



Comments on Virginia's Child Care Plan FFY 2019 through FFY 2021

While the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is geared largely to children in the early childhood years, the fund supports school-age youth as well. Of the children receiving support through CCDBG, 44% are school age and cover costs associated with before-school, afterschool and summer care for children 5 to 12 years of age. In response to the State request for comment on the draft of the State Child Care Plan FFY 2019 through FFY 2021, the Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time (VPOST) submits the following comments to ensure that the State centers school age care within the larger system of childcare.

Section 1: Leadership and Coordination with Relevant Systems

- **Protect early childhood investments by promoting the significant connection of continuity of care between early childhood learning systems and school-age learning.** With an increased emphasis on high stakes testing during the traditional school day, without an investment in school age care comparable to those in early childhood, losses in social emotional development can surge.
- **Utilize 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds to match and blend with CCDBG to optimize quality.** To meet the needs of the school age children who go unserved during the hours immediately following the regular school day, VPOST proposes that the Department utilize 21st Century Community Learning Center funds as matching funds to braid with CCDF and expand accessible services throughout the Commonwealth. The affects of this could include: increasing the number of youth receiving care and increasing the number of providers offering care through the child care subsidy program.



Section 6: Recruit and Retain a Qualified and Effective Child Care Workforce

- **Collaborate with the Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time to identify the career pathway(s) for advancing in the field and the corresponding professional development for the before/afterschool child care workforce.** Currently, Virginia has few training and education options for child care staff seeking to advance in the field outside of the school setting. Such a partnership would include: articulation agreements, apprenticeship and internship programs for youth development, incorporation of school-age quality standards, creation of statewide credential and/or program that addresses workforce needs, additions to the State's Career Pathways document (such as Thomas Nelson Community College's Youth Development certificate), self-care for youth development workers.
- **Expand focus of Virginia's School Readiness Committee to include all young people, not just infant through preschool youth, covered by the fund.** At present, the committee's purview only includes care for children up to age 8. The out-of-school child care staff working with children from ages 9-12 (and up to age 18 for special needs children), need advocates and guidance at the highest level, as well from professional development to care coordination and overall leadership. In this way, there would be a state-level advisory structure for children older than 8, but younger than 13, and for children with disabilities up to age 18.
- **Re-evaluate training standards and requirements for individuals working with school-age youth and ensure that they meet federal requirements for age-appropriate training.** The federal requirements state that training must be age-appropriate, yet current pre-service training topics required for school-age staff only offer courses focused on care for youth in the early childhood years. Likewise, the creation of professional development requirements and standard trainings would facilitate an aligned system of education and training that aptly meets the needs of professionals throughout the state. At present, few Virginia higher education institutions offer courses in school-age child care or youth development. In other words, no standard training or professional development requirements for staff working with school-age children in child care exists. It is important to understand this age group to provide solid guidance and intentional learning.
- **Create milestones for school-age youth similar to the MiLestones for Child Development which addresses children from birth to age 5.** At present, Virginia has a void in what young people beyond the age of 5 need to thrive beyond academic content. The Virginia Department of Education provides learning standards and the Virginia Department of Social Services provides milestones for children from birth to age 5 but young people's social, emotional, physical, communication and creative needs do not end at age 5 once children enter school.

Section 7: Support Continuous Quality Improvement

- Assess the need for school age services as a first step to direct quality activities. While a needs assessment has been completed for early childhood, children with disabilities, children in underserved areas, children in need of care during non-traditional hours, children in need of care in the hours immediately following the traditional school day also requires evaluation to ensure continuity of quality care between the early childhood and school age transition.
- Increase the investment in training and professional development of the school-age care workforce with CCDF Quality Funds. Having allocated 8% of the CCDBG funds to quality, Virginia needs to invest comparable funds to school age youth just as it does for early childhood. At present school age youth represent 44% of the children being served and therefore the funding for training and professional development should represent an equitable distribution of funds based on the youth being served by the fund.
- Add school-age child care programs to the Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System. School-age child care programs should have the same access to free training and technical assistance as early childhood programs.

Photo of high schoolers assembling circuit kit and girl artists courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.