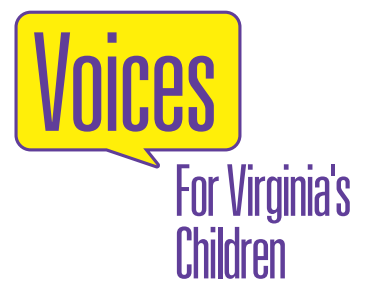




2020

Annual Report





OUR WORK

Voices for Virginia's Children is a nonprofit organization committed to improving and protecting the lives of Virginia's children, youth, and families.

We believe every child should have equitable access to the resources, services and opportunities needed to thrive. For us, that means advocating for sound policies, educating the public, mobilizing communities, utilizing data to determine unmet needs, and leading with compassion.

Our aim is to always close the systemic gaps that fail children, prioritize racial justice in policymaking, and ensure every voice has a role in shaping their future.

Get involved at vakids.org.

CEO'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

There are many words that could be used to describe the past year at Voices for Virginia's Children. From my perspective, 2020 can be summed up as a time of challenges, change, and growth.

What a year for any organization to hire a new CEO! From the ongoing COVID pandemic and the country's reckoning with social and racial injustice to rebuilding a largely new staff team, our work and the way we work was altered. Face-to-face meetings were impossible, the General Assembly went virtual, and everyone had to learn new ways of connecting, communicating, and cooperating. Most days, it felt like the only constant was change, and sometimes that felt overwhelming.

The good news is that for all the challenges and all the change, we moved forward! We assessed who and what was needed to strengthen the organization as a team. We were intentional about building our working relationships as a staff in a virtual world, and while our country struggled to confront its history of, and ongoing issues around, racial injustice, we created space for that discussion. We took the time to engage internally in the ongoing, difficult, and much-needed work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Most importantly, we advanced our understanding and ability to give voice to the challenges and needs faced by children, youth, and families in the Commonwealth. Voices has brought intention to our approach by increasing community engagement, incorporating the whole child and working to dismantle systemic barriers. We were able to forge new relationships throughout Virginia with community partners while deepening established ones, such as with legislators and their staff.

As advocates, I am impressed by how we stepped up to prepare for not one, but two sessions of the state legislature because of the pandemic. We leveraged virtual platforms to provide more people across the Commonwealth with the opportunity to meet directly with their representatives and share their story. We will most certainly continue to build upon this experience moving forward in our advocacy efforts.

Finally, I would be remiss were I not to offer a heartfelt thanks to Johanna Schuchert for the leadership she provided Voices when she stepped into the role of Interim CEO. An interim's job is often thankless, while the challenges of the position can be extraordinary. Johanna's skills and commitment served Voices exceedingly well and in turn, allowed us to continue serving the people of



the Commonwealth in a professional and caring manner. Thank you, Johanna!

Challenges and change will no doubt continue into the foreseeable future but standing on the firm foundations we laid in 2020, we will, without a doubt, continue to move forward as champions for Virginia's children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Strite". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'A' and 'S'.

Amy Strite, Chief Executive Officer

COVID Challenges and Response

March 11, 2020 was the day in which the world changed for everyone. The World Health Organization declared a pandemic, schools closed, work presented a host of new challenges for us all and everyone was forced into isolation. What some believed might be an inconvenience for a few weeks turned into the challenge of a lifetime. The nation had a slew of concerns such as how everyone could best stay safe, what to do about childcare, and would jobs and businesses survive. As weeks turned into months, our concerns only grew. What would the long-term impacts be?

By early December 2020, the Virginia Department of Health reported over

15,116

hospitalizations from COVID-19.

The State of Virginia's Children and Families

Over the last year, the lives of children across the nation, and within Virginia, have changed drastically. The stress of trying to pay bills, eat, maintain housing and balance child care led to an increase in depression and

– IN VIRGINIA –

1/3

of families delayed getting medical care because of the pandemic

1 in 4

adults with kids at home did not get medical care at all*

anxiety for adults. These familial stressors were also felt by children and could impact their development by introducing new levels of trauma and instability. Facing the pandemic required that families and children have access to adequate healthcare and economic security.

Our advocacy and policy priorities shifted to focus on how policymakers could help implement programs and long-term solutions for families in Virginia. Providing access to health care should be a guarantee during a pandemic.

The Policy Shifts from the 2020 Regular GA Session

The 2020 regular General Assembly adjourned just one week prior to the United States going into pandemic lockdowns. When the GA adjourned, we celebrated historic investments and shifts in systems within early education, mental health and child welfare. However, only a few weeks later the approved budget was put on hold and plans were paused.

Some investments were regained:

- Most of the state's investment in early childhood education and the consolidation of child care at the Department of Education.
- Moving forward with the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and adding staff to local departments of social services to implement new funding and services to prevent children from entering foster care.
- Increases in Medicaid reimbursement rates for mental health practitioners as well as reimbursement for evidence-based and trauma-informed services.

We also saw the General Assembly return in the summer of 2020 to allocate federal CARES Act funds. This provided additional relief for the child care sector, housing, food access and public health measures that would keep children safe in schools.

* Source: Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and a Roadmap for Recovery

2020 POLICY & ADVOCACY

Our Work in Action

This year brought new approaches and challenges to the way Voices advocated for children and families. As the nation's focus shifted to the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice, our advocacy also experienced shifts.

Incorporating New Equity Impact Statements into Policy Analysis

Prior to the 2021 General Assembly Session, Voices launched Equity Impact Statements for each of our policy areas. These were grounded in the best practices of race equity impact analysis. Each statement looked at one of Voices' policy priority areas with a lens focused on children of color. Our equity impact statements seek to answer the question "who benefits and who is burdened?" when policy decisions are made. These helped to shape our priorities and our talking points for the 2021 General Assembly Session.

Taking the Lead of Those Directly Impacted in Order to Shape Policy

One of the triumphs of advocacy is to lift up the voices of those directly impacted by proposed bills or legislation. We jump at the opportunity to connect with youth currently in or aging out of the foster care system, children opening up about mental health issues, and parents seeking to find and afford childcare.

Before the pandemic, Voices launched two events that we hope to continue throughout our work. We had our first foster youth advocacy cohorts which included foster youth and alumni who participated in legislative meetings and issue briefings. We also launched our first "Playdate at The Capitol" bringing young children and parents to the legislative session to demonstrate the power of play and the importance of investments in children and parents.

Feedback from the Front Line is Critical

Developing sustained relationships and strong networks with those who are implementing policies impacting children and families is critical to our work. As we tried to better understand how COVID-19 impacted families, we relied on these relationships to stay up to speed on emerging issues and help us understand how we could continue to weigh in with state policymakers and lawmakers.



Voices for Virginia's Children staff, partner organizations, and advocates at the State Capitol.

The Other Pandemic

The COVID pandemic has wreaked havoc in ways we could never imagine, magnifying gaps in our current collection of safety net programs. This is a global health crisis that is exacerbated by existing crises due to systemic racism, economic inequality, and institutional failures. The more we learned about infection rates, hospitalizations, and deaths due to COVID-19, the more it became clear that the impact of hardship is greatest along lines of race and gender, as well as those with chronic illnesses and disabilities.

For Virginia's children, their race, zip code, and family income determine their life expectancy and ability to succeed. The data from our KIDS COUNT Data Center confirms the impact of COVID-19 on families of color. While the Black community represents 19% of the commonwealth's population, they accounted for 29% of the hospitalizations for COVID-19 at the end of 2020. Likewise, the Latino population made up roughly 24% of Virginia's COVID hospitalizations, but only 10% of the state's population. The economic security for families has also weakened, especially for Black and Latino families. Fifty one percent of Black parents and 60% of Latino parents reported a loss of employment income.

These are the numbers of one pandemic. The other is racism. We watched as the call for social justice was raised around the world in response to the murder of George Floyd and deaths of other Black and Brown Americans, which brought systemic racism and its many

29%

of the hospitalizations for COVID-19 at the end of 2020 were in the Black community

– EVENTHOUGH–

The Black Community represents 19% of the commonwealth's population

manifestations to the forefront. Voices stood in unison with those fighting the systems that stoke the flames of racism by working to dismantle structural racism internally and externally, as well as listening and prioritizing the voices of impacted communities.

We took time to think about our work in a constructive way and the responsibility we have in creating equitable change in Virginia. To properly fulfill our mission of championing public policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children, we had open and honest conversations about the racial inequities that exist not only in our work but also within our organization and took actionable steps toward change.

In direct response to community feedback, Voices launched Virginia's first Racial Truth & Reconciliation Week with a mission to empower

communities impacted by racial injustice to promote healing, reconciliation, and justice for children, youth, and families in Virginia. In just one week, over 2,000 participants engaged in 30-plus events with programming from the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, elected officials, and more than 50 organizations from across the Commonwealth. Due to the popularity of the event, Voices launched Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia, a coalition campaign which centers engagement, partnerships, education, advocacy, and activism in pursuit of dismantling systems that perpetuate racial trauma, oppression and inequity.

While there is no quick fix to the deeply rooted racism embedded within our systems and institutions, we are committed to working with policymakers alongside our communities of color with renewed vigor and purpose to transform our inequitable systems.

Racial Truth & Reconciliation

Racial Truth & Reconciliation (RTR) Virginia (RTRVA) is an intentional evolution of the Campaign for a Trauma-Informed Virginia that further concentrates our efforts on the intersection of trauma and equity. As a community-led initiative, RTRVA focuses on the intersection of trauma and equity to empower advocates with lived experience to ignite change in pursuit of healing, reconciliation and justice. This community-led initiative catalyzed by Voices for Virginia's Children empowers advocates with lived experience to ignite the change they wish to see in their communities.

The goal is to connect community-level trends to trauma and equity-informed policy at the state level in order to champion policy opportunities that improve the social determinants of health and combat inequities

Sophia Booker

Sophia Booker is a social justice trailblazer, foster care advocate and former intern at Voices for Virginia's Children.

"Yes, I am a foster care alumna, but furthermore, I am also a Black woman. What Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia does is bring those two worlds together. It acknowledges the intersectionality of those two identities and the systemic limitations that stem from that."

"It took a pandemic for us to say this stuff is not right. This stuff should not be happening."

Sophia wanted to see people start having the hard conversations around injustice and examine why others were not holding space for these discussions. She decided to serve on Racial Truth & Reconciliation Virginia because the Campaign moves conversations to advocacy and action.

"Silence in the face of injustice is unacceptable."

As the Engagement Committee Co-Chair, Sophia enjoys connecting with advocates who are in different phases of their journey to learning

about equity and justice. She also sets expectations that the participant will have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable in order to move towards positive changes across all of the systems we have – including foster care, mental health, and health.

"It's also time to value youth and their seats at the table. That means, whether an adult is present or not, the youth's voice is equally valued."

In her work with the Racial Truth engagement committee, Sophia intends to further contribute to shifting the non-profit sector's cultural narrative around youth engagement and expectations.



Data

Throughout 2020, we remained focused on utilizing vital data from our KIDS COUNT Data Center and Research Program to influence policy priorities and advocacy. In addition to impacting our policy agendas, we were able to provide insights on the wellbeing and health of children to news stations and media outlets throughout Virginia. This reporting helped keep Virginians, policymakers and other key figures informed on where we stood and where there was room for improvement.

Data in Action

Last year, there were 24 new legislators in the General Assembly. Our Data and Research Center along with the Policy team created custom profiles for each new legislator that described the state of children in their areas, so they could be better informed about how to support their communities.

In May 2020, data from the KIDS COUNT data center was analyzed and a custom equity assessment was then presented virtually to the Winchester Trauma Informed Community Network to aid in their strategic planning. The data in these types of assessments not only educated the public on the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve, but also assisted in helping advocates with prioritizing future areas of focus. This assessment described trends that allow for further investigation into the “why” and looked to attendees as the experts in their communities to understand the reasons behind the trends.



Data Releases

In addition to the various uses of our KIDS COUNT Data Center, we also joined the Annie E. Casey Foundation in releasing the 2020 KIDS COUNT Data Book, an annually published resource that tracks child well-being nationally and state by state and ranks the states accordingly. This was released on June 22, 2020. The report is based on the latest available data for 16 key indicators. Virginia ranked 14th overall and showed improvement in several area domains. Policymakers, researchers, and advocates can continue to use this information to help shape their work and build a stronger future for children, families, and communities.

The 2020 Data Book shows improvement in Virginia on eight indicators in the KIDS COUNT Index, including:

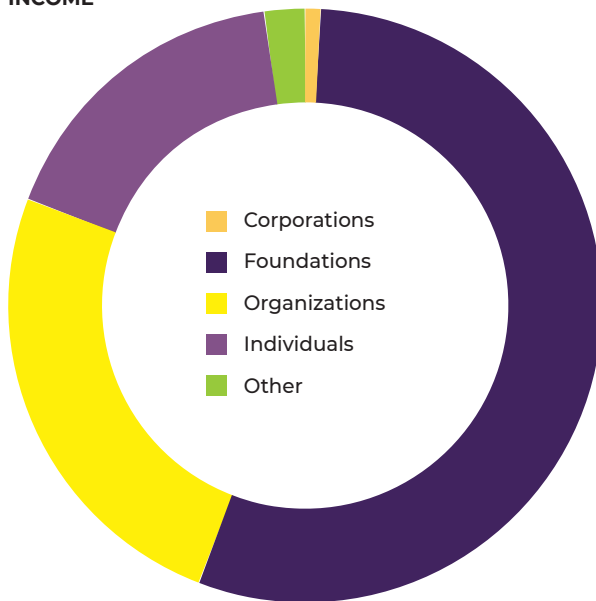
- Children with parents that lack secure employment
- Children living in households with a high housing cost burden
- Teens not in school and not working
- 8th graders not proficient in math
- High school students not graduating on time

- Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma
- Teen births
- Children without health insurance

Alongside the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book, advocates saw a need to release data specifically centered on the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, December Pandemic Pain Points: Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and the Urgent Need to Respond was released on December 12, 2020 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in partnership with Voices for Virginia's Children. This report shows in detail how children and families are suffering from the unprecedented disruption and economic storm set off by the pandemic. It measures how families are doing in the areas of food security, housing stability, health insurance status and mental health concerns. The report shows how urgent state and federal intervention is crucial to the health and well-being of families with children. Robust federal interventions, such as Unemployment Insurance and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, in times of crisis are not only essential but are also deeply effective.

Financial Report

INCOME

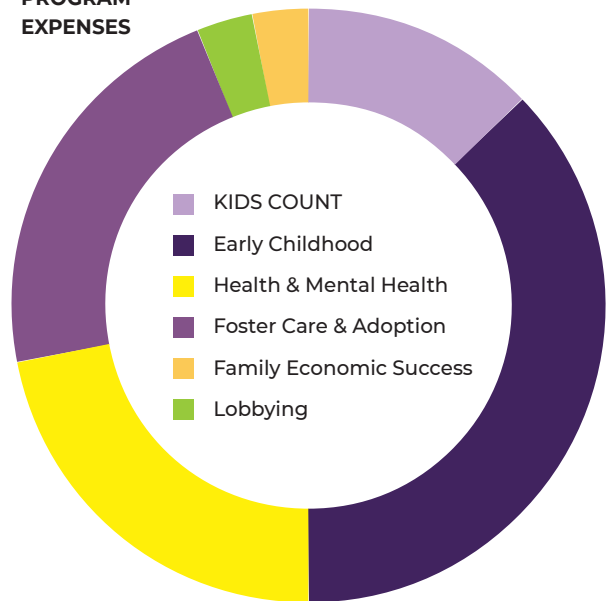


Audited Schedule of Income January 1- December 31, 2020

Corporations	\$ 749
Foundations	429,138
Organizations	194,618
Individuals	138,957
Other	20,547
Total Income	\$ 784,008

In 2020 Voices applied for and received a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan for \$137,700. At the end of 2020, the forgiveness application had not been approved; therefore the loan was recorded as a liability on the 2020 audited financials. This PPP loan was forgiven in the current year.

PROGRAM EXPENSES



Audited Schedule of Expenses January 1- December 31, 2020

Programs and Advocacy:	
KIDS COUNT	\$ 86,874
Early Childhood	233,794
Health and Mental Health	137,507
Foster Care and Adoption	137,359
Family Economic Success	17,222
Lobbying	18,426
Total Program and Advocacy	\$ 631,182
General and Administrative	50,272
Development	176,597
Lobbying	226,869
Total Expenses	\$ 858,051

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