

KINSHIP CARE -- FACT SHEET

1) Because the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Block Grant Funding amount has remained the same over the years (\$158,258,000) while the TANF caseload has diminished — from 70,797 families in June 1995 to 24,680 families in June 2015 -- Virginia has, as a result, the financial resources required to assuage the poverty afflicting many children in the state. In addition, it should be noted that the TANF “carry-forward” from prior fiscal years 2014, 2015, 2016 has been \$36,533,157, \$47,528,489, \$39,226,072.

2) Unfortunately, although the financial resources have been available to Virginia for many years, the resolve to lighten the burden for impoverished children has been deficient.

3) In addition, there has been a significant gap, actually a grave injustice, in the level of care provided to impoverished children in the Foster Care program and those in the TANF Kinship Care (aka Relative Care) program. For example, two siblings age five and thirteen being cared for in a Foster Care home will receive \$1,227 per month--\$14,724 per year--plus an annual clothing allowance of \$386 and \$464; the same children, if being cared for by a relative, receives a mere \$254 per month—\$3,048 per year--under the TANF program. The only difference between these children in this example is their domicile; one lives with a foster parent and the other with a relative.

4) The example cited above demonstrates how dramatically the cost to the state would escalate if children in TANF households were transferred to the foster care program.

5) Considering the TANF surplus that is available and noted in #1 above, the time for correcting this inequity is long overdue, especially in light of the fact that assistance available to impoverished children living with a relative has increased only twice since 1985; that is twice in 30 years.

6) In contrast, Foster care support payments increased by 15 percent in FY 2009; in FY 2014 these payments are again set to increase in 2016. Even with a 10 percent increase for next year and the following two years, TANF benefits would still lag far behind foster care payments, exacerbating the policy inequity that currently prevails. A comparable increase in TANF benefits is long past due; this injustice calls for a prompt correction.

7. TANF benefits are currently supporting roughly 34,680 children in Virginia. Most of these children live with at least one parent, but about a half of them, roughly 17,043 children, live with a relative other than a parent. These relatives, especially grandparents, make tremendous sacrifices to care for these children, i.e., their kin, and they receive little support in doing so--nothing in comparison to what is received by Foster families.

8. Virginia is presented with an opportunity to invest the considerable savings noted above in helping the hard-to-serve families who remain on TANF. As a matter of basic fairness and in light of the moral imperative to set things aright, i.e., do justice, the Governor and General Assembly owe it to Virginia's neediest children to restore at least a portion of the buying power lost to inflation and, thereby, use TANF funds for their most fundamental purpose, to provide a temporary safety net for families working toward financial independence.

9. Funding for TANF should be increased by 15 percent, costing \$7.5 million, to account for what was lost due to over 25 percent inflation during the past fifteen years. In addition, benefits should be indexed to increase whenever Foster Care rates are increased. Doing so would address the issue of future inflation and allow recipients to continue meeting basic needs and reduce the increasing/unfair disparity between Foster Care payments and TANF benefits for children.