



The Campaign for Children's Mental Health



Please maintain Therapeutic Foster Care as a Community-Based Service; Support Budget Amendment Item 274 #3s (Whipple) and #6s (Hanger)

The Governor has proposed reclassifying Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) as a residential service, resulting in a budget cut of \$7.5 million GF. We OPPOSE this reclassification because:

- **Therapeutic Foster Care IS a community-based service.** Children are placed in foster homes, which are licensed as homes by the Department of Social Services; they are not licensed as residential facilities. The foster parents receive special training to care for children with a high level of need, and children receive additional services from mental health and social services professionals to meet those needs.
- **We will reverse the progress Virginia has made in the last several years on shifting from an over-reliance on residential treatment to a more appropriate use of community-based treatment.** Increasing the local match rate (the amount a locality must pay for the service) for TFC is shifting more of the cost to the localities, which will create a disincentive to use this service. Predictably, as local social services agencies have worked to place more children in community-base settings (versus residential care), there has been an increase in the use of TFC. *When Virginia begins to offer a broader array of community-based mental health services for children, reliance on TFC will likely decrease because there will be more options.*

Who are the children in Therapeutic Foster Care?

Children in TFC are those who have special needs that necessitate an environment in which foster parents receive additional training and support services. Children have contact with additional supports daily, weekly, or monthly, depending on their level of need.

Can we improve TFC in Virginia and help control costs?

Yes. Local officials report varying degrees of training and support offered to TFC children and families in Virginia. Greater standardization of requirements for TFC programs would help clarify the parameters for this level of service and reimbursement. In addition, giving localities, particularly in rural areas, the ability to contract with TFC providers on a regional level could help control costs.

The Campaign for Children's Mental Health is an advocacy initiative of Voices for Virginia's Children, led by a steering committee including Mental Health America Virginia, NAMI Virginia, and the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards. For more information, contact Mary Dunne Stewart, mds@vakids.org, or Margaret Nimmo Crowe, margaret@vakids.org, at Voices for Virginia's Children.