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Superintendents	74 of 108 (69%)	34 of 108 (31%)
High School Principals	96 of 159 (60%)	63 of 159 (40%)
Middle Schools Principals	110 of 167 (66%)	57 of 167 (34%)
Combined Schools Principals	2 of 6 (33%)	4 of 6 (67%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>7 of 13</u> (54%)	<u>6 of 13</u> (46%)
TOTAL	289 of 453 (64%)	164 of 453 (36%)

2. Personal contact with the parent/guardian within 3 days

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Superintendents	85 of 108 (79%)	23 of 108 (21%)
High School Principals	133 of 159 (84%)	26 of 159 (16%)
Middle Schools Principals	143 of 167 (86%)	24 of 167 (14%)
Combined Schools Principals	3 of 6 (50%)	3 of 6 (50%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>13 of 13</u> (100%)	<u>0 of 13</u> (0%)
TOTAL	377 of 453 (83%)	76 of 453 (17%)

3. Parent/student/school conference

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Superintendents	92 of 108 (85%)	16 of 108 (15%)
High School Principals	123 of 159 (77%)	36 of 159 (23%)
Middle Schools Principals	135 of 167 (81%)	32 of 167 (19%)
Combined Schools Principals	2 of 6 (33%)	4 of 6 (67%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>9 of 13</u> (69%)	<u>4 of 13</u> (31%)
TOTAL	361 of 453 (80%)	92 of 453 (20%)

4. Assessment by an interdisciplinary team

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Superintendents	59 of 108 (55%)	49 of 108 (45%)
High School Principals	80 of 159 (50%)	79 of 159 (50%)
Middle Schools Principals	96 of 167 (58%)	71 of 167 (43%)
Combined Schools Principals	2 of 6 (33%)	4 of 6 (67%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>10 of 13</u> (77%)	<u>3 of 13</u> (23%)
TOTAL	247 of 453 (55%)	206 of 453 (45%)

- Whether “reasonable efforts” should be standardized across the state

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Superintendents	67 of 108 (62%)	41 of 108 (38%)
High School Principals	113 of 159 (71%)	46 of 159 (29%)
Middle Schools Principals	110 of 167 (66%)	57 of 167 (34%)
Combined Schools Principals	4 of 6 (67%)	2 of 6 (33%)
Vocational Schools Principals	<u>5 of 13</u> (38%)	<u>8 of 13</u> (62%)
TOTAL	299 of 453 (66%)	154 of 453 (34%)

General Education Development (GED) Test

- Superintendents reporting a GED *preparation* program in their division

99 of 108 (92%)	Yes
9 of 108 (8%)	No

- Superintendents reporting their division has a GED *testing* program⁴

76 of 108 (70%)	Yes
28 of 108 (26%)	No
4 of 108 (4%)	Missing

- 16 of the 28 Superintendents in divisions without a GED testing program said they would administer a GED testing program if there were state appropriations to fund the program.
- 67 of 108 (62%) of the Superintendents reported their division offered the GED pre-test; 81 of 108 (75%) offered a GED preparatory course.
- 53 (49%) Superintendents reported their division has a policy concerning GED test eligibility.
- 69 (64%) Superintendents reported applicants under the age of 18 years were allowed to take the GED in their division.
- 16 (15%) Superintendents from the following divisions reported applicants under the age of 18 years were not allowed to take the GED in their divisions:⁵

Buchanan Co.	Greensville Co.	Prince George Co.	Danville City
Carroll Co.	Henrico Co.	Prince William Co.	Galax City
Craig Co.	Middlesex Co.	Colonial Heights City	Lynchburg City
Fluvanna Co.	Prince Edward Co.	Covington City	Suffolk City

⁴ DOE reported official testing programs in 58 local school divisions.

⁵ 23 (21%) of the Superintendents did not answer the question.

- Local school divisions required youth under age 18 to meet the following criteria to take the GED test:
 - 36 (33%) Letter from an official of the regular day school last attended stating that the applicant has been officially withdrawn from school for one year
 - 38 (35%) Letter from an official of the regular day school last attended stating that the applicant has been officially withdrawn from school for a period of six months and a letter from the director of a high school review program stating that the applicant has successfully completed the program
 - 32 (30%) A letter from an employer, a recruiting officer of the armed forces or admissions officer of an institution of higher learning or post-secondary training institution and a letter from an official of the regular day school last attended
- 23 (21%) of the divisions use all three criteria in the DOE policy manual to determine GED test eligibility for youth under age 18.
- 36 (33%) Superintendents reported their divisions have other criteria in addition to the state requirements. Examples of "other" criteria included:
 - participation in pre-test
 - parent conference
 - enrolled in a GED/alternative program
 - court ordered youth/CSU recommendation
 - extenuating circumstances
 - best interests of the student
 - permission of school board
 - recommendation of principal
- 30 (28%) of the local school boards contribute funding for the GED testing program; the average local contribution was \$11,300.
- 58 (54%) of the responding local school divisions allowed youth under 18 to take the GED test in calendar year 1997; two-thirds of these divisions (38) reported that all youth under 18 applying to take the GED in 1997 were allowed to take the test.
- Superintendents reported 2,102 youth under age 18 applied to take the GED in respondent localities; 1,727 (82%) were allowed to take the test.⁶
- Which entity should make the decision on whether youth between 16 and 18 years of age should be allowed to take the GED test

RESPONDENT GROUP	Local School Superintendent	Central State Office/Official	Parent/Guardian
Superintendents	75	4	7
High School Principals	96	14	12
Combined Schools Principals	2	0	2
Vocational Schools Principals	9	0	0
Regional Alternative Programs	14	3	5
Adult Education Directors	43	2	6
GED Testers	24	1	4
TOTAL	263 (81%)	24 (7%)	36 (11%)

⁶ All of the 26 youth applying in Augusta County were reported as not being allowed to take the test.

- Whether there should be uniform criteria in Virginia for GED participation and eligibility

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
Superintendents	83	25
High School Principals	110	49
Combined Schools Principals	5	1
Vocational Schools Principals	8	4
Regional Alternative Programs	20	6
Adult Education Directors	46	18
GED Testers	<u>33</u>	<u>6</u>
TOTAL	305 (74%)	109 (26%)

- Whether Virginia should increase access to the GED test for youth under the age of 18 years of age

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
Superintendents	52	56
High School Principals	111	48
Combined Schools Principals	4	2
Vocational Schools Principals	9	3
Regional Alternative Programs	20	6
Adult Education Directors	25	39
GED Testers	<u>21</u>	<u>18</u>
TOTAL	242 (58%)	172 (42%)

- The 242 respondents wanting to lower the age for GED eligibility, recommended the following minimum age requirements⁷

	<u>16 Years</u>	<u>17 Years</u>
Superintendents	27	20
High School Principals	56	43
Combined Schools Principals	1	3
Vocational Schools Principals	5	3
Regional Alternative Programs	9	11
Adult Education Directors	11	13
GED Testers	<u>7</u>	<u>14</u>
TOTAL	116 (48%)	107 (44%)

- 101 of 103 (98%) of GED testers and Adult Education Program Directors reported the GED Preparatory Program is beneficial to students; 75 of 103 (73%) recommended all students taking the test take the preparatory program.

⁷ Respondent numbers do not total 100% due to missing data or "other responses."

Compulsory School Attendance

- 44% indicated that the age for compulsory school attendance for Virginia public schools should be lowered from 18 years of age; 53% said it should not be lowered.

RESPONDENT GROUP	YES	NO	Missing
Superintendents	51 (47%)	53 (49%)	4 (4%)
High School Principals	91 (57%)	65 (41%)	3 (2%)
Middle School Principals	62 (37%)	98 (59%)	7 (4%)
Combined Schools Principals	1 (17%)	4 (67%)	1 (17%)
Vocational Schools Principals	8 (67%)	4 (33%)	0
Regional Alternative Programs	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	0
Adult Education Directors	17 (27%)	43 (67%)	4 (6%)
GED Testers	14 (36%)	24 (62%)	1 (3%)
Vocational Education Directors	30 (41%)	42 (58%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	287	346	21

- Of the respondents who suggested age for compulsory school attendance be lowered, the plurality of respondents suggested age 16.

RESPONDENT GROUP	17 Years	16 Years	Other/Missing
Superintendents	19	25	7
High School Principals	42	40	9
Middle School Principals	17	40	5
Combined Schools Principals	1	0	0
Vocational Schools Principals	4	4	0
Regional Alternative Programs	10	3	0
Adult Education Directors	11	6	0
GED Testers	7	6	1
Vocational Education Directors	10	17	3
TOTAL	121 (42%)	141 (49%)	25 (9%)

- Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the age for compulsory school attendance for youth in pre- and post-trial correctional facilities should continue to be 18 years of age.

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
Superintendents	75	33
High School Principals	80	79
Middle School Principals	99	68
Combined Schools Principals	3	3
Vocational Schools Principals	8	4
Regional Alternative Programs	19	7
Adult Education Directors	49	15
GED Testers	29	10
Vocational Education Directors	61	12
TOTAL	423 (65%)	231 (35%)

- The following criteria were suggested if the compulsory school attendance age for public school attendance was lowered to 17 years of age.

RESPONDENT GROUP	Parental Permission	Employment	Career/ Academic Counseling	Completion of Vocational Education Program	GED Prep Course/Pass GED Test
Superintendents	66 of 108 (61%)	48 of 108 (44%)	56 of 108 (52%)	42 of 108 (39%)	52 of 108 (48%)
High School Principals	120 of 159 (76%)	90 of 159 (57%)	105 of 159 (66%)	70 of 159 (44%)	97 of 159 (61%)
Middle School Principals	98 of 167 (59%)	81 of 167 (49%)	79 of 167 (47%)	62 of 167 (37%)	67 of 167 (40%)
Combined Schools Principals	4 of 6 (67%)	4 of 6 (67%)	3 of 6 (50%)	4 of 6 (67%)	4 of 6 (67%)
Vocational Schools Principals	10 of 13 (83%)	11 of 13 (92%)	9 of 13 (75%)	8 of 13 (67%)	9 of 13 (75%)
Regional Alternative Programs	18 of 26 (69%)	17 of 26 (65%)	14 of 26 (54%)	15 of 26 (58%)	16 of 26 (62%)
Adult Education Directors	34 of 67 (53%)	25 of 67 (39%)	28 of 67 (44%)	26 of 67 (41%)	33 of 67 (52%)
GED Testers	20 of 40 (51%)	21 of 40 (54%)	22 of 40 (56%)	19 of 40 (49%)	24 of 40 (62%)
Vocational Education Directors	51 of 73 (70%)	39 of 73 (53%)	45 of 73 (62%)	39 of 73 (53%)	36 of 73 (49%)
RESPONDENT PERCENTAGE	64%	51%	55%	44%	52%

Work Based Learning Programs

- Superintendents reporting their school division had a position charged with the responsibility to establish and market work-based learning programs

64 of 108 (59%)	Yes
44 of 108 (41%)	No/Missing
- Vocational education directors and principals reported the Virginia Department of Labor (DOL) provided assistance in establishing youth apprenticeships for students interested in careers associated with the vocational education curriculum

86 of 251 (34%)	Yes
165 of 251 (66%)	No/Missing
- Superintendents and vocational education directors reporting their divisions have not gotten the technical assistance needed to establish youth apprenticeship opportunities for students in your vocational education curriculum

82 of 181 (45%)	Yes
99 of 181 (55%)	No

- Whether youth apprenticeship and work-based learning programs should be expanded

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO/Missing</u>
Superintendents	84 of 108	24 of 108
High School Principals	118 of 159	41 of 159
Combined Schools Principals	3 of 6	3 of 6
Vocational Center Principals	11 of 13	2 of 13
Regional Alternative Programs	24 of 26	2 of 26
Vocational Education Directors	<u>67 of 73</u>	<u>6 of 73</u>
TOTAL	307 of 385 (80%)	78 of 385 (20%)

Career Guidance

- Superintendents reporting their division provides guidance on course planning for coordination of vocational education electives

81 of 108 (75%)	Yes
27 of 108 (25%)	No

- Whether middle and high school guidance counselors participate regularly in professional training regarding career development⁸

386 of 526 (73%)	Yes
140 of 526 (27%)	No

Vocational Education

- Whether students should have access to more vocational education opportunities

449 of 552 (81%)	Yes
103 of 552 (19%)	No

- Whether students at the middle school level should have more opportunity to enroll in skill- specific vocational education courses

312 of 552 (57%)	Yes
240 of 552 (43%)	No

- Whether access to skill specific vocational education courses would enhance the relevancy of education for students

399 of 552 (72%)	Yes
153 of 552 (23%)	No

- Whether any of the following hinder participation in vocational education classes by middle school students

Schedule design (<i>i.e., block vs. six period</i>)	168 of 526 (32%)
Academic requirements	299 of 526 (57%)
Availability of programs	254 of 526 (48%)

⁸ Questions relating to middle schools were not asked of regional alternative programs.

Judicial Opinion⁹

- How the Court defines *habitually* with respect to runaways in §16.1-228
 - 34 (48%) Other
 - 16 (23%) Two incidents
 - 12 (17%) Three incidents
 - 5 (07%) More than three incidents
- Expectations for local schools as to what constitutes “reasonable efforts” prior to their filing truancy petitions
 - 59 (84%) Face to face meeting with student and parent
 - 58 (82%) Face to face meeting with student
 - 53 (75%) Notify parent by telephone
 - 52 (73%) Notify parent by letter
 - 42 (59%) School staffing
 - 17 (24%) Community referral
 - 16 (23%) Amendment of academic plan
 - 13 (18%) FAPT referral
- Recommendations to expedite the scheduling of a court hearing on truancy and runaway petitions
 - 27 (38%) Other
 - 19 (27%) Use hearing officers
 - 18 (25%) Docket management training
 - 14 (20%) Appoint more judges
 - 12 (17%) Delegation of authority for intake to appointed counsel and/or GAL
 - 11 (15%) Develop a specialized CHINS court
 - 11 (15%) Create time limits for hearing cases
 - 6 (08%) Use Masters to hear cases
- Point at which disciplinary staffing for a CHINSup pursuant to §16.1-278.5 is ordered
 - 39 (55%) As part of the initial hearing
 - 21 (30%) Other
 - 5 (7%) Prior to hearing
 - 2 (3%) At intake
 - 2 (3%) when placed in secure detention
- Who routinely conducts the interdisciplinary staffing for CHINSup cases
 - 39 (55%) FAPT team
 - 17 (24%) Other
 - 5 (7%) Court team
 - 4 (6%) Don't know
- Value of staff in providing information with which to fashion dispositions
 - 34 (48%) Very helpful
 - 24 (34%) Helpful
 - 6 (8%) Slightly helpful
- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code for truants*
 - 37 (52%) Yes
 - 31 (44%) No
- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code for runaways*
 - 39 (55%) Yes
 - 28 (39%) No

⁹ Percentages and totals may not total 100% due to missing values. N=71

- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code* for parents of CHINS who refuse to cooperate

52 (73%)	Yes
13 (18%)	No

- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code* for parents of CHINSup who refuse to cooperate

50 (70%)	Yes
14 (20%)	No

- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code* for adults who harbor runaways and/or truants

59 (83%)	Yes
5 (07%)	No

- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code* for CHINS

41 (58%)	Yes
25 (35%)	No

- Satisfaction with dispositional options provided in *Code* for CHINSup

43 (59%)	Yes
22 (42%)	No

- Establish a Family in Need of Services (FINS) classification in the *Code* as a means to promote parental and sibling participation in court orders

35 (49%)	Yes
30 (42%)	No

- Frequency with which contempt of court sanction is used for truants

29 (41%)	Seldom
28 (39%)	Often
5 (07%)	Never
3 (04%)	Always

- Frequency with which contempt of court sanction is used for runaways

35 (49%)	Seldom
21 (30%)	Often
9 (13%)	Never
1 (01%)	Always

- Primary goal when ordering placement in secure detention for a runaway or truant

25 (35%)	Stabilize child
25 (35%)	Other
10 (14%)	Punishment
4 (06%)	Assessment
4 (06%)	Buy time while awaiting placement
1 (01%)	Cooling out period

- Satisfied with access to secure detention for runaways or truants
 - 42 (59%) Yes
 - 24 (34%) No

- Other short-term placement options used for runaways or truants
 - 47 (66%) Placement with relatives
 - 33 (25%) Less secure detention
 - 25 (35%) Runaway shelter
 - 25 (35%) Crisis home
 - 18 (25%) Other
 - 6 (08%) Host homes

- Other services needed for short-term placement for runaways or truants
 - 26 (37%) Runaway shelter
 - 24 (34%) Host homes
 - 22 (31%) Crisis home
 - 18 (25%) Less secure detention
 - 16 (23%) Other
 - 8 (11%) Placement with relatives

- After court hours, give the Intake Officer the authority to place a CHINSup in detention when the juvenile refuses to go to an alternative short-term placement
 - 55 (77%) Yes
 - 9 (13%) No

- For CHINSup cases, use of contempt of court powers as set forth in §16.1-278.5 and §16.1-292 (E)(2) consecutively or concurrently
 - 29 (41%) Consecutively
 - 26 (37%) Concurrently

- Place truancy petitions on the docket 12 months of the year
 - 55 (77%) Yes
 - 12 (17%) No

- Criteria for granting a continuance in truancy cases
 - 50 (70%) Progress of client
 - 45 (63%) Attorney request
 - 23 (32%) Client has no attorney
 - 20 (28%) Other

- Satisfied with the priority law enforcement places on truants
 - 36 (51%) Yes
 - 29 (41%) No

- Satisfied with the priority law enforcement places on runaways
 - 45 (63%) Yes
 - 19 (27%) No

- Satisfied with the priority local school system places on truants
 - 36 (51%) Yes
 - 31 (44%) No

- Remove runaway cases from the jurisdiction of J&DR Court
 - 61 (86%) No
 - 8 (11%) Yes

- Remove truancy cases from the jurisdiction of J&DR Court
 - 61 (86%) No
 - 9 (13%) Yes

- Remove other status offense cases from the jurisdiction of J&DR Court
 - 57 (80%) No
 - 9 (13%) Yes

- Re-institute the term and dispositions for “incorrigibles” in the *Code* to describe a component of the status offender population
 - 41 (58%) No
 - 24 (34%) Yes



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 93 SURVEY MASTER VERSION OF ALL QUESTIONS

The 1998 Session of the Virginia General Assembly enacted House Joint Resolution 93, continuing the Virginia Commission on Youth's study of truants and runaways in Virginia. As part of this study, the Commission is surveying all (group name here) to collect opinions and information on issues related to truancy and programs such as the General Education Development (GED), vocational education, youth apprenticeship and educational alternatives. Several sections of the *Code of Virginia* and a list of definitions are enclosed to assist in your responses.

Please return the survey by **August 21, 1998**. If you have any questions, contact Kim Echelberger at (804) 371-2481. The General Assembly of Virginia and the Virginia Commission on Youth thank you for your assistance in this important study effort.

SECTION 1: TRUANCY

1. What is the local school board definition of a truant? *(Please provide.)*

2. Does each school in your division keep monthly records on the number of truants per month?
 - Yes *(If YES, proceed to question 3.)*
 - No *(If NO, proceed to question 2a.)*

2a. If NO, what type of attendance records do the schools maintain? *(Please explain.)*

3. Should there be a statewide definition of a "truant" to assist in maintaining uniformity in the enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws?
 - Yes *(If YES, proceed to question 4.)*
 - No *(If NO, proceed to question 3a.)*

3a. If NO, why should there not be a statewide definition? *(Please explain.)*

4. How many truant officers did your locality have during the 1997-98 School Year? _____
 - 4a. Do the truant officers have job responsibilities in addition to their truancy work?
 - Yes
 - No

5. The Code of Virginia, §16.1-260 (d) requires that schools exhaust "all appropriate nonjudicial remedies which are available to them" prior to seeking court involvement through the filing of a petition for truancy. In your opinion, which of the following steps should be completed by the schools to constitute "reasonable efforts" in exhausting remedies? (Please check all that apply.)

- Immediate personal contact with the child (within 1 day)
- Personal contact with the parent/guardian within 3 days
- Parent/student/school conference
- Assessment by an interdisciplinary team
- Other (Explain.) _____

5a. Which of the following should be included in an interdisciplinary team staffing for truants? (Please check all that apply.)

- Educational assessment
- Referrals to community service agencies
- Changing the student's classes/schedule
- Other (Explain.) _____

5b. Should "reasonable efforts" regarding required school remedies for truants be standardized across the state?

- Yes No

SECTION 2: GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT TEST (GED)

6. Does your locality have a General Educational Development (GED) preparation program?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to question 7.)
- No (If NO, proceed to questions 6a and 6b.)

6a. Why did your locality choose not to offer the GED preparation program as an educational option? (Please explain.)

6b. Would your locality administer a GED preparation program if the state increased appropriations to fund the program?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to question 7.)
- No (If NO, proceed to question 6c.)

6c. Why would your locality choose not to participate in a state-funded GED preparation program? (Please explain.)

7. Does your locality have a General Educational Development (GED) testing program?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to question 8.)
- No (If NO, proceed to questions 7a and 7b.)

7a. Why did your locality choose not to offer the GED testing program as an educational option? (Please explain.)

7b. Would your locality administer a GED testing program if there were state appropriations to fund the program?

- Yes
 No (If NO, proceed to questions 7c and 7d.)

7c. Why would your locality choose not to participate in a state-funded GED testing program?
(Please explain.)

7d. The Standards of Quality (§22.1-253.13.1D2) require that local school divisions provide programs based on prevention, intervention or retrieval designed to increase the number of students who earn a high school diploma or General Education Development certificate (GED.) In lieu of not having a GED testing program, what educational programs does your division offer to completely address this standard? (Please explain.)

(After you have answered question 7d, proceed to question 14 on page 4 if you do not have a GED testing program.)

8. Does your locality have a policy concerning GED test eligibility?

- Yes (If YES, please attach a copy of the policy and proceed to question 8.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 8a.)

8a. How does your locality determine test eligibility? (Please explain.)

9. Are applicants under the age of 18 years of age allowed to take the GED in your locality?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 9a and 9b.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 9c.)

9a. Which of the following criteria must be met to allow a youth under age 18 to take the GED test?
(Check all that apply.)

- Letter from an official of the regular day school last attended stating that the applicant has been officially withdrawn from school for one year
 Letter from an official of the regular day school last attended stating that the applicant has been officially withdrawn from school for a period of six months and a letter from the director of a high school review program stating that the applicant has successfully completed the program
 A letter from an employer, a recruiting officer of the armed forces or admissions officer of an institution of higher learning or post-secondary training institution and a letter from an official of the regular day school last attended

9b. Does your division have other criteria in addition to the state requirements (i.e., parental permission, exceptions for teenage parents)?

- Yes No

If YES, please explain the requirements.

9c. If NO, why are applicants under 18 not allowed to take the GED test? (Please explain.)

10. Does your local school board contribute funding for the GED test program?

Yes (If YES, proceed to question 10a.)

No (If NO, proceed to question 11.)

10a. Please provide the Calendar Year 1997 division share of local GED test program funds.

\$ _____ .00

11. Does the local GED testing program offer a pre-test?

Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 11a through 11c.)

No (If NO, proceed to question 12.)

Don't Know (If Don't Know, proceed to question 12.)

11a. Is the pre-test mandatory? Yes No

11b. Is there a cost to the applicant for taking the pre-test? Yes No

11c. What is the cost of the pre-test to the applicant? \$ _____ .00

12. Does the local GED program offer a preparatory course to assist applicants in planning for the test?

Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 12a through 12d.)

No (If NO, proceed to question 13.)

Don't Know (If Don't know, proceed to question 13.)

12a. Are there space limitations for participation in the preparatory course?

Yes No

If YES, please explain the space limitations.

12b. Is there a cost to the applicant for taking the preparatory course? Yes No

If YES, what is the cost of the course to the applicant? \$ _____ .00

12c. Is the preparatory course mandatory? Yes No

12d. How long is the preparatory course? _____ average months

How many youth between 16 and 18 years of age applied to take the GED test in your locality during Calendar Year 1997?

13. How many youth between 16 and 18 years of age applied to take the GED test in your locality during Calendar Year 1997?

13a. How many youth between 16 and 18 years of age were allowed to take the GED test during Calendar Year 1997?

14. Which entity should make the decision on whether youth between 16 and 18 years of age should be allowed to take the GED test? *(Please check one.)*

- Local School Superintendent Central State Office/Official
 Parent/Guardian Other *(Explain)*

15. Should there be uniform criteria in Virginia for GED participation and eligibility?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 15a and 15b.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to question 15c.)*

15a. If YES, why should there be uniform criteria for GED participation and eligibility? *(Please explain.)*

15b. Where should the uniform criteria be included? *(Please check one.)*

- Code of Virginia State Board of Education Regulations
 Dept. of Education Administrative Policies Other *(Explain)*

15c. If NO, why should there not be uniform criteria for GED participation and eligibility? *(Please explain.)*

16. Should Virginia increase access to the GED test for youth under the ages of 18 years of age?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 16a and 16b.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to question 16c.)*

16a. What should be the minimum age requirement for GED eligibility?

- 16 years of age 17 years of age
 Other *(Explain)* _____

16b. Why should access be increased for youth 16 to 18 years of age? *(Please explain.)*

16c. Why should access not be increased for youth 16 to 18 years of age? *(Please explain.)*

17. Should youth under 18 who have acquired a GED be allowed to participate in public school classes?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to question 18.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to question 17a.)*

17a. If NO, why should youth under 18 year of age with a GED not be allowed to participate in public school classes? *(Please explain.)*

SECTION 3: COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

18. Should the age for compulsory school attendance for Virginia public schools be lowered from 18 years of age?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 18a through 18c.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 18c.)

18a. If YES, what should be the age for compulsory school attendance?

- 17 years of age 16 years of age
 Other (Explain) _____

18b. Why should the age be lowered? (Please explain.)

18c. Should the age for compulsory school attendance for youth in pre- and post-trial correctional facilities continue to be 18 years of age?

- Yes No

19. If the compulsory school attendance age for public school attendance were lowered to 17 years of age, which of the following criteria should also be mandated to accompany the age change? (Please check all that apply.)

- Parental permission
 Career/academic counseling
 Completion of an approved vocational education program
 GED prep course and successful completion of the GED test
 None of the above criteria; just lower the age
 None of the above criteria; the age should remain at 18 years

19a. If you checked at least one of the additional criteria, why would you be in favor of such a change? (Please explain.)

19b. If you did not check at least one additional criteria, why are you not in favor of such changes? (Please explain.)

SECTION 4: WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS

20. What types of work-based learning programs are available in your division's secondary schools? (Please check all that apply.)

- Internships
 Cooperative Education
 Business Mentorships
 Pre-apprenticeships
 Registered Youth Apprenticeships
 Non-registered Youth Apprenticeships
 Other (Explain.) _____

20a. Does your school division have a position with the responsibility to establish and market work-based learning programs in your locality? Yes No

21. Does the Virginia Department of Labor (DOL) assist the school division in establishing youth apprenticeships for students interested in careers associated with the vocational education curriculum?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 21a, 21b and 21c.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 22.)

21a. How does DOL assist your division in establishing youth apprenticeship programs? (Please explain.)

21b. What areas would you like to see additional technical assistance provided by the DOL? (Please check all that apply.)

- Recruit of business partners Direct assistance with business partners
 Technical assistance on legal and insurance problems
 Marketing work based learning programs
 Central office linkage with DOL field representatives
 Placements of students in the work place
 Other (Explain.) _____

21c. Should the DOL have a specific coordinator position to establish and coordinate secondary schools youth apprenticeship programs statewide?

- Yes No

22. Has your division gotten the technical assistance needed to establish youth apprenticeship opportunities for students in your vocational education curriculum?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 22a through 22f.)
 No (If NO, proceed to questions 22f.)

22a. Which of the following state entities provided the technical assistance? (Please check one.)

- Virginia Dept. of Labor (DOL) Virginia Dept. of Education (DOE)
 Virginia Community College System (VCCS)
 Virginia Business Education Partnership Program (VBEPP)

22b. How would you rate the level of technical assistance provided by DOL? (Please check one.)

- Excellent Fair
 Good Poor
 Not Applicable

22c. How would you rate the level of technical assistance provided by DOE? (Please check one.)

- Excellent Fair Good Poor
 Not Applicable

22d. How would you rate the level of technical assistance provided by VCCS? *(Please check one.)*

- Excellent Fair Good Poor
 Not Applicable

22e. How would you rate the level of technical assistance provided by VEBPP?

(Please check one.)

- Excellent Fair Good Poor
 Not Applicable

22f. What areas would you like to see additional technical assistance? *(Please explain.)*

23. Have you ever experienced confusion or frustration when attempting to get technical assistance at the state level regarding youth work-based learning programs?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to question 23a.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to question 24.)*

23a. If YES, would it be helpful to have one state agency responsible for all aspects of overseeing and establishing work-based learning programs at the state level?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to question 23b.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to question 24.)*

23b. If YES, which state agency should provide the technical assistance? *(Choose one.)*

- Virginia Department of Labor (DOL)
 Virginia Department of Education (DOE)
 Virginia Community College System (VCCS)
 Virginia Business Education Partnership Program (VBEP)
 Other *(Explain.)* _____

24. Do you think youth apprenticeship and work-based learning programs should be expanded?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 24a.)*
 No *(If NO, proceed to questions 24b.)*

24a. Why should youth apprenticeship and work-based learning programs be expanded? *(Please explain.)*

24b. Why should youth apprenticeship and work-based learning programs not be expanded? *(Please explain.)*

25. Do you think there are currently incentives for employers to participate in youth apprenticeships and work-based learning experiences?

- Yes No

30. Does your division provide guidance on course planning for coordination of vocational education electives?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to question 30a.)
 No (If NO, proceed to questions 30b and 30c.)

30a. If YES, what types of guidance activities do you provide? (Please explain.)

30b. If NO, should students receive guidance on course planning for coordination of vocational education electives?

- Yes No

30c. Why do you currently not provide such guidance? (Please explain.)

31. Do middle and high school guidance counselors participate regularly in professional training regarding career development?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 31a and 31b.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 32.)

31a. How often do the guidance counselors receive such training? (Please explain.)

31b. Which state and local entities provides the training? (Please explain.)

32. Do middle and high school guidance counselors have the time and resources to provide adequate career counseling to students?

- Yes No

32a. Should guidance counselors be required to have updated training on career development issues as part of their certification process?

- Yes (If YES, proceed to question 33.)
 No (If NO, proceed to question 32b.)

32b. If NO, why should guidance counselors not be required to have such updated training? (Please explain.)

33. Which of the following career exploration opportunities are available at the middle school level in your division? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career fairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Shadowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career days | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visits to/from local employers | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to career centers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Virginia VIEW | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(Explain.)</i> _____ |

34. Which of the following career or employment preparation activities are provided in the high schools in your division? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resume development | <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction on employer expectations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completion of job applications | <input type="checkbox"/> Differences between jobs and careers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> Career search process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace employment trends | <input type="checkbox"/> Career management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Advancement | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Placements | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(Explain.)</i> _____ |

35. Has your division developed a model educational plan which provides the academic courses necessary to complement various vocational education plans?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 35a.)*
 No *(If YES, proceed to questions 36.)*

35a. Do the middle school guidance counselors have a model curriculum for vocational education preparation in high school?

- Yes No

SECTION 6: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

36. Should students have access to more vocational education opportunities?

- Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 36a and 36b.)*
 No *(If YES, proceed to questions 37.)*

36a. If YES, why should students' have more access? *(Please explain.)*

36b. Which types of vocational education opportunities do students' need more access to? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Increased number of high tech class offerings
 Increased number of classes in traditional trades
 Increased number of work based learning placements
 Other *(Explain.)* _____

37. Should student's at the middle school level have more opportunity to enroll in skill specific vocational education courses?

Yes (If YES, proceed to questions 37a and 37c.)

No (If YES, proceed to questions 37b and 37c.)

37a. If YES, why should students' have more opportunities? (Please explain.)

37b. If NO, why should students' not have more opportunities? (Please explain.)

37c. Do you think access to skill specific vocational education courses would enhance the relevancy of education for students?

Yes

No

38. Which of the following hinder participation in vocational education classes by middle school students? (Check all that apply.)

Schedule design (i.e., block vs. six period)

Academic requirements (Standard of Learning)

Availability of programs

Other (Explain.) _____

39. Which of the following structural changes would have to take place to serve more students in vocational education at the middle school? (Check all that apply.)

Summer school

Longer school days

Extended school years

Evening classes

Weekend classes

Block classes

Other (Explain.) _____

39a. If there was state financial support for these types of structural changes, would your division be interested in implementing any of these options?

Yes

No

39b. If NO, why would you not be interested in these options? (Please explain.)

40. How can better information be provided to educators, parents, students and the community regarding career opportunities that result from completion of a vocational education program? (Please explain.)

41. What types of marketing strategies does the school division use to illustrate the benefits of a vocational education to students and their parents? (Please explain.)

42. Do you think vocational education has an image problem? Yes No

42a. If YES, why do you think vocational education have an image problem? *(Please explain.)*

43. Should the name of vocational education be changed?

Yes *(If YES, proceed to questions 43a.)*

No *(If YES, proceed to questions 43b.)*

43a. If YES, which of the following names do you think should be chosen to replace the name of vocational education? *(Please choose one.)*

Professional and Technical Education

Work Force Education

Technical and Career Education

Technical Education

Career Education

Other *(Explain.)* _____

43b. If No, why should the name remain the same? *(Please explain.)*

44. Describe the role of your local vocational education advisory council in the development of your annual application for vocational programs and funds? *(Please explain.)*

44a. How often do they meet? *(Please check one.)*

Once a year

Twice a year

Quarterly

Monthly

Other *(Explain.)* _____

45. What activities does the school division use to recognize the achievement of students in vocational education (i.e. certificates of completion, awards banquets, etc.)? *(Explain.)*

SEPARATE QUESTIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS

46. Are vocational education teachers required to meet with guidance counselors on an annual basis to update their knowledge regarding curriculum design?

Yes No

47. Which vocational education classes have a work based learning component? *(Please explain.)*

47a. What is the average duration of each type of work based learning component (i.e., after school day per semester, 1 hour per week, 3 hours per week, etc.) *(Please explain.)*

48. How many local business were involved in each of the following work based learning programs during the 1997-98 school year? *(Please fill in all that apply.)*

Internships	_____	Businesses
Cooperative Education	_____	Businesses
Business Mentorships	_____	Businesses
Pre-apprenticeships	_____	Businesses
Registered youth apprenticeships	_____	Businesses
Non-registered youth apprenticeships	_____	Businesses
Other <i>(Explain.)</i>	_____	Businesses

49. How many high school students were placed in each of the following work based learning programs during the 1997-98 school year? *(Please fill in all that apply.)*

Internships	_____	Students
Cooperative Education	_____	Students
Business Mentorships	_____	Students
Pre-apprenticeships	_____	Students
Registered youth apprenticeships	_____	Students
Non-registered youth apprenticeships	_____	Students
Other <i>(Explain.)</i>	_____	Students

49a. How many of previous work based learning program placements in the 1997-98 school year were paid placements versus unpaid placements? *(Please fill in all that apply.)*

_____	Paid placements
_____	Unpaid placements



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT JUDGES' SURVEY

The 1998 Session of the Virginia General Assembly enacted several resolutions directing the Virginia Commission on Youth to study a number of issues related to youth and their families in the Commonwealth. As part of these studies, the Commission is surveying all Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges to collect opinions and information on issues related to **(1) status offenders**, (2) custody and visitation, and (3) juvenile competency to stand trial. A list of definitions are enclosed to assist you in your responses.

SECTION 1: STATUS OFFENDERS

1. How does your Court define *habitually* with respect to runaways in §16.1-228? *(Please check one.)*
 - Two incidents
 - Three incidents
 - More than three incidents
 - Other *(Explain.)* _____

2. What are your expectations for the local schools with respect to what constitutes "reasonable efforts" prior to their filing a truancy petition? *(Please check all that apply.)*
 - Face to face meeting with student
 - Face to face meeting with student and parent
 - Notify parent by telephone
 - Notify parent by letter
 - School staffing
 - Amendment of academic plan
 - Community referral
 - FAPT referral
 - Other *(Explain.)* _____

3. What approach would you recommend to expedite the scheduling of a court hearing on truancy and runaway petitions? *(Please check all that apply.)*
 - Use hearing officers
 - Appoint more judges
 - Docket management training
 - Develop a specialized CHINS court
 - Use Masters to hear cases
 - Create time limits for hearing cases
 - Delegation of authority for intake to appointed counsel and/or GAL
 - Other *(Explain.)* _____

4. When do you order the interdisciplinary staffing for a CHINSUP pursuant to §16.1-278.5? *(Please check one.)*
 - At intake
 - Prior to hearing
 - As part of the initial hearing
 - When placed in secure detention
 - Other *(Explain.)* _____

5. Who routinely conducts the interdisciplinary staffing for these cases? *(Please check one.)*

FAPT team

Court team

Don't know

Other *(Explain.)* _____

6. How valuable is the staff in providing you with information with which to fashion dispositions? *(Please check one.)*

Very helpful

Slightly helpful

Helpful

Not helpful

7. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for truants?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 8.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 7a.)*

7a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

8. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for runaways?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 9.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 8a.)*

8a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

9. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provide in the Code for parents of CHINS who refuse to cooperate?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 10.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 9a.)*

9a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

10. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for parents of CHINSUP who refuse to cooperate?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 11.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 10a.)*

10a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

11. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for adults who harbor runaways and/or truants?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 12.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 11a.)*

11a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

12. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for CHINS?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 13.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 12a.)*

12a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

13. Are you satisfied with the dispositional options provided in the Code for CHINSUP?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 14.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 13a.)*

13a. If NO, what additional options would you suggest? *(Please explain.)*

14. Would you be in favor of establishing a Family In Need of Services (FINS) classification in the Code as a means to promote parental and sibling participation in court orders?

Yes *(If YES, please go to question 14a.)*

No *(If NO, please go to question 14b.)*

14a. If YES, why would you be in favor of such a change? *(Please explain.)*

14b. If NO, why would you not be in favor of such a change? *(Please explain.)*

15. How often do you use the contempt of court sanction for truants? *(Please check one.)*

Always

Often

Seldom

Never

16. How often do you use the contempt of court sanction for runaways? *(Please check one.)*

Always

Often

Seldom

Never

17. What usually is your primary goal when you order placement in secure detention for a runaway or truant?
(Please check only one.)

Stabilize child

Cooling out period

Assessment

Buy time while awaiting placement

Punishment

Other _____

18. Are you satisfied with your access to secure detention for these cases? *(Please check one.)*

Yes

No

19. What other short-term placement options do you use for these cases? *(Please check all that apply.)*

Runaway Shelter

Less Secure Detention

Crisis Home

Host Homes

Placement with Relatives

Other _____

20. What other services do you need for short-term placement for these cases? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- Runaway Shelter Less Secure Detention Crisis Home
 Host Homes Placement with Relatives Other _____

21. Do you support giving the Intake Officer, after court hours, the authority to place a CHINSUP in detention when the juvenile refuses to go to an alternative short term placement? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes No

22. In CHINSUP cases, do you use contempt of court powers as set forth in §16.1-278.5 and §16.1-292 (E)(2) consecutively or concurrently? *(Please check one.)*

- Consecutively Concurrently

23. Do you favor placing truancy petitions on the docket 12 months of the year? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes No

24. On what basis do you consider granting a continuance in truancy cases? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- Client has no attorney Attorney request
 Progress of client Other _____

25. Are you satisfied with the priority law enforcement places on truants? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes No

26. Are you satisfied with the priority law enforcement places on runaways? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes No

27. Are you satisfied with the priority the local school system places on truants? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes No

28. Should runaway cases be removed from the jurisdiction of J&DR Court? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes *(If YES, please go to question 28a.)*
 No *(If NO, please go to question 29.)*

28a. If YES, what agency should be responsible for services to runaways? *(Please check one.)*

- Schools Social Services
 Mental Health Create a New Agency
 Other _____

29. Should truancy cases be removed from the jurisdiction of J&DR Court? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes *(If YES, please go to question 29a.)*
 No *(If NO, please go to question 30.)*

29a. If YES, what agency should be responsible for services to truants? *(Please check one.)*

- Schools Mental Health
 Social Services Create a New Agency
 Other _____

30. Should other status offense cases be removed from the jurisdiction of the J&DR Court? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes *(If YES, please go to question 30a.)*
 No *(If NO, please go to question 31.)*

30a. If YES, what agency should be responsible for services to status offenders? *(Please check one)*

- Schools Mental Health
 Social Services Create a New Agency
 Other _____

31. Would you be in favor of re-instituting the term and dispositions for "incorrigibles" in the Code to describe a component of the status offender population? *(Please check one.)*

- Yes *(If YES, please go to question 31a.)*
 No *(If NO, please go to question 31b.)*

31a. If YES, why would you be in favor of such a change? *(Please explain.)*

31b. If NO, why would you not be in favor of such a change? *(Please explain.)*

32. What other information or concerns regarding services to runaways and truants would you like to share? *(Please attach additional pages if necessary.)*

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Dale Parent
Senior Associate
ABT Associates
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138-1168

Patricia Puritz
Director
American Bar Association Juvenile Justice
Center
740 Fifteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005-1009

Catherine J. Ross, Chair
American Association Steering Committee on
the Unmet Legal Needs of Children
740 Fifteenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005-1009

James A. Gondles, Jr.
Executive Director
American Correctional Association
4380 Forbels Blvd.
Lanham, MD 20706-4322

Stu Smith
Public Affairs
Bureau of Justice Statistics
1110 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

Executive Director
Center for the Study and Prevention of
Violence
Institute of Behavioral Science
University of Colorado at Boulder
ISB #10, Campus Box 442
Boulder, Colorado 80309-0442

Ira Schwartz
Center for the Study of Youth Policy
University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Work
4200 Pine Street, Second Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Vincent Schiraldi
Executive Director
Center of Juvenile and Criminal Justice
1622 Folsom Street
Second Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Marcia Lowry
Children's Rights, Inc.
404 Park Avenue South
11th Floor
New York, NY 10016

David S. Liederman
Executive Director
Child Welfare League of America
440 1st Street, NW
Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20001

James Brown
Director
Community Research Associates
309 West Clark Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Executive Director
Council on Crime in America
The Center for Civic Innovation
The Manhattan Institute
52 Vanderbilt Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Jess Cook
Director of Public Information
Criminal Justice Program, RAND
1700 Main Street,
P.O. Box 2138
Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

Dorianne Beyer
Executive Director
Defense for Children International-United
States of America
14907 Berry Road
Accokeek, MD 20607-3115

Franklin Zimring
Director
Earl Warren Legal Institute
398 Boalt Hall
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Dan Rosenblatt
Executive Director
International Association of Chiefs of Police
515 N. Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Robert Schwartz
Executive Director
Juvenile Law Center
801 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Marvin R. Ventrell
Executive Director
National Association of Counsel for Children
1205 Oneida Street
Denver, CO 80220

Larry Naake
Executive Director
National Association of Counties
440 1st Street, NW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001

John J. Sheridan
Secretary-Treasurer
National Association of Juvenile Correctional
Agencies
55 Albin Road
Bow, NH 03304-3703

Hunter Hurst
Director
National Center for Juvenile Justice (NDJJ)
71- Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-3000

Executive Director
National Center for State Courts
300 Newport Avenue
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Jerome G. Miller
President
National Center on Institutions and
Alternatives
3125 Mt. Vernon Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22305

William T. Pound
Executive Director
National Conference of State Legislatures
1560 Broadway, Suite 700
Denver, CO 80202

Barry Krisberg, Ph.D.
President
National Council on Crime and Delinquency
685 Market Street
Suite 620
San Francisco, CA 95105

Louis W. McHardy
Executive Director
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court
Judges
P.O. Box 8970
Reno, NV 89507

Cabell C. Cropper
Executive Director
National Criminal Justice Association
444 N. Capitol Street, NW
Suite 618
Washington, DC 20001

Executive Director
National Criminal Justice Reference Service
(NCJRS)
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000

Newman Flanagan
Executive Director
National District Attorneys Association
99 Canal CN Plaza
Suite 510
Alexandria, VA 22314

Raymond C. Scheppack
Executive Director
National Governors Association
Hall of States, 444 N. Capitol Street, NW
Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Sally Hillsman
Deputy Director
National Institute of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice
633 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

Earl Dunlap
Executive Director
National Juvenile Detention Association
Eastern Kentucky University
301 Perkins Bldg.
Richmond, KY 40475-3127

Donald J. Borut
Executive Director
National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 550
Washington, D.C. 20004

Clinton Lyons
Executive Director
National Legal Aid and Defender Association
1624 K Street, NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20006-1604

Ira Harris
Executive Director
National Organization of Black Police
Executives
4609 Pinecrest Office Park Drive
Suite 2-F
Alexandria, VA 22312

A.N. Moser, Jr.
Executive Director
National Sheriffs Association
1450 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3490

Shay Bilchik
Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
Prevention
810 7th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

Chuck Wexler
Executive Director
Police Executive Research Forum
1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 930
Washington, DC 20036

Dr. John J. Dilulion, Jr.
Public/Private Ventures
One Commerce Square
2005 Market Street, Suite 900
Philadelphia, PA

Marvin E. Wolfgang
Director
Sellin Center for Studies in Criminology and Criminal Law
University of Pennsylvania
3733 Spruce Street, Room 437
Philadelphia, PA 19104

J. Thomas Cochran
Executive Director
The United States Conference of Mayors
1620 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

John Dilulio
Professor of Politics and Public Affairs
Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

Mark Soler
President
Youth Law Center
1325 6th Street, NW
Suite 770
Washington, DC 20005

Innovative Virginia Truancy Programs

Inter-Agency Child Team, Giles County

The Inter-Agency Child Team, utilized in Giles County School System, emphasizes the necessity to coordinate efforts between schools and child-serving community agencies before filing a truancy petition. It recognizes that truancy is not the problem, but a symptom of other problems that the student may face. The collaboration of school and service agency representatives both of whom work directly with the students saves to identify and provide service resources is used to address underlying problems which often result in poor attendance. The role of the team in addressing attendance issues has taken on additional importance with the implementation of Learnfare legislation in Fall 1996. All referrals to the committee are initially based on attendance; however, the efforts of the committee are directed toward addressing the real causes of the attendance problem, e.g., family situations, poor grades. As evidence of the success of this approach, evaluation data for one year of service is provided below:

- Of 55 referrals, 50 received specific interventions.
- 52% of all referrals received at least one home visit.
- Only 16% of the referrals required court intervention.
- 80% of all referrals concluded with "Approved: Released from Review."
- Only 10% of the referrals required carry-over action for the next school year.

HELP Committee, Page County

Any student who is absent receives a phone call at home. All schools attempt to call every absentee each day. Most schools also request that parents contact the school on the day that the child is absent and give a reason for that absence. Letters are sent to the parents at seven, thirteen and twenty days absences. The 13 and 20-day letters request a conference with the parents and school administrator. If no justifiable reasons for the absences are known, the school social worker, who also serves as the school system's attendance officer, visits the student's home. In this visit, the parents are made aware of the school system's concern and presents the possible consequences.

Once letters to the parent are sent, the student's file is referred to the HELP Committee, which is made up of the school's administrators, counselors, the school nurse, the school social worker, and the school psychologist. The committee meets weekly and formulates plans for the provision of mentors, behavior contracts, set contact times during the day, and other services. In addition, this group initiates the contact with Social Services, Juvenile Probation Officer, Town Police and the local Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT). In most cases, court proceedings are not initiated until the student has missed at least 20 days and there have been numerous contacts, including the home visits on the part of the school.

In-House Referral for Intensive Case Management for Truancy, Hanover County

The school social worker will make a telephone referral to the student support/attendance coordinator (SSAC) if a student/parent has been through the Procedure for Truancy Referral

and there has either been no parent/student cooperation or no solution to the attendance problem.

On the day of referral or the next working day, the SSAC will contact the Hanover Court intake officer to report charges and information about this child's truancy. The intake officer will determine the appropriateness of the referral. If the student is not accepted, the name is sent back to the school social worker for monitoring. If the SSAC retains the referral, the school social worker sends all contact/service documentation, correspondence, school records, and the completed Family Assessment to the SSAC.

Unless the intake officer recommends the immediate filing of a CHINS petition, a written offense sheet with documentation of absences will be sent to the intake officer. The SSAC will inform the family by letter and telephone (if possible) that a truancy referral has been made by the school social worker and complaint information sent to the intake officer. Home visits and meetings with the parent(s) may also occur along with other interventions at this time.

The CSU intake officer will contact the child/family in writing to set up an intake appointment to discuss the possibility of a CHINS petition. The SSAC will attend this meeting. If discussions at the intake meeting indicate that a diversion plan is possible, the intake officer will draw up a Diversion Contract for all parties to sign. Compliance will be monitored by the SSAC who will report to the intake officer as necessary and appropriate. If the diversion attempt fails to improve attendance and a CHINS petition becomes necessary, the schools and courts file jointly.

If a student has had improved, acceptable attendance for six months and successfully met the requirements of a diversion contract, or has been released from a CHINS petition or probation by the Juvenile Judge, the case will be referred to the appropriate school social worker for follow-up case management and services. Once a child is adjudicated a CHINS, the SSAC will file any "show cause" actions regarding failure to attend school or follow orders of the court. If a child is placed on probation by the Juvenile Judge at the time of adjudication, the probation officer will place the child on inactive status while the SSAC monitors attendance. The probation officer will provide back-up assistance to the SSAC as necessary.

Street Watch Program, Newport News

The Newport News Police Department and Newport News City Schools have joined together in a partnership program to address the school truancy issue. The Street Watch Program places police officers on the streets with school personnel to search for truant students. The program operates four days a week during the school year.

The program operates with selected personnel from both the Uniform and Investigation Divisions of the Police Department and the City's School Division. The selected police officers/detectives go into the community and check selected "hot spots" for truants. The program continues until 1:00 p.m. each day of operation.

When a suspected truant is located, the Street Watch patrol personnel bring the student back to school. School personnel are available to provide immediate assistance to resolve non-attendance issues.

The school division, with the assistance of CSU, takes the lead on identifying and sanctioning habitually truant students. Students who are located through the Street Watch Program are taken immediately to their school of record following the recording of juvenile history information. The school division decides appropriate administrative sanctions. Further sanctions are at the discretion of the truancy team consisting of police/school and court services. The system makes every effort to involve proper court and social service action against habitually truant students, as well as possible sanctions against parents in accordance with Virginia law.

Summary of Selected Waiver Criteria to Compulsory School Attendance Laws

STATE	Compulsory School Age Requirements	Public Trans.	Parent Permission	Employment/Support Family	GED	Educational Alternative	Voc. Ed. Program	Other
Alabama	16	√		√				√
Alaska	16	√						√
Arizona	16			√			√	√
Arkansas	17				√		√	√
California	18						√	√
Colorado	16			√			√	√
Connecticut	16							√
Delaware	16							√
Florida	16							√
Georgia	16							√
Hawaii	18			√		√		√
Idaho	16							√
Illinois	16			√				√
Indiana	18		√					√
Iowa	16				√			√
Kansas	18		√		√	√		√
Kentucky	18		√					√
Louisiana	17		√					√
Maine	17		√	√			√	√
Maryland	16							√
Massachusetts	16			√			√	√
Michigan	16							√
Minnesota	16							√
Mississippi	17					√		√
Missouri	16		√	√				√
Montana	16					√		√
Nebraska	16			√				√
Nevada	17	√		√		√	√	√
New Hampshire	16							√
New Jersey	16							√
New Mexico	18		√	√		√		√
New York ¹	16			√				√
North Carolina	16			√				√
North Dakota	16			√				√
Ohio	18			√				√
Oklahoma	18		√					√
Oregon	18			√		√		√
Pennsylvania	17						√	√
Rhode Island	16							√
South Carolina	17			√				√
South Dakota	16					√		√
Tennessee	18				√			√
Texas	18		√		√	√		√
Utah	18			√				√
Vermont	16			√				√
Virginia ²	18	√			√			√
Washington	18		√	√		√		√
West Virginia	16	√		√				√
Wisconsin	18		√	√	√	√	√	√
Wyoming	16							√
TOTAL		5	11	22	7	11	9	50

"Other" includes criteria such as: (a) physical, mental or emotional conditions, (b) local school board, superintendent or court excuses, or suspension/expulsions.

¹ In New York City and Buffalo only, school board may require children not employed to attend school until 17 years.

² In Virginia, child under 18 has to be a drop-out first to qualify to take the GED and only the acquisition of the certificate meets the waiver criteria.

Waiver Criteria for States with Compulsory Attendance to Age 18

STATE	WAIVER AGE	WAIVER CRITERIA
California	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum attendance requirement of 4 - 60 minute hours of classes per week (continuation education classes, regional occupational centers or programs) Successful demonstration of proficiency equal or greater than the standards and verified approval of the parent/guardian (awards Certificate of Proficiency)
Hawaii	15 (#1) 16 (#2 & #3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is suitably employed and has been excused by the superintendent Child has engaged in behavior disruptive to other students, teachers or staff; or child's non-attendance is chronic and has become a significant factor that hinders the child's learning The principal, a teacher or counselor and the child's parents develop an alternative educational plan for the child
Indiana	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upon an exit interview and a written acknowledgement from the student and written permission of the parent and the principal
Kansas	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child with written consent from parent/guardian after attending a final counseling session Pursuant to a court order Child is regularly enrolled in an approved alternative educational program
Kentucky ¹	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-married children must have written parental permission after a school conference and participation in a one hour counseling session
New Mexico	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is excused by local school board upon a finding that the person will be employed in a gainful trade or occupation or engaged in an alternative form of education and the parent/guardian consents
Ohio ²	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is "performing necessary work directly and exclusively for the child's parents or legal guardian"
Oklahoma	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child has finished four years of high school work Joint agreement between the school administrator of the district and the parents that it is in the best interest of the child or community
Oregon	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is lawfully employed full-time Child is lawfully employed part-time and enrolled in school Child is enrolled in a community college program or other registered alternative education program Child is an emancipated minor
Tennessee	16 (#1) 17 (#2 & #3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course leading to a GED or has received a GED Child whose continued attendance, in the opinion of the local board of education, results in detriment to good order and discipline to other students Student enrolled in home school
Texas	17 (#1) 16 (#2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination and (a) has parents permission to attend course, or (b) is under court order to attend course, or (c) has established a residence separate from their parents, or (d) is homeless Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination, if child is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the child under a court order
Utah	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If child has completed the 8th grade and is employed, child shall attend school part-time or home school District superintendent has determined the child is unable to profit from attendance at school because "of inability or continuing negative attitude toward school regulations and discipline"
Washington	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is regularly and legally employed and has parental permission or is an emancipated minor Child has already met graduation requirements Child has received a certificate of educational competence
Wisconsin	16 (#1) 17 (#2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child, with parental permission, may on a part-time basis attend a vocational, technical or adult education program Child with parental permission, shall enter into a written agreement to participate in a program leading to high school graduation or equivalency degree

¹ Married children do not have a compulsory education requirement; must meet the standard for marriage.

² Statute allows for such excuse to be for "a future limited time" however, no guidelines are prescribed in statute for the length of time.

Compulsory School Attendance Laws

STATE	Compulsory School Age Requirements	Waiver Age	Exceptions
Alabama	16	Doesn't specify an age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance at a church school 2. Physical/mental conditions 3. Completion of the course of study 4. Lack of public transportation 5. Legal and regular employment
Alaska	16	Doesn't specify an age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provided an education comparable to public schools (private school, tutor or religious school) 2. Attends federal government school 3. Physical/mental condition 4. Child is in custody of court/law enforcement 5. Temporary illness 6. Resides more than two miles from school or school transportation route 7. Excused by local school board 8. Child has completed 12th grade 9. Enrollment in private, correspondence schools 10. Home schooled children
Arizona	16	14 years (#4) ----- Doesn't specify age for other criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical/mental condition 2. Completion of high school study through grade 10 3. Excused by local board (governing body official, teacher and probation officer. 4. Child is over 14 years and is employed at a lawful occupation 5. Child is enrolled in work training, career education, vocational or manual training programs which meet educational standards 6. Suspension/expulsion from school
Arkansas	17	Doesn't specify (#1) ----- 16 (#2 & #3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any child who has received a high school diploma or its equivalent 2. A child enrolled in a post-secondary vocational-technical institution, community college or 2-4 year college 3. Any child enrolled in an adult education program (after formal application to the board, a GED prep test, meeting with parents, etc.) 4. Any child enrolled in the National Guard Youth Challenge Program
California	18	16 (#1) 16 or enrolled in 10 th grade (#2) ----- Doesn't specify the age(#3-#7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimum attendance requirement of 4 - 60 minute hours of classes per week (continuation education classes, regional occupational centers or programs) 2. Successful demonstration of proficiency equal or greater than the standards and verified approval of the parent/guardian (Awards a Certificate of Proficiency) 3. A child who has been graduated from high school (public, private or tutor) 4. Any child enrolled in a private school 5. Physical/mental condition 6. Personal services that must be rendered to their dependents 7. Are satisfactorily attending a regional occupational program or center

Colorado	16	16 (#1) ----- Doesn't specify age (#2-#7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any child enrolled in a private school 2. Physical, mental or emotional disability 3. Any child suspended, expelled or denied admission 4. Any child to whom a work permit has been issued pursuant to the "Colorado Youth Employment Opportunity Act" 5. Any child in custody of the court or law enforcement 6. Any child who is pursuing a work-study program under supervision of the public schools 7. Any child being educated at home
Connecticut	16	Doesn't specify age (#1) 16 (#2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educationally retarded children 2. Attendance at a private school that meets public school standards
Delaware	16	16 (#1) ----- Doesn't specify age (#2-#4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance at a private school 2. Mentally/physically handicapped children 3. Child excused by the local superintendent pursuant to local board policies 4. Child with a contagious disease
Florida	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child with a Certificates of Exemption from the local superintendent (no criteria given)
Georgia	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child excused by local school board for the following (minimum criteria set by DOE regulations): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. personal illness/death in the family b. a court order c. religious holidays d. "conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety"
Hawaii	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- 15 (#5) ----- 16 (#6 & #7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physically/mentally unable to attend school 2. Child has graduated from high school 3. The family court can show good reason why the child should remain away from school 4. Child is enrolled in an approved alternative educational program 5. Child is suitably employed and has been excused by the superintendent 6. Child has engaged in behavior disruptive to other students, teachers or staff; or child's non-attendance is chronic and has become a significant factor that hinders the child's learning 7. The principal, a teacher or counselor and the child's parents develop an alternative educational plan for the child
Idaho	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical, mental or emotional condition of the child
Illinois	16	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- 12-14 (#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance at private or parochial school 2. Physically/mentally unable to attend school 3. Necessary and lawful employment (upon approval of the local superintendent) 4. Tenets of religion 5. Attendance at confirmation classes
Indiana	18	16 (#1) ----- Doesn't specify age (#2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upon an exit interview and a written acknowledgement from the student and written permission of the parent and the principal 2. Child mentally or physically unfit

Iowa	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of graduation requirements 2. Child has obtained a high school equivalency diploma 3. Excuse by any court of record or judge 4. Attendance at religious services or receiving religious instruction 5. Attendance at a private college preparatory school (accredited) 6. Religious exemptions 7. Deaf and Blind excuses
Kansas	18	Doesn't specify age (#1) ----- 16 or 17 years (#2-#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An exceptional child 2. Child with a GED 3. Child with written consent from parent/guardian after attending a final counseling session 4. Pursuant to a court order 5. Child is regularly enrolled in an approved alternative educational program
Kentucky	18	16 (#1) ----- Doesn't specify age (#2-#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-married children must have written parental permission after a school conference and participation in a one hour counseling session 2. Children married and under 18 are exempted from the statute 3. Child who has met graduation requirements 4. Child enrolled in private, parochial or church school 5. Physical/mental conditions
Louisiana	17	Doesn't specify age ----- 16 (#3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graduation from high school 2. Married/emancipated minors (Case law and Att. General's Opinion) 3. Written consent of the parent, tutor or legal guardian
Maine	17	Doesn't specify age (#1 & #2) ----- 15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child has graduated from high school 2. Person who has been adjudged a habitual truant 3. Has completed 9th grade and has permission from their parents and the commissioner to participate in a suitable program of training or combined work/study
Maryland	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental, emotional or physical conditions which make instruction detrimental to the child's progress 2. Child whose presence presents a danger of serious physical harm to others
Massachusetts	16	14 years (#1-#3) ----- Doesn't specify age for (#4-#6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meets requirements for completion of the 6th grade and holds a permit for employment in private domestic service or farm service and is employed 6 hours per day 2. Meets requirements for completion of the 6th grade and has the written permission of the local superintendent of schools to engage in non-wage earning employment at home 3. Child who holds a permit for employment in a cooperating employment 4. Physical/mental conditions 5. Child granted an employment permit by the superintendent when he/she determines that the welfare of the child will be better served through working 6. Child instructed in another manner approved by the superintendent
Michigan	16	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- 12 or 13 (#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is attending a state approved non-public school 2. Child has graduated/fulfilled requirements of high school graduation 3. Physical complications from pregnancy 4. Child is being educated at home 5. Child is in attendance at confirmation classes conducted for 5 months or less

Minnesota	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bodily or mental condition 2. Child has completed studies required in the 10th grade 3. Religious instruction not more than 3 hrs. per week
Mississippi	17	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is physically, mentally or emotionally incapable of attending school 2. Child is enrolled in course of special education, remedial education or education for handicapped children 3. Child is home schooled
Missouri	16	Doesn't specify age (#1) ----- 14-16 (#2)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is mentally or physically incapacitated 2. Legal employment has been obtained and the parent/guardian "have been advised of the pending action"
Montana	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of the 8th Grade 2. Child is provided correspondence study or home instruction 3. Child is excused by a district judge because attendance "is not in the best interest of the child" 4. Child is enrolled in a nonpublic school
Nebraska	16	Doesn't specify age (#1- #3) ----- 14-16 years (#4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When excused by school authorities 2. Illness 3. Severe weather conditions 4. When the earnings of the child are necessary for his/her own support or those dependent on them and they have completed the work of the 8th grade the superintendent may issue a work permit provided the student attend a part-time continuation school 8 hrs a week (if available in district)
Nevada	17	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- Completion of 8 th grade (#5) ----- 14 (#6 -#7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child had physical or mental condition making attendance inadvisable 2. Child has completed the requirements of the 12th grade 3. Child is in home school or other approved equivalent instruction 4. Child's "residence is located at such distance from the nearest public school as to render attendance unsafe or impractical" and the child's parent or guardian has notified the school board to that effect in writing 5. Child is authorized to leave school by the juvenile division or family division of the district court 6. Child must work for his own or his parent's support 7. Child who has completed 8th grade can enter into proper employment or apprenticeship
New Hampshire	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical or mental condition is such as to prevent attendance 2. The superintendent or a majority of the members of the local school board determine "that the welfare of any child will be best served by withdrawal of such child from school"
New Jersey	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental condition of the child is such that he cannot benefit from instruction 2. Bodily condition of child prevents attendance
New Mexico	18	16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child has graduated from high school 2. Child is excused by local school board upon a finding that the person will be employed in a gainful trade or occupation or engaged in an alternative form of education and the parent/guardian consents

New York ¹	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child has completed a four year high school course of study 2. Child who has applied for a full-time employment certificate may be permitted to attend school part-time (20 hrs. per week)
North Carolina	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A pregnant girl with parental permission and physician verification 2. Child must work to support himself or the support of the family
North Dakota	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child attends a private or parochial school 2. Child has acquired the branches of learning taught in high school 3. Child is necessary to the support of his family 4. Child is handicapped and that handicap renders attendance inexpedient or impracticable 5. Child is receiving home based instruction
Ohio	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#3) ----- 14 (#4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child's bodily or mental condition does not permit attendance at school or a special education program 2. Child is being instructed at home 3. Child is excused or "good and sufficient reasons" by the local board pursuant to disciplinary rules 4. Child is "performing necessary work directly and exclusively for the child's parents or legal guardian"
Oklahoma	18	16 (#1 & #2) ----- Doesn't specify age (#3 & #4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child has finished four years of high school work 2. Joint agreement between the school administrator of the district and the parents that it is in the best interest of the child or community 3. Child has mental or physical disability 4. Child is excused by principal due to an "emergency" at the request of the parent/guardian
Oregon	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#3) ----- 16 (#4-#7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is in private or parochial school 2. Child has proved to local school board they have acquired knowledge equivalent to that taught through the 12th grade 3. Child is in home school 4. Child is lawfully employed full-time 5. Child is lawfully employed part-time and enrolled in school 6. Child is enrolled in a community college program or other registered alternative education program 7. Child is an emancipated minor
Pennsylvania	17	15 (#1) ----- 16 (#2) ----- Doesn't specify age (#3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child may, with approval of district superintendent and Secretary of Education, enroll in a trade school or business school 2. Child may, with approval of district superintendent, enroll in a trade school or business school 3. Child is in private, parochial or home school
Rhode Island	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child attends private school or home school 2. Child's physical or mental condition render attendance inexpedient or impracticable

¹ In New York City and Buffalo only, school board may require children not employed to attend school until 17 years.

South Carolina	17	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- 16 (#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graduates from high school 2. Physical or mental disability 3. A child who has completed the 8th grade and whose employment is determined by the court to be necessary for the maintenance of his home 4. A student who has a child and it is determined that suitable day care is unavailable by the attendance supervisor (would be a temporary waiver) 5. A child whose attendance in school, vocational school or special classes is determined by the court to be disruptive to the educational program of the school, unproductive of further learning and not in the best interest of the child and the child has suitable gainful employment.
South Dakota	16	Doesn't specify age (#1 & #2) ----- Completion of the 8 th grade (#3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Serious illness in the family or the child's health is a menace to others. 2. Provision of an approved alternative form of instruction 3. Child/parents are part of a religious church or denomination objecting to public high school attendance and the church/denomination provides a regularly supervised program of instruction where the child participates in learning activities appropriate to an adult occupation.
Tennessee	18	17 (#1- #3) ----- Doesn't specify age (#4 & #5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course leading to a GED or has received a GED 2. Child whose continued attendance, in the opinion of the local board of education, results in detriment to good order and discipline to other students 3. Student enrolled in home school 4. Child who has received a diploma or other certificate of graduation 5. Mentally/Physically incapacitated to perform school duties
Texas	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#6) ----- 17 (#7) ----- 16 (#8)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attends private or parochial school 2. Child is eligible for Special Education Program and 3. Physical or mental condition 4. Child is expelled 5. Child is enrolled in the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science 6. Child is enrolled in the Texas Academy of Leadership in the Humanities 7. Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination and (a.) has parents permission to attend course, or (b) is under court order to attend course, or (c) has established a residence separate from their parents, or (d) is homeless 8. Child is attending a course of instruction to prepare for a high school equivalency examination, if child is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the child under a court order
Utah	18	16 (#1) ----- Doesn't specify age (#3-#5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If child has completed the 8th grade and is employed, child shall attend school part-time or home school 2. District superintendent has determined the child is unable to profit from attendance at school because "of inability or continuing negative attitude toward school regulations and discipline" 3. Child has completed the work required for graduation or has demonstrated mastery of required skill and competencies 4. Child is home schooled 5. Physical or mental condition 6. "Proper influences and adequate opportunities for education are provided in connection with the minor's employment"

Vermont	16	Doesn't specify age (#1 & #2) ----- 15 (#3 & #4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is mentally or physically unable to attend school 2. Child has completed the 10th grade 3. Child has completed work through 6th grade and is excused by the superintendent or a majority of the local school board 4. Child has completed work through 6th grade, and is excused by the superintendent or a majority of the local school board because his services are needed for the support of those dependent on him
Virginia	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#7) ----- Under 10 (#8) ----- Between 10 -17 (#9)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any child who has obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent (§22.1-254) 2. Any child who has obtained a certificate of completion (§22.1-254) 3. Any child suffering from contagious or infectious diseases (§22.1-256) 4. Any child whose immunizations have not been completed (§22.1-256) 5. Court-order student, with parental permission, who the School Board (with recommendation of the Superintendent and Principal) has determined "cannot benefit from education" (§22.1-257) 6. Any child conscientiously opposed to attend school for religious reasons (§22.1-257) 7. Any child violating school board policies, law or has been expelled from an alternative program (§22.1-257) 8. Any child living more than 2 miles from a public school unless public transportation is provided within one mile of the home (§22.1-256) 9. Any child living more than 2 ½ miles from a public school unless public transportation is provided within 1 ½ miles of the home (§22.1-256)
Washington	18	Doesn't specify age (#1-#4) ----- 16 (#5-#7)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child is attending an approved private school or is enrolled in an extension program 2. Child is receiving home-based instruction 3. Child is attending an education center 4. Child is physically or mentally unable 5. Child is regularly and legally employed and has parental permission or is an emancipated minor 6. Child has already met graduation requirements 7. Child has received a certificate of educational competence
West Virginia	16	16 ----- Doesn't specify age (#3-#8) ----- Completion of 8 th Grade (#9)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction in private, parochial or other approved school 2. Instruction in home or other approved place 3. Physical/mental incapacity 4. Residence more than 2 miles from school or school bus route 5. Hazardous conditions 6. High School graduation requirements met 7. Serious illness or death in the immediate family of the pupil 8. Destitution in the home 9. Superintendent's permission for youth with work permits
Wisconsin	18	16 (#1) ----- 17 (#2) ----- Doesn't specify age (#3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child, with parental permission, may on a part-time basis attend a vocational, technical or adult education program 2. Child with parental permission, shall enter into a written agreement to participate in a program leading to high school graduation or a equivalency program 3. Child's physical or mental condition
Wyoming	16	Doesn't specify age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental or physical health of child would be detrimentally impacted 2. Local school board determines attendance "might work undue hardship" 3. Child has been suspended or expelled

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA

as provided by the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education Instruction

Agricultural Education

Goal: Designed to prepare students to enter various occupations in horticulture, agricultural business, natural resources management, agricultural machinery, and production agriculture.

Skill Development: Stresses the development of skills in all aspects of agricultural business and industries, including skills related to planning, management, safety, finances, and leadership. Also, an integral part of the agricultural education program is the Future Farmers of America (FFA). The FFA provides all agricultural education students opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom.

Business Education

Goal: Attainment of competencies for work, further education and training, and personal use. The program prepares students to enter various occupations in administration/management, computers, finance and economics, and human resources.

Skill Development: Provide courses to enable students to investigate opportunities in business, prepare for entry and advancement on the job, develop management skills, and identify further education and training necessary within a chosen career cluster. The framework for business not only meets current technological advances in computer applications, systems, and communications but also presents opportunities to learn about economics and finance, accounting, law, and management. Also, the program utilizes enrollment in Future Business Leaders of America and Cooperative Education.

Health Education

Goal: Prepare students for entry level positions in a particular health field or for advanced training in health occupations at the technical and professional level. There are 13 programs: Dental Assistant, Emergency Medical Technology, Health Careers Cluster, Health Occupations Cooperative Education, Medical Assistant, Nursing Assistant, Practical Nursing, Surgical Technology, Veterinary Assistant, Occupational Mix, Special Programs.

Skill Development: Introduces secondary students to nursing, medical, dental, and allied health occupations; prepares students with basic skills for employment in nursing homes, clinics, medical and dental offices, hospitals, homes, and certain public health settings; facilitates entry into advanced health occupations programs that require post-high school education leading to state licensure, certification, registration, or national credentialing; enables students to become more knowledgeable consumers of health services. The program also utilizes teacher supervised work education or on the job training such as a clinical practicum and utilizes enrollment in Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA).

Marketing Education

Goals: prepares students for entry-level positions and/or continued education in a variety of careers that require knowledge of communications, economics, and psychology as well as techniques in sales, promotion, and management. These include professions in buying,

Marketing Education (cont.)

transporting, and storing of goods, promotion of goods and services, marketing research, and marketing management.

Skill Development: Marketing careers require academic skills as well as marketing competence. To help students gain proficiency, teachers reinforce Virginia's academic Standards of Learning in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science as they apply to the Marketing curriculum. The program utilizes occupation experiences, cooperative education, and participation in DECA: The Association of Marketing Students.

Work and Family Studies Education

Goal: prepares students to manage and balance the demands of a personal, home, and work life in the 21st century. Work and Family Studies programs facilitate student progress toward a set of unifying goals in the areas of academic achievement, cultural and environmental issues, health and safety, individual and family relations, leadership and workplace ethics, and application of technology. The skills and knowledge acquired in Work and Family Studies programs can lead to entry level, technical level, or professional level careers in human services fields or can transfer to jobs and careers in other fields. The program has two options for students: the family focus or the occupational focus.

Skill Development: The family focus program provides youth and adults with a set of experiences to prepare them for the occupation of home manager; to become competent in the management of their individual, family, and work lives; and to apply these skills to jobs and careers. The work-focus program prepares youth and adults for paid employment in entry-level and technical jobs, entrepreneurship, advanced training beyond entry-level jobs and/or training in occupations requiring work and family studies content area knowledge and skills. The program may also prepare individuals for advancement in an occupation requiring education at a four-year college or university.

Technology Education

Goal: Comprehend the dynamics of technology, including its development, impact, and potential. Employ the technological processes of problem-solving, creating and designing. Analyze the behavior of technological systems and subsystems, including the tools, materials, processes, energy, information, and people involved in systems. Apply scientific principles, engineering concepts, and technological systems in the processes of technology. Discover and develop personal interests and abilities related to a wide variety of technology-oriented careers. Designed to prepare students for occupations in 7 areas: Principles of Technology, Pre-Engineering, Technical Design and Illustration, Production Technology, Design and Technology, Control Technology, and Communication and Information Technology.

Skill Development: Skills are developed in accordance with the mission of the entire program and knowledge specifics from the particular program. The technology education program teaches students to understand, use and control technology. The curriculum covers the development of technology and its effect on people, the environment and society. Students learn how to adjust to change, to deal with forces that influence their future, and to participate in controlling their future. In the technology education laboratory students develop insights into the application of technological concepts, processes and systems. They are prepared to be active participants in controlling their future.

Trade and Industrial Design

Goal: Trade and Industrial Education programs prepare students with occupational skills, knowledge, attitudes, and work habits to become employed and progress satisfactorily in the trade and industrial field as skilled or semi-skilled craftspersons. The program includes clusters in communications and graphics, construction, metals cluster, personal services, protective services, transportation, cooperative education.

Skill Development: The basic competencies required for employment in a given trade area determine the content of each local instructional program. The teacher, in cooperation with supervisors, advisory committees, and other persons who have knowledge of the trade, develops the curriculum based upon the needs of students and opportunities for employment. The program utilizes in school laboratory and cooperative education.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

Business Mentorships--informal relationships between students and persons from business or industry who enhance students' career development by helping them learn about the workplace through participation in non-paid activities (Senate Document No. 7, 1994, p. B-6).

Cooperative Education--a method of instruction for students that combines vocational classroom instruction with paid employment directly related to classroom instruction (Vocational Education Regulations, 1987, p. 1).

General Vocational Education Advisory Council--a group of individuals, including representatives from business, industry, and labor, appointed by the local education agency to provide advice on program relevance and occupational demands, and to assist in the development of the local vocational educational plan and application (Vocational Educational Regulations, 1987, p. 2).

Internships--planned, progressive, educational activities/programs that enable students to explore career opportunities. Internships operate for a specified period of time, and are generally one-time agreements that may be paid or unpaid (Senate Document No. 7, 1994, p. B-6).

Non-registered Youth "Apprenticeships"--informal arrangements for workplace experiences planned for youth who are 16-18 years of age. Such arrangements are not officially registered with the state apprenticeship agency and may or may not be coordinated with classroom instruction (adapted from definition of registered youth apprenticeships, Senate Document No. 7, 1994, p. B-1).

Program Completer--is a senior who completes a program that includes coherent sequence of courses: vocational courses identified by the current edition of the guide to Vocational Program Planning in Virginia and academic courses as identified by the Standards and Regulations for Public Schools in Virginia or an approved alternative education program (Virginia Department of Education, October 1998).

Pre-Apprenticeships--any on-the-job or curricular activities intended to prepare youth or adults for apprenticeship training or youth apprenticeship; may include paid employment, part- or full-time; career counseling activities; skill training; and remedial or developmental course work (Senate Document No. 7, 1994, p. B-1).

Registered Youth Apprenticeships--training programs designed for youth, ages 16-18, that are registered with the state apprenticeship agency and provide for on-the-job training and related instruction associated with skills required in the particular trade or occupation (Senate Document No. 7, 1994, p. B-1).

Tech Prep Programs--career preparation programs combining secondary and postsecondary (minimum of two years) seamless, integrated instruction with options for work-based learning; include a placement component that leads to employment and further education, which may include a four-year degree ("Tech Prep in Virginia," Virginia Community College System, 1997).

Vocational Education--organized educational programs offering sequences of courses which may incorporate field, laboratory, and classroom instruction; and which emphasize occupational experiences designed to prepare individuals for further education and gainful employment (State Board of Vocational Education, Article 4, §22.227.01).

Work-Based Learning Programs--school programs that provide opportunities for workplace experiences such as internships, cooperative education, registered youth apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, business mentorships, and non-registered youth apprenticeships (Workgroup for HJR 93, July 22, 1998).

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