

2024 Southeastern Virginia's EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY AGENDA

EVMS

MINUS 9 TO 5

Preparing families from
conception to kindergarten

READY REGION

Southeastern



Fast FACT

On average, just over half of kindergarteners in Eastern Virginia are prepared for kindergarten (Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program).

Virginia has successfully:

- Established a unified measurement and improvement system (VQB5), for all publicly-funded birth-to-five early childhood programs (VDOE)
- Solidified expanded Medicaid coverage for new mothers to 12-months postpartum
- Increased the state minimum wage
- Established the Virginia Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Secured Medicaid reimbursement for community-based doula services (4th state in the nation to offer this benefit)

But there is still plenty more to do, especially in Southeastern Virginia!

Many families in the region struggle to make ends meet. Stability and security lay the foundation for health, thriving, and ready-to-learn children. Access to quality early care and education is critical for the community, allowing parents to work and businesses the productive workforce they need.

A strong early childhood system that meets the needs of families and the community isn't just about the children... **It's essential to the success and economic prosperity of the region.**

Advocating for policies and programs that support young children and their families means advocating for strong, vibrant communities where families choose to live, work, and raise their children.

Stand up for Southeastern VA's youngest residents today!

Collectively, we advocate for:

Fast FACT

Since 2019, state investments in ECCE have resulted in an 83% increase in children enrolled in publicly funded programs in Ready Region Southeastern.

Fast FACT

The average annual cost of infant care in Virginia is \$14,063 (similar to an in-state college tuition) which puts a huge burden on working families.

Strong and Sustainable Child Care Systems

Rallying around **the #GottaHaveChildCare campaign** to prioritize and maximize funding for early childhood care and education (ECCE):

- Appropriating funds to meet current parent demand for child care services: \$275 million in FY25 and \$325 million in FY26 (for subsidy and Mixed Delivery programs)
- Creating a predictable funding formula and non-reverting fund to stabilize, sustain, and maximize ECCE funds that prioritize parent choice

Additionally, we are advocating for:

- Continued funding for VQB5 and RecognizeB5
- Expanding statewide early childhood mental health consultation model to support early childhood educators
- Providing the support and tools necessary to help families identify and select quality childcare, promoting parental choice and responsibility
- Prioritizing solutions to address the child care workforce crisis
- Increasing child care provider wages and benefits

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Fast FACT

Across Southeastern Virginia, 14 home visiting agencies provide FREE education and resources to pregnant and parenting families, yet navigating the referral system is challenging

With supportive perinatal care, mothers can access more nutritional foods, attend critical prenatal visits, and reduce the risk of substance use, hypertension, diabetes, premature deliveries and more. We advocate for...

Maternal/Child Health and Well-Being

- Stabilizing funding, increasing awareness, and local coordination of maternal/child home visiting services
- Implementing Medicaid funded home visiting supports for families
- Increasing universal prenatal and at-birth screenings to address social vulnerabilities for children, pregnant and parenting families
- Creating more supports for families to seek timely pediatric well visits and on-time immunizations

Stable and Financially Secure Families:

When families have stable housing, and access to healthy, affordable food, children have a reduced risk of physical, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. Southeastern Virginia is advocating for...

- Removing restrictions/barriers families experience while applying for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Implementing permanent Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) for summer meals
- Combating poverty and social injustices to create equal access to credit, employment and housing
- Establish a state-level Child Tax Credit and expand the refundable state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to 20% of the federal credit.
- Increasing employee's access to Paid Family Leave to at least 6 weeks

Fast FACT

According to the USDA, nationally, more than 50 percent of WIC-eligible SNAP and Medicaid recipients do not participate

Fast FACT

The starting wage for a lead early childhood teacher in Southeastern Virginia is \$13.76. The mean wage for a parking attendant is \$14.04 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Visit our Policy & Advocacy LinkTree site to learn more about the various initiatives and policy highlighted here on our 2024 Policy Agenda.



For more information about EVMS Minus 9 to 5, visit our website at [Minus9to5.org](https://www.minus9to5.org)

