

## State-Level Trauma Informed Policy Talking Points for Partners

### Background on State-Level Trauma Informed Policy

Recognizing childhood trauma has become a necessary component of shaping policy to improve child outcomes. Voices has been encouraged by the work happening through local/regional Trauma Informed Community Networks to bring awareness to the issue and to help encourage policy and practice to become trauma-informed. Over the last year state policymakers have become more aware of trauma informed policy. This year Virginia was one of 20 states to consider legislation on trauma informed policy. The Commission on Youth hosted a [Family Impact Seminar on Trauma Informed Policy](#) and the Children's Cabinet has identified trauma as a priority.

We have reached a pivotal moment to build off of this momentum and help point to a new direction of trauma informed policy at the state level. Voices has conducted research on how other states are approaching this topic and has taken part in discussions with national organization over the summer. (Read more about three state-level policy examples from MI, TN & SC [here](#).) The COY Family Impact Seminar led [to recommendations for the Commission](#) to consider supporting during the 2018 Session. And our [candidates running to be the next governor of Virginia](#) have been supportive of the issue.

**Now it's time to hear more from advocates, services providers, and families who want Virginia to continue to move in this direction!**

### Weigh in with the Commission on Youth by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>!

The [Commission on Youth \(COY\)](#) is an arm of the Virginia General Assembly to study issues impacting children and youth in the Commonwealth. This Commission, made up of a bi-partisan group of delegates and senators, will weigh several recommendations around trauma-informed policy to consider supporting during the 2018 GA Session. COY is accepting public comment on these proposals until Nov. 1, 2018 and will vote on endorsing these proposals at its Nov. 8, 2018 meeting.

**The next page includes a sample support letter to the Commission on Youth that we encourage you to send from your organization prior to the Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.**

- Comments may be submitted by email at [aatkinson@vcoy.virginia.gov](mailto:aatkinson@vcoy.virginia.gov)
- Comments may also be submitted by hand-delivery or mail to the Commission on Youth, 900 E. Main St, Floor 11, Richmond, VA 23219
- Comments may be faxed to [804-371-0574](tel:804-371-0574)

### Why Do We Need to Weigh in on This Issue?

Policymakers must hear from their constituents on areas of interest. As this is an area of cross-cutting interest to many organizations and communities, we want them to understand the breadth of potential impact and that these proposals are of keen interest to their voters.

In typical Voices fashion, we are focusing our suggested talking points on the recommendations that we believe to be the most feasible in terms of bi-partisan support and most impactful to improve outcomes for children. We hope this is the initial step in moving towards long-term work on specific trauma-informed training, interventions, and practice changes in Virginia.

**SAMPLE LETTER WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION’S LOGO OR YOUR INDIVIDUAL INFO**

DATE

Dear Commissioner Favola and Members of the Commission on Youth:

I encourage you to adopt the recommendations on trauma-informed policies presented at the September 20, 2017 Commission on Youth meeting. I/MY ORG supports these recommendations because we work on implementing trauma informed policy and practice as part of our (direct services, staff training/professional development, TICN, etc.) We have seen better outcomes for the children we serve through EXAMPLE.

In particular, I encourage your support of the following recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1- Support budget language and a small appropriation to establish a trauma-informed care workgroup and coordination function.** Given the amount of interest in the topic and the need to provide a common framework, state agency leadership should partner with local systems, community-based organizations, and advocates to establish a shared goals, definitions, and impact measures for trauma-informed policy. This workgroup could build off existing expertise in Virginia, as well as effective strategies from other states and communities to develop a collective impact model to help shape state policy. The staffing component is essential to work across state agencies, provide expertise, conduct research, and facilitate the work. As this work aligns with the Children’s Cabinet, it should be embedded in the continuation of the Children’s Cabinet.
- **Recommendation 2- Support a small grants program.** Additional funds would be needed to establish and strengthen local systems change and direct services initiatives within localities. Small grants could be used to pilot best practice initiatives, support evaluation projects, encourage professional development, and improve awareness and connections in local communities. The Family and Children’s Trust Fund (FACT) is well-positioned to accept public or private funding and to administer grants on a competitive basis. A letter to FACT and the Administration should encourage seeking additional funds for this purpose.

I also encourage you to consider supporting additional recommendations to strengthen trauma-informed practice and policy in the future. Schools are an essential component of identifying children who have experienced trauma and providing additional supports. The role of teachers, social workers, mental health personnel, and administrators should be carefully considered when rolling out new initiatives. If the state policy workgroup is adopted, representatives from Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports and local initiatives should be key partners to identify unmet needs and opportunities to leverage existing training and resources. Similarly, the workgroup can also be used to identify shared goals before considering the feasibility of a public awareness campaign.

I hope that you will endorse these recommendations, with a priority for immediate action on recommendations 1 and 2. These recommendations represent essential first steps to tackle state-level policy and practice change. As you put forward these recommendations to the General Assembly, I pledge to work towards supporting their adoption and their future implementation.

Sincerely,

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