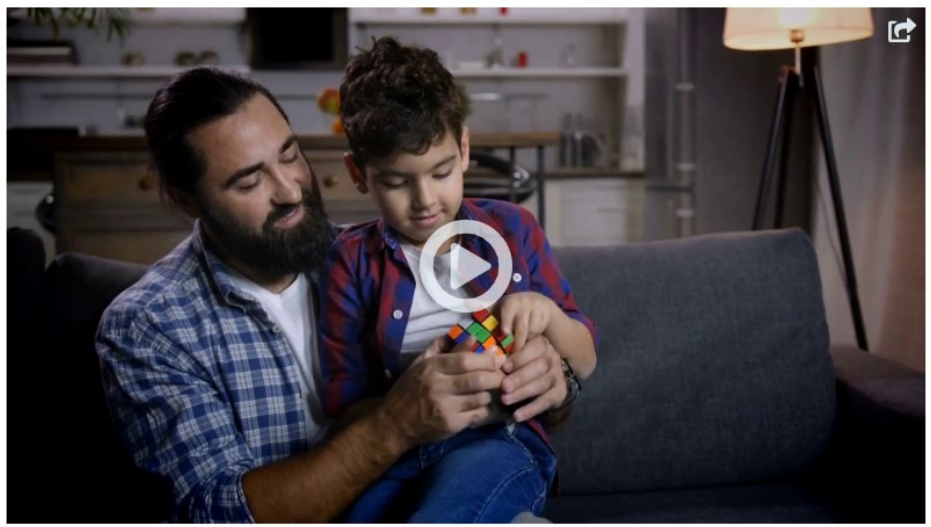
# Virginia task force reshaping the foster care system

Foster Care: Kids in Crisis is a 10 News investigation looking into several aspects of the Virginia foster care system



*Work to reshape the foster care system continues as Virginia faces the same struggle other states have: not enough foster homes for the children who need one.*

**For Immediate Release:** April 1, 2022
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# Governor Youngkin Announces Safe and Sound Task Force to End Practice of Kids Sleeping in Local Government Offices

**RICHMOND, VA –** Governor Youngkin announced today that he has launched an initiative aimed at creating safe housing placements for children in foster care. As today marks the start of Child Abuse Prevention month, the "Safe and Sound Task Force" will bring together government agencies, the Virginia League of Social Services Executives and other community partners to end the practice of children sleeping in local departments of social services, hotels and emergency rooms.

"It is unacceptable that last year over 150 children in foster care spent the night in places that just simply are not meant for kids. When this challenge came to our attention, my administration knew we had to act swiftly to ensure that every child has a safe place to belong," **stated Governor Youngkin.** "Beyond the immediate need, we hope Virginians from all walks of life will step up to help children in foster care."

National crisis, not just Virginia problem

55% of youth and young adults do not receive mental health services when they need them

1 in 5 live in provider shortage areas without internet access

Align resources and immediate needs with systemic changes

System gaps

Treatment and practice gaps

https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html

Shortage Areas (hrsa.gov)

# Initial outcomes and what worked

- “Phase 1”
- End problem of youth in foster care sleeping in unsuitable places (offices, hotels)
- 2021 = average of 27 youth per month
- Current average is 3 youth per month*, an 89% decrease
- There is still much more upstream work to do to ensure this is sustainable

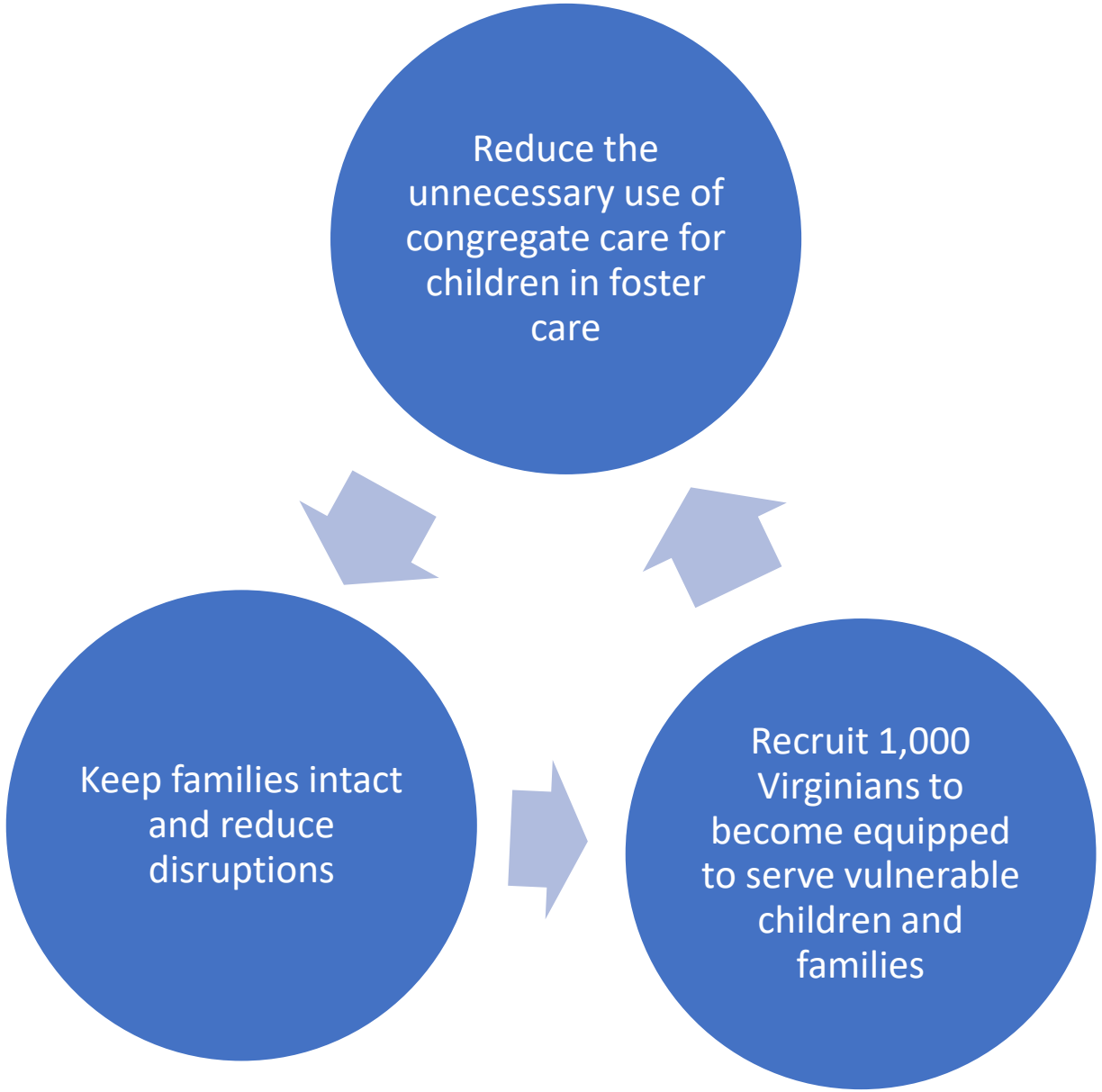
Data from 4/1/22 – 7/31/22

# Initial outcomes and what worked

- Establishing a multi-agency approach with state/local coordination, representation, and leadership
- Establishing process through daily meetings and staffings (Go Team/Rapid Response)
- Getting multiple systems/organizations aligned and working through their appropriate authorities on shared objectives
- Employing high fidelity wraparound and other models. “What Would It Take?” framework/creative problem solving; and
- Leveraging the visibility and authority of the Governor’s Office and Task Force.

# Challenges and Next Steps

- Capacity limitations and service gaps across the continuum
- Staffing shortages & workforce challenges (child welfare, provider community, mental health, etc.)
- Process and organizational challenges (multiple funding streams, multiple involved agencies, data across systems, payors, etc.) across systems that serve children
- “No quick fixes”/dead ends
- Multiple “accountable” entities


Reduce the unnecessary use of congregate care for children in foster care
Recruit 1,000 Virginians to become equipped to serve vulnerable children and families
Keep families intact and reduce disruptions

# Examples - Recommendations

- Examine rates and payment structures for behavioral health providers
- Enhance options and models for treatment foster care
- Explore specialty residential programs
- Workforce development
- Leverage Emergency Department Care Coordination
- Increase community engagement efforts
- Foster local “Safe and Sound” Task Forces across systems
- Examine Medicaid opportunities relative to residential services
- Support technical assistance/local cross system collaboration