

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five Virginia Communities Win Bid to Help Improve Youth Services

Goal is to get all youth “Ready by 21”

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Washington, D.C., Jan. 13 – Five Virginia communities have won a competitive bid to help them launch new efforts to improve services for children, youth and families.

The Forum for Youth Investment, a nonprofit “action tank” based in Washington, named Alexandria, Charlottesville, Hampton, Surry County and Virginia Beach as participants in the Virginia Cities Challenge – which will provide each with customized training and consultation from the Forum and its national partners. The winning communities came from a pool of applicants chosen by America’s Promise Alliance, the National League of Cities and the Virginia Municipal League.

The five communities will implement aspects of Ready by 21®, a set of innovative strategies developed by the Forum that helps communities improve the odds that all of their youths will be “ready for college, work and life.” Ready by 21 helps state and local leaders around the country improve the quantity, quality and consistency of supports, opportunities and services for children and youth.

The Challenge kicks off this month, with teams of two to four leaders from each community participating in an introductory webinar. In March, the teams will attend a “policy institute” in Richmond, where they will be trained on Ready by 21 standards, such as aligning and coordinating the work of all of the “stakeholders” in their communities (including public, private and nonprofit agencies), agreeing on specific goals for all children and youth, and establishing measurable outcomes to gauge their progress.

The city and county leaders will receive ongoing technical assistance to apply those strategies in their communities. That assistance will include helping the communities gather input from youth, families and stakeholders; aligning various databases among agencies to track conditions and outcomes for youth and families; developing a “big-picture action plan”; and using data to adopt effective policies and practices. Surry County’s team will consist of Sopenia H. Pierce (Surry County Office on Youth), Linda Gardner (Community Partner), Dr. Serbrina Sims (Surry Public Schools) and the Honorable Judy Lyttle (Surry Board of Supervisors).

The Forum for Youth Investment (www.forumfyi.org) helps communities strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them by providing leaders with the information, connections and tools they need to improve opportunities and outcomes for children and youth.

To learn more about Ready by 21, visit www.readyby21.org.

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