Update: Workgroup on Attendance Policies

Directive and Approach

The FY26 State Budget (Item 125.10) directed the VDOE to revise attendance requirements for the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), Mixed Delivery (MD) Grant Program, and Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), to maximize use of resources and benefits to children. The VDOE must report on attendance to Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education and then the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

The VDOE facilitated an attendance-focused workgroup on October 21, 2025. Members reviewed current attendance policies, learned about the modernized attendance tracking system, and discussed potential future updates to attendance policies.

As of 2024-2025, Virginia is already seeing improvements in absenteeism in early childhood. Chronic absenteeism in VPI has decreased to 27.0% in 2024-2025 after peaking at 35.9% in 2021-2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, chronic absenteeism in CCSP is down to 19.5% in FY2025 after peaking at 31.5% in FY2022.

Overview of Attendance Policies by Public Program

Mixed Delivery (MD)	
Background	• Designed to serve working families who need and intend to use full-day, year-round ECCE. • Pay-by-enrollment (contracted slots with provider) with formal policies to ensure regular attendance and specific requirements for ensuring slots are not left vacant.

Attendance Policy	• If a child in MD is absent for 50% or more of the school days in any two (2) consecutive months they will be disenrolled from MD at the end of the second month.
	  – Sites may request exceptions for individual children (e.g., chronic illness, significant barriers such as loss of housing).
	  – Sites' own policies can be implemented with the MD policy, as long as they do not conflict and the site policy is applied consistently across all children at the site.
	• MD site must contact families if their child was absent for 50% or more days of the previous month – must remind family of attendance policy and inform them their child will lose MD slot if they miss 50% of more school days in the second month.
	• Ready Regions may also determine whether a child should be disenrolled based on attendance patterns if it becomes clear the family does not meet priority of needing full-day, year-round care.

Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)	

Background	• VPI is pay-by-enrollment based on Student Record Collection (SRC) at 3 points during the year. • All students must have State Testing Identification number and be reported in 3 SRC reporting cycles: Fall, Spring and End of Year.
Attendance Policy	• VPI Guidelines state that school divisions and partners must collect VPI attendance data, develop strategies for improving attendance, and conduct outreach with VPI students and their families if there are concerns about regular attendance. • Specific policies vary by locality.
Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP)	

Background	• Coverage is based on parent schedules.
	  – Coverage can range from 1 day per month (i.e., a child enrolled in Head Start who needs holiday care), to full-day, full-year services.
	• CCSP payments are attendance-based, with some flexibility:
	  – The state pays for up to 60 absence days per child per year for each provider.
	  – Providers can receive up to 15 paid days for planned closures.

Attendance Policy	• Children are expected to attend services regularly. o Caseworkers are instructed to reach out to families if attendance was not logged at all in a month to offer resources and support and confirm need for services. • After 60 absences, missed days are not paid to the provider • Providers may have their own attendance-related policies

CCSP Attendance System	CCSP has been logging attendance via a swipe card system since ~2010.
	• Burdensome for families and providers: generates concerns regarding data completeness and accuracy.
	• Providers have indicated in surveys that they don't participate in or would consider leaving CCSP due to the current system.
	• The system has limited data controls and reporting capabilities to inform policy decisions. For example:
	  o Inability to verify data quality or fidelity (e.g., attendance reported on days when provider is not open).
	  o Inability to track continuous absenteeism for individual children across months.
	Virginia's Child Care Program, Attendance, and Schedule System (PASS)—a new, modernized approach for tracking attendance—launches December 1, 2025.
	• PASS is being developed and hosted by KinderSystems, a national leader in child care technology solutions.

> - The new system will make logging attendance easier for families, minimize administrative burden for providers, and improve access to actionable attendance data for the state.

Modernized Attendance Tracking

Key Features: All providers and families in the CCSP will begin using Child Care PASS starting December 1. Important features will minimize burdens and improve data access:

For Families:	For Child Care Providers:	For State Leaders:
• Attendance can be recorded using a QR code or with a tablet on-site. • Parents can designate other approved adults to check children in and out on their behalf. • Absences can be recorded from anywhere. • Automated reminders to log missed attendance.	Providers can: • enter schedules (paid closures); • record attendance on parents' behalf; • use system for all children (not just CCSP); • group children (e.g., by age, classroom); and • use a partner child care management system and transmit data to PASS.	• Regular reports allow VDOE to collect and review data for quality assurance and program monitoring. • Specialized ad hoc reports can further inform policy revisions.

Future Opportunities

- VDOE will partner with KinderSystems to ensure PASS – a customized, off-the-shelf solution – is continually responsive to changing policies and Virginia's growing system
- VDOE will use PASS data to better understand attendance and service utilization patterns and inform revised attendance expectations for CCSP.
- VDOE will explore options to connect PASS with other ECCE data systems to minimize administrative burden for providers and partners.
- VDOE will use data from PASS and other administrative data sources to explore connections between attendance and child outcomes.

Timeline: Future Updates to Attendance Policies

VDOE will continue to develop and implement policies to improve attendance and meet the unique needs of Virginia providers, families and children. Here is proposed timeline:
- **December 1, 2025** – Launch Child Care PASS
- **December 2025 – February 2026** – Provide ongoing quality assurance and targeted provider supports to promote effective PASS use and complete attendance records.
- **March 2026 – May 2026** – Analyze new data on system use and attendance patterns.
- **Summer 2026** – Bring proposed policy changes to the Commission.