



Virginia

Virginia Preschool Initiative

The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) provides services to 4-year-olds who meet locally determined risk criteria and are not served by Head Start. The program operates in public schools and community-based settings. Funding for the program more than doubled in 2004-05, in an effort to serve 90 percent of all eligible children in the state.

Eligibility

Income: none

Age: 4-year-olds

Priority: at-risk children (criteria for “at-risk” is determined locally) who are not served by Head Start

Length of Program

Hours/day: three hours for half-day programs; six hours for full-day programs

Days/year: 180 days (school year)

Eligible Providers

Public schools, community-based organizations (family child care providers are eligible, although none have participated)

Number Served¹

10,899 slots (2004-05); most are full-day

Total Annual Budget

\$47.4 million (2004-05); will increase to \$53 million in 2005-06

Monitoring

The Virginia Department of Education is responsible for biannual site visits. If a program sub-contracts, DOE will visit a sample and review the records of all programs. Child care programs must be licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services and schools must be accredited. All programs must conform to Virginia’s Foundation Blocks for Early Learning criteria. Teachers in programs operating in public schools must have a Bachelor’s degree (B.A.) and Head Start teachers must hold a Child Development Associate (C.D.A.) degree. There is no requirement for teachers in child care centers, although most are well-qualified because they work in programs that must maintain high standards.

¹ For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

Governance

How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?

The statute authorizes integration into community-based settings. Local communities determine whether or not to provide VPI in community-based settings. The guidelines call for the chief administrator (city manager or county administrator) to work in conjunction with the school superintendent to identify a lead agency. In most cases, the lead agency determines who will provide VPI services, pending approval from the state. The lead agency must develop a local plan for the delivery of quality preschool services. The local plan will include budget, preschool education, staff development, health and social services, parental involvement and transportation. The plan must also demonstrate coordination of resources and the combination of funding streams to serve the greatest number of at-risk 4-year-old children. The locality will develop and use criteria for student eligibility for services.

Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?

There are no requirements at the state level, but the VPI legislation was created through a cross-agency committee convened by the state legislature.

At the local level, each locality must maintain a steering committee to coordinate with schools, child care providers, local social services agencies, Head Start, local health department and other groups identified by the lead agency.

Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?

There are no state requirements to notify potential community-based providers of opportunities to provide pre-kindergarten. This decision is made at the local level.

The Department of Education funds a lead agency, designated by the school district superintendent in conjunction with the chief administrator. The lead agency will develop a local plan for the delivery of quality preschool services, including the designation and selection of eligible providers. Most programs are in public schools. Local superintendents, or their designee, must certify that each VPI program follows the established standards in order to receive funding.

What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?

Funds are restricted to VPI grantees. Allowable expenses for VPI programs include funding for accreditation and start-up funds, technical assistance, and professional development.

Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?

No. Salaries are determined at the local level.

Supports for Working Families

Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?

The legislation does not address this explicitly. The scope of services states, “The purpose of the grants is to reduce disparities among young children upon formal school entry and to reduce or eliminate those risk factors that lead to early academic failure.” However, delivery of social services to meet the needs of the families is a central part of the program. This could include extending the day and coordinating with the subsidy program.

What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?

Funding is flexible, and may be used to provide “high quality preschool education, health services, social services, parental involvement, and transportation.” Programs may provide assistance in securing child care or provide wraparound care. Transportation is an allowable use of funds, but most schools pay for it out of their existing budget.

Funding

What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?

Funding is calculated at \$5,400 per eligible child, with program costs shared by the state and local governments based on the composite index of local ability to pay. The state share ranges from 82 percent of the \$5,400 for poorer localities, to 20 percent for wealthier localities. Local funds can be up to 25 percent in-kind; the remaining 75 percent must be cash. The per-child funding amount will be pro-rated for programs operating less than the school day/school year. Localities are expected to coordinate resources and funding streams to serve the greatest number of 4-year-old children.

How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?

There is no impact for children receiving a child care subsidy. VPI funds cannot be used for children enrolled in Head Start, unless they extend a part-day program to a full-day program.

Sources

- Interview: Cheryl P. Strobel, (11/02/2004) (program) Kent Dickey (budget)
- Website: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/early.html
- Legislation: HB 2542 (1995) <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?951+ful+HB2542ER>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/early/preschoolinitiative.html

For information about national trends, read CLASP’s *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.