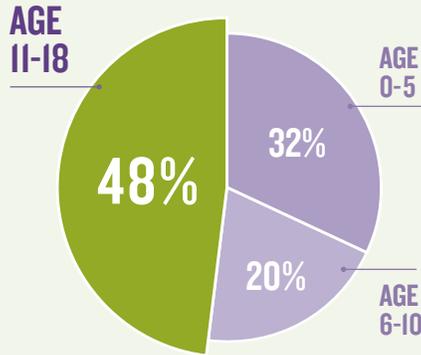


FOSTER CARE

Despite making some improvements to the foster care system, Virginia policymakers have the opportunity to continue to improve child welfare in the best interest of children. Additionally, Virginia needs to dedicate resources to ensure the child welfare workforce can meet its goal of ensuring every child has a safe, loving, and permanent family.

Each year about 500 youth in foster care will turn 18 and age out without being reunited with family or adopted.

AGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



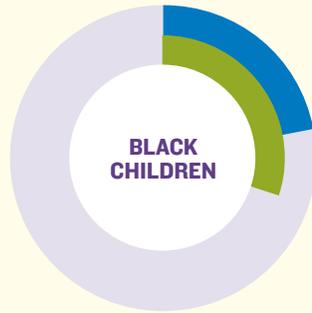
Virginia ranks

49th out of 50
— FOR —

youth aging out of foster care without a permanent connection

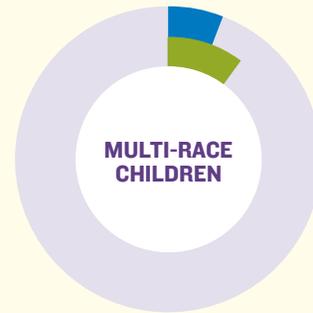
Black children and children of 2 or more races continue to be overrepresented in foster care.

DISPROPORTIONALITY OF BLACK AND MULTI-RACE CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



22%
VIRGINIA CHILD POPULATION

30%
FOSTER CARE POPULATION



6%
VIRGINIA CHILD POPULATION

10%
FOSTER CARE POPULATION

Formal kinship care is increasing nationwide, but Virginia still lags behind.

PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACED WITH RELATIVES OR KIN



Child welfare workers are expected to do too much and are paid too little.

\$30,828
starting base salary for entry-level Family Caseworker



Many child welfare workers in Virginia have caseloads that **exceed the recommended 15 children per worker**

Questions for Candidates

#VAVotes4Kids

- 1 FOSTER CARE REFORM:** The 2018 JLARC study highlighted problems in foster care such as social workers with high caseloads, children missing their required medical appointments, as well as the system under-utilizing relatives as foster parents. The General Assembly approved greater oversight of local agencies, but much remains to be done. **How will you build on the recent improvements to support children in foster care?**
- 2 WORKFORCE:** Virginia has struggled to retain child welfare workers. Nearly a third of all entry-level Family Services Specialists quit within their first year on the job. For a child, having multiple caseworkers can mean disrupted placements and a longer time spent in foster care. **How do you plan to address the workforce challenges to better serve children in the child welfare system?**
- 3 KINSHIP CARE:** Currently in Virginia, there are many children being raised by grandparents and other relatives when their parents are unable to do so. Research has shown these kinship arrangements reduce the impact of trauma and are more likely to support a permanent home. Unlike some states, Virginia does not provide financial support to kinship caregivers, like it does to non-relative foster parents. **If elected, what policy solutions would you propose to address the financial challenges kinship caregivers face?**
- 4 FAMILY-FOCUSED:** Children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system have often experienced generations of trauma. The federal Family First Prevention Services Act can transform Virginia's child welfare system to provide services to family and kin, not only the child. **What do you see as the next step to help transform Virginia's foster care system to help heal the entire family?**
- 5 EQUITY + FOSTER CARE:** Children of color are disproportionately represented in care and are more likely to be placed in a group setting, which research shows is less beneficial than a family setting. **How would you address the racial inequities within the foster care system?**
- 6 AGING OUT:** Virginia continues to have one of the highest rates of youth aging out of foster care without a permanent family. **What policy solutions would you propose to reduce the rate of youth aging out of foster care and increase family permanency through reunification or adoption?**
- 7 OPIOID EPIDEMIC:** The opioid epidemic has resulted in an increasing number of infants reported to DSS when born to mothers with substance-use disorders. Studies show substance-affected infants have better outcomes when mothers receive both prenatal care and substance-use treatment during pregnancy, and children are kept with their mothers during the treatment. **If elected, what will you do to address the impact of the opioid epidemic on families with young children?**

Source information available online: <https://vakids.org/take-action/elections>

