

CHILD WELFARE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Evidence-Based & Community-based services for better outcomes for Children and Families

Re-allot Budget line items:

- *Fund Prevention Services at Local Departments of Social Services:*
\$29.8m GF and \$9.4m NGF over two years
 - *Fund Family First Prevention Services Act Evidence-Based Prevention Programs:*
\$8.4m GF and \$8.4m NGF each year
 - Support Family / Neighborhood Resource Centers to provide place-based family-strengthening services with a track record of reducing child neglect and abuse.
 - ***Prioritize allocating funds to place-based family-strengthening programs for communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities give parents what they need to succeed.***
- > **Why it's important:** Strengthening families reduces the “foster care to prison pipeline” — Simply removing a child from their home raises their risk of criminal justice involvement.

Stabilize the Child Welfare Workforce

Re-allot: Budget line item:

- *Increase Local Staff Minimum Salary to Address Turnover:*
\$5.6m GF and \$5.7m NGF each year.

Increase family services worker salaries by 20%. (Currently base salary is \$30,828 - only slightly higher than the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four.)

- 2018 JLARC report on Foster Care found that instability of the child welfare workforce prevents Virginia from meeting important mandates in services to children in foster care.
- > **Why it's important:** Staff turnover of entry-level family services workers is 42%, exacerbating Virginia's poor foster care outcomes. A hiring freeze in many agencies due to the pandemic is compounding the problem.

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