

VoicesFor Virginia's
Children

2021 THE CAMPAIGN FOR A TRAUMA-INFORMED VIRGINIA: RACIAL TRUTH & RECONCILIATION VIRGINIA'S UNIFIED POLICY AGENDA

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The Campaign for a Trauma-Informed Virginia: Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia's Unified Policy Agenda is created by Virginia's Trauma-Informed Community Networks and the Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia coalition, which includes community members, art activists, professionals from a variety of sectors, direct-service providers, and – most especially – youth and caregivers to identify key legislative opportunities to leverage a multi-disciplinary lens to ensure Virginia's systems are trauma-informed and equitable in addressing the root cause of trauma and dismantling systems of oppression.



RACIAL TRUTH & RECONCILIATION

[Trauma-Informed Community Networks](#)

[Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia](#)

In the wake of the pandemic and today's modern civil rights movement, we must recognize that populations who disproportionately suffer from trauma need a different approach, one that acknowledges their collective experience and further promotes equitable and just policies of change. Trauma-informed care operates at the individual-level in realizing, recognizing, responding, and resisting re-traumatization. Addressing the root cause of trauma in neighborhoods, families, and schools requires policies that consider the environmental that perpetuates the harm. Trauma-informed care in combination with equitable policies deconstructs toxic systems, policies and practices that reinforce the initial harm.

In June 2020, Virginia trauma-informed community network leaders of color convened to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on at-risk communities and the modern civil rights movement. They felt an innate urge to respond and react to two pandemics, COVID-19 and racism as a public health crisis. In response, there became a clear need to concentrate efforts on the impact of cultural, racial, and historical trauma on marginalized communities. This influenced them to launch Virginia's first-ever Racial Truth & Reconciliation Week (RTRW) from August 2-8, 2020, which served as the launch of Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia, a campaign that implements the mission and goals of the week over a longer period of time.

URGENT NEEDS IN VIRGINIA

During the 2020 legislative session, a number of incremental steps were taken to make Virginia's systems trauma-informed to improve the lives of community members, families, and children. However, many of these steps forward were paused due to the pandemic, and the solutions fell short in combatting ongoing issues that perpetuates existing inequalities. This contributes to interventions that do not provide holistic solutions. Families are facing issues ranging from economic trauma, the trauma of the pandemic, and cultural, racial, and historical trauma as it relates to the history of America and Virginia and the disparities that stem from that trauma. The pandemic has exacerbated already existing inequities. Solutions require a continuum of care and investments in services across systems

EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

Connect parents to supports that foster resiliency by expanding access to positive social, emotional, and physical health outcomes.

Decrease maternal and infant health outcome disparities by expanding home visiting and investing in doula services in order to ensure low-income families have access to the resources and supports needed to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy. Restore funding for the home visiting program and fund doula services for pregnant women through Medicaid.

Prioritize early identification and intervention to lessen the impact of trauma in children and families.

Provide funding to support the Virginia Helping Everyone Access Services (HEALS), which is a model of service delivery that has been developed in order to assist service providers in better linking systems of care to provide support to children, youth, and families impacted by trauma and/or victimization, including trauma that stems from COVID-19 related challenges.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL INTERVENTION

Promote financial stability and resilience for families by funding community partnerships to respond to family economic hardships and intergenerational trauma.

The Family and Children's Trust Fund provides technical assistance to support community-based multi-disciplinary networks across the state to develop trauma-informed best practices and services. In addition, the networks facilitate COVID-19 referral and response programs to help families meet their basic needs during the pandemic in order to further mitigate economic trauma.

Address unintended consequences and biases that can lead to additional trauma for children.

As our systems seek solutions to liaise disruptions in educational settings, such as housing and other supports, we must ensure these interventions do not inadvertently widen cultural, racial, and ethnic disparities. For example, the rush to address chronic absenteeism and truancy might miss the opportunity to address community-level interventions, such as increasing family supports that are lacking. Our advocacy will focus on providing the resources that promote a continuum of care across systems to ensure children and their families can stay resilient when faced with economic, health, and environmental challenges.

SYSTEMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTION

Ensure Virginia state agencies are well-equipped to focus on children and the future they deserve

One approach to ensuring that all state agencies and the next gubernatorial administration will focus on children is to make the Children's Cabinet permanent and to create a position for a Chief Advisor. This position would review and address data about the conditions of children and families across state agencies and continue the collaborations begun in the Northam administration around early learning, trauma-informed policy and practice and food security

Create systematic, communal, and individual interventions to address racism as a public health crisis in Virginia.

As state elected officials seek policy-solutions to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, they must first identify and further address the ways in which racism has contributed to poor economic, social, and health outcomes for children of color and their parents. Opportunities to address racism as a public health crisis include state commissions to identify strategies and next steps, data collection to measure progress, funding priorities that shift resources to those most impacted by racism, training and community-level engagement.