In general, the composite index is designed so that counties with large low-income populations are required to contribute less of a local match than wealthier communities. The percentage of costs visits is determined locally.

Support services include parent involvement activities, health services for children, referral to social services, and transportation. The annual number of required parent conferences and/or home visits is determined locally. All staff must have some training in early childhood development. Minimum teacher qualifications depend on the location of the program: public school teachers must be certified, Head Start teachers must hold a CDA, and there is no specific degree requirement for teachers in child care settings.

The Virginia Preschool Initiative was developed to meet the needs of 4-year-old children not being served by existing preschool education programs. Public schools receive allocations sufficient to fund services for 60 percent of the at-risk 4-year-olds in a community who are not being served by federal programs, including Head Start and Title I. Public schools may subcontract with Head Start or YMCA programs to operate prekindergarten classes. Although all children who participate must be at risk, the specific risk factors used to determine eligibility are chosen and identified at the local level. Some risk factors that are frequently used include poverty, homelessness, parents who have dropped out of school or who have limited education, family unemployment or incarceration, and limited English proficiency.

The Virginia Preschool Initiative has a required local match, based on a composite index that reflects local districts’ abilities to contribute additional funds. In general, this index is designed to promote equity across communities, such that wealthy communities are required to contribute more funds than less wealthy communities.

The 2002–2003 school year saw the publication of Virginia’s Foundation Blocks for early literacy and mathematics, which have become a required part of the curriculum. Major program changes were approved in a special session of the state General Assembly in 2004. Districts will be given the opportunity to choose whether to provide half-day or full-day services; currently, full-day services are available. At least 1 service screening/referral requirement is mandated for vision, hearing, and health. At least 5 hours/year of in-service training are provided for teachers. The 2002–2003 school year saw the publication of Virginia’s Foundation Blocks for early literacy and mathematics, which have become a required part of the curriculum.

Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

The Virginia Preschool Initiative served 5,895 4-year-olds in 2003–2004 and received $18,285,745 in state funding.

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