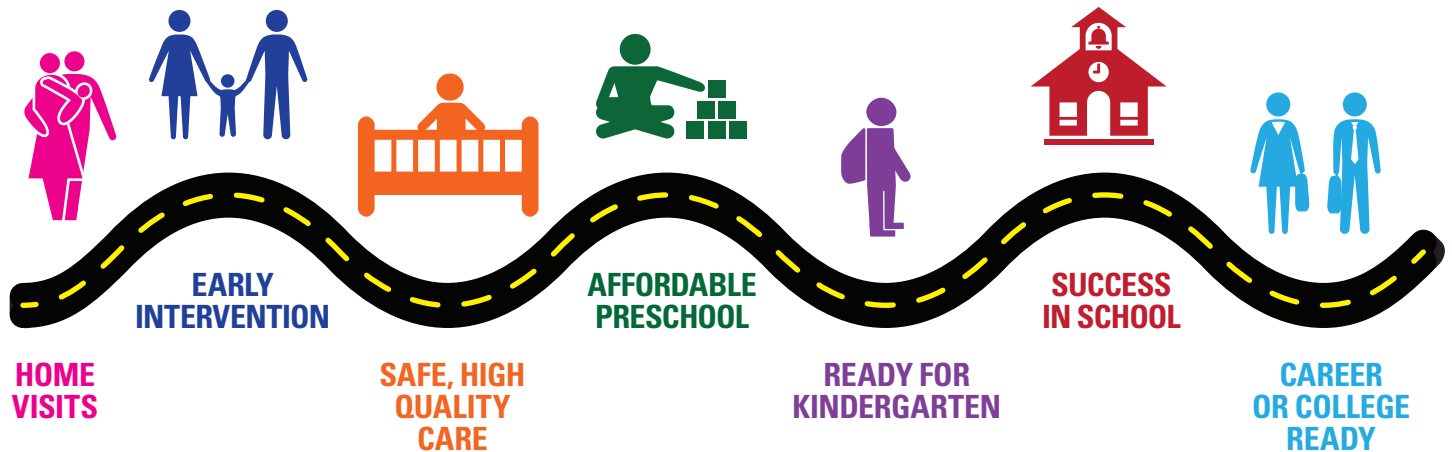


# 2014 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION UNIFIED AGENDA

## THE PATH TO VIRGINIA'S PROSPERITY



Each year, more than 10,000 kindergarteners in Virginia start school without the literacy skills they need to succeed. 70,000 to 100,000 Virginia children under five are facing challenges that are completely out of their control- their parents' unemployment, health problems and family stress. These challenges put them at a disadvantage before they even start school. If children are not ready for school, they will not succeed in school. The Commonwealth currently spends \$80 million each year on elementary school students who need to repeat grades, rather than giving them the help they need to succeed the first time.

The good news is Virginia has proven programs that give kids the foundation they need for success in school and life. Yet not all children who face challenges have the opportunity to participate in programs that will start them on the right path. Giving Virginia's kids the opportunity for a successful start will help ensure that Virginia will succeed in the global economy. It will also help avoid the costs of children that end up on the wrong path.

## TOGETHER, WE CAN TAKE 3 STEPS TO ENSURE THAT AT-RISK BABIES, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS GET THE EARLY EDUCATION THEY NEED FOR SUCCESS:



### 2014 GA STEP 1:

Enable successful early childhood programs to serve more families by fully restoring funding in the 2014 General Assembly Session.



### BEGIN PLANNING TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES: STEP 2:

Identify strategies at the state and local level to give 7,500 at-risk four-year-olds a chance to participate in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).



### STEP 3:

Improve the quality, safety and cost of child care and preschool in Virginia.

# STEPS TO A STRONG START FOR A STRONG WORKFORCE



**2014 General Assembly: Step 1: Expand successful early childhood programs to serve more kids by fully funding home visiting and early intervention.**

- **Completely restore funds for home visiting** - Home visitors give parents skills to be their children's first and best teachers. Home visitors with CHIP of Virginia/Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families Virginia teach moms and dads practical skills for raising healthy, successful kids. Since 2009, families in 18 Virginia communities have lost home visiting programs because of \$2.5 million in budget cuts.
- **Fully fund early intervention/IDEA Part C** - Early intervention services (also known as the Infant & Toddler Connection) help babies and toddlers catch up to their peers developmentally. Since 2007, the number of children identified with developmental delays has increased 52%. Many babies who are connected to experts for therapy are able to live up to their full potential. One in five early intervention participants do not need any additional services and those with more severe delays often make significant progress.

## BEGIN PLANNING TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES:



**Step 2: Identify strategies at the state and local level to give 7,500 at-risk four-year-olds a chance to participate in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).**

While the number of kids enrolled in VPI increases each year, some school districts do not use all of the spots offered to them by the state that could be offered to at-risk preschoolers. **That means almost one-third of preschoolers who qualify for the program cannot attend.** Last year, about 10% of school divisions did not offer 100 or more of their VPI spots to at-risk preschoolers, citing lack of local matching funds or classroom space. Researchers from UVA found that children who attend VPI are better prepared for school. Across Virginia, we must find ways to give more kids a chance to participate in VPI, such as partnerships with private child care providers and incentives for localities to participate.

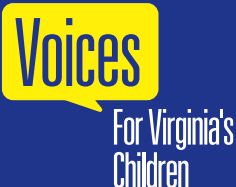


**Step 3: Improve the quality, safety and cost of child care and preschool in Virginia.**

- **Improve safety** - More than half of states require fingerprint background checks for child care providers, but Virginia does not.
- **Increase quality** - Early learning programs vary widely; not all offer developmentally appropriate environments or engaging interactions between caregivers and kids. We can help professionals boost their skills with more training. We can improve quality by encouraging more child care facilities to participate in Virginia Star Quality Initiative, which rates preschools.
- **Reduce cost burden** - A year of infant care costs more than a year of college in Virginia. Young families must make choices and sacrifices to find high quality child care. Without additional resources to reduce costs, providers must also balance the choice between quality and affordability for working families.

**We can do this by building on the early learning infrastructure that we have in place but we need policymakers to champion this issue and prepare for the future now.**

## TAKE A STEP WITH US ON THE PATH TO VIRGINIA'S PROSPERITY.



*The **Early Childhood Policy Network** represents the organizations who are giving Virginia's kids the opportunities they need to succeed:* Child Care Aware Virginia • Child Development Resources • Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU • ChildSavers • CHIP of Virginia/Parents as Teachers State Office • JustChildren/Legal Aid Justice Center • Learning Care Group • Prevent Child Abuse Virginia/Healthy Families Virginia • Nurse-Family Partnership • Smart Beginnings Historic Triangle • The Children's Center • Virginia Alliance of Family Child Care Providers • Virginia Association of Community Services Boards • Virginia Association of Early Childhood Education (VAECE) • Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health • Virginia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics • Virginia First Cities • Virginia Head Start Association