

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

**Report on Attendance
Requirements
(2025 Appropriation Act, Item
125.10 B.6., Item 125.10 C.4.,
Item 125.10 D.1.d.)**

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 11

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2025**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2120
RICHMOND, VA 23218-2120

Office: (804) 225-2057
Fax: (804) 371-2099

December 16, 2025

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 1404
P. O. Box 396
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building, Room 1223
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senators Lucas and Torian,

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on attendance requirements, as directed by House Bill 1600 (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly), Items 125.10 B.6, C.4, and D.1.d:

B.6. The Department of Education shall revise attendance requirements for the Child Care Subsidy Program, subject to review by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, to ensure participating children fully benefit and maximization of available resources. The Department shall report proposed changes to the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

C.4. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and subject to review by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, shall revise attendance requirements for the Mixed-Delivery initiative to ensure participating children fully benefit and maximization of available resources. The Department shall report proposed changes to the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

D.d. The Department of Education shall revise attendance requirements for the Virginia Preschool Initiative, subject to review by the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, to ensure participating children fully benefit and maximization of available resources. The Department shall report proposed changes to the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

A summary of this report was shared with the full Early Childhood Care and Education Commission at its October 22, 2025 and December 3, 2025 meetings to solicit feedback and the final draft was approved by the Commission's Steering Committee following the December 3,

2025 meeting. Please direct questions to Jenna Conway, Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations at Jenna.Conway@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Anne Gullickson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

EAG/JLC/RSU

c: The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

REPORT ON ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Items 125.10 B.6, C.4, and D.1.d (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Overview</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Importance of Attendance</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Review: Attendance Policies</i>	<i>2</i>
Child Care Subsidy Program	2
Mixed Delivery.....	3
Virginia Preschool Initiative.....	4
<i>Review: New Attendance Tracking Technology.....</i>	<i>4</i>
Child Care PASS: Key Features	5
Child Care PASS: Future Opportunities	5
<i>Proposed Timeline to Revise Attendance Policies</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>6</i>

OVERVIEW

Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly, Items 125.10 B.6, C.4, and D.1.d direct the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to review and revise attendance requirements for the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), Mixed Delivery (MD) Grant Program, and the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), to ensure participating children fully benefit and available resources are maximized. VDOE is directed to consult with the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education (Commission) on the proposed changes prior to submitting a report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

In line with recent practice, VDOE worked with the Commission to establish a workgroup in response to this requirement. The workgroup reviewed policy shifts, stakeholder engagement, and public investment – all of which have supported reductions in chronic absenteeism in the CCSP and VPI in recent years. The workgroup also reviewed updates on the new attendance-tracking system for CCSP, scheduled to launch later this year. This new system will support better tracking and data collection and inform future policy changes to improve attendance and child outcomes.

As is practice for the Commission, a summary of the workgroup’s activities and discussion was shared with the full Commission at its October 22, 2025 and December 3, 2025 meetings to solicit feedback and the final draft was approved by the Commission’s Steering Committee following the December 3, 2025 meeting. At this time, due to the impending implementation of a new statewide attendance tracking system, no policy changes were recommended to the Commission. In line with the workgroup’s findings, future changes to attendance policies should be explored once the new system is in place and there is accurate, up-to-date data on attendance. In addition, Governor Youngkin’s *Building Blocks for Virginia’s Families* called for improving Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) attendance, and these efforts have resulted in recent improvement in attendance trends over this biennium, thus mitigating the need for immediate policy changes.

This report provides details regarding current, attendance-related policies and data-informed insights for each of Virginia’s public ECCE programs – CCSP, MD, and VPI – and provides an overview of the new, modernized attendance-tracking system.

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Children’s attendance in ECCE programs is an important factor in maximizing benefits for children and prioritizing resources to serve children who most need services. Attending ECCE programs sets children up for consistent attendance later in their schooling, as suggested by a study linking children to center-based care with lower rates of absenteeism in kindergarten and

beyond, as late as 7th and 8th grade¹. Virginia's nation-leading quality monitoring program – Virginia Quality Birth to 5 (VQB5) – has demonstrated that the public ECCE programs in Virginia consistently meet quality expectations known to promote positive child outcomes. As such, children enrolled in Virginia's public programs must attend consistently to benefit maximally from their participation.

From the perspective of resource prioritization, children's attendance in ECCE programs may be an important indicator of the extent of family need, with chronic absenteeism potentially reflecting that their family may not need the care they have been authorized for. Given the persistence of waitlists for public ECCE programs in Virginia, it is important to prioritize authorizing the use of slots for children and families who need and will fully utilize the services.

As demonstrated later in this report, Governor Youngkin's *Building Blocks for Virginia's Families* called for improving ECCE attendance, and these efforts have resulted in recent improvements in attendance trends. Attendance rates have improved since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic but have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. A continued focus on current attendance and attendance policies is warranted to support positive child outcomes and responsible stewardship of public ECCE programs.

REVIEW: ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Child Care Subsidy Program

CCSP policy indicates that payments are attendance-based, with some flexibility. Key policies for CCSP related to attendance include:

- 60 paid absence days per child per year for each provider. After 60 absences, missed days are not paid to the provider. Providers may have their own policies regarding disenrollment due to absences.
- Providers can also receive up to 15 paid days of planned closures. Family day homes are eligible for an additional 3 paid sick days.
- Children are expected to attend services for which they are authorized regularly. CCSP Guidance directs caseworkers to contact families if attendance is not logged at all in a month to both offer resources and support and confirm the family's need for services.

Chronic absenteeism trends in the CCSP parallel trends in grades K-5, with rates of chronic absenteeism decreasing, but still above pre-pandemic levels. Thanks to initiatives like *Building*

¹ Zandoni, W., & Johnson, A. D. (2019). Child Care Subsidy Use and Children's Outcomes in Middle School. *AERA Open*, 5(4), pp 1-19. DOI:10.1177/2332858419884540

Blocks for Virginia's Families, certain indicators, such as the median number of paid absences, are actually lower than pre-pandemic measures. See Table 1 for detail:

Table 1: CCSP Absenteeism Patterns

CCSP	2018-2019 (FY19)	2021-2022 (FY22)	2023-2024 (FY24)	2024-2025 (FY25)
% of Children Chronically Absent	13.6%	31.5%	20.5%	19.5%
# of Children Chronically Absent	2,910	9,297	8,805	9,104
Median Number of Paid Absences (Among chronically absent children)	33	39	37	38
Median Number of Paid Absences (For all children with absences)	9	15	11	7

Note: Chronic absences is defined as missing more than 26 days in a year, based on 10% of potential child care days missed (52 weeks x 5 days = 260 potential days of child care in a year). Absences are independent of number of authorized days.

Mixed Delivery

Although Mixed Delivery is a pay-by-enrollment, contracted slots model, the program has formal policies to ensure regular attendance and specific requirements to ensure slots are not left vacant. Key policies related to attendance include:

- Sites must contact families if a child is absent for 50% or more days of the previous month, with a reminder of the attendance policy and the possibility of disenrollment should they miss 50% or more school days in the second month.
- If a child is absent for 50% or more of the school days in any two consecutive months, they will be disenrolled from the program at the end of the month.
- Sites may request exceptions for individual children, for causes such as chronic illness or other significant barriers, such as loss of housing.
- Sites may also have their own attendance policy, so long as it is applied consistently across all children at the site and does not conflict with Mixed Delivery policy.
- Ready Regions may also determine if a child should be disenrolled based on attendance patterns if it becomes clear the family does not meet the priority of needing full-day, year-round care.

The estimated median count of paid absence days in Mixed Delivery is slightly higher than in the CCSP, while the estimated chronic absenteeism rate is slightly lower.

Table 2: Mixed Delivery Absenteeism (2024-2025)

Mixed Delivery	July 2024-May 2025
Total # of children chronically absent (>=10% of days)	444
% of children chronically absent (>=10% of days)	17%

(Out of # of slots)	
Median Number of Paid Absences (Among children absent ≥ 5 days per month at least once)	12

***Note:** Mixed Delivery began collecting limited attendance data in 2024-2025. Sites are only required to report the number of absences for children who are absent ≥ 5 days in a given month. If a child is absent 4 days every month, they would not be represented in the data. Data from previous years is not available.*

Virginia Preschool Initiative

VPI is pay-by-enrollment based on Student Record Collection (SRC) at three points during the year. All students must have a State Testing Identification (STI) number and be reported in three SRC reporting cycles: during the fall, the spring, and at the end of the year. VPI guidelines state that school divisions and partners are expected to collect VPI attendance data, develop strategies to improve attendance, and conduct outreach with VPI students and their families should concerns about regular attendance arise; specific policies vary by locality.

Table 3: VPI Absenteeism (2024-2025)

VPI	2024-2025
Total # of children chronically absent ($\geq 10\%$ of days)	6,294
% of children chronically absent ($\geq 10\%$ of days) (Out of 23,148 students with attendance data)	27%
Median Number of Paid Absences (Among chronically absent children)	24
Median Number of Paid Absences (For all VPI students)	10

Table 4: VPI Absenteeism Patterns

Chronic Absenteeism (%) by Grade - Schools	2018-2019	2021-2022	2023-2024	2024-2025
VPI	19.48	35.87	30.89	27.0
Kindergarten	20.57	35.08	30.63	13.4
1	12.4	23.77	19.11	11.6
2	9.1	18.9	15.1	10.5
3	7.6	16.46	13.04	10.6

REVIEW: NEW ATTENDANCE TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

Since 2010, CCSP has used a swipe card system to log attendance. Several issues have been raised regarding this system, including the burden on families and providers, and resulting concerns regarding data completeness and accuracy. Moreover, providers have indicated that the swipe card system is a barrier to participation in the subsidy program. The system’s data controls and reporting capabilities are limited, with an inability to verify data quality or fidelity and an inability to track continuous absenteeism for individual children across multiple months.

Child Care PASS: Key Features

In response, Virginia launched a new, modernized attendance-tracking system, the Child Care Program, Attendance, and Schedule System (PASS), on December 1, 2025. Developed and hosted by KinderSystems, the new system will make logging attendance easier for families, minimize administrative burden on providers, and improve access to actionable attendance data for the state. The system includes the following features:

For Families:	For Child Care Providers:	For State Leaders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance can be recorded using a QR code or with a tablet on-site • Parents can designate other approved adults to check children in and out on their behalf • Absences can be recorded from anywhere • Automated reminders to log missed attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers can enter their programmatic schedule and select paid days of closure • Providers can record attendance on parents’ behalf • System can be used to log attendance for all children • Providers using a partner child care management system can use it to transmit data to PASS • Providers can group children by classroom, age, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reports allow VDOE to collect and review data for quality assurance and program monitoring • Specialized ad hoc reports can further inform policy revisions

Child Care PASS: Future Opportunities

Moving forward, VDOE will:

- Partner with KinderSystems to ensure the system is continually responding to changing policies and state priorities. As a customized, off-the-shelf solution, PASS can be nimble and flexible to changing attendance policies and Virginia’s growing system.
- Use data from PASS to better understand attendance and service utilization patterns and inform revised attendance expectations for CCSP.
- Explore options to connect PASS with other ECCE data systems to minimize administrative burden for providers and partners. For example, connecting PASS with LinkB5 could reduce data entry requirements for providers when entering class lists.
- Use data from PASS and other administrative data sources to explore connections between attendance and child outcomes.

PROPOSED TIMELINE TO REVISE ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Given the implementation of a large new technology system to improve attendance tracking, VDOE proposed the following timeline to develop and propose attendance policy revisions for review by the Commission:

December 1, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care PASS Official Launch Date
Winter 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing quality assurance and targeted supports to providers to promote effective system use and complete attendance records
Spring-Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze available data on system use and attendance patterns
Fall 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring proposed policy changes to the Commission

In response, Commission members noted that the implementation of a statewide technology change may encounter challenges but indicated their support of the current plan and timeline. Spring 2026 is an important internal period during which VDOE will collect and analyze new and improved attendance data following the implementation of PASS. Proposed policy changes based on this new data will be presented to the Commission for review in Summer 2026, for inclusion in its 2026 Annual Report.

CONCLUSION

The growing demand for early childhood care and education from working families underscores the need for improved attendance policies and practices that will maximize the use of existing slots by families who most need them. Through Governor Youngkin’s *Building Blocks for Virginia’s Families*, Virginia has made recent improvements in ECCE attendance but also needs

to continue to focus on attendance. Virginia's new attendance-tracking system will provide VDOE with high-quality data to inform future changes to attendance policies and requirements.

