

2017 Legislative Priorities

Protect Our Investments in Kids

Virginia faces a \$1.5 billion shortfall in the state budget, which must be balanced. After making significant progress last year for kids with investments in early childhood, mental health, foster care and juvenile justice, we must fight to keep these funds. Otherwise, young children in at-risk families will be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect, children with urgent mental health needs will have to wait longer for help, and youth aging out of foster care with no family at age 18 will once again be left on their own.



info@vakids.org
804. 649. 0184
www.vakids.org

As Virginia's nonpartisan, independent children's advocacy organization we speak up for quality early education opportunities, resources for children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system, and support for children's mental health. These are our legislative priorities for the 2017 General Assembly:

- Adequately fund the Part C Early Intervention program that promotes the healthy development of babies and toddlers who are born with disabilities or delays.
- Continue efforts to improve the safety of child care in all settings.
- Support public-private partnerships for early learning that ensure quality care for at-risk students in communities around the state.
- Ensure the safety and stability of children who are placed with relatives instead of in formal foster care by strengthening Virginia's "kinship diversion" system.
- Strive for more positive outcomes for justice-involved youth by continuing to monitor Virginia's juvenile justice system reform, ensuring that a broad array of services are available in communities statewide and that the families of these youth are involved in their rehabilitation.
- Continue to push for a transformation of Virginia's mental health system that better addresses the needs of children and parents.
- Educate lawmakers about the brain research about the effects of children growing up in environments of toxic stress and trauma, and about the efforts of a growing number of Virginia communities to encourage resilience and address trauma in children and families, laying the groundwork for more evidence-based state policies.