



Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education

Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

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Goal 1: All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.

1.1 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Department has been coordinating with the Virginia Department of Education this past year to better coordinate services for children. Governor Warner's Partnerships for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) Initiative is designed to help schools that are at-risk of not meeting the state's Standards of Learning. The Department of Social Services is funneling some of the CCDF quality funding into designated PASS elementary schools to help start before and after school programs. These programs will help parents have access to affordable before and after school child care, and also assure that these children will receive help in meeting the state Standards of Learning (<http://www.passvirginia.org>).

The Department has established an interagency group consisting of the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Education, the President of the State Head Start Association, the Head Start State Collaboration Grant Director and the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, to work together to facilitate better communication, collaboration and policy-making decisions for pre-school children and programs.

The Department and the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) have coordinated on the dissemination of *the Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Guidelines for Literacy and Mathematics* through presentations at the Virginia Family Literacy Conference and the Virginia Head Start Conference. The Department also coordinated with VPI on the School Readiness Indicators Initiative to identify and track indicators of school readiness.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Virginia Department of Social Services, over the past several years, has initiated many programs that involve coordination with other major social service systems in Virginia.

For many years the Department has had mandated funding that is targeted to assist those families enrolled in Head Start. Subsidy fees are waived if the family is at or below the federal poverty level. This wraparound program, to help families pay for care before and after the Head Start core hours and during the summer and school breaks, dates from the early 90s. The Department also houses staff for the Head Start State Collaboration Grant.

Part of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) has routinely been shared with the Department's Division of Licensing Programs for provider training, health and safety materials for providers, scholarships for providers to upgrade their education and credentials, and other initiatives to help ensure and expand quality of care. Providers include Head Start staff.

For the past six years part of the quality funds from the CCDF have been shared directly with the Department's 121 local departments of social services through allocations. The local departments have used this quality funding for a wide variety of initiatives to increase the quality, availability, accessibility, and affordability of child care in their areas.

Funds to help pay for child care for children with special needs have been and are still subcontracted to the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. Funds to help pay for child care for children who are homeless have been and are still subcontracted to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

1.2 *Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Child well-being indicators were developed to improve school readiness. The Virginia Head Start Collaboration office created a Healthy Tool Kit and provided training to child care providers on its use. Dissemination began on the new parent toolkit to provide new parents with information on physical and mental health care, economic support and parenting education services.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Local child care staff are encouraged to refer potentially eligible child care subsidy families to the state's FAMIS (Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan) program. This program provides low income children with health insurance. Often it is the child care subsidy worker who sees these low income working families first. Enrollment in the FAMIS program is up substantially in 2003 over previous years. For more information go to <http://www.famis.org>.

Parental child care educational brochures have been translated into Spanish and are now available to all 121 local departments of social services.

110,000 New Parent Tool Kits are being distributed in 2003/04 to all new parents in the Commonwealth to help educate new parents on how to care for babies, parenting in general, and choosing and monitoring quality child care if it is needed. A toll-free information line for new parents and caregivers has been developed that gives additional information and referrals to resources on child care, health, and nutrition. A web-based version of the information line with additional topical information on early childhood development is also to be developed.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

All children in Virginia in licensed care must be currently immunized. Also, the Department has had a child care immunization policy in place for a number of years, requiring all children who receive CCDF subsidy to be currently immunized. The Department has always emphasized the provision of good consumer education for parents in the selection and monitoring of child care services. Brochures on quality child care have been developed and distributed throughout the state. Initial supplies of these brochures in English were placed in public libraries and made available to community centers and in hospitals several years ago. They have also been made available to resource and referral centers.

1.3 Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Department is working closely with the Department of Education to promote coordination of programs.

Governor Warner plans to establish a task force this year to coordinate all activities related to school readiness within state government. He plans to host an early childhood development and school readiness summit to build partnerships, mobilize a coalition, educate the public and engage the business community. He plans to develop a long-term early childhood education plan for Virginia.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The former state Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs was responsible for the precursor to the current voluntary Virginia Pre-school Initiative for At-Risk Four-Year-Olds. The functions of the Council were subsumed into the Virginia Department of Social Services on 7/1/1996.

Goal 2: Rigorous licensing requirements and/or regulatory processes will be enacted to ensure that children are adequately protected in all early care and education settings.

2.1 States will establish staff-child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC¹, NAFCC², APHA³ or AAP⁴ national standards.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS:

- The Department of Social Services proposed a reduction in staff-to-child ratios for licensed child day centers in November 2003. The Child Day Care Council of Virginia approved (in May 2004) the proposed ratios for two-, three-, and four-year old children and for the younger school age children (five-to-eight-year-olds). However, the reduced ratios were not approved for

- older school age children (nine-to-12- year-olds).
- Please note the chart showing the staff-to-child ratios as approved by the Child Day Care Council in the final draft of the Proposed Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers 22 VAC 15-30.
- The Department of Social Services also proposed the establishment of group sizes for licensed child day centers. However, the standard of group size in general was not approved. Virginia continues to lack a standard requiring group sizes for children in licensed child day centers.
- Please note the chart showing the group sizes that were proposed by the Department of Social Services but that were not approved by the Child Day Care Council.
- Please note that although the final draft of this regulation was approved by the Council, the regulation has not yet been signed by the Governor and hence, is not yet effective.

Staff-to-Child Ratios for Licensed Child Day Centers				
	<i>Current</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Final Draft</i>	<i>Meets NAEYC standards</i>
<i>B -16 mos</i>	<i>1:4</i>	<i>1:4</i>	<i>1:4</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>16 –24 mos</i>	<i>1:5</i>	<i>1:5</i>	<i>1:5</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>2 yrs</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>1:8</i>	<i>1:8</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>3 yrs</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>4 yrs</i>	<i>1:12</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>1:10</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>School age</i>	<i>1:20</i>	<i>1:18</i>	<i>1:18 (5-8 yrs)</i> <i>1:20 (9-12 yrs)</i>	<i>No</i> <i>No</i>
Group Sizes Proposed, but not approved, for Licensed Child Day Centers				
	<i>Current</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Final Draft</i>	<i>Meets NAEYC standards</i>
<i>B -16 mos</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>16 –24 mos</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>2 yrs</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>3 yrs</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>4 yrs</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>School age</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>No</i>

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

CHILD DAY CENTERS: The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003 a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. Proposed changes to this regulation include:

- Changing the staff-to-children ratio for two-year-old children from 1:10 to 1:8;
- Changing the staff-to-children ratio for four-year-old children to age of eligibility to attend public school from 1:12 to 1:10;
- Changing the staff-to-children ratio for school-age children from 1:20 to 1:18;
- Changing the staff-to-children ratio for balanced mixed-age groupings of children ages three through six years of age from 1:15 to 1:14;

- Limiting the maximum number of children in ongoing groups according to the following ages:
 - 12 for children from birth to the age of 16 months;
 - 15 for children 16 months old to two years;
 - 16 for two –ear-old children;
 - 20 for three-year-old children to the age of eligibility to attend public school, five years by September 30; and
 - 27 for balanced mixed-age groupings of children ages three through six years of age; and
- Limiting the number of school age children assigned to a staff member or team of staff members in which each staff member is assigned no more than 18 children or each team of staff members are assigned no more than 36 children.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

FAMILY DAY HOMES: The following fixed adult to child ratios shall be maintained, to include the provider’s own and resident children under 8 years of age:

- 1:4 children from birth through 15 months of age;
- 1:5 children from 16 months through 23 months;
- 1:8 children from 2 years through 4 years; and
- 1:6 children from 5 years through 9 years.

Children who are 10 years of age and older are not counted in determining ratio of adults to children for staffing purposes.

For ease of implementation in mixed age groups, the following point system applies. Each care giver shall not exceed 16 points. The provider’s own children and resident children under age 8 count in point maximums:

- children birth through 15 months count as 4 points each;
- children from 16 months to 23 months count as 3 points each;
- children from 2 years through 4 years count as 2 points each; and
- children who are 10 years of age and older count as 0 points.

CHILD DAY CENTERS: The child day center regulation requires the following ratios of staff to children wherever children are in care:

1. for children from birth to the age of 16 months: one staff member for every four children;
2. for children 16 months old to two years: one staff member for every five children;
3. for children from two years to four years: one staff member for every 10 children;
4. for children from four years to the age of eligibility to attend public school, five years by September 30: one staff member for every 12 children;
5. for school-age children, one staff member for every 20 children; and
6. notwithstanding items 3 through 5, the ratio for balanced mixed age grouping of children ages three through six years of age shall be one staff member for every 15 children, provided:

- If the program leader or child care supervisor has an extended absence, there shall be sufficient substitute staff to meet a ratio of one staff member for every 12 children.
- The center shall have readily accessible and in close classroom proximity auxiliary persons sufficient to maintain a 1:10 adult-to-child ratio for all three-year-olds who are included in balanced mixed-age groups to be available in the event of emergencies.
- The program leader or child care supervisor has received training in classroom management of balanced mixed-age groupings of at least eight hours.

When children are regularly in ongoing mixed age groups, the staff-to-children ratio applicable to the youngest child in the group shall apply to the entire group. Staff-to-children ratios can vary during designated rest periods. Staff-to-children ratios are different for therapeutic child day programs. Staff-to-children ratios do not apply during transportation of children to and from the center.

2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early care and education settings that reflect standards set forth by the APHA and the AAP.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS:

The resilient surfacing standard (defined in 15-30-10 and written about as it pertains to playground equipment in 15-30-500) has been revised such that the required amount of resilient surfacing follows the Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines, and is contingent upon the critical height value of a given piece of playground equipment in addition to the specific type of resilient surfacing that is being used underneath and around such equipment.

The transportation standard 15-30-640 has been revised to add that the stated number of maximum number of passengers in a vehicle shall not be exceeded. In addition, the staff-to-children ratios of 22 VAC 15-30-440 E, G, and H shall be followed on all field trips. The staff-to-children ratios need not be followed during transportation of school age children to and from the center. Finally, one staff member or adult is necessary in addition to the driver when 16 or more preschool or younger children are being transported in the vehicle.

A new standard, 22 VAC 15-30-310 D., entitled Medication Administration has been added to the proposed licensing standards for child day centers.

Please note that although the final draft of this regulation was approved by the Council, the regulation has not yet been signed by the Governor and hence, is not yet effective.

FAMILY DAY HOMES:

Revisions have been proposed to the standards for licensed family day homes that are intended to provide increased protections in the areas of health, fire and safety. The revisions are at the second stage of the regulatory revision process and were approved by the State Board of Social Services in October 2003. Proposals include, but are not limited to the following:

Fencing of play areas located within 30 feet of hazards;

- Prohibition against use of hot tubs and whirlpools by children in care;
- Annual inspection of heating systems;
- Specific indoor and outdoor space requirements;
- Protective barriers around decks, porches and balconies that exceed a certain height;
- Limitations on the height of climbing equipment used by preschool and school age children;
- Resilient surfacing under and around outdoor play equipment;
- Prohibition against use of trampolines;
- Authorization for prescription and nonprescription drugs renewed after 10 workdays;
- A written plan for competent adult supervision in the event of a medical emergency involving a caregiver or a child;
- Portable wading pools used by children who are not potty trained assigned for individual use.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

CHILD DAY CENTERS: The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003, a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. Proposed changes to this regulation include:

- Requiring any physician's direction not to have an infant placed on his back when placed in a crib to be put in writing (3.008);
- Requiring the cleaning and sanitizing of the diapering surface after each use instead of one or the other (3.014, step 7);
- Deleting the option to use disposable wipes instead of hand washing after toileting and any contact with blood, feces or urine (3.020 and 3.021);
- Requiring any surface that has been contaminated with body fluids to be cleaned and sanitized (3.026);
- Requiring at least one staff member on duty at all times who has obtained within the last 12 months instruction in medication administration and only allowing staff with this training to administer medications (3.083);
- Requiring centers to have an agreement with parents that the parent will inform the center within 24 hours or the next business day after his child or any member of the immediate household has developed any reportable communicable disease except for life threatening diseases which must be reported within 24 hours (3.086);
- Prohibiting the use of bottles while the child is in his designated sleeping location (4.014);
- Prohibiting formula or breast milk that has been unrefrigerated for more than one hour (4.017);
- Prohibiting the direct heating of milk, formula or breast milk in a microwave (4.018);
- Requiring centers to allow second helpings of food listed in the USDA's child and adult care meal patterns (4.023);
- Requiring tables and high chair trays to be sanitized immediately before use for feeding and washed after used for feeding (4.029 e);

- Prohibiting potential choking foods for children three years of age or younger (4.037);
- Prohibiting crib gyms that are strung across the crib for infants over five months of age or infants who are able to push up on their hands and knees (5.088);
- Specifying that when centers wash linens, the water must be above 140°F or the dryer must heat the linens above 140°F or a sanitizer must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions (5.141);
- Requiring a shady area on playgrounds (5.177);
- Increasing the depth of loose-fill resilient surfacing under playground equipment from six inches to nine inches except for shredded rubber or tires, which can have a six inch depth (5.183); and
- Requiring the written procedures for injury prevention to be updated at least annually based on documentation of injuries and a review of the activities and services (8.064).

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

FAMILY DAY HOMES: Include, but not limited to the following:

- (1) Current written record maintained for each child, including results of physical examination and immunizations prior to or within 30 days after enrollment, emergency contact information, names of persons authorized and not authorized to pick up the child; and pertinent health history;
- (2) tuberculosis screening information required for care givers and adult household members who come in contact with children;
- (3) background clearances (criminal record checks and child abuse/neglect central registry checks) for care givers and household members over age 14;
- (4) requirements for supervision that assure care giver knows what children are doing at all times;
- (5) physical facilities and grounds and furnishings maintained in clean and safe condition;
- (6) rooms used by children adequately ventilated, heated, cooled and well lighted;
- (7) harmful substances stored in areas inaccessible to children;
- (8) adequate space provided for each child to allow freedom of movement and active play indoors and outdoors;
- (9) a written posted emergency escape plan that is practiced with all care givers and children on a monthly basis;
- (10) emergency numbers or generic 911 posted in a visible area close to the telephone;
- (11) any vehicle used to transport children meets *Code of Virginia* requirements and must be equipped with the proper child restraining devices required by law to correspond with the ages of the children being transported;
- (12) prescription and nonprescription drugs given only as directed by prescription label or instructions on original container and when provider has parent's written consent;
- (13) dogs or cats immunized for rabies and treated for fleas;
- (14) local department of social services notified whenever there is reason to suspect child abuse or neglect; and
- (15) an open door policy that permits parents to visit and pick up their children at any time.

CHILD DAY CENTERS: Numerous requirements on the following topics: written procedures for injury prevention, emergency contacts, written parental agreements concerning health issues, immunizations and physical examinations for children, tuberculosis screening for staff, procedures for response to natural and man-made disasters, daily health observation of children, asbestos inspections, fire and health inspections, fans/cooling systems, availability of safe drinking water, storage of hazardous substances, smoking restrictions, electrical outlet covers, resilient surfacing under playground equipment, playground requirements, sleeping position of infants, safe play equipment, individual assignment of personal articles, prohibition of infant walkers, play yards, space between sleeping equipment, cribs, restrictions on use of pillows and filled comforters, pools, exclusion of ill children, notification of parents of exposure to a communicable disease, hand washing, diapering, administering medications, first aid training, first aid/emergency supplies, procedures for emergencies, transportation safety, and animals and pets.

2.3 State law will require strict enforcement of licensing requirements. States will use a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS and FAMILY DAY HOMES:

These strict enforcement standards are already in place. No action has been taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Commissioner may: 1) seek to enjoin the operation of any child day program operating without a license, 2) impose administrative sanctions or initiate court proceedings, and 3) issue special orders for violations.

The Commissioner may take the following actions regarding licensed child day programs through the issuance of a special order:

1. Place a licensee on probation upon finding that the licensee is substantially out of compliance with the terms of its license and that the health and safety of children are at risk;
2. Reduce licensed capacity or prohibit new admissions when the Commissioner concludes that the licensee cannot make necessary corrections to achieve compliance with regulations except by a temporary restriction of its scope of service;
3. Require that probationary status announcements, provisional licenses, and denial or revocation notices be posted in a prominent place at each public entrance of the licensed premises and be of sufficient size and distinction to advise consumers of serious or persistent violations;

4. Mandate training for the licensee or licensee's employees, with any costs to be borne by the licensee, when the Commissioner concludes that the lack of such training has led directly to violations of regulations;
5. Assess civil penalties of not more than \$500 per inspection upon finding that the licensee is substantially out of compliance with the terms of its license and the health and safety of children are at risk;
6. Require licensees to contact parents, guardians or other responsible persons in writing regarding health and safety violations; and
7. Prevent licensees who are substantially out of compliance with the licensure terms or in violation of the regulations from receiving public funds.

(Note: special orders are case decisions, which can be appealed directly to circuit court.)

2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS AND FAMILY DAY HOMES:

Unless licensed child day centers and family day homes are operating on either a conditional or a provisional license, a minimum of two inspection visits, one of which must be unannounced, is required per year in accordance with Virginia statute. No action has been taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as below.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

A minimum of two inspections per year, and one of the inspections must be unannounced.

2.5 States will require that child care providers, early childhood teachers and others who have regular access to children in early childhood settings have federal and state background checks using fingerprinting and screening against the state child abuse registry.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS and FAMILY DAY HOMES:

The "Background Checks for Child Welfare Agencies" regulation, effective April 1, 2004, and the "Background Checks for Licensed Child Day Centers" regulation, effective October 1, 2004 require a state criminal history record check through the Central Criminal Records Exchange, per the Code of Virginia. This check is a name search check.

These regulations, and the Code of Virginia, also require a search of the central registry, Virginia's child abuse regulatory.

In addition, the Code and the regulations require a sworn statement or affirmation disclosing whether the person has a criminal conviction or is the subject of any pending criminal charges within or outside the Commonwealth or has been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect within or outside the Commonwealth.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Applicants, agents at the time of application who are or will be involved in the day-to-day operations of the child welfare agency or who are or will be alone with, in control of, or supervising one or more of the children; any other adult living in the home of an applicant for licensure or registration as a family day home; employees who are involved in the day-to-day operations of the agency or who are alone with, in control of, or supervising one or more children; and volunteers who will be alone with any child in the performance of their duties (except parent-volunteers as defined in the *Code of Virginia*) are required to have state background checks using name search (2002). The same persons are required to be screened against the state child abuse registry (2002).

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Applicants, volunteers (except parent volunteers as defined in the *Code of Virginia*) and employees were required to have state background checks using name search and screening against the state child abuse registry.

2.6 States will ensure that all licensing and early care and education staff are educated in recognizing signs of child abuse and are trained in the state's child abuse reporting laws.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

CHILD DAY CENTERS:

The phrase "Preventing and reporting" was added to "...child abuse and neglect" in terms of the minimum hours of training requirements for program leaders (i.e., head teachers) was added to the Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers 22 VAC 15-30 and was approved in May 2004 by the Child Day Care Council in the final draft of the proposed regulation.

"Recognizing child abuse and neglect and the legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse as required by 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia" has been added as a requirement for child day center staff training to the Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers 22 VAC 15-30 and was approved in May 2004 by the Child Day Care Council in the final draft of the proposed regulation.

Please note that although the final draft of this regulation was approved by the Council, the regulation has not yet been signed by the Governor and hence, is not yet effective.

FAMILY DAY HOMES:

Recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect is included as a training topic in the increased number of annual training hours being proposed for providers. (Please note that this change has been proposed by the State Board of Social Services, but has not yet been approved for release to the public for comment by the Governor).

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

LICENSING STAFF: Licensing staff continue to be trained in recognizing signs of child abuse and the state's child abuse reporting laws.

CHILD DAY CENTERS: The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003, a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. Proposed changes to this regulation include requiring staff to receive by the end of their first day of assuming job responsibilities, training in recognizing child abuse and neglect and the law requirements for reporting suspected child abuse as required by the *Code of Virginia*. The proposed regulation maintains the requirement that staff receive by the end of their first day of assuming job responsibilities training on the center's policy for reporting suspected child abuse as required by the *Code of Virginia*.

TRAINING AND WRITTEN MATERIALS:

- Continuation of staff from local departments of social services providing child abuse training upon request for child care providers.
- Increasing the frequency of the statewide, four-hour provider training sessions from every 18 months to every 12 months (offered during the fall of each year).
- Continuation of providing child abuse information in technical assistance material sent to providers.
- Continuing to offer the booklet entitled *Assistance for Child Care Providers in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.
- Development of a video/DVD entitled *Protecting Children: A Mandated Reporter's Guide to Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect* (2003, 26 minutes total running time). This video/DVD was developed in partnership with the Virginia Bar Association/Young Lawyer's Division and the Family and Children's Trust Fund of Virginia. Video/DVD is available from VideoWorks of Virginia Incorporated (804-282-2003) at a cost of \$7.00 for a single copy with lower rates depending on the quantity ordered. An order form to obtain this video/DVD was sent to providers in June 2003.
- Development of a brochure entitled *Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in Virginia* (10/02). Brochure is available in English or Spanish. This brochure was distributed to providers in June 2003.

Plans are underway to offer child abuse training for providers via teleconferencing at approximately six sites in the spring of 2004.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

LICENSING STAFF: Licensing staff are trained in recognizing signs of child abuse and the state's child abuse reporting laws.

CHILD DAY CENTERS: The child day center regulation requires staff to receive by the end of their first day of assuming responsibilities, training in the center's policy for paid staff to report suspected child abuse as required by the *Code of Virginia*. The program leader qualification option that does not require college course work or a certificate, credential or teaching diploma requires the person to receive training in child abuse and neglect.

TRAINING AND WRITTEN MATERIALS:

- Staff from local departments of social services will provide child abuse training upon request for child care providers.
- Four-hour provider training sessions offered statewide every 18 months.
- Child abuse information included in technical assistance material sent to providers (e.g., April is Child Abuse and Prevention month)

Availability of booklet entitled *Assistance for Child Care Providers in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.

2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person⁵ and a system capable of providing technical assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Caseloads are within this range and technical assistance is available from the Home Office.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Caseloads are within this range and technical assistance is available at Central Office.

2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action has been taken from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. Section 63.2-1813 of the Code of Virginia requires parental access to any child day program while the child is in the program.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003, a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. The proposed regulation includes a new standard that requires centers to give parents information about the parent's right to be admitted to the center as required by the *Code of Virginia*.

The proposed new child care regulation for the subsidy program has wording that assures full parental access, and also access by state and local social services staff. This regulation will go through public comment before being finalized.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Section 63.2-1813 of the *Code of Virginia* requires parental access to any child day program while the child is in the child day program. The child day center regulation has a standard about this section of the Code.

Goal 3: States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.

3.1 States will provide all early care and education providers with resources to help them improve the quality of care and education they deliver, such as technical assistance and training, accreditation support, grants to meet health and safety requirements and grants to support family child care home networks.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) provides information to the public and child care practitioners upon request. The Department sent three mailings of technical assistance materials to over 10,000 child care provider facilities. Additionally, VDSS offered the following training initiatives during this time period.

- 250 Statewide provider training sessions on a variety of training topics;
- Regional training throughout the year for people who were interested in becoming licensed, both at the pre-application process and the post-application/pre-licensure process;
- Self-paced video training series on Infant and Toddler care;
- Self-paced video training series entitled, "The Whole Child", which covers birth through 5 years of age;
- 2 videoconference training sessions (4-7 sites each) were held on Sun Safe and Child Abuse and Neglect;
- Supported training entitled, "Helping and Nurturing Developmental Stages";
- Administered the Virginia Alliance of Family Child Care Association grant which provided a statewide training event for family day child care providers;
- Administered the Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program which provided tuition assistance to those who were employed in child care or those thinking of entering the child care field who wanted to attend courses in child care and development or child care administration taught at Virginia's institutions of higher education. (Information on this program is available on the website: <http://www.dss.state.va.us>.) ;
- Quality Initiative allocations from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) were used to provide technical assistance and training to child care providers regarding health and safety standards, making improvements in the quality of care, and licensing; and

Through the CCDF sponsored the TEACH-VA Program which is an early childhood education scholarship program that helps child care employees with the costs of earning college credit in partnership with the child care employer.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above except the training on Infants and Toddlers is now offered through a video training series rather than Public Television stations. In the spring of 2004, the Department will begin offering training through teleconferencing.

The Department, through the CCDF, is supporting the TEACH-VA program. This is an early childhood education scholarship program. It helps child care workers with the costs of pursuing early childhood development studies at community colleges across the state. Students are responsible for 10% of tuition and book costs. They must be employed by child care centers or regulated family day care homes that agree to pay the final 10% of their education costs. The employers also must agree to provide the students with three hours of paid time off each week to attend school or study. Participating child care providers are required to match a cash bonus provided by the program or provide salary increases of at least 2% for their employees. In turn, the students must agree to remain with the child care agencies that sponsor their education for a year after they complete the required studies.

The Department plans to do research into the possibility of providing some new incentives for the business community to provide child care employer-sponsored options for their employees.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Department of Social Services sends technical assistance material on a variety of topics to child care programs three to four times a year. The Department of Social Services offers the following training initiatives:

- statewide provider training sessions two times a year on a variety of topics (approximately 250 sessions);
- regional training throughout the year for people interested in becoming licensed both at the pre-application process and the post-application/pre-licensure process;
- training concerning Infants and Toddlers on Public Television stations;
- video training series entitled the Whole Child (birth through five years of age); and
- support for training entitled Helping and Nurturing Developmental Stages.

The Department has funded, since 1992, the Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program. The program provides tuition assistance to those employed in child care and those who plan to enter the field of child care who want to attend courses in child care, child development, or child care administration taught at Virginia's institutions of higher learning. This program is open to all in the Commonwealth. Information on this program is at the Department's web site (<http://www.dss.state.va.us>).

The Quality Initiative allocations to all 121 Virginia localities from the CCDF are used to offer child care provider training, to assist providers in meeting health and safety standards, and to upgrade the care that they provide.

Dating from the early and mid 90s, staff working with the Child Care and Development Block Grant designed and funded the Child Day Care Financing Program, through the

Virginia Small Business Financing Authority. The Department no longer provides direct funding, as this lending program is now self supporting. This program provides small direct low interest loans to child care centers and family day homes for expansion, for start-up, for quality enhancement projects or to meet or maintain child care standards.

State staff were also involved in the mid 90s in educating business leaders on the benefits of employer-sponsored child care. Printed materials were developed and shared with state business leaders, and staff were available to provide technical assistance to businesses. Staff were also available to assist school-age programs in the state.

3.2 *States will have Child Care Resource and Referral networks to deliver quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers, such as outreach, training and technical assistance.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Department provided direct financial support from the CCDF to the Virginia Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Network (VACCRRN) during this period. A number of Resource and Referral agencies are connected to this human services information network.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

As of 2002, the Department has provided direct financial support from the CCDF to VACCRRN, the Virginia Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Department has supported the Statewide Information and Referral Network for a period of years. A number of Resource and Referral agencies are connected to this human services information network.

3.3 *States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Division of Child Care and Development hopes to raise child care subsidy payment rates in order to implement a tiered reimbursement system based on the levels of professional development achieved. A Professional Development Committee was formed to discuss, with numerous community partners, a plan for professional development, including quality child care providers.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Child Care and Development Division hopes to raise child care subsidy payment rates in the near future, and develop a tiered reimbursement system partially based on levels of professional development.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Former State Plans for Child Care, dating back to the mid 1980s, all recognized the need for better educational opportunities and pay for child care providers.

3.4 States will implement tax and other incentives to develop and expand early care and education programs that demonstrate a higher level of quality.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Department is currently researching the feasibility of tiered reimbursement, partially based on levels of professional development.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

3.5 States will use a formal mechanism to seek parental input in program evaluations and will use that information in making policy decisions related to early care and education programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Division of Licensing Programs used parental input in their program design. There was parental representation on the Child Day Care Council. All state child care regulations are subject to the state Administrative Process Act, which requires public notification and input on all significant policy changes. The Department has its Child Care and development Fund Plan on the web (www.dss.state.va.us) and opens it to public comment before finalization.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Division of Licensing Programs routinely uses parental input in their program design. There is parental representation on the Child Day-Care Council. All state child care regulations are subject to the state Administrative Process Act, which requires public notification and input on all significant policy changes. The Department has its Child Care and Development Fund Plan on the web (www.dss.state.va.us), and opens it to public comment before finalization.

3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The curricula developed by the Virginia Department of Social Services for child care provider training are based on research and best practices. The Department does not use or support any one curriculum produced by external entities.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Curricula of Department of Social Services' training for providers are based on research and best practice. The Department of Social Services does not use or support any particular curriculum produced by outside entities.

Goal 4: Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.

- 4.1 States will maintain a professional development system that ensures, at a minimum, providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC, NAFCC, APHA or AAP.**

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Child Day Care Council approved a proposed center regulation on July 10, 2003, regarding educational requirements of center directors. The current status of this regulation is on hold. Proposed changes to this regulation include the following:

- Requiring Program Directors without management experience to have college coursework in a business-related field or a specified number of clock hours of management training; and
- Phasing-out the Program Director qualification option that does not specifically require any college coursework or an appropriate credential.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

There are plans to reconvene a group in the fall of 2003 to work on a professional development system.

The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003, a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. Proposed changes to this regulation include:

- requiring program directors without management experience to have a college course in a business related field or certain clock hours of management training, and
- phasing out the program director qualification option that does not specifically require any college coursework or an appropriate credential.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

In the early 1990s, the Department of Social Services established a statewide group to look into the possibility of developing a professional development system. This group stopped its work in 1995 before a professional development system was established.

4.2 States will require approved ongoing annual professional development for staff, appropriate to their education levels and job requirements, as specified in APHA and AAP. States will provide and implement a professional development system that verifies trainers, approves training and tracks the training of participants.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The child day center regulation requires that staffs who work directly with children must attend at least 8 hours of staff development activities each year. The family day home regulation requires that caregivers obtain a minimum of 6 hours of training annually. Regulations also require additional training in certain topics, such as first aid and daily health observation of children. At this time, there is no professional development system in place.

The training that is provided is structured into series, such as Leadership, Infants and Toddlers, Preschool, School-Age, Children with Disabilities, Classroom Management and Curriculum Development, Family Day Home, Health and Safety, etc.

When the Virginia Department of Social Services provides training, the following occurs:

- Trainers with the proper qualifications are hired;
- Curricula are developed or approved by the Department; and
- Statistics are kept on the participants.

During this time period, a new training management database was implemented called, Pathlore. The Department was able to extract reports on child care training classes. Additionally, the Department developed and implemented an online training calendar for child care providers exclusively, which hosts external training announcements regarding child care, as well.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The above information is still accurate although the Department is currently looking into the possibility of developing a professional development system. The Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003 a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. The proposed regulation increases the annual training requirement from eight hours to 10 hours with a gradual increase to 16 hours three years after the effective date of the regulation.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The child day center regulation requires staff working directly with children to annually attend eight hours of staff development activities. The family day home regulation requires caregivers to obtain a minimum of six hours of training annually. While regulations require training in certain topics such as first aid and daily health observation of children, there is no professional development system in place. When the Department of Social Services provides training, the following occurs:

- trainers with the proper qualifications are hired,
- the curricula are developed or approved by the Department, and
- statistics are kept on the participants.

- 4.3 *The federal government and states will provide universally available, comprehensive scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two- or four-year degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child care administration. Scholarships will address the costs of tuition, fees and books and will support components such as travel costs, paid release time and child care.***

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Department continues to offer the Virginia Child care Provider Scholarship Program (see answer 3.1). VDSS also contracted with Voices for Virginia's Children to implement TEACH-VA which addresses all of the components mentioned in 4.3.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Department continues to offer a child care provider scholarship program. The Department has a contract with Voices for Virginia's Children to implement TEACH® - VA. TEACH® - VA addresses all of the components mentioned above. See answer to 3.1.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The Department of Social Services has had a child care provider scholarship program since 1992. See answer to 3.1. This program pays for the tuition of relevant courses and limited fees at community colleges and four-year colleges and institutions in the state. These courses may help individuals meet annual training requirements, the CDA credential or other credentials/certificates and degrees from community colleges and four-year colleges.

- 4.4 *States will work with educational institutions to ensure that coursework is accessible in order to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends, in accelerated formats, on-line and in various languages. Courses will address the varying educational levels of the workforce.***

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Through the Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program, state staff continued to meet with state higher education institutions to discuss the needs of students in the child care field. With the Professional Development Committee and through partnerships with child care organizations, the Department plans to meet with 4-year institutions to ask them to consider offering bachelor degrees in early childhood education. Virginia currently has only associate degrees in this field.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Staff from the Department of Social Services meet on a regular basis with the

Community College System Early Childhood Development Peer Group to discuss the needs of students. The community college system tries to meet the needs of the students.

4.5 *The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

The Division of Child Care and Development researched the feasibility of tiered reimbursement, based partially on levels of professional development achieved. At this time, budget and resource constraints do not allow development or implementation of a plan.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Child Care and Development Division is currently researching the feasibility of tiered reimbursement, based partially on levels of professional development.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

4.6 *The federal government and states will provide college loan forgiveness programs for persons earning an approved degree who work for a specified period of time in early care and education programs.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action taken during this period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

4.7 *States will work toward a system whereby staff with approved degrees or credentials will receive employment benefits and compensation at comparable levels to the state's public education system.*

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action taken during this period.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

4.8 States will ensure meaningful agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among approved two- and four-year degree programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action taken. Currently, all 2- and 4-year colleges transfer credits based on individual policies.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Individual colleges work out an articulation with other colleges concerning transfer of credits. All of the community colleges and four-year colleges are separate entities.

Goal 5: Families will have the information to make well-informed decisions about the quality of their child's care and education and to be actively involved in their child's care and education.

5.1 States will support Child Care Resource and Referral networks that are easily accessible to parents and that provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and linkages to additional information.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Virginia continues to provide CCDF funds to the Virginia Child Care Resource and Referral Network for these services.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

As of 2002, the Department has provided direct financial support from the CCDF to VACCRRN, the Virginia Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Network. As a part of this financial support the Resource and Referral agencies have agreed to use compatible software so that data for parents and reports to the state are consistent.

The Child Care and Development Division is distributing 110,000 New Parent Toolkits to all new parents in the state to help them choose and monitor quality child care and to assist them in their overall parenting role.

The Department continues to make quality booklets and brochures available to all resource and referral agencies, and they are now available in Spanish.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

See answer to 3.2. For several years the Department has made available to all resource and referral agencies, at no cost, brochures and booklets on quality child care.

5.2 States will support early care and education providers in promoting parental involvement and in seeking parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above. Additionally, the Child Day-Care Council approved on July 10, 2003 a proposed center regulation. There will be a 60-day comment period on this regulation and consideration of comments before it is finalized. The proposed regulation requires: (i) the semiannual update to parents on the child's development, behavior, adjustment and needs to be put in writing and (ii) centers semiannually to provide an opportunity for parents to provide feedback on their children and the center's program.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

The family day home regulation requires providers to agree to share information daily with parents about their children's health, development, behavior, adjustment and needs. The child day center regulation requires centers to:

- provide written information about the operation of the program to parents;
- inform parents promptly when persistent behavioral problems are identified and notify parents of any disciplinary steps taken in response;
- allow opportunities for parental involvement in center activities;
- post a daily record for each infant with specific information (e.g., time infant slept, food consumed and time) which can be easily accessed by the parent;
- respond to parents request for feedback about their child's daily activities, physical well-being and developmental milestones; and
- provide to parents at least semiannually, either orally or in writing, information on their child's development, behavior, adjustment and needs.

Goal 6: Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.

6.1 Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

See answer to 6.2.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

6.2 States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Same as above.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Virginia has a deduction that parents can take on their Virginia taxes for child care. Parents can use this if they have taken the federal deduction. This deduction reduces Virginia taxable income.

6.3 State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

No action taken.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

6.4 Federal, state, local and private funds will be sufficient to meet 100% of the need for direct early care and education financial aid, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Federal law will allow and states will implement redetermination policies that allow families to retain early care and education financial aid until they reach 100% of state median income.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Income eligibility for child care subsidies in Virginia is set at 150%, 160%, and 185% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG), depending on the locality in which a family lives. Fairfax County has been granted a waiver to increase income eligibility to 250% FPG.

Effective 10/03 Virginia implemented policy to waive the annual income eligibility redetermination for Head Start families as long as there is a child enrolled in Head Start.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Virginia is evaluating options for increasing the maximum income levels for areas of the state with higher costs of living. Virginia will also waive the annual eligibility re-determination requirement for Head Start families as long as they remain enrolled in Head Start.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Since 1997, income eligibility in Virginia for child care subsidy has been set at 150%, 160% and 185% of the federal poverty level, depending upon the area of the state and the cost of living in the area.

6.5 Federal and state governments should develop policies and systems to assure families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken. Co-payments remain at 10% of the family's countable income. Co-payments are waived for TANF recipients, Head Start families with income at or below the FPG, and for child protective services families on a case by case basis.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The state is in the preliminary stages of evaluating the possibility of waiving fees for all families who are at or below the federal poverty level, and, on a case by case basis, for families who are receiving child care subsidy for child protective services reasons.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Since the early 1990s, the fees for the income eligibility subsidy program in Virginia have been set at 10% of gross income. The fee is waived for families receiving TANF and families in the Head Start program who are at or below the federal poverty level.

6.6 States will set payment rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years for each level and type of care. Annual inflation adjustments to payment rates will be made between market surveys.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No action taken from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. (NOTE: Implementation of tiered reimbursement began September 1, 2004. Reimbursement rates for licensed providers are set at the 75th percentile of the most recent provider rate survey.)

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Department plans to raise payment rates back to the 75th percentile for the most qualified providers. Plans are for this change to be coupled with a tiered payment rate system based partially on levels of professional development and quality.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Market rates were set at the 75th percentile through the 1990s until very recently. Economic constraints necessitated lowering this percentile.

6.7 States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

See 6.6

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

See answer to 6.6.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

No action taken.

6.8 States will examine the financing of quality early care and education in their state and work toward providing payment rates that recognize the cost commensurate with the standards set forth in this action plan.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

See 6.6

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The Child Care and Development Division is studying the feasibility of a tiered reimbursement system based partially on levels of professional development and quality.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

See answers at 3.1, 4.5 and 6.6.

6.9 States will design and aggressively implement outreach initiatives to provide families with easy-to-understand early care and education financial aid information and application assistance.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

Efforts are made by local departments of social services to notify parents of the child care subsidy program. The application for the subsidy program is available on-line, along with an on-line screening tool to help families determine if they are eligible for assistance.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

The service application and information about the child care subsidy program are now on the web. Families can access the web site and do a rough eligibility determination to see if they might qualify for the income eligible child care fee program. See www.dss.state.va.us.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Some individual local departments of social services have been able to use outreach

methods for their subsidy allocations. Others with sustained waiting lists have not been able to do this.

Goal 7: States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.

7.1 States will convene appropriate stakeholders to develop written strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education programs in the state. These plans will include key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Governor Warner is planning to develop a long-term early childhood and education plan for Virginia. This is part of the Commonwealth's new focus on children from birth to five "Foundations for a Lifetime" program.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

In 1997 the Virginia State Board of Social Services, Day Care Subcommittee, presented a report on the Child Care and Development Fund Plan to the Virginia General Assembly Commission on Early Childhood and Child Day Care Programs. This Commission was headed by Senator Stanley Walker. The report identified the key goals identified by the State Board of Social Services for the CCDF Plan.

- Ensure that the family child care system contributes to the broader objective of self-sufficiency.
- Promote parental choice in the selection of child care.
- Address the problem of the waiting list by ensuring that the maximum available dollars are directed to the purchase of child care services.
- Ensure that subsidy dollars are provided to the neediest families.
- Create flexibility in the design of quality child care programs across the state.
- Provide more information to parents regarding available child care options.

7.2 States will collect and analyze data and produce written annual reports on progress toward identified goals. Reports will be made readily available to the public.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Staff in the new Child Care and Development Division are working on what will be an Annual Report on Child Care.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

Numerous reports on the state of child care in the Commonwealth have been produced since the mid 1980s.

7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.

Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004

No new action taken.

Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003

Many new reports have been developed and made available in the past six months. These demographic, statistical and financial reports are available on the web to all 121 local departments of social services. Localities are encouraged to use these data reports to better manage their funding and for long range planning. The reports will be invaluable to state staff as they make plans for the future.

Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)

This has been an ongoing process in Virginia.

¹ NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

² NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

³ APHA – American Public Health Association

⁴ AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

⁵ American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance – Guidelines for out-of-home child care programs*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.