

Update on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Presentation to the Joint Subcommittee on ECCE

December 1, 2020

Objective and Agenda

Objective

To provide a comprehensive update on ECCE in Virginia in preparation for 2021 General Assembly.

Agenda:

- I. Impact of COVID-19
- II. Kindergarten Readiness in 2020
- III. Addressing Inequities and Improving Quality through Virginia Educator Incentive
- IV. Update on ECCE Transition
- V. Critical ECCE Needs

I. Impact of COVID-19

Impact on School-based ECCE

In line with local decisions, school-based programs are offering preschool in multiple formats and working to reach expected enrollment. Virtual preschool is challenging but still preferred by many families.

Delivery Model

- School programs are implementing 4 different delivery models: fully in-person, partial in-person, hybrid, fully remote. The majority provide some form of in-person instruction. See map for detail.
- Schools were encouraged to prioritize early learners and special education for in-person services.

Enrollment

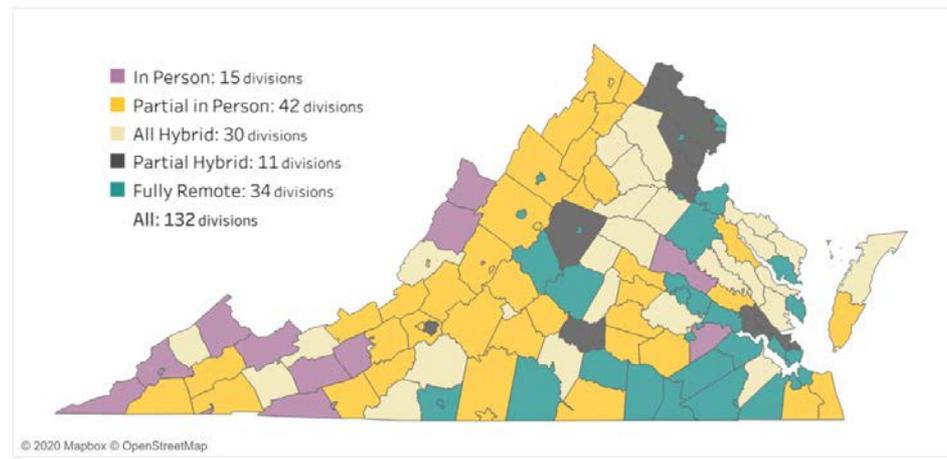
- For Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), 13% or 2,479 fewer 4 year olds were enrolled in fall 2020 (16,680 four-year-olds enrolled as of 10/1/20 compared to 19,159 enrolled on 10/1/2019)
- Using waiver flexibility, VPI programs estimate filling 3,191 vacant slots by 1/8/21 for a total enrollment of 19,871.
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) count will be in December 2020. Divisions must serve all eligible children.

Experience

- Preschool teachers have made significant shifts to offer virtual preschool as it is difficult to develop relationships and support social-emotional skill-building for younger children in the virtual context. Many families still prefer virtual preschool.
- Half of divisions report lower referrals for early childhood special education services. Nearly all divisions are now offering in-person and virtual evaluations; only 13% of divisions report using remote-only methods.

Map of Delivery Models for School-based ECCE

Virginia's Return to School Instructional Schedules Fall 2020



As of Date

- November 12
- September 22
- September 8

In Person = 4+ days of in person instruction for all students

Partial in Person = 4+ days in person for some students (usually the younger grades); hybrid or remote for all other students

All Hybrid = all students with some in person and some remote (none hitting the 4 days/week threshold)

Partial Hybrid = some students hybrid (usually the younger grades; none hitting the 4 days/week threshold), all others fully remote

Fully Remote = learning is remote for the vast majority of students, while some students may have in-person learning experiences

Hybrid schedule description

- A = Group A
- B = Group B
- C = Group C
- D = Group D
- R = Remote

Implementing VPI Changes

In response to Executive Directive 4, the Biennial Budget called for multiple changes to VPI to maximize usage and improve effectiveness. Though funds were unallotted and/or reverted, the VDOE worked closely with the field to implement the language changes where appropriate to meet the needs of educators and children.

Redistribution of Slots (Four-year-olds)

- Despite recruiting during a pandemic, 8 school divisions were able to fill 109 additional slots that were redistributed to them. In prior years, these slots would have been “left on the table” leaving at-risk children unserved.

Pilot for Serving Three-year-olds in VPI

- Twenty-four VPI programs are participating in the VPI Pilot for Serving Three-Year-Olds with 733 children and families receiving services.

Community Provider Add-on

- 459 four-year-olds and 101 three-year-olds are served in community provider settings receiving add-on funds.

Ratio Flexibility

- Divisions are using teacher:child ratio flexibility where needed to help prepare more children for kindergarten.

Impact on Head Start

Head Start programs continue to operate, serving Virginia's most vulnerable three and four year olds and have relied on flexibilities in federal oversight for program operations, monitoring and reporting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delivery Model

- Early Head Start and Head Start currently provide the following, typically in line with their local school division:
 - Hybrid - 70%
 - Virtual Learning - 20%
 - Full In-person - 10%

Enrollment

- For Head Start, 30% or 4,250 fewer children are being served to date (10,213 are currently reported being served as compared to the 14,463 children served in 2019 per the Office of Head Start Program Information Report)
- All 50 Early Head Start and Head Start grantee agencies are currently below enrollment. They continue to recruit, and enroll children on a continual basis to meet their Total Funded Enrollment.

Experience

- Similar to VPI, programs report challenges in offering virtual Head Start but note that many families prefer virtual.
- Staffing continues to be an operational challenge for in-person programming.

Impact on Child Care

Child care, whether in centers or family day homes, has been significantly negatively impacted by COVID-19. Child care programs have offered safe, in-person programming throughout the entire pandemic yet have experienced the most instability and suffered the greatest financial impact.

Delivery Model and Enrollment

- At the peak of closures in mid-April, nearly half of all providers were temporarily closed
- As of November 16, ~1,900 providers remain closed, representing 30% of all providers and 35% of child capacity
- Family day home providers have been most likely to remain open and operational throughout the pandemic; today roughly 84% are open.
- 50% of open providers report expanding capacity to serve school-age children in virtual learning.

Experience

- CARES funding has been helpful but does not fully address financial loss experienced by the field.
- VDOE and VDSS have worked together to issue guidelines to providers, offer policy flexibility, and distribute supplies
- Open providers will receive a shipment of PPE from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management in December, including facial coverings, gloves, no-touch thermometers, and cleaning supplies
- Staffing continues to be a significant operational challenge for in-person programming.

Overview of Relief Funding to Support the Field

In response to feedback from the field, agencies used funding to address most critical needs.

VDOE	
CARES Act via GEER	\$10 million
Funds for unallotted VPI initiatives (waitlists, community-provider add on, 3-year-old pilot)	\$7 million Funds committed, to be spent in spring 21
Professional development and coaching on social-emotional	\$1 million Contract in place
VECF Mixed Delivery program	\$2 million Contract in place
CARES Act via ESSER	\$16,000
Support emergency child care in schools during 2019-2020 school year	\$16,000 Payments completed
CARES Act via Head Start	\$12.3 million
Support EHS/HS grantees' COVID response efforts	\$12.3 million Funding was federal-to-local; total reflects amount received by grantees in Virginia

VDSS*	
CARES Act via CCDBG	\$70.6 million
Two rounds of direct grants to child care providers (CARES grants)	\$54 million Fully spent
Paid absence days for subsidy vendors	\$5.9 million Fully spent
Waiving copayments for CCSP parents April-June	\$3.7 million Fully spent
Increased maximum reimbursement rate for Level I providers	\$7 million Payments just begun
CRF (must be expended by 12/31/20)	Up to \$76.6 million
Direct grants to providers (CARES II waiting list; CARES III)	Up to \$60 million Payments just begun
School-age child care**	Up to \$16.6 million Payments just begun

* The final FY 2021 budget also included \$16.6 million in SGF to support child care services for school-age children.

** \$4 million is currently contracted to support school-age care.

Overview of Waivers Used to Respond to Pandemic

Agencies have used waivers to support educators and families throughout the pandemic response.

VDOE

- **Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)**
 - No Spring 2020 assessment requirement
 - Timing flexibility in Fall 2020
- **Virginia Preschool Initiative Enrollment**
 - Extended enrollment from September through January at prorated rate
 - Flexibility with local eligibility criteria to reflect COVID 19 need
- **Extension for Child Care Market Rate Report**
 - Six month extension for community provider add-on due to instability of child care market

VDSS

- **Child Care Licensing**
 - Leniency around time frames for staff training and orientation
 - Extended duration for which short-term day centers can operate
 - Permitting “desk inspections” instead of on-site
 - Waiving licensure fees
- **Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP)**
 - Eliminating the requirement for in-person interviews
 - Extending eligibility periods for families up for renewal
 - Eliminating family copayments through June
 - Increasing number of paid absence days
 - Increasing payment rates for unlicensed providers.

II. Kindergarten Readiness in 2020

Kindergarten Readiness in 2020

Virginia is currently evaluating all students entering kindergarten on literacy, math, and social-emotional skills to help provide insight on impact of COVID-19. Data, however, will likely not be fully comparable to prior years.

For the 2020-2021:

- UVA added well-being items and made adjustments to the tools based on current situation (e.g., social play).
- UVA, in partnership with VDOE, has worked with the field to update guidance and support teachers on changes.
- Fall timeline extended through 11/19 for PALS and additional time waivers granted for other components.
- Data on ~70,000 kindergartners is in the system; UVA and VDOE are working to address gap.
- PALS and social skills/self-regulation can be administered virtually; half of divisions have administered virtually.
- No virtual option available for math, resulting in fewer assessments completed to date (47% of students).
- 22 divisions are piloting VKRP with four year olds.

2019 data suggests significant disparities:

- 44% (37,587) of kindergartners entered school behind in one or more key readiness areas:
 - 56% of children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
 - 66% of children with disabilities
 - 64% of Dual Language Learner students
 - 58% of Hispanic, 53% of Black and 49% of American Indian/Alaska Native students
- Spring data not collected due to COVID-19 and the resulting closure of schools

3. Addressing Inequities and Improving Quality through the Virginia Early Childhood Educator Incentive

Virginia's Early Childhood Educator Incentive

Virginia used federal funds to pilot an innovative early childhood incentive to reduce turnover and improve quality. Evaluation findings demonstrate that the incentive was effective and additional state funding will help serve more child care educators who typically make \$10-12/hour.

Key Findings:

- In FY20, ~2000 teachers received a payment of \$1500 (Total = \$2,876,000).
- School- and center-based teachers who worked with children 0-5 for 30 or more hours per week.
- UVA research showed that the recognition payment significantly reduced teacher turnover in child care.
- Teachers who received 3 payments of \$500 stayed at their jobs at higher rates than those who received a one-time \$1,500 payment.

Going Forward:

- Educator incentive is now limited to teachers in publicly-funded child care centers and family day homes in response to research findings and equity concerns.
- Approx. 3000 teachers are eligible for this incentive thanks to \$3 million in additional state funding.
- Key innovations for year two:
 1. Offering more frequent payments (6 payments of \$250 vs. 3 payments of \$500)
 2. Texting teachers to provide more information on the incentive and support for retention

4. Update on ECCE Transition

Update on ECCE Transition

HB 1012/SB 528 unified early childhood at the VDOE to create a single point of accountability for school readiness, align expectations and funding, increase access and support all programs to strengthen quality.

Head Start State Collaboration	Child Care Quality Improvement	CCDF Lead Agency	Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP)	Child Care Licensing
Transition complete	Transition complete	MOA in progress; July 1, 2021 transition	MOA in progress; July 1, 2021 transition	MOA complete; July 1, 2021 transition
Head Start State Collaboration Office is Virginia's liaison between the federal Office of Head Start, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in Virginia, and broader early childhood initiatives across the state	The Quality team oversees contracts related to quality improvement and professional development for the early childhood workforce.	The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the largest source of federal funding for child care services and quality improvement. As Lead Agency, VDOE will set policy and determine how VA utilizes CCDF.	Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program is funded by CCDF and provides direct child care services to eligible families. Children are eligible if they are under age 13, meet income requirements, and have parents who are working or in school.	The Child Care Licensing team sets and oversees basic health and safety requirements for child care providers and conducts required annual inspections.

Transition Timeline

Virginia is on track to fully transition CCDF by July 1, 2021 as required by law.

- HSSCO and CCPOD staff transition to VDOE on July 1, 2020
- Transition Work Group kicks off

- BOE selects members of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC)
- 2022 General Assembly session

- VDOE assumes oversight of child care licensing; child care subsidy
- VDOE becomes CCDF Lead Agency
- Child care licensing staff transfer to VDOE

Spring 2020

Summer 2020

Fall 2020

Winter 2020/2021

Spring 2021

Summer 2021

- Legislation unifying Virginia's ECCE System under VDOE passes the state legislature
- Transition planning begins

- MOAs for transfer of child care licensing functions; child care subsidy oversight finalized
- ECAC recruitment begins

- First ECAC meeting
- VDOE onboards new staff to support transition, ongoing child care operations

5. Critical ECCE Needs

Critical ECCE Needs Going Forward

State agencies, in partnership with the Governor's Office, continue to support the field, focused on Virginia's most vulnerable children and families, many of whom are most impacted by COVID-19 and most likely to be essential workers. Additional funding and flexibility will likely be needed to:

- Ensure more at-risk children have access to VPI and VECF Mixed Delivery, including three-year-olds, to fully prepare most vulnerable and COVID-19 impacted children for kindergarten;
- Expand the early childhood educator incentive to more child care educators who continue to serve on the front-lines of the pandemic and help ensure essential workers can work by providing safe, quality child care and support for virtual learning;
- Address the dynamic needs of educators and children, including the social-emotional needs of children; and
- Support a seamless CCDF transition and full recovery for the ECCE sector, especially child care.

Questions?