



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of the Governor*

## *Executive Order*

**NUMBER TWENTY ONE (2014)**

### **CHAMPIONS FOR VIRGINIA'S CHILDREN: VIRGINIA CHILDREN'S CABINET**

#### **Importance of the Issues**

With a longstanding history of prioritizing our youngest generation, Virginia has a distinguished record as one of the best states for children and families. This achievement has been accomplished through a firm commitment to the highest quality of life, health care, public safety, K-12 and higher education, and a vibrant business environment that promotes job growth, employment opportunities, and career advancement.

We must ensure that youth throughout Virginia can excel, beginning in their earliest years. Addressing the challenges that face our children requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on strengthening families and stemming the tide of poverty. To build Virginia's workforce, we must continue to invest in and foster the development of healthy and well-educated children who are prepared to be productive members of our communities as adults.

The Commonwealth of Virginia must cultivate a solid foundation for our children and their families through supportive measures that promote: 1) early childhood development programs and basic healthcare needs, 2) age-appropriate mental health services, 3) first-rate, coordinated services for at-risk youth, 4) critical educational outcomes and academic readiness to succeed, and 5) nutritional security and access to stable housing. The education, health, safety, and well-being of Virginia's children are fundamental to the Commonwealth's future.

#### **Establishment of the Cabinet**

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby initiate Champions for Virginia's Children with the establishment of the Virginia Children's Cabinet ("Children's Cabinet").

## Virginia Children's Cabinet

The Children's Cabinet shall develop and implement a comprehensive policy agenda related to the education, health, safety, and well-being of youth throughout the Commonwealth. It shall evaluate and recommend strategies to optimize and align local, state, and federal public resources, and public-private partnerships to enhance current and prospective programs and services for Virginia's children and their families, particularly those at highest risk. It shall also identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Additionally, the Children's Cabinet shall provide leadership and strategic direction, facilitate the sharing of information, and work to improve service delivery of state programs. It shall identify specific goals, outcomes, and metrics to accomplish its work during this administration. These issues are interrelated and require regular communication and collaboration across local, state, and federal agencies, secretariats, industry sectors, and other related constituencies. It will coordinate with other state entities as appropriate to remain apprised of developing issues.

## Children's Cabinet Priorities

By collaborating across secretariats and working with local, state, and federal agencies, private industry, non-profit organizations, the Children's Cabinet will work to ensure that effective supports are in place to achieve the following:

1. **Beyond the barriers.** Schools in high-poverty communities face numerous systemic societal barriers (such as unstable housing, high crime rates, health, nutritional, and social challenges). The myriad of issues facing these schools and their students must be addressed. Opportunities for increased support will be identified, including, but not limited to, community and social services for Virginia's most vulnerable children and their families.
2. **Raising the foundation.** High quality early child care, increased access to pre-K, and educational programs lay the foundation for academic achievement. Child care providers must be held accountable to provide quality care so that our youngest children will thrive and obtain the necessary skills to contribute to our communities.
3. **Access to basics.** Access to healthcare, housing, and proper nutrition must be facilitated to meet basic needs and ensure the healthy growth, development, and well-being of our children and their families.
4. **Triumph over transitions.** Services for youth who are transitioning out of Virginia's juvenile justice, mental health, and foster care systems will be assessed. Best practices will be determined, and replication will be encouraged. Factors leading to youth entering the juvenile justice system will be identified to reduce the impact of incarceration. Issues related to educational and work transitions from preschool to K-12 education, and K-12 education to college and/or the workforce, will also be examined.
5. **Working parents, building families.** Policies and services that encourage workforce development efforts for parents through education, credential training, career development, and employment will be addressed.

## Composition of the Children's Cabinet

The Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Resources shall serve as Co-Chairs of the Children's Cabinet.

The Children's Cabinet will be appointed by the Governor and consist of the Lieutenant Governor, the First Lady, the Secretaries of Commerce and Trade, Education, Health and Human Resources, and Public Safety and Homeland Security. The Children's Cabinet Co-Chairs may invite other Secretaries to participate as needed and appropriate.

**Staffing**

Staff support for the Children's Cabinet will be provided by the Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Resources, and any other agencies or offices as may be designated by the Governor. The Children's Cabinet will serve in an advisory role, in accordance with § 2.2-2100 of the *Code of Virginia*, and will meet upon the call of the Chairs at least four times per year. The Children's Cabinet will issue an annual report by no later than June 1, and any additional reports and recommendations as necessary or as requested by the Governor.

**Effective Date of the Executive Order**

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect until January 9, 2018, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 11th day of August, 2014.



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Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

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Levar M. Stoney, Secretary of the Commonwealth