



# Family & Children's Trust Fund of Virginia

801 E. Main Street  
15th Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
[www.fact.virginia.gov](http://www.fact.virginia.gov)  
804-310-1520

November 8, 2022

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
Governor of Virginia  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin:

I write on behalf of the Family and Children's Trust Fund of Virginia (FACT), to support the Virginia Department of Social Services' (DSS) budget request to strengthen Virginia's Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) Hotline System.

The purpose of the Hotline is to provide 24/7 support to Local Departments of Social Services by receiving reports of abuse and neglect of children and/or elder or disabled adults. Those reports are screened, then referred cases are directed to the appropriate localities for appropriate investigation. This system serves as the primary entry point for services for many of these cases; additionally, it is a fundamental tool for those reporting maltreatment of Virginia's most vulnerable citizens.

A call to the Statewide Hotline means that someone – a child, a disabled or elder adult– may be at risk or in significant danger due to violence or neglect. It is therefore critical that DSS Hotline workers are able to respond to these calls quickly, efficiently and refer them to the appropriate local agency without delay.

Over the past few years, DSS has made valiant efforts to improve its Statewide Hotline. It has routinized scheduling, instituted a training protocol before staff begins to take calls, implemented an on-line reporting option, reduced the amount of time allocated to each call and reduced wait times for mandated reporters and other callers. Despite these efforts there remains an urgent struggle to respond in a timely and consistent manner to the calls for help coming into the system. The largest barrier remains the ever-increasing number of calls with only a skeletal staff to respond.

In 2022 so far, the State Hotline has received an average of 2,073 calls per week. To ensure that all pertinent information is properly documented, the average call takes roughly 35 minutes to process from start to finish. The number of staff minutes needed to process these calls promptly and thoroughly is 72,555 per week based on the current average call volume. At this time, however, and with current staffing levels, DSS has only 44,543 minutes available to manage these calls, leaving about 800 calls unanswered each week.

In addition, wait times for calls are not predictable or reasonable. Callers are spending an average of 20 minutes waiting in queue to report allegations of child and/or adult abuse and neglect. The Hotline can also experience extremely high wait times, with the highest in 2022 being 6.2 hours in the month of February. Long wait times lead to abandoned calls where callers hang up and no report is made. Of the roughly 2,000 calls received each week, 25%, approximately 500 calls, were abandoned after roughly 8 minutes.

Callers include those mandated reporters whose responsibilities are outlined in the *Code of Virginia* – for example, health care providers, school personnel, probation officers, mental health providers, law enforcement and childcare providers - as well as family members, friends, and neighbors. For mandated reporters, long waits on a hotline mean lost productivity and effectiveness in their own professions. For all callers, lack of responsiveness can feed a perception that DSS lacks the appropriate concern for the urgent needs of the abused and neglected.

Your administration has already demonstrated a strong commitment to improving stability and safety to abused and neglected children through the establishment and work of the Safe and Sound Task Force. We stand with you to continue improving the path to safety for vulnerable populations which is critical for maintaining a high standard of protection in Virginia.

On behalf of the FACT Board of Trustees, I urge you to include the funding requested by DSS to expand and strengthen the Statewide CPS and APS Hotlines in your biennial budget. This support would add several positions needed to staff an effective and responsive Hotline. Safety and protection for Virginia's abused and neglected citizens cannot wait any longer.

I thank you for your leadership to the Commonwealth and for your commitment to ensuring that Virginia protects its most vulnerable.

Sincerely,



Linda D. Wilkinson, Chair  
FACT Board of Trustees

cc: The Honorable John Littel, Secretary of Health and Human Services  
The Honorable George L. Baker, Co-chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Janet Howell, Co-chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Barry D. Knight, Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
Danny TK Avula, MD, MPH, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Social Services  
Kathryn A. Hayfield, Commissioner, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services