

2022 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH



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

REPORT DOCUMENT 34

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2023**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Commission on Youth

Delegate Emily M. Brewer, *Chair*
Senator Barbara A. Favola, *Vice-Chair*

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January 9, 2023

TO: The Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin
and Members of the General Assembly

Pursuant to the provisions of the *Code of Virginia* (§§ 30-174 and 30-175) establishing the Virginia Commission on Youth and setting forth its purpose, I have the honor of submitting herewith the Executive Summary for the calendar year ending December 31, 2022.

This Executive Summary includes the activity and work conducted by the Virginia Commission on Youth during the 2022 study year, as required by § 30-175. The Commission has enjoyed a busy year and has produced excellent work to support Virginia's families and youth.

Final reports of the studies conducted will be made available on the Commission on Youth's website at <http://vcoy.virginia.gov>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Emily Brewer".

Emily M. Brewer

2022

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

House of Delegates

Emily M. Brewer, Chair
Carrie E. Coyner
Karrie K. Delaney
Tara A. Durant
Irene Shin
Anne Ferrell H. Tata

Senate of Virginia

Barbara A. Favola, Vice-Chair
David W. "Dave" Marsden
David R. Suetterlein

Gubernatorial Appointments from the Commonwealth at Large

Jessica Jones-Healey
Avi D. Hopkins
Christian "Chris" Rehak

Commission Staff

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director
Will Egen, Senior Policy Analyst
Kathy Gillikin and Elizabeth Spinney, Part-time Analysts
Sarah Castle, Part-time Editor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Virginia Commission on Youth – Background

Enabling Authority

§ 30-174 and § 30-175

Established in statute by the 1989 General Assembly, the Virginia Commission on Youth represents a legislative response to a two-year study examining the issues related to services to chronic status offenders. Virginia Code directs the Commission "to study and provide recommendations addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and families." Enacted in 1989, the Commission began operations in 1991.

The Commission on Youth is comprised of nine members of the General Assembly and three citizens appointed by the Governor (§ 30-174). Six Commission members from the House of Delegates are appointed by the Speaker of the House. Three Commission members from the Senate are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.

Legislative Study

The Transition Process for Students with Disabilities Regarding Records and Services at the Age of the Majority

Study Author

Virginia Commission on Youth

Enabling Authority

§ 30-174 and § 30-175

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Commission on Youth's 2021 crossover youth study, the study work group discussed the importance of maintaining and transferring records and services that young people receive in the school setting as they reach adulthood. Young adults with emotional or intellectual disabilities often lose access to services when they leave high school and reach eighteen, the age of majority. It is difficult for parents to navigate services and resources without support. The Virginia Commission on Youth approved a recommendation at its October 19, 2021 meeting articulating that the appropriate transfer or handoff of student records and the effective provision of services needs to be explored further.

The Commission then adopted a study plan on the transition process for students with disabilities regarding records and services at the age of majority at its April 19, 2022 meeting. The mandate for the study is stated as follows:

- The Virginia Commission on Youth shall convene an advisory group to review how youth with disabilities are being provided services in the schools, including mental health services, and how they can be better supported as they transition to adulthood. The 2022 study should look at ways that the Community Services Boards can work with the transitioning student, family, and the local education agency.

The Virginia Commission on Youth convened an advisory group to review how youth with disabilities are being provided services in the schools, including mental health services, and how they can be better supported as they transition to adulthood to avoid the “cliff” that many parents and guardians experience after their child leaves high school. Members of the advisory group met twice (May 17, 2022 and September 7, 2022) to explore this issue and discuss potential recommendations for improvement.

Draft study findings and recommendations were presented at the Commission’s September 19, 2022 meeting. The Commission received written public comment through October 14, 2022. After receiving public comment at the October 19, 2022 meeting, the Commission on Youth approved the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

Require that the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, in coordination with the Department of Education, and representatives from Community Services Boards and local education agencies, develop and disseminate best practice standards to Community Services Boards (CSBs) and local education agencies about how to work with local education agencies, private placement entities, students, and families through the transition process. Additionally, best practices should include information about what special education, service, or accommodation records to transfer at the age of majority and/or high school completion. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall use existing Department of Education guidance in developing best practices.

Recommendation 2:

Introduce a budget amendment directing the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services to work with the Department of Education, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), Virginia Commonwealth University’s Partnership for People with Disabilities, and VCU-RRTC to ensure

that online resources are readily available and disseminated to all individuals of transition age and their families. This includes utilization and promotion of PEATC's online training course, Transition University (TU), conducted in coordination with VDOE and PEATC's online transition guide and resource documents on its website.

DARS, DOE, DBHDS, PEATC, Partnership for People with Disabilities, and VCU-RRTC shall explore whether these online resources should be expanded to ensure full coverage of resources for students with disabilities on transition services beyond high school, including transfer requirements, provider and service options, diploma requirements for future career or educational goals, and other helpful information. Assess whether PEATC's online resources, including Transition University and PEATC's transition webpage, should serve as the central hub or a separate website should be developed with the goal of ensuring access to families and promotion of resources and information by DARS and DBHDS without duplicating existing efforts. Review transition resources on other organizational websites including, but not limited to, Partnership for People with Disabilities.

Recommendation 3:

Request that the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services work with the Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with Disabilities, VCU-RRTC, and the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), to develop and disseminate virtual training on transition resources and services for teachers in each high school or school district.

Recommendation 4:

Request the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) work with agencies who provide services and workplace opportunities to students with disabilities, to identify solutions to barriers in using virtual reality software and other relevant transition content applications for students with disabilities.

Recommendation 5:

Request that the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) continue to develop internship opportunities for students with disabilities. DARS should work in collaboration with other state agencies and local governments including, but not limited to, the Virginia Departments of Labor and Industry, Education (Career and Technical Education, as well as Special Education), the Blind and Vision Impaired, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, as well as the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, local chambers of commerce, businesses, and other relevant

organizations to provide internship opportunities for students with disabilities. These opportunities will ensure that each student with a disability has a blueprint for their career and job placement after high school. DARS shall continue to educate internship provider businesses about different types of accommodations that can be accessed for various disabilities. DARS shall take advantage of established programs and increase statewide school participation in programs such as Project Search and other post high school programs.

Recommendation 6:

Request that the Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Secretary of Labor, and Secretary of Commerce and Trade, investigate the feasibility of developing a comprehensive program to reduce unemployment among adults with disabilities by assisting and supporting businesses to attract, hire, train, and retain adults with disabilities.

Recommendation 7:

Introduce a budget amendment to fund a transition coordinator grant program to be administered through the Virginia Department of Education. These coordinators shall be employed by local school divisions and work with other community partners (Local Community Services Boards and other agencies, including private education entities) to assist students with disabilities and their families in preparing for future service needs and employment opportunities. School districts shall apply to the Department of Education to receive state grant funding for a coordinator position. Grant funding may also be used by local school divisions to offer transition services to students with disabilities through contracted positions, such as job coaches, that are available in the community.

Recommendation 8:

Require that all public high schools identify the person responsible for transition planning and coordination at each school. Make such identification of the person responsible for transition planning available to the public.

Recommendation 9:

Support the Virginia Department of Education in their use of IDEA funding to develop a state special education transition management position to oversee transition coordinator issues and funding across the state.

Recommendation 10:

Request that the Chair of the Virginia Commission on Youth write letters of endorsement for Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with

Disabilities, the disAbility Law Center, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, and the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services. The letters will show support for these organizations towards their goal of obtaining grant funding to assist with the advocacy for, and the transition of, students with disabilities to adulthood and independent living.

Recommendation 11:

Introduce a language only budget amendment directing the Virginia Department of Education to have the Virginia Intercommunity Transition Council meet at least biannually to help implement its statewide plan for oversight of local practices related to transition planning and services.

The objective of this council shall include streamlining and collaboration, developing a better transition communication network in the Commonwealth, educating all members about what Virginia and local organizations provide for students transitioning to adulthood, identifying any gaps or overlap in services for potential streamlining and problem-solving, identifying best practices for students without family involvement or who are in the custody of a social services agency, and developing an improved transition infrastructure for students with disabilities.

This council shall include, but not be limited to, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Department of Social Services, Virginia Community College System, and Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with Disabilities.

Recommendation 12:

Request that the Chair of the Virginia Commission on Youth write a letter of support to the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities for the following recommendation, as amended below in **bold**:

Virginia Department of Education (DOE) **and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services**, along with the local school divisions, should work with CSBs/BHA within the school divisions' catchment area to designate a staff to act as a lead for school-to-adult life transition and work with the school division's Transition Coordinator to ensure accurate and timely information is distributed to families. CSBs/BHA should utilize existing school-to-adult life transition resources such as PEATC's Transition University for CSB staff training and development.

Recommendation 13:

Request that the Chair of the Virginia Commission on Youth write a letter of support to the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities for the following recommendation:

The CSBs/BHA, through their member organization, Virginia Associations of Community Services Boards (VACSB), should consider operating a Community of Practice for School to Adult Transition, to foster learning and identify some of the exemplary practices taking place in several CSBs.

Legislative Study

Evaluating the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Virginia's Juvenile Detention Centers

Study Author

Virginia Commission on Youth

Enabling Authority

§ 30-174 and § 30-175

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of several factors, including Virginia's recent juvenile justice reform efforts and decreases in juvenile arrests and referrals to juvenile court, the average daily population in local detention centers has decreased dramatically. However, detention costs, which are covered by both state and local funding sources, have not decreased. Due to these factors, at its December 15, 2021, meeting, the Commission on Youth adopted a recommendation to study this topic further. At its April 19, 2022, meeting, the Commission on Youth approved a study plan to investigate issues related to the effectiveness and efficiency of Virginia's juvenile detention center system. The mandate for the study stated as follows:

- Establish an advisory committee to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our current detention center system, evaluating the intersection of public safety and the rehabilitation of youth.

Following the adoption of the study plan, the Commission on Youth conducted a study on the effectiveness and efficiency of local and regional juvenile detention centers. The Commission convened an Advisory Group of stakeholders and held three meetings across the Commonwealth. The Advisory Group was unable to reach consensus on any recommendations to move forward with. At its September 21, 2022, meeting, staff presented draft recommendations based on the direction and input of some Commission on Youth members. These draft study findings and recommendations were presented at the Commission's September 21, 2022, meeting. The Commission

received written public comment through October 14, 2022. After receiving public comment at the October 19, 2022, meeting, the Commission on Youth approved the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

Request that the Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Virginia Association of Counties, Virginia Municipal League, and affected localities conduct an assessment of needs regarding juvenile detention centers. This assessment shall take into consideration the cost savings that could occur with consolidation or repurposing and discuss ways to reinvest in places or programs for youth who are in or at risk of becoming part of the juvenile justice system. Further, request that this review assess and consider alternative delivery models of education services. This group shall report its progress and timeline to determine any potential cost savings and ways to invest in community needs, to the Commission on Youth by July 1, 2023. This group shall complete its report and provide recommendations to the Commission on Youth by December 1, 2023.

Legislative Study

Collection of Evidence-based Practices for Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Treatment Needs

Study Author

Virginia Commission on Youth

Enabling Authority

§ 30-174 and § 30-175

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SJR 358 (2003) directed the Commission on Youth to update biennially its publication, the *Collection of Evidence-based Practices for Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Treatment Needs (Collection)*. The purpose of the *Collection* is to identify effective treatment modalities for children, including juvenile offenders, with mental health treatment needs. Utilization of evidence-based practices in the field of children's mental health promotes better patient outcomes and may offer the Commonwealth some cost savings.

Senate Joint Resolution 358 also mandated that the Commission disseminate the *Collection* via web technologies. As specified in the resolution, the Commission received assistance in disseminating the *Collection* from the Advisory Group, the

Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Public Safety.

The Commission on Youth directed staff at the April 19, 2022, meeting to:

Continue to identify and implement cost-effective and efficient dissemination methods and collaborate with agencies and organizations. In preparing for the *Collection's* 9th Edition biennial update, identify partners and participants in biennial update and training initiatives. In addition, identify parameters and limits of 2023 biennial update.

The Commission on Youth published the *Collection's* 8th Edition, and it may be found on the Commission's webpage.

Commission Initiative

Foster Care Safe and Sound Task Force

Study Author

Virginia Commission on Youth

Enabling Authority

§ 30-174 and § 30-175

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to the massive shortage of foster homes, kinship family placements, and staffed beds in group homes and residential treatment centers, over a six-month period in 2021, 163 children in foster care were displaced for at least one night in unsuitable sleeping arrangements. Because of this crisis, on April 1, 2022, Governor Glenn Youngkin launched a task force to ensure safe placements for children in foster care. Bringing together state and local government agencies, all three branches of government, private providers, health networks, advocacy groups, the faith community and other community partners, the Safe and Sound Task Force will work to find solutions for safe and appropriate placements for children in foster care. The Commission on Youth at the April 19, 2022, meeting adopted the following recommendation:

The Virginia Commission on Youth shall participate and assist the Safe and Sound Task Force in solving Virginia's child welfare crisis and to end the practice of children sleeping in local departments of social services, hotels, and emergency rooms.