

**VIRGINIA TITLE IV-E PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**Virginia Department of Social Services**  
**7 North Eighth Street**  
**Richmond, Virginia 23219-3301**

**January 11, 2005**

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**Introduction**

Title IV-E funds enable Virginia to provide foster care for children in foster care. The Social Security Act includes requirements that define the circumstances under which foster care payments may be made and mandate a child's placement in an approved or licensed facility.

Virginia underwent a Title IV-E Eligibility Review of children in foster care, conducted the week of August 23, 2004 by a team of federal and state staff. The purpose of the title IV-E foster care eligibility review was (1) to determine if Virginia was in compliance with the child and provider eligibility requirements as outlined in CFR 1356.71 and Section 472 of the Act; and (2) to validate the basis of Virginia's financial claims to assure that appropriate payments were made on behalf of eligible children and to eligible homes and institutions.

Based on the findings of that review, Virginia was found not to be in substantial conformity with the requirements as set out in the above statutes. Pursuant to 45 CFR 1356.71(i), Virginia is required to submit a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to correct those areas determined not to be in substantial compliance. The attached document is Virginia's Title IV-E Program Improvement Plan.

**Plan Formulation:**

Virginia's Title IV-E PIP was developed with assistance from:

- The Title IV-E Eligibility Program Improvement Plan Advisory group;
- The Virginia Title IV-E Field Analysts;
- The Virginia Department of Social services Financial Resource Utilization Technical Assistance Team; and
- The Administration for Children and Families Regional Staff

**The Title IV-E Eligibility Program Improvement Plan Advisory Group:** The Advisory group is composed of statewide representatives from local departments of social services' (LDSS) eligibility, finance and service programs. Additional non LDSS members include representatives from the Virginia Supreme Court's Court Improvement Program, the Virginia Department of Social Services Finance Division, Division of Licensing Programs, and the Division of Family Services, the Virginia Interdepartmental Regulations and the Office of Comprehensive Services.

**The Virginia Title IV-E Analysts:** These five individuals have experience in providing training and technical assistance to LDSS on Title IV-E Eligibility issues. Prior to the

August 2004 Review, they were members of a team that reviewed cases statewide and provided additional technical assistance to LDSS around eligibility compliance issues.

**The Virginia Department of Social services Financial Resource Utilization**

**Technical Assistance Team:** The FRU-TAT Team is based in the Virginia Department of Social Services Division of Finance and have spearheaded Virginia's efforts to develop consistency and compliance in Title IV-E Eligibility in the past.

**The Administration for Children and Families Regional Staff:** Christine Craig and Ahn Nghiem from the Philadelphia Regional Office provided technical assistance once an initial draft of the Title IV-E PIP was completed.

**Areas of Concern:**

Areas where Virginia was found not to be in substantial conformity include the following:

- Provider files were missing copies of the licensing history and a copy of the provider license or letter of approval
- Complete payment histories were either not available on all files reviewed or were lacking in appropriate documentation to understand the billing coding processes used by different localities.
- Judicial determinations of reasonable efforts did not always reflect the specific permanency plan goal that was in effect at the time of the hearing.
- Eligibility criteria regarding removal from a specified relative were not applied in accordance with regional Title IV-E federal requirements.

The following items did not impact Virginia's conformity with Title IV-E Eligibility requirements but were noted as areas on which the State should focus attention:

- Full implementation of a state's SACWIS system requires the state to have the ability to store and manage all information needed to determine eligibility in the SACWIS automated system.
- Some court orders were not child-specific and did not reflect the unique circumstances of the child's case.
- Some case file records were poorly organized and contained multiple copies of the same document in multiple section of the file. Reviewers had difficulty locating items due to the lack of organization and standardization of case files.

Virginia's Program Improvement Plan reflects these deficiencies and provides goals and action steps to improve.

**Evaluation Plan**

Virginia's PIP, expected to cover the period of February 1, 2005 through February 1, 2006, includes specific action steps, each with a time frame for completion. Progress reports to ACF on each goal and action step will occur three times during the PIP period

and will be submitted by May 15, 2005; September 15, 2005 and February 15, 2006. Progress reports will include the following information:

- A summary of the review of PIP progress discussed at the Title IV-E Advisory Committee meetings held at least three times during the course of the PIP (April, August and December 2005);
- Copies of any guidance documents disseminated during that same period of time;
- Training sessions conducted during the four month period recently completed; and
- Listing of case reviews conducted during the four month period recently completed.

### **Contact Information**

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## Virginia Title IV-E Program Improvement Plan

### ➤ Over-all Performance Improvement Goals

1. Improve the accuracy of IV-E eligibility determinations/re-determinations
2. Improve the accuracy of IV-E eligibility payments

### ➤ Individual Performance Improvement Goals and Action Steps

#### **1. IV-E Eligibility Policy: Enhance and disseminate policy guidance to local departments of social services that is clear and in compliance with federal law.**

- a. Title IV-E Eligibility Policy Guidance
  - i. Provide results of the Title IV-E Review to local departments by **February 15, 2005** including:
    - a. Any immediate policy or practice guidance;
    - b. Summary of future plans/direction VDSS will take to improve statewide compliance with Title IV-E eligibility requirements.
  - ii. Revise Virginia's Title IV-E Manual so that it is consistent with federal policy by **April 31, 2005**.
    - a. Obtain local department feedback on policy issues by **March 31, 2005**.
    - b. Disseminate updated Title IV-E Eligibility Policy Manual by **May 31, 2005**

#### **2. Licensing: Enhance children's residential facilities safety policies and child placing agency and local department foster home approval policies and procedures to ensure compliance with federal safety guidelines.**

- a. Collaborate with the Division of Interdepartmental Regulations to ensure all children's residential facilities comply with staff safety checks.
  - i. Review and revise as needed the "Standards for Interdepartmental Regulation of Children's Residential Facilities" as to meet federal requirements for staff safety checks by **October 2005**.
- b. Submit for public comment local Agency Approved Provider Regulations and Licensed Child Placing Agency Regulations (proposed drafts at a minimum) that are consistent with federal requirements for documenting approval of homes and retention of safety information by **October 2005**.
  - i. Develop and disseminate to local departments and licensed child placing agencies procedural guidance regarding documentation of criminal background check information and central registry abuse and neglect searches to be kept in all foster/adoptive home provider and/or child's records by **November 2005**.
  - ii. Criteria for documenting approval of the foster/adoptive home in the case file by **November 2005**.

- c. Meet with the Division of Interdepartmental Regulations, VDSS Division of Licensing and other state department's licensing divisions to review and develop as needed additional procedures to notify local departments of social services of changes in licensure/approval status of children's residential facilities and licensed child placing agencies in a timely manner by **October 2005**.

**3. Training: Implement a training program to facilitate statewide understanding and consistency in application of Title IV-E Eligibility policy.**

- a. Develop ongoing communication with local departments of social services directors beginning in **March 2005** regarding:
  - i. Directors role in increasing compliance with Title IV-E requirements;
  - ii. Local and statewide progress in compliance with IV-E requirements during the course of the Program Improvement Plan.
- b. Provide geographically based Title IV-E training and technical assistance to address areas of need between **March 2005** and **November 2005** for:
  - i. Eligibility staff
  - ii. Service staff
  - iii. Finance staff
  - iv. Local Department of Social Service Directors
  - v. Local department of social services attorney's and guardians ad litem
- c. Develop and implement an on-going training program that uses any or all of the following training modes by **November 2005**.
  - i. Teleconference training
  - ii. FAQ page on the DSS website
  - iii. ListServ for Q and A
  - iv. Partnering with local department of social service's to develop local or regional experts to facilitate and expand the VDSS training effort.
  - v. Annual training for VDSS and Interdepartmental Regulations licensing staff

**4. Court Order Language and Related Activities: Partner with the Court Improvement Program to identify and develop enhancements that will increase accurate and timely completion of court forms.**

- a. Develop training modules to be used in local department attorney training sessions regarding attorney's roles in increasing compliance with Title IV-E requirements by **September 2005**.
- b. Work with Court Improvement Program staff to review and if feasible, revise current language and format of court forms as they relate to the reasonable efforts requirements by **September 2005**.

5. **Eligibility Determinations and Procedures: Develop and maintain up-to-date and accurate policy and procedural guidance to local departments of social services.**
  - a. Review and, as necessary, revise Title IV-E eligibility determination and redetermination forms by **May 2005**.
  - b. Develop and disseminate clear instructions for completing Title IV-E eligibility forms by **May 2005**.
  - c. Determine the feasibility of conducting either a six month desk review or full redetermination of all Title IV-E eligible cases by **June 2005**.
  - d. Update Title IV-E Eligibility Policy to reflect the new six month review process by **July 2005**.
  
6. **Quality control: Ensure that existing IV-E cases comply with State and Federal policy**
  - a. Revise the current statewide IV-E eligibility instrument so that it is consistent with the federal instrument/policy by **June 2005**.
    - i. Review all IV-E cases using the revised federal instrument between **July 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006** that is:
      1. Coordinated with other VDSS QC/QM processes; and
      2. Includes local department staff as review team members.
    - ii. Develop a Corrective Action Plan protocol for use with those local departments of social services found not to be in substantial conformity with Title IV-E Eligibility requirements by **July 2005**.
  
7. **Establish a Title IV-E Advisory Committee to provide oversight and guidance to VDSS on improvements to the Eligibility process and PIP.**
  - a. VDSS will establish an on-going advisory group that will meet at least three times per year during the Program Improvement Plan (beginning in **April 2005**) to address progress, discuss barriers and revise the PIP as needed.
  
8. **Develop an Automated Title IV-E Eligibility System to Enhance Accuracy of Eligibility determinations.**
  - a. An automated IV-E eligibility system will be developed that will determine and track eligibility for Title IV-E by **December 2005**.
  
9. **Payment Documentation: Enhance the IV-E Payment Documentation Process to Improve Ability to Audit Title IV-E Payments.**
  - a. Payment sample reviews will be conducted as part of case pre-review site visits throughout the **July 2005-October 2006** case review period.

- i. A sample of payments will be reviewed at each locality to assess accuracy, clarity, and compliance with Title IV-E and VDSS requirements and protocol.
- b. The Department will create and provide a “Standard Payment Record” (SPR) for applicable cases by **July 2005**.
  - i. The SPR document will include at least the following:
    - a. A complete payment history of all payments beginning with the most recent FC placement episode and continuing through the period under review
    - b. All payments in the payment history will include the following:
      - Invoice number or other identifier
      - Period covered by invoice (service month)
      - Amount paid
      - Date of payment
      - Child’s name and case number
      - Provider’s name and number
    - c. In addition to the SPR, individual local warrant registers will be included with each SPR as support documents for applicable payments

**10. Standardization of Case File Format: Develop Standardized Eligibility Case Records to Improve Ability to Audit Compliance with Title IV-E Requirements.**

- a. Identify local department’s of social services with a standardized paper case record format and assess for generalizability throughout the state by **September 2005**.
  - i. Provide local departments of social services with a standardized format for organizing the eligibility section of the child’s paper case record by **November 2005**.
  - ii. Include OASIS printouts of the child’s placement history in every eligibility section of the paper case record file by **February 2006**.