

Recommended Design for a LWV Child Care Study

Presented to the 2021 LWV-VA Convention

The League's History

With the increase in the number of employed mothers and single parent families and the reported difficulties parents have in finding good, available and affordable child care, many Leaguers thought the time had come for the League of Women Voters to study what role, if any, the state should have in child care. At the 1985 state convention, delegates adopted a two-year study of the issue. The final report along with consensus questions was sent to the local Leagues early in the fall of 1986. Consensus reports were returned by mid-December of 1986 with 17 of 19 local Leagues reporting. The board developed and approved complete consensus in February 1987.

Questions for Consideration

A critical question that keeps coming up in discussion about child care is whether to focus and prioritize access (making it more affordable) or quality (stricter licensing etc.). In the past, the league has come down on the side of quality, advocating licensing, standards and requisite monitoring. To the extent that access and affordability has been a factor, the league's position has been that subsidies should be offered directly to low-income families or to facilities who enroll low-income families.

THIS POSITION REMAINS INADEQUATE

Crafting the child care of the future

It is high time that the league completed a comprehensive review of its position on child care. The COVID-19 epidemic shined a strong spotlight on the inadequate nature of our state's child care system with [hundreds of private facilities unable to remain open](#), women [leaving the workforce in record numbers](#), and counties left to figure out on their own how to offer emergency child care to residents who need it. These challenges are compounded for black and other minority women who make up a disproportionate number of low-income households. The systemic racism of Virginia's past and the lack of affordable, quality child care continues to spur generational poverty among the state's black population. As the state emerges from COVID, it is of utmost importance that Virginia builds a child care infrastructure for the 21st century - one that centers on five goals:

1. Ensuring that **no parent** - ESPECIALLY black and minority parents - ever have to choose between keeping or getting promoted in a job or caring for their child.
2. Ensuring that **no childcare center** has to choose between delivering quality care and remaining operational
3. Ensuring every **young child** is healthy, safe and learns requisite social-emotional skills to be ready for kindergarten.
4. Ensuring that **every school-age child** has a safe, nurturing place to go after school until such age as they can look after themselves

5. Ensuring that **all child care educators** have the knowledge, skills and compensation to do their work

Study Design

In a revised position on child care, we propose a three-part study that centers on these goals.

The three parts include:

1. *Exploration*: A root cause analysis to understand what barriers are currently preventing the child care system from achieving these goals. The root cause analysis should consider all possible barriers including financial, political, legal, cultural, demographic etc. and all relevant actors including policy makers, program administrators, employers, child care providers, parents and children. The analysis should consider quantitative data (literature and statistics) as well as qualitative data (focus groups and key informant interviews)
2. *Solutioning*: Based on the findings from the root cause analysis, the study should explore solutions with ideas generated from all data sources including evidence on the success of various models found in other states.
3. *Recommendations*: The study should conclude with a set of recommended revisions to the LWV's current position on child care