



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
*Office of the Commissioner*

S. Duke Storen  
Commissioner

November 30, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Honorable Ralph Northam  
Governor of Virginia  
  
Members, Virginia General Assembly

**FROM:** S. Duke Storen *S. Duke Storen*

**SUBJECT:** Report on Supervisory Spans of Control for Local Departments of Social Services

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' report regarding a standard for supervisory spans of control to limit the number the caseworkers that a foster care supervisor may oversee. This is prepared pursuant to Item 4 of Chapter 934 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly. If you have questions, please contact me.

SDS/kc

## **Department of Social Services Report on Foster Care Supervisory Spans of Control**

### **Report Mandate**

Item 4 of Chapter 934 of Virginia Acts of Assembly amends and reenacts §§ 16.1-282.1 and 63.2-906 of the Code of Virginia, relating to foster care, termination of parental rights, independent living needs assessments, and supervisory spans of control. It directs the Commissioner of Social Services (the Commissioner) to establish a work group to review the feasibility and costs of establishing a standard for supervisory spans of control that would limit the number of caseworkers that a foster care supervisor may oversee. The Commissioner is to report the findings and recommendations of the work group to the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations by November 30, 2020.

### **Work Group Membership**

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) partnered with the Virginia League of Social Services Executives (VLSSE) in creating the work group. VLSSE reached out to their members to seek volunteers to explore the cost and feasibility of establishing foster care supervisory spans of control. In addition, the Virginia Commission on Youth was invited to participate on the work group, as the topic aligns with their work. The work group was made up of VLSSE representatives from each of the five VDSS regions. Additionally, the work group had representatives from small, medium and large local departments of social services. Work group meetings were held from August 6, 2020 to September 17, 2020 to discuss their recommendations and provide input for this report. See Appendix A for a full list of names and agencies represented.

### **Background**

In December 2018, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) released a report “Improving Virginia’s Foster Care System” that included 34 recommendations to improve Virginia’s foster care system<sup>1</sup>. The report highlighted the importance of effective foster care supervisor support as one of the most important factors for worker retention. The Child Welfare League of America and the Council on Accreditation<sup>2</sup> identified the best practice standard for supervisor-supervisee ratios in child and family services to be 1:5. In this scenario, the caseworker would be carrying a caseload between 12-15 children in foster care. The intent for setting limits on both workers’ caseload sizes and supervisory spans of control is to ensure manageable workloads that would then lead to better outcomes for children and families served. JLARC’s report highlighted three states that have established foster care supervisory spans of control: Delaware, New Jersey, and Tennessee. In comparing national data on permanency outcomes for children in foster care, those states with established foster care supervisory spans of control, in general, had better outcomes than Virginia. See Appendix B for comparison data.

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<sup>1</sup> JLARC Report “Improving Virginia’s Foster Care System 2018” can be found at <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt513-2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/>

This comparison reinforces the JLARC and national child welfare organizations' recommendations to establish supervisory spans of control.

### **Foster Care Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of Foster Care Supervisors are expansive and complex. The work group began discussing supervisory spans of control by first developing a list of all of the responsibilities of foster care supervisors. These include:

- 24-hour on-call supervision for critical programs and consultation on after-hours emergencies; on-call for foster care emergencies and back-up supervisor for child protective services and adult protective services; crisis management
- Clinical casework oversight; case reviews; coaching
- Manage employee performance
- Oversee preparation and maintenance of case records
- Represent the agency on interagency councils, committees, community agencies and groups (Family Assessment Planning Team, alternate for Community Policy and Management Team)
- Aid staff in completing all stages of Family Engagement – conducting/participating in Family Partnership Meetings
- Maintain time-oriented, deadline-focused approach for documentation
- Organize and conduct unit/individual case consultations
- Monitor/provide consent for psychotropic medications for children in foster care
- Assist with development/approval of Foster Care Service Plans, Reviews, Permanency Plans and other court related reports
- Monitor VEMAT (Virginia Enhanced Maintenance Assessment Tool) for timeliness and compliance
- Monitor IV-E referrals and ongoing requirements
- Maintain training requirements of all staff; onboarding
- Manage large volume of emails/phone calls responsively and effectively
- Monitor budgets; prepare quarterly reports for Respite Care, Independent Living, Promoting Safe and Stable Families funding, and Children's Services Act reporting
- Submit annual grant documents for funding (Respite, IV-E, Education and Training Voucher, etc)

- Participate in regular meetings with agency attorney; prepare staff for court
- Monitor compliance and outcomes data to include Safe Measures
- Prepare for and participate in agency reviews (Child and Family Services Review, IV-E, etc.) and audits
- Participate in meetings for appeals and/or complaints (outside of regular family meetings)
- Provide coverage for vacant supervisor positions; sometimes carry foster care cases

### **Recommendations**

The JLARC report highlighted some of the nuances of Virginia’s state-supervised, locally administered child welfare system. This structure accounts for a great deal of variability among staffing within each local department of social service (LDSS). In every LDSS, the title of Family Services Specialist is assigned to front line staff who are primarily responsible for carrying out the duties within child welfare to include child protective services, prevention, foster care, adoption and resource family work (foster, adoptive, and kinship). Some agencies assign this title to caseworkers who perform self-sufficiency roles within their agency (Virginia’s Initiative for Employment and Work). Caseworkers who perform adult protective services are also under this title.

In the absence of an alternative, the group deferred to the expertise of the national child welfare organizations and the experience of other states. It was determined that the ratio of 1:5 was feasible and would improve outcomes in Virginia. The workgroup also recommended the ratio should apply to any/all Family Services Supervisors. For example, at some smaller agencies, there are “generic” Family Services Supervisors and Specialists who not only perform foster care duties, but also perform a variety of other functions to include child protective services, adult protective services, and prevention. The ratio for all Family Services Supervisors over all Family Services Specialists should be set at 1:5 (i.e. one supervisor for every five specialists).

### **Cost**

The workgroup utilized the caseload management tool known as SafeMeasures to review current foster care caseload information and determine the number of new supervisors needed to achieve the recommended ratio of 1:5. For any unit that was over the 1:5 ratio, the number of new supervisors needed to achieve the ratio was calculated. For example, if a supervisor was responsible for the oversight of 12 workers, it was noted an additional 2 supervisors would be required to not exceed the 1:5 ratio.

It was determined that approximately 43 new supervisor positions would be needed across the state of Virginia to achieve the 1:5 ratio in all 120 LDSS. The current average salary of a Family Services Supervisor in Virginia is \$71,301<sup>3</sup>. After including fringe benefits, operating costs, and a one-time average cubicle cost, the total cost of a new Family Services Supervisor equals

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<sup>3</sup> Salary estimates provided by the Division of Finance, Virginia Department of Social Services as of September 2020

**\$116,458.00** for the first year of hire. See Appendix C for full breakdown of cost estimates for one new Family Services Supervisor.

The Family Services certified IV-E Foster Care Penetration rate is applied to calculate the match rate for the Family Services Supervisor position. Last quarter, the rate was 56.24%, meaning Administration on Children and Families and IV-E is willing to pay administrative foster care costs of 50% for 56.24% of all children in foster care. Therefore the General Funds match rate for a new supervisor position equals to \$65,659. The estimated total amount of General Funds needed for 43 new supervisor positions would equal **\$2,832,337**. The Federal Fund match for a new supervisor position is \$32,748, which would equal a total of \$1,408,164 for 43 new positions. Finally, the Local Fund match for a new supervisor position is \$18,051, which would equal a total of \$776,193 for 43 new positions. For more information on the breakdown of general, federal and local match funds, please see Appendix D.

### **Conclusion**

The work group recommends that the ratio for Family Services Supervisors to Family Services Specialists should be set at 1:5. The investment needed to establish this standard would ensure that supervisors have manageable workloads and that caseworkers receive the support necessary to achieve the best outcomes for Virginia's children and families.

## APPENDIX A

### **SB472 Work Group Membership**

Amy Atkinson, Executive Director, Virginia Commission on Youth  
Rob Anderson, Foster Care Supervisor, Harrisonburg-Rockingham DSS  
Denise Kirschbaum, Chief of Services, James City County DSS  
Jason Miller, Director, Bath County DSS  
Lana Mullins, Director, Scott County DSS  
Brenda Sampe, Project Manager, Division of Family Services-VDSS  
Lora Smith, Foster Care Program Manager, Division of Family Services-VDSS  
Tamara Temoney, Assistant Director, Hanover County DSS  
Celestral Williams, Director, Harrisonburg-Rockingham DSS

## APPENDIX B

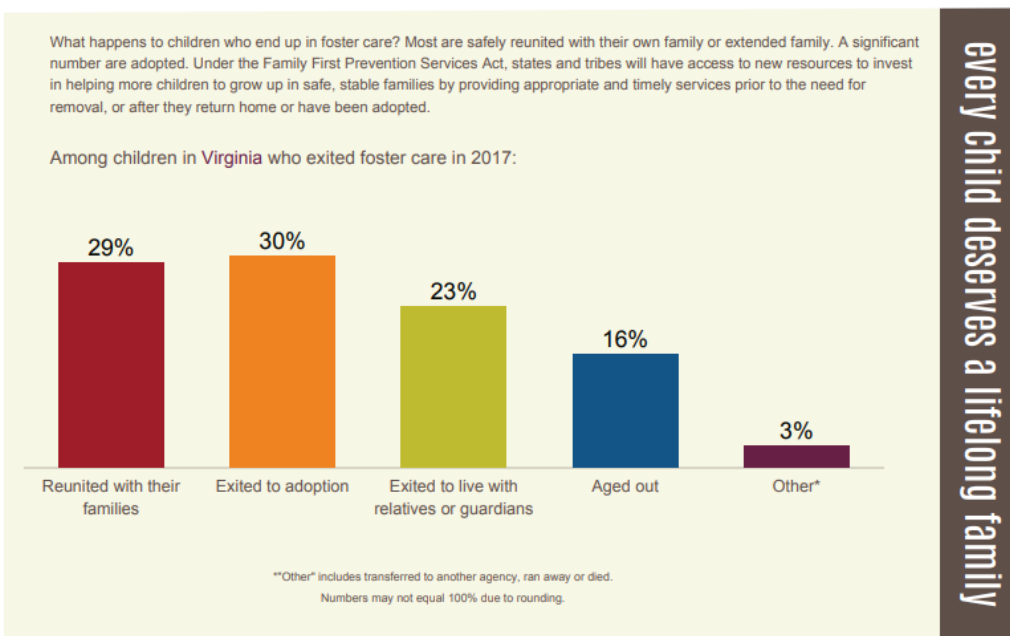
### Comparing Permanency Outcomes: Virginia Compared to Delaware, New Jersey and Tennessee – States with Established Foster Care Supervisory Spans of Control

The JLARC report indicated three states that have established foster care supervisory spans of control. For this report, Virginia permanency data pulled from Casey Family Programs and from federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) data were compared with Delaware, New Jersey and Tennessee.

The Casey Data Charts <sup>4</sup> from 2017 look at the percentage of children who reunite with their families after entering foster care, exit to adoption, exit to living with relatives or guardians, age out of foster care or “other”, meaning they transferred to another agency, ran away or died. Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Two outcomes were reviewed from Round 3 of the federal CFSR<sup>5</sup> from 201: Item 5 Permanency Goal for the Child and Item 6 Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Living Arrangement for the Child. The greater the percentage, the better the outcomes, with the exception of percentage of youth that aged out of care or in the “other” category.

#### Casey Permanency Data for Virginia



<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.casey.org/state-data/>

<sup>5</sup> Source: [https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/cwmd/docs/cb\\_web/SearchForm](https://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/cwmd/docs/cb_web/SearchForm)

## Virginia CFSR Round 3 Information

### Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

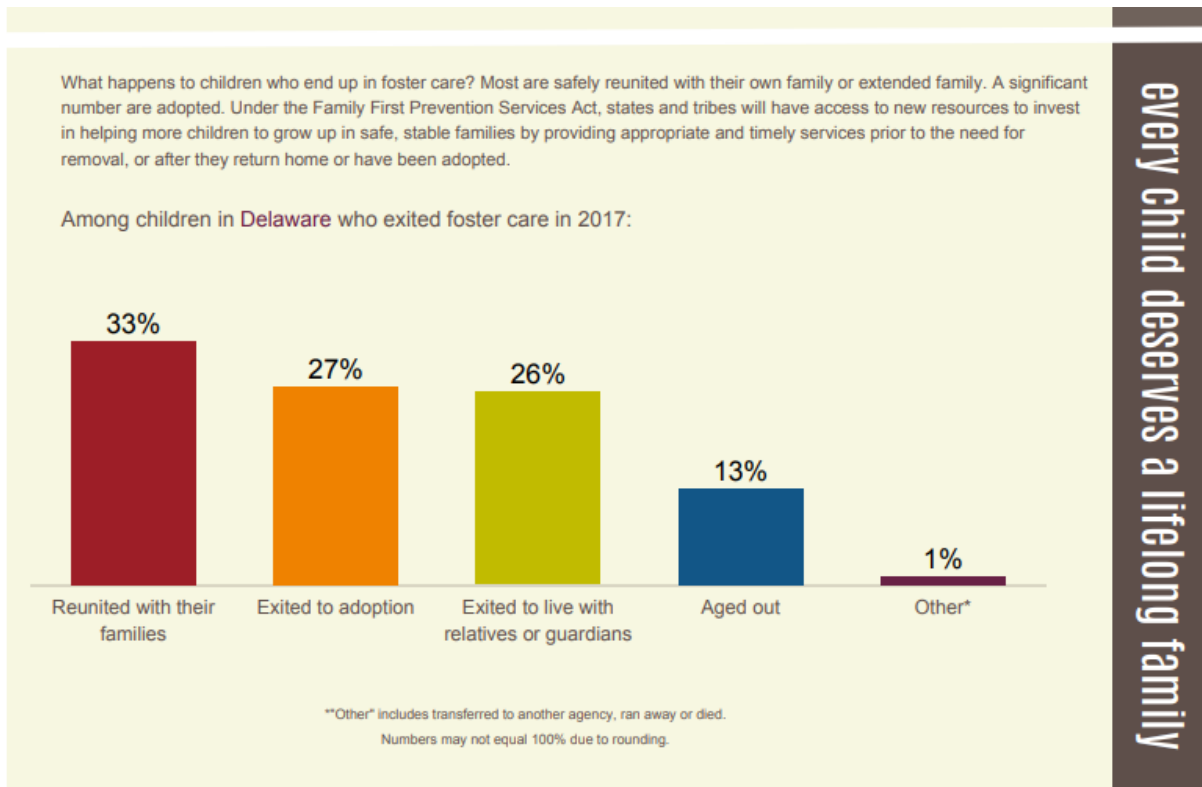
- Virginia received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 64% of the 42 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

### Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- Virginia received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 25% of the 44 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

## Casey Permanency Data for Delaware



## Delaware CFSR Round 3 Information

### Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

- Delaware received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 75% of the 51 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

### Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- Delaware received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 83% of the 52 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

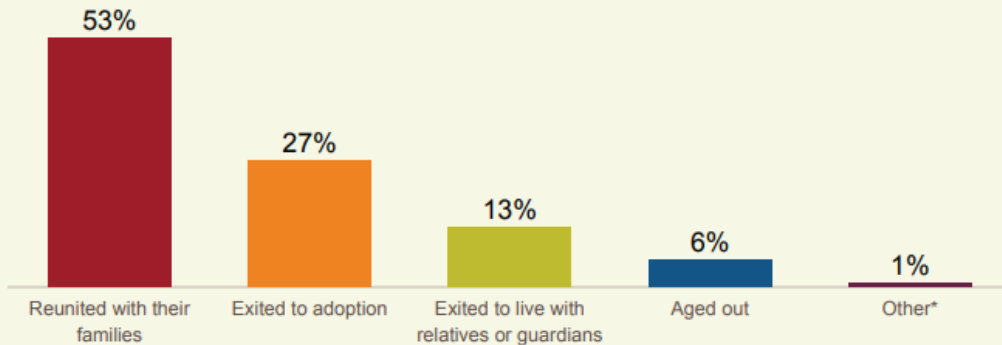
For performance on the permanency statewide data indicators, see Appendix A.



## Casey Permanency Data for New Jersey

What happens to children who end up in foster care? Most are safely reunited with their own family or extended family. A significant number are adopted. Under the Family First Prevention Services Act, states and tribes will have access to new resources to invest in helping more children to grow up in safe, stable families by providing appropriate and timely services prior to the need for removal, or after they return home or have been adopted.

Among children in New Jersey who exited foster care in 2017:



\*\*Other\* includes transferred to another agency, ran away or died.  
Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

every child deserves a lifelong family

## New Jersey CFSR Round 3 Information

### Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

- New Jersey received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 67% of the 39 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

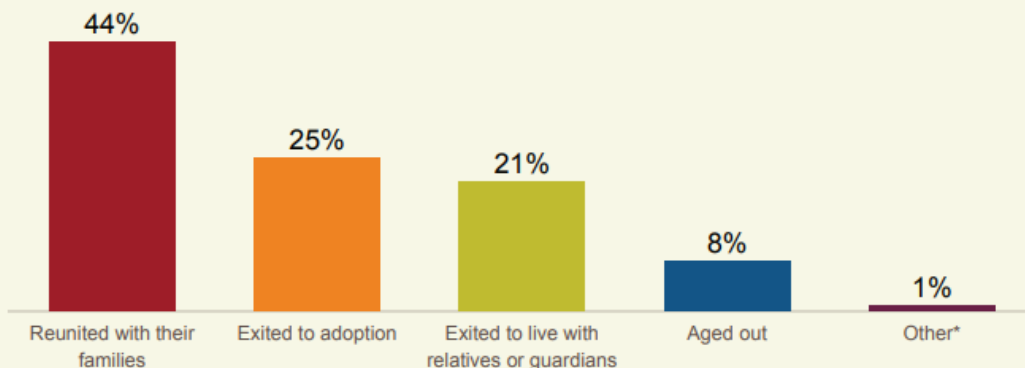
### Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- New Jersey received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 30% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

What happens to children who end up in foster care? Most are safely reunited with their own family or extended family. A significant number are adopted. Under the Family First Prevention Services Act, states and tribes will have access to new resources to invest in helping more children to grow up in safe, stable families by providing appropriate and timely services prior to the need for removal, or after they return home or have been adopted.

Among children in Tennessee who exited foster care in 2017:



\*\*Other\* includes transferred to another agency, ran away or died.  
Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Tennessee CFSR Round 3 Information

### Item 5. Permanency Goal for Child

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether appropriate permanency goals were established for the child in a timely manner.

- Tennessee received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 5 because 59% of the 39 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

## Tennessee 2017 CFSR Final Report

### Item 6. Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

**Purpose of Assessment:** To determine whether concerted efforts were made, or are being made, during the period under review to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement.

- Tennessee received an overall rating of Area Needing Improvement for Item 6 because 48% of the 40 applicable cases were rated as a Strength.

**APPENDIX C**

**Cost Estimates for One New Family Services Supervisor**

	SALARY OF SAME		NUMBER of		Year 1
	POS. / GRADE		POSITION S		TOTAL COSTS
	-		-		-
SALARY of FSS Supervisor	71,301.00	X	1	=	71,301
WAGES		X		=	0
RETIREMENT	71,301	X	14.46%	=	10,310
FICA-STATE	71,301	X	7.65%	=	5,455
FICA-WAGES	0	X	7.65%	=	0
GROUP INS.	71,301	X	1.34%	=	955
MEDICAL	1	X	12,835	=	12,835
RETIREE MEDICAL/HOSP	71,301	X	1.12%	=	799
LONG TERM DISABILITY	71,301	X	0.61%	=	435
<b>TOTAL SALARY &amp; FRINGES</b>					<b>102,090</b>
TELEPHONE	905	X	1	=	905
TRAVEL	1,069	X	1	=	1,069
SUPPLIES	391	X	1	=	391
SPACE	5,386	X	1	=	5,386
INSURANCE	154	X	1	=	154
ANNUAL PC COST	<u>1,300</u>	X	1	=	1,300

<b>NPS Operating Costs:</b>	<b>9,205</b>				<b>9,205</b>
One-Time Costs:					
AVERAGE CUBICLE COST	5,163	X	1	=	5,163
OTHER	0	X	0	=	0
<b>Total One-Time Costs</b>					<b>5,163</b>
<b>TOTAL NONPERSONAL SERVICES:</b>					<b>14,368</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>					<b>\$116,458</b>

## APPENDIX D

### Breakdown of General, Federal and Local Match Funds for Foster Care Family Services Supervisor

The Family Services certified IV-E Foster Care Penetration rate is applied to calculate the match rate for the Family Services Supervisor position. Last quarter the rate was 56.24%, meaning ACF/IV-E is willing to pay administrative foster care costs of 50% for 56.24% of all children in foster care.

Foster Care Family Services Supervisor using a 56.24% IV-E P-rate (most current quarter)

	FY 2021
General Funds	\$65,659
Federal Funds	\$32,748
Local Match	\$18,051
	<b>\$116,458</b>

Estimated Cost to Achieve 1:5 Ratio in Virginia:

General Funds	65,659	X	43	=	2,823,337
Federal Funds	32,748	X	43	=	1,408,164
Local Match	18051	X	43	=	776,193
					<b>\$5,007,694</b>