



**Advisory Committee to the
Court Appointed Special Advocate
and Children's Justice Act Programs**

AGENDA

In-Person Committee Meeting

Virginia Department of Social Services
5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060
York River Room, 111B
April 24, 2026
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

- 1. Welcome, Roll Call and Introduction of Guests**
- 2. Review and approval of January 23, 2026, Minutes**
- 3. Citizen Review Panel**
 - Development of 2026 CRP Recommendations
- 4. CJA Program Update**
 - CJA Priorities Discussion
- 5. CASA Program Update**
 - Annual Report FY2025
 - 28th Judicial District CASA Program Update
- 6. Final Outcome of Tracked General Assembly Bills**
- 7. Adjournment**

Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs
Strategic Planning Meeting

Implementation Period: October 1, 2026–September 30, 2029

THREE-YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPMENT

Background: Recommendations 1–3 are carried over from the previous three-year plan, as work in these areas is ongoing. Recommendation 4 represents a new priority area for CJA and needs to stand alone as its own recommendation. Recommendations 1–4 (in blue) need to remain in the three-year plan. Recommendations 5–6 are also carried over from the last plan but may require refinement or consolidation into other recommendations. Recommendations 7–8 are new additions for this three-year plan and reflect collaborative work currently underway at DCJS with anticipated future expansion. Notice that Recommendations 4, 7, and 8 include more detailed draft language. This language is intended to help facilitate our discussion and should not be considered final. Ideally, the final wording of Recommendations 4, 7, and 8 will align with the style of the others following our discussion. Historically, the Virginia CJA Program has adopted five to six recommendations in each three-year plan.

Proposed Three-Year Recommendation Themes	1. MDT Support	2. Policy	3. CASA Support	4. Children with Disabilities	5. Multi-Systems Training	6. Evidence-Informed Best Practices	7. Anti-trafficking Efforts for Youth	8. Children Affected by Domestic Violence
Draft Recommendation Language	Develop state level collaborative teams that support sustainability for regional and local multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) that focus on child abuse and neglect, including child exploitation.	Develop, support, and monitor new and existing policies and legislation that may have an impact on criminal justice and child protection systems.	Encourage the implementation, development, and growth of CASA programs throughout the Commonwealth in pursuit of the vision that every child in every jurisdiction have access to a CASA volunteer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote practices that ensure children with disabilities affected by child abuse and neglect receive accessible and appropriate services across all programs. • Promote disability-inclusive, trauma-informed approaches, including training of professionals, that uphold the rights and dignity 	Continue collaborative partnerships with allied agencies that support children and families involved in the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases by collaborating and offering trauma-informed training.	Promote evidence-based best practices and support innovative promising practices while examining past challenges to address child abuse and neglect in Virginia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote early identification and response protocols to improve the ability of investigators, prosecutors, and allied professionals to recognize potential trafficking and child maltreatment indicators and to connect children with appropriate, trauma-informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand trauma-informed developmentally appropriate services that address the unique needs of children exposed to domestic violence. • Enhance coordination among child-serving systems, domestic violence programs, schools, and community

				<p>of children with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand training for providers to improve identification, support, and referral pathways for children with disabilities who are at risk or experiencing harm. 			<p>services during case handling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand cross-system training to increase provider capacity to understand risk factors, warning signs, and effective intervention strategies for youth. Promote youth-centered prevention strategies that address vulnerabilities, build protective factors, and support safe, stable environments. 	<p>partners to ensure a unified, child-centered response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase provider training on recognizing the signs of exposure to domestic violence and delivering safe, appropriate interventions.
Additional Notes	MDT support is gaining attention across the Commonwealth. CACVA is no longer providing MDT training.	Continue to update CDIP, Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) (FACT project), youth mental health, and children affected by substance use disorders.		This is a new priority area for CJA.			The CJA program continues to collaborate and support anti-trafficking efforts that are developed by the State Trafficking Coordinator at DCJS.	DCJS Domestic Violence Concept papers initiative – seeking to make change within the DV movement, improve impact. January 2027 start for two years.
Recommendation Aligns with CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)	A/B/C	B	C	A	A/B/C	A/B	A/C	A/B

Recommendation Aligns with Priority Area(s):	1/2/3/4	3	1/2	4	1/2/3	1/2/3/4	1/2/3	1/2/3
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CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)(A), (B), and (C):

- A. Investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, in a manner which reduces the additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused;
- B. Experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused; and
- C. Reform of State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children, which may include those children involved in reports of child abuse or neglect with a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, from child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.

CJA Priority Areas:

1. The assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the child's family;
2. The assessment and investigation of cases of suspected child abuse-related fatalities and suspected child neglect-related fatalities;
3. The investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
4. The assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Citizen Review Panel 2026 Recommendations

DRAFT 4-15-26

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Citizen Review Panel Overview

The Virginia Department of Social Services has the responsibility to identify three Citizen Review Panels to comply with the requirements of the Reauthorization of the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 2023, Title 42, U.S.C. §§. [5106\(c\)\(1\)\(A\)\(i\) and \(ii\)](#). The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee serves as one of three Citizen Review Panels (CRP) in Virginia.

CAPTA directs each panel established as a CRP to examine the policies, procedures and practices of state and local departments of social services and, where appropriate, review specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA State plan. A panel may also examine other criteria it considers important to ensure the protection of children including the extent to which the state and local child protective services (CPS) system is coordinated with the Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act. CRPs are also authorized to review child fatalities and near fatalities in the state.

[The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee prioritized this year's recommendations to highlight the issues most urgently in need of attention.](#)

1. Child Abuse Prevention

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) should continue to focus timely prevention efforts that ensure the safety and well-being of children and support families in ways that provide support and enhance timely permanency. This includes providing services to prevent removal, and services to support adoptive and kinship families.

a. Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

VDSS should continue implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and build capacity for, and awareness of, evidence-based practices and holistic, family-centered services. Primary and secondary prevention efforts should focus on avoiding further social services engagement and continued need for tertiary services. Available services should include respite for all members of the family, including siblings in the home. VDSS should consider including the development and integration of best practices of the Science of Hope framework in working with children and families. Education stability should be included as a prevention strategy [to include increased collaboration with school division foster care liaisons and McKinney Vento liaisons.](#)

b. Parental Child Safety Placement Program Implementation

The Virginia Parental Child Safety Placement Program (PCSPP) intends to prevent unnecessary foster care entry by supporting temporary, time limited placements with relatives or fictive kin when a child's safety is at risk. The program requires accountability for such pre-court placements. Legislation was passed in 2024, and the goal of the program is to provide services to the family while assessing safety for the child.

The Advisory Committee seeks updates on the implementation of the PCSPP. Information should include reports on the number of cases served, length of time cases are served, interventions and services provided, the outcomes of those efforts, and the number of court actions subsequently initiated.

c. Child Abuse Prevention Services Model

The VDSS should develop mechanisms for reporting on its prevention services model. This would include establishing criteria and definitions of the various levels of prevention interventions. Consideration should include reports on the number of prevention (pre-court intervention) cases served, length of time cases are served in prevention, outcomes of prevention efforts, interventions and services provided, how many prevention cases required additional DSS intervention, and what types of intervention took place.

2. System Improvement

a. Workforce Support and Development

VDSS continues to focus on family engagement practices as a cornerstone of the child welfare system. To implement family engagement practices effectively, more trained workers are needed. VDSS should explore establishing minimum education and experience requirements for new workers, in addition to increasing salaries, to reflect the persistent, complex, and high-stakes responsibilities carried by case workers. Efforts should be expended to explore interagency collaboration regarding delivery of case management services and implementation of lived experience navigator services to guide parents and to participate in every level of service delivery, program design, and policy development. VDSS has experienced the impacts of a reduced workforce due to the lingering effects of the pandemic, fiscal constraints, and vicarious trauma. Retention of workers is important to maintain uniformity and strengthen the workforce.

b. Cross System Collaboration

VDSS should encourage local departments of social services (LDSS) to improve communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when investigating child abuse and neglect and participate on a local multidisciplinary team (MDT), if available. Per *Code of Virginia* § 15.2-1627.5, LDSS-Child Protective Services Unit representation is a required member on a local MDT.

VDSS should encourage LDSS agencies to improve cross systems collaboration to support thorough investigations of child abuse and neglect. This should include cross systems joint training opportunities. Upon commencement of dependency proceedings, VDSS should encourage inclusion of attorneys, relatives and other actors in service planning (i.e., family partnership meetings and team meetings). VDSS should establish clear communication protocols between local DSS offices and school divisions.

c. Data Collection and Evaluation

The Advisory Committee makes several data collection and evaluation recommendations. The pandemic presented numerous challenges, especially for frontline workers. The VDSS should continue to examine the preparedness for the COVID19 pandemic and begin planning for the next pandemic that will inevitably strike. Included in this planning should be helping teachers and other mandated reporters to identify child abuse and neglect in a virtual environment.

VDSS should continue to study trends in the reductions of the number of child abuse and neglect complaints and determine if the reduction in complaints actually represents a reduction in harm to children.

VDSS aligned in-home services, CPS ongoing practice, prevention services, and the implementation of the FFPSA. The Advisory Committee requests continued collection of data and evaluation of this alignment.

The Advisory Committee requests data and information around the efforts to implement more Evidence-based programs (EBP) under the FFPSA along with progress in securing providers that are properly certified and authorized to provide EBPs. The Advisory Committee recommends the Virginia Department of Social Services continues collaboration with the Center for Evidence-Based Practices-Virginia to support localities' efforts to build service array capacity.

The Advisory Committee requests data and information on the PCSP to include the number of cases served, length of time cases are served, outcomes of efforts, interventions and services provided, how many cases were non-compliant, and what steps VDSS took when cases were non-compliant.

The Advisory Committee requests data on the number of Relief of Custody cases served by VDSS, including the interventions and services provided.

As VDSS builds the new Child Welfare Information System (CWIS), the Committee requests updates and asks VDSS to seek stakeholder input into the development of data points for the system.

CASA/CJA

HB 53

Chief Patron: Cole, J.G.

Status: Incorporated

Title

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-276.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to student bullying; definition; characteristics of victim.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED

Student bullying; definition; characteristics of victim. Adjusts the definition of "bullying" in the context of public education to specify that the real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim includes such a power imbalance on the basis of the membership of the victim in a group that is protected from discrimination pursuant to the Virginia Human Rights Act.

HB 73

Chief Patron: Cole, J.G.

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-241, 16.1-277.02, and 16.1-278.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to juvenile and domestic relations district courts; petitions for relief of care and custody; custodians.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts; petitions for relief of care and custody; custodians. Allows the custodian of a child to file a petition for relief of the care and custody of such child in a juvenile and domestic relations district court. Current law only authorizes the parent or parents of a child to file such petition for relief of care and custody. The bill also requires the petitioning parent or custodian to cooperate with any services provided by a local department of social services during the initial investigation by such local department of social services after such petition for relief of care and custody has been filed. This bill is a recommendation of the Virginia Commission on Youth and is identical to SB 206.

HB 274

Chief Patron: Walker

Status: Incorporated

Title

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-386.31 of the Code of Virginia, relating to seizure, forfeiture, and destruction of property used in connection with the exploitation and solicitation of children.

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED

Seizure, forfeiture, and destruction of property used in connection with the exploitation and solicitation of children. Requires the court to order the destruction of all audio and visual equipment, electronic equipment, devices, and other personal property used in connection with the possession, production, distribution, publication, sale, possession with intent to distribute, or making of child pornography, or in connection with the solicitation of a person less than 18 years of age, in violation of current law. The bill also (i) requires certain information to be provided by the law-enforcement agency responsible for the destruction, (ii) prohibits destruction of such items to be used in a criminal prosecution until all rights of appeal have been exhausted, and (iii) requires the law-enforcement agency to provide notice, by first-class mail, to the accused

or other interested party, if known, and his attorney at least seven days prior to the destruction of the time and place the destruction will occur.

HB 632

Chief Patron: Callsen

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 63.2-901.2, relating to kinship foster care; barrier crime waiver.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Kinship foster care; barrier crime waiver; report. Establishes a process by which a local department of social services may apply for a barrier crime waiver on behalf of an individual who has been convicted of a Virginia barrier crime that (i) is not (a) included on the list of federal barrier crimes; (b) a violent felony offense; or (c) an offense requiring registration under the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry Act and (ii) does not otherwise fall under a barrier crime exception for foster or adoptive homes for the purpose of approval of the individual's home as a kinship foster home. The bill creates a process by which such a local department of social services may apply to the Department of Social Services for a waiver and for the Department to conduct an assessment of such application. The bill also requires the Department of Social Services to file an annual report by December 1 of each year detailing the specifics of the waiver process to the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the House Committee on Health and Human Services. This bill is identical to SB 305.

HB 644

Chief Patron: Kent

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact § 2.2-3705.7 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Freedom of Information Act; exemption for records of minors participating in certain programs run by state public bodies.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Virginia Freedom of Information Act; exemption for records of minors participating in certain programs run by state bodies. Exempts from the mandatory disclosure requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act the personal contact information of minors who are participating in a program, such as an apprenticeship or unpaid internship or externship, run by a state public body. The bill is a recommendation of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

HB 652

Chief Patron: Hayes

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

A BILL to direct the Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Department of Health to convene a work group to evaluate the Commonwealth's response to parental prenatal and postnatal substance use, the services available to address such substance use, and the effects of such substance use on newborns and children; report.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Department of Social Services; Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; Department of Health; prenatal and postnatal substance use; work group; report. Directs the Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Department of Health to convene a work group to evaluate the Commonwealth's response to parental prenatal and postnatal substance use, the services available to address such substance use, and the effects of such substance use on newborns and children. The bill requires the work group to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the Senate Committees on Education and Health and Rehabilitation and Social Services and the House Committee on Health and Human Services by December 1, 2026. This bill is identical to SB 133.

HB 667

Chief Patron: Maldonado

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-228, 16.1-241, and 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia, relating to juvenile and domestic relations district courts; jurisdiction; definitions; petition by noncitizen aged 18 to 21 years for legal custody.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts; jurisdiction; definitions; petition by noncitizen aged 18 to 21 years for legal custody. Allows an unmarried noncitizen between the ages of 18 and 21 who has been abused, neglected, or abandoned to petition a juvenile and domestic relations district court to be placed in the physical custody of a proposed legal custodian. The bill also includes such unmarried noncitizen in the definitions of "child," "juvenile," and "minor," as such terms are related to juvenile and domestic relations district courts.

HB 942

Chief Patron: Clark

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-278.15 and 20-124.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to custody and visitation; possession or consumption of authorized substances.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Custody and visitation; possession or consumption of authorized substances. Provides that no person shall be denied custody or visitation of a child, based only on the fact that the child's parent or other person responsible for his care, or the person petitioning for custody or visitation of the child, possessed or consumed legally authorized substances. The bill directs the Board of Social Services to amend its regulations, guidance documents, and other instructional materials to ensure that such regulations, documents, and materials comply with, and that investigations and family assessments are conducted by local departments of social services in accordance with, the provisions of the bill.

HB 1060

Chief Patron: Callsen

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 63.2-901.1, 63.2-1721, and 63.2-1722 of the Code of Virginia, relating to foster and adoptive homes; barrier crimes; exceptions.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Foster and adoptive homes; barrier crimes; exceptions. Consolidates existing barrier crime exceptions for foster or adoptive homes, including kinship foster homes, and establishes new barrier crime exceptions for certain drug offenses.

HB 1222

Chief Patron: Delaney

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 63.2-1506 and 63.2-1516 of the Code of Virginia, relating to local departments of social services; child abuse and neglect; recorded interviews.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Local departments of social services; child abuse and neglect; recorded interviews. Requires local departments of social services, unless otherwise demonstrated by good cause shown, to record any child welfare interview, defined in the bill. Under the bill, any person may record any communications between themselves and child-protective services personnel that take place during the course of an investigation or family assessment. Under current law, only a person who is suspected of abuse or neglect of a child and who is the subject of an investigation or family assessment may record such communications.

HB 1327

Chief Patron: Tata

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-228 and 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia, relating to fictive kin; definition.

SUMMARY AS PASSED HOUSE

Child dependency cases; court procedures; fictive kin; definition. Updates the definition of fictive kin to specify that such person is required to have an established relationship with a child or his family prior to the child's initial entry into foster care to meet the definition of fictive kin.

HB 1366

Chief Patron: Callsen

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 63.2-100, 63.2-203, and 63.2-1501 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding sections numbered 63.2-203.1 and 63.2-319.1, relating to Department of Social Services; corrective action plans and assumption of temporary control of local boards and local departments.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Department of Social Services; corrective action plans and assumption of temporary control of local boards and local departments. Grants the Commissioner of Social Services the authority to create and enforce a corrective action plan for any local board of social services or local department of social services that (i) fails to administer public assistance and social services programs in accordance with applicable laws and regulations or (ii) takes any action or fails to act in a manner that poses a substantial risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a child or adult. The bill permits similar authority for any local board of social services that (a) fails to provide child welfare services in accordance with applicable law or regulations or (b) takes any action or fails to act in a manner that poses a substantial risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a child.

Under the bill, if a local board or department fails to comply with a corrective action plan, the Commissioner has the authority to temporarily assume control of all or part of the local board's operations. The bill also provides that, when a local board of social services or local department of social services requests assistance, the Commissioner has the authority to utilize staff of the Department of Social Services or contract with private entities to provide public assistance and social services programs in the locality served by the local board or department. The bill also adds adult services to the definition of "social services" for purposes of Title 63.2 (Welfare (Social Services)).

HB 1414

Chief Patron: McQuinn

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact § 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia, relating to requirement that certain injuries be reported by physicians, nurses, teachers, etc.; penalties for failure to report.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Requirement that certain injuries to children be reported by physicians, nurses, teachers, etc.; penalties for failure to report. Creates a Class 1 misdemeanor for any person required to file a report, pursuant to relevant law, who fails to do so as soon as possible, but not longer than 24 hours after having reason to suspect a reportable offense of child abuse or neglect where such reportable offense is alleged to have occurred at a private or state-operated hospital, institution, or facility to which children have been committed or where children have been placed for care and treatment. The bill also provides that a second or subsequent conviction is a Class 6 felony.

The bill further expands the mandatory reporting requirements for certain enumerated persons in their professional or official capacities to include certain offenses related to children and certain obscenity and related offenses and applies all such mandatory reporting requirements to all public and private school athletics program coaches, directors, and adult volunteers, including those associated with interscholastic teams and clubs. Under current law, the mandatory reporting requirements apply to such enumerated persons who suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child and to public or private sports organization or team athletic coaches, directors, or adult volunteers.

HB 1490

Chief Patron: Tran

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-3803, 2.2-3815, 63.2-105, 63.2-1502, 63.2-1503, 63.2-1508, 63.2-1509, 63.2-1512, and 63.2-1530 of the Code of Virginia and Chapter 604 of the Acts of Assembly of 2017; to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 63.2-1510.1; and to repeal § 63.2-1510 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Department of Social Services; centralized hotline for reports or complaints of child abuse or neglect.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Department of Social Services; centralized intake system for reports or complaints of child abuse or neglect; response to complaints within 24 hours for children under three years of age. Establishes a centralized hotline for reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect. The bill requires the Department of Social Services to establish and maintain a hotline for reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect and specifies that the Department shall determine the validity of such reports and complaints. The bill eliminates the requirement that local departments must be capable of receiving and responding to reports and complaints of abuse or neglect and instead requires that any complaint of child abuse or neglect received by a

local department shall be immediately forwarded to the Department's child abuse and neglect hotline. Such provisions of the bill have a delayed effective date of July 1, 2027.

The bill also directs the Department of Social Services to (i) promulgate regulations necessary to implement the provisions of the bill by July 1, 2027, and (ii) contract with a third party by August 1, 2026, to conduct a comprehensive study and review of the screening process used for child protective services complaints across Virginia.

SB 125

Chief Patron: Favola

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-438 through 2.2-444, 2.2-446, and 2.2-447 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Office of the Children's Ombudsman; powers and duties; report; recommendations.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Office of the Children's Ombudsman; powers and duties; report; recommendations. Makes a number of changes to the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (the Office). The bill expands the Office's access to certain records and reports and allows the Office to report certain complaints to the Office of the Inspector General. Under the bill, the Office is required to report findings and recommendations related to failures by state agencies to protect children to the Governor or General Assembly upon request. Under current law, such reports are made to the General Assembly. The bill makes certain changes to the Office's reporting and recommendation requirements. Finally, the bill adds and amends several definitions related to the Office.

SB 133

Chief Patron: Locke

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to direct the Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Department of Health to convene a work group to evaluate the Commonwealth's response to parental prenatal and postnatal substance use, the services available to address such substance use, and the effects of such substance use on newborns and children; report.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Department of Social Services; Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; Department of Health; prenatal and postnatal substance use; work group; report. Directs the Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Department of Health to convene a work group to evaluate the Commonwealth's response to parental prenatal and postnatal substance use, the services available to address such substance use, and the effects of such substance use on newborns and children. The bill requires the work group to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the Senate Committees on Education and Health and Rehabilitation and Social Services and the House Committee on Health and Human Services by December 1, 2026. This bill is identical to HB 652.

SB 206

Chief Patron: Suetterlein

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-241, 16.1-277.02, and 16.1-278.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to juvenile and domestic relations district courts; petitions for relief of care and custody; custodians.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts; petitions for relief of care and custody; custodians. Allows the custodian of a child to file a petition for relief of the care and custody of such child in a juvenile and domestic relations district court. Current law only authorizes the parent or parents of a child to file such petition for relief of care and custody. The bill also requires the petitioning parent or custodian to cooperate with any services provided by a local department of social services during the initial investigation by such local department of social services after such petition for relief of care and custody has been filed. This bill is a recommendation of the Virginia Commission on Youth and is identical to HB 73.

SB 305

Chief Patron: Pekarsky

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 63.2-901.2, relating to kinship foster care; barrier crime waiver.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Kinship foster care; barrier crime waiver; report. Establishes a process by which a local department of social services may apply for a barrier crime waiver on behalf of an individual who has been convicted of a Virginia barrier crime that (i) is not (a) included on the list of federal barrier crimes; (b) a violent felony offense; or (c) an offense requiring registration under the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry Act and (ii) does not otherwise fall under a barrier crime exception for foster or adoptive homes for the purpose of approval of the individual's home as a kinship foster home. The bill creates a process by which such a local department of social services may apply to the Department of Social Services for a waiver and for the Department to conduct an assessment of such application. The bill also requires the Department of Social Services to file an annual report by December 1 of each year detailing the specifics of the waiver process to the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the House Committee on Health and Human Services. This bill is identical to HB 632.

SB 640

Chief Patron: Pillion

Status: Awaiting Governor's Action

Title

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-3803, 2.2-3815, 63.2-100, 63.2-105, 63.2-203, 63.2-1501, 63.2-1502, 63.2-1503, 63.2-1508, 63.2-1509, 63.2-1512, and 63.2-1530 of the Code of Virginia and Chapter 604 of the Acts of Assembly of 2017; to amend the Code of Virginia by adding sections numbered 63.2-203.1, 63.2-319.1, and 63.2-1510.1; and to repeal § 63.2-1510 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Department of Social Services; corrective action plans and assumption of temporary control of local boards and local departments; centralized hotline for reports or complaints of child abuse or neglect.

SUMMARY AS PASSED

Department of Social Services; corrective action plans; centralized hotline for reports or complaints of child abuse or neglect. Establishes a centralized hotline for reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect and grants the Commissioner of Social Services the authority to create and enforce a corrective action plan for any local board of social services or local department of social services that (i) fails to administer public assistance and social services programs in accordance with applicable laws and regulations or (ii) takes any action or fails to act in a manner that poses a substantial risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a child or adult. The bill permits similar authority for any local board of social services that (a) fails to provide child welfare services in accordance with applicable law or regulations or (b) takes any action or fails to act in a

manner that poses a substantial risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a child. Under the bill, if a local board or department fails to comply with a corrective action plan, the Commissioner has the authority to temporarily assume control of all or part of the local board's operations. The bill also provides that, when a local board of social services or local department of social services requests assistance, the Commissioner has the authority to utilize staff of the Department of Social Services or contract with private entities to provide public assistance and social services programs in the locality served by the local board or department.

The bill requires the Department of Social Services to establish and maintain a hotline for reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect and specifies that the Department shall determine the validity of such reports and complaints. The bill eliminates the requirement that local departments must be capable of receiving and responding to reports and complaints of abuse or neglect and instead requires that any complaint of child abuse or neglect received by a local department shall be immediately forwarded to the Department's child abuse and neglect hotline. The bill also adds adult services to the definition of "social services" for purposes of Title 63.2 (Welfare (Social Services)).

The bill directs the Department of Social Services to (1) promulgate regulations necessary to implement the provisions of the bill and (2) contract with a third party by August 1, 2026, to conduct a comprehensive study and review of the screening process used for child protective services complaints across Virginia. The bill also directs the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to convene a Social Services Task Force to develop a comprehensive improvement plan to address changes needed within the State Department of Social Services and the local departments of social services.

The provisions of the bill related to centralized intake have a delayed effective date of July 1, 2027.

Counts: HB: 14 HJ: 0 SB: 5 SJ: 0

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 24, 2026, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs

Prepared by: Melissa O'Neill, CASA Coordinator - DCJS

I. CASA Network State Leadership Team Updates

The CASA Network State Leadership Team (SLT) is a partnership between the CASA Network and DCJS. DCJS participates on some but not all the committees. DCJS facilitated one meeting of the SLT during this reporting period.

The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT committees during this reporting period.

A. Training Committee

During the month of January, DCJS hosted twenty CASA programs who attended the Virginia Case Studies Training (VCST) of Facilitators events held throughout the Commonwealth. 43 CASA program training staff participants attended sessions in Fredericksburg, Weyers Cave and Newport News. Upon completion of Facilitator Training, DCJS conducts monthly support calls to assist programs with the implementation of the VCST curriculum. Jessica Carter, the DCJS State Training Coordinator, provides individualized technical assistance to local programs to ensure a smooth and effective rollout of the training.

A summer session of the Training of Facilitators is scheduled for July. Five additional CASA programs are registered to participate, with 27 attendees anticipated. This will bring the total number of programs trained in VCST to 25 out of 27 statewide.

The network's response to the VCST curriculum has been overwhelmingly positive. Programs are eager to implement the curriculum and to make the necessary adjustments that come with adopting a new learning approach. Evaluation results from the Training of Facilitators sessions further reinforce this momentum, showing that the vast majority of participants left feeling well prepared to implement the new curriculum.

The Training Committee continues to make progress implementing the 2026 CASA College training plan. A two-part session was held in February on the topic of special education. This training provided CASA volunteers with the knowledge,

skills, and strategies necessary to effectively advocate for children with special education needs.

The next planned series, titled “Building Bridges,” will focus on enhancing communication with key stakeholders, implementing trauma-informed strategies for engaging families, and utilizing effective communication techniques when interacting with children who have experienced trauma.

B. Data Committee

The Data Committee convened twice during this reporting period and continued the development of a judicial survey for local programs. The survey template will be utilized by local programs to gain feedback and assess judicial satisfaction with local CASA program operations, as perceived by the judges served by each program.

The Data Committee continues to monitor technical support issues encountered by users within local CASA programs. DCJS receives technical support requests from local programs regarding CASA Manager and reports these issues to the Data Committee for review and follow-up.

The CASA Manager User Group (CMUG) met once during the reporting period.

C. Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee is chaired by a local CASA program director and meets monthly. The committee monitors state and federal legislation of impact to the CASA programs. The CASA Network collaborated to advocate for an increase in state funding for CASA programs during the 2026 General Assembly session. The state budget has not yet been finalized.

II. Network Support Meetings

DCJS facilitated three CASA Network Support meetings and three New Director Support calls using virtual technology during this reporting period. These meetings assist local programs with navigating program operations and management concerns.

III. DCJS CASA Grant Program

DCJS announced the grant application process for the FY2027 CASA grants. The total amount available to local CASA programs is \$1,534,712 in state general funds and \$1,498,300 in federal VOCA funds. The total amount available for CASA program grant awards totaled \$3,724,708. The application deadline was April 20, 2026 and programs

will receive award notices in June 2026. If the General Assembly passes a budget with additional funds for CASA programs, those will be distributed to the programs in accordance with the existing formula.

IV. CASA Program Closure

People Incorporated notified DCJS last fall of its decision to discontinue support for the CASA program under its supervision. This change affects the 28th Judicial District and Culpeper County. Over the past six months, DCJS has provided technical assistance and support as People Incorporated has worked to identify alternative oversight agencies for these areas. The Piedmont CASA Board of Directors agreed to absorb Culpeper County, as it falls within the 16th Judicial District where they currently operate. However, People Incorporated was unable to secure a new oversight agency for the 28th Judicial District, and as a result, CASA services in that district will cease effective July 1, 2026. DCJS will continue to work with the courts and localities in the region should there be interest in reestablishing or continuing CASA services in the 28th Judicial District.

V. CASA Regulatory Revision

The approved draft of the proposed changes to the CASA regulations is pending review by the Attorney General's office.

Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

April 24, 2026 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Children's Justice Act (CJA)

Prepared by Jenna L. Foster

I. 2026 CJA Application

The Administration for Children and Families has released the 2026 Program Instructions for states to apply for formula CJA funding. The Virginia application is due by May 29, 2026. The Program Instructions outline several updates to reporting requirements and priority areas that states must address in their submissions.

II. Good to Great 2.0 MDT Training

The Good to Great MDT Training, originally developed to support established Multidisciplinary Teams seeking to strengthen processes and enhance case review practices, has been fully updated. The 2026 training revision:

- Provides a comprehensive overview of the CAC/MDT model
- Establishes a shared understanding of Virginia's MDT statutes, including those related to child sexual abuse and human trafficking
- Addresses and clarifies common misconceptions about MDTs and CACs
- Reviews required and optional member roles and responsibilities under the Virginia Code and National Children's Alliance (NCA) accreditation standards
- Highlights the benefits of a coordinated MDT response for children, families, communities, and team members
- Offers plug-and-play resources designed to support and sustain effective MDT operations

DCJS plans to host at least two full day in-person Good to Great 2.0 training sessions in 2026.

III. Children's Justice Act Priority Areas

To help inform the next three-year plan, the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee will develop recommendations on updated priorities that align with Section 107 of CAPTA. These include:

1. The assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the child's family;
2. The assessment and investigation of cases of suspected child abuse-related fatalities and suspected child neglect-related fatalities;
3. The investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and

4. The assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.