

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP ADVOCATE? IT'S EASY!

- Learn the names and contact information of your elected officials on the national, state and local levels and let them know when you have opinions or concerns about issues. Let them know that you want them to actively and directly support parent education as well as child abuse and neglect prevention.
- Register to vote and use your vote to reflect your concern for families.
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Offer background information and story ideas about issues affecting children and families.
- Organize fundraising activities or donate to benefit organizations that help children and families.



8100 Three Chopt Road, Suite 212
Richmond, VA 23229
804.359.6166
FamiliesForwardVA.org



Families Forward *Position Statements 2019*

Disrupting the cycle of child abuse, neglect and poverty by strengthening Virginia's families and communities

As the state leader in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, it's our goal to protect Virginia's children and strengthen Virginia's families. Families Forward supports legislation that is directly or indirectly aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect in any form, including physical abuse or neglect, mental abuse or neglect, and sexual abuse. We support the Children's Cabinet and the Executive Branch's commitment to address the needs of children under the age of 18.

PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND PREVENT CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Families Forward supports the development of a state framework to implement evidence-based trauma-informed policy and practice. Its purpose is to help identify innovations, interventions and funding to support resilient children, families and communities.

CAREGIVER PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

Families Forward affirms that all children need guidance and discipline, and supports parents as their children's first and best teachers. We advocate teaching alternative forms of discipline to parents and caregivers to avoid physically punishing children. We oppose the use of physical punishment by parents and caregivers for the following reasons:

- Other forms of discipline have been proven to be more effective
- Physical punishment teaches that physical force and violence are acceptable ways to settle disputes
- Some physical punishment that is not intended to be severe escalates to abuse
- Severe physical punishment is child abuse

INSTITUTIONAL PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

Families Forward advocates for the elimination of physical punishment of children in Virginia's schools, residential facilities and other institutions. We support teaching alternative forms of discipline to teachers, school administrators, day care providers, foster parents and other caregivers.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

We support investigation and court procedures that acknowledge the needs of child witnesses and prevent the victimization of children in the legal system and courtroom. This includes civil and criminal cases, including divorce and custody matters. We support children in the child welfare system being informed and having a voice in court proceedings that affect their lives.

EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Families Forward supports the elimination of child trafficking and child pornography in any medium.

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Families Forward supports and endorses any policy that enhances the child welfare system, especially in the following areas:

- Trauma informed practice
- Child abuse and neglect reporting laws
- Investigation procedures for reports of child abuse or neglect, including monitoring the effectiveness of Structured Decision Making and the Differential Response System
- Services for children in foster care and kinship care, and training and support for their caregivers
- Treatment resources for children in the welfare system, including children in foster care
- Data collection and analysis of the abuse and neglect of children and programs within the child welfare system
- The creation of a federally-mandated national data system
- The implementation of an effective data management system within the Commonwealth

FUNDING FOR PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND TREATMENT

Families Forward supports funding for the following:

- Child welfare employees to reach the best practice standard of 20 cases per caseworker
- Early support services for 100% of births
- High quality and innovative prevention and treatment services under the Children's Services Act
- Ongoing training of police, attorneys and judges
- Expansion of treatment resources for Community Service Boards to fully meet the needs of families and children

CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Because child maltreatment is a complex problem with a multitude of causes, we believe that an approach to prevention must encompass an array of services for families and children. We support the development of prevention and treatment programs to provide a continuum of care in every Virginia community for families at every level of need. We encourage the continuation and enhancement of:

- Specialized programs such as home visiting for new and expectant parents
- Parent education programs
- Family support programs and services
- Trauma informed treatment programs woven through all services
- Life skills training for children and young adults
- Sexual abuse prevention programs
- Public information and education initiatives
- Programs and resources to help kinship caregivers
- Initiatives that support child safety at home, in the community and on the internet

PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE

We advocate preventing child abuse and neglect through increases in programs and outreach efforts aimed at promoting homes free of substance abuse. We support policies, practices and regulations that address the identification and treatment of substance-exposed infants and their mothers. We also promote developing adequate treatment services for parents and caregivers with substance use disorder.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Families Forward advocates for increased collaboration among child abuse and domestic violence organizations with the goal of eliminating violence in the home. We advocate for policies that provide more active protective-services intervention in cases where children witness domestic violence.

CHILDREN AND GUNS

Families Forward supports gun safety and gun storage measures and education to prevent death, injury and trauma to children.

VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA

Families Forward supports and encourages nonviolent programming for all media that is targeted to children.

CAREGIVER AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Families Forward supports policies and resources that ensure adequate treatment and prevention services for all caregivers, adults and children who are at risk of or have identified mental health needs.

VOLUNTARY HOME VISITING PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES

Families Forward supports the development of community-based, voluntary home visiting programs to maximize parenting skills, promote school readiness, promote family stability and child health, and eliminate child abuse and neglect. We support universal contact and voluntary assessment of parent and caregiver needs as a way to educate young families about the services available in their communities.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

Quality child care reduces child abuse and neglect and promotes healthy development. Families Forward endorses efforts to assist caregivers in providing quality child care services, assist parents in accessing quality child care for their children, and passing stronger regulations for in-home child care.

SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Families Forward supports school and community environments that are safe and inclusive of all children, and that are free from discrimination on any basis, harassment, aggression, violence and all forms of abuse and neglect.