



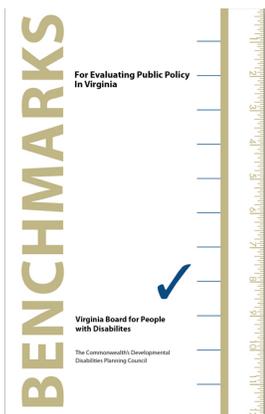
VOICES & VISIONS

A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ❖ A PROMISING VISION FOR TOMORROW

A "Blueprint" for the Future

Approaching the completion of its 2007-2011 State Plan and beginning to consider development of its 2012-2016 plan, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities felt a growing need for a document that would guide and provide continuity for its policy and advocacy activities. The goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in these federally mandated five year plans provide a firm foundation and clear rationale for all its activities, but the Board concluded that it needed a more concise and far-reaching testament that also could be shared with and potentially adopted by others. In December 2008, an ad hoc workgroup of ten Board members was recruited "to design and identify a 'blueprint' for a truly inclusive community and a strategic plan for long-term efforts to achieve it that can be shared with political decision-makers."

Over the next year, this workgroup first developed a broad description of the elements for an ideal disability services system and deliberated the actions needed to achieve it. These elements included core system values and critical performance standards. Gradually, this initial description was refined to produce clear, concise language establishing benchmarks by which the Board could measure and judge its own activities as well as overall state disability policy. That document, which appears below, was adopted by the full Board in December 2009. Soon, it will be posted on the Board's website and printed copies will be shared with the Commonwealth's policymakers, who will be encouraged to apply its principles and benchmarks to their own efforts to expand and improve the state's disability services system and create a fully integrated community with equal rights and opportunities for all Virginians. ♪♪



Benchmarks for Evaluating Public Policy in Virginia

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities hopes this information will serve as a tool for the Governor, legislators, and other elected officials and policymakers. The Board asks policymakers to adopt these benchmarks and consider the impact upon Virginians with disabilities when developing, writing, and implementing all state policies, regulations, laws, and funding priorities.

Over the past 30 years, state leaders have recognized that full inclusion in community life by Virginians with disabilities is a legal, moral, and ethical right.

These benchmarks are intended to inform future policy and strategic investments in community supports and infrastructure that will enable Virginia's citizens with disabilities to return the Commonwealth's investment through increased independence, educational achievement, economic self-sufficiency, and community or civic engagement.



Message from the Executive Director: Get Involved: Make Your Voices Heard!

Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

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A year ago, my Director's message talked about the incredible challenges facing the Commonwealth and its citizens as a result of the declining economic situation. Unfortunately, the situation in 2010 is far worse.

The budget proposed by the outgoing Administration includes cuts to human services termed "Draconian". If enacted, they would be devastating for individuals with disabilities and their families. Individuals currently living in the community could be at risk of institutionalization, and those still residing in institutions will have little opportunity to move to integrated community settings. Community supports, such as respite and personal care services that are the most cost effective and needed, would be reduced or completely eliminated. Waiting lists for home and community-based Medicaid waivers would be significantly increased. Provider rates that are already too low would be reduced.

General Assembly members' deliberations on this budget have been underway for over a month and amendments have been proposed to reverse many of its cuts. Both professional lobbyists and citizen advocates have been at their doorsteps attempting to influence their decisions during what may be the most challenging budget year in recent history.

The Governor has now submitted his recommendations to the General Assembly for further budget cuts. It is important that advocates review and understand these proposals. His full proposal can be found at www.governor.virginia.gov/docs/10-02-17_Gov_Recs.pdf. To list just a few of its recommendations, the Governor's proposal:

Eliminates coverage of consumer-directed personal/respite/companion care services in the HIV/AIDS, Elderly and Disabled, Intellectual Disability, and Developmental Disability waivers which allow an individual to hire and

fire their own caretaker.

Recommendations note that individuals in need of these services will still be able to receive them through agency-directed services.

The savings assumes that 50% of the individuals receiving the consumer-directed services will no longer receive any of those services. The remaining 50% will begin to receive services through personal/respite/companion care agencies. (Savings of \$62.9 million)

Reduces Department of Rehabilitative Services' Personal Attendant Services by 25% in the first year and 50% in the second year of the biennium. (Savings of \$1.9 million)

Reduces the income eligibility for Medicaid Long-Term Care to 250% of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), \$20,220 a year, which is equivalent to 186% of the federal poverty level. Medicaid currently covers individuals eligible for long-term care services (nursing facility or Medicaid waivers) with income up to 300% of SSI (\$24,264 a year). The introduced budget reduces the income limit for this eligibility group from 300% of SSI to 275%. It is estimated this will affect 2,000 Medicaid waiver enrollees. (Savings of \$53.3 million)

Reduces the annual limit for environmental modifications and assistive technology services under the ID, DD, ED, CD, HIV/AIDS and Tech Waivers from \$5,000 to \$3,000 per individual (the limit is separate for each service) and imposes a lifetime limit of \$15,000 per service for each individual. (Savings of \$0.9 million)

Consolidates disability services agencies into the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). All services provided by the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI),



(continued on page 6)

Collaborator's Update: A Disability & Economic Development Call to Action

Ed Turner, Governor's Special Advisor on Disability Issues in the Workforce

Shortly after my appointment as a Special Advisor to Governor Kaine in 2006, we met to identify an area where we could work together and with others to make a significant impact. I expressed my personal belief that most people with significant disabilities can be competitively employed in the community, and we concluded that there is no issue more important to Virginians with disabilities than the right to work, earn a good wage, and live in the community with other citizens.

With the Governor's support, I began an examination of disability employment programs already in place to see if there were opportunities for collaboration. I quickly realized that ineffective communication between administering agencies hindered progress. Some programs were doing a good job of serving their own customers and had well established employer relationships; however, not many were aware of others' programs and able to make referrals to them when appropriate.

There were notable exceptions: Joint efforts of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), and Virginia Employment Commission led to the appointment of a Veterans Taskforce to increase employment opportunities for wounded warriors returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities funded a series of grants to the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports at Virginia Commonwealth University to engage temporary staffing companies as a means of expanding employment of individuals with disabilities in the private sector and in state government. In support, Governor Kaine issued Executive Directive #8 ordering all state agencies, colleges, and universities to examine their hiring practices, remove barriers to hiring and promoting qualified employees with disabilities, and report their progress annually to the Secretary of Administration. With strong support from the Medicaid Works Project, DRS also joined with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to identify and support Disability Program Navigators at Virginia's One Stop Workforce Centers.

These successful collaborations convinced me that we needed to bring stakeholders together to share ideas and develop a comprehensive employment plan for Virginians with disabilities. In spring 2008, such an opportunity presented itself. Daniel LeBlanc, the Governor's Senior Workforce Advisor, learned of a U.S. Department of Labor grant to the

National Technical Assistance Research (NTAR) Project at Rutgers

University's John Heldrich Center to fund Innovative Institutes in three states. These institutes would train

stakeholders to use innovative approaches to increase employment options for people with disabilities. With LeBlanc's encouragement, VCCS Policy Analyst Kathy Thompson and I assembled a team representing businesses, state agencies, academics, an Employment Services Organization, and employees with disabilities and submitted a grant proposal.



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Board Welcomes Recent Appointees

Prior to leaving office, previous Governor Kaine appointed two new members to fill recent Board vacancies.

Katherine O. McCary of Chesterfield, the Board's new representative for the banking and financial community, will complete the term of departing member Darrell Hill and serve on the Employment Committee. Ms. McCary is Vice President of Human Resources for SunTrust Banks, Inc., and a member of the Virginia and U.S. Business Leadership Networks' boards.

As a parent or guardian of a child with developmental disabilities, Dennis Findley of Fairfax will complete the term of departing member Martha Toomey. Mr. Findley is a Senior Project Architect at Bowie Gridley Architects and will join the Community Integration Committee.

At its December meeting, the Board also approved current member Cecily Rodriguez as a new At-Large member of its Executive Committee, replacing Mr. Hill.

For additional information on current members of the Board, the constituencies that they represent, and their appointment, visit www.VABoard.org/aboutVBPD.htm. **VV**

Partners and Policy making: Apply Now for the Class of 2011

Erin Hickey, Sponsored Programs Assistant



Partners in Policymaking: Are you an adult with a developmental disability or the parent of a young child with disabilities? Do you want to be a more knowledgeable and effective advocate for your own or your child's rights? Do you want to join a statewide corps of Virginians active in public discussions of policies and practices affecting people with disabilities? If so, the Board must receive your application to participate in the 2010-2011 session of Partners in Policymaking by no later than April 30, 2010.

Partners attend eight two-day sessions in Richmond between September and May led by state and national experts who prepare them to use the power of advocacy to change the way that they, their families, and others with disabilities are understood, supported, taught, live, work, and play in their communities. Their training covers the history of the disability rights movement, self-advocacy, independent living, supported employment, building inclusive communities, natural supports, legislative advocacy, assistive technology, communications, and team building.

The Board pays all expenses for training, lodging, meals, and travel. It also works with participating self-advocates to arrange personal care support services and with parents to arrange respite care. Participants, in return, must agree to complete all homework and class assignments as well as one major project that demonstrates their new competencies.

Partners are a diverse group of highly motivated individuals with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities from all across Virginia. For more information, to download an application, or to apply online, visit www.VABoard.org/policymaking.htm. You can also e-mail Erin.Hickey@VBPD.virginia.gov or Teri.Barker@VBPD.virginia.gov or call 1-800-846-4464 with questions or to request an application. ♡♡

Become a more knowledgeable and effective advocate for yourself, your child, and others!

Partner Updates

Joan Brunner (2002) is the new Coordinator for the Center for Self-Advocacy Leadership (CSAL) at Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with Disabilities. CSAL is a training and resources network funded by the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities. Brunner says, "PIP program opened the doors of life to me. I was an angry parent that did not know how to advocate correctly for my child or others. Once the door was unlocked by PIP, I have continued to grow and give back to my community."

Carl Brakman (1999) worked with the Virginia Coalition for Students with Disabilities to help draft its public comments on the state's special education regulations following national IDEA reauthorization. At his local school, he has been involved in projects to develop guidelines for determining autism services eligibility and to produce revised special education policies and procedures with protections exceeding federal standards. He reports, "I try to help parents find the applicable local procedure or state/federal regulation in the area they are having difficulty with. Hopefully, it has helped enable equal participation in school meetings."

Suzette Epperley (2002) participated in a Disaster Training Drill last September at the Roanoke Regional Airport, involving twenty-three fire, EMS, and police departments. She acted as a passenger with special needs injured slightly in a crash and appeared in post-drill stories in the Roanoke Times and on two local television stations.

Jennifer Peers' (2002) daughter, Molly Jimerson, was featured in a three-article series in The Village Mill local newspaper, sharing positive outcomes of her family's experiences in the community. ♡♡

Partners, please let us know about your **post-PIP** activities.
It's quick and easy to do at
www.vaboard.org/policymaking.htm#form.

Youth Leadership Forum: Reboot! Creating VA-YLF 2.0

Kara White, Sponsored Programs Assistant

A small group of Youth Leadership Forum alumni and staff gathered for their first planning meeting in November 2009. The committee is considering every aspect of YLF, from its location and activities to alumni involvement after their attendance. Their mission is to maintain the integrity of YLF while refreshing old ideas and incorporating new ones. Seeking YLF's future, they have been compelled to look back at its history.

In the late 1980s, the state of California took the lead in an effort to promote employment of people with disabilities. Its goal was to inspire young people with disabilities to overcome barriers to employment and social participation often confronted by adults with disabilities.



For more information about the Youth Leadership Forum, visit www.VABoard.org\YLF.htm.

Since California's first Youth Leadership Forum in 1992, twenty-seven states have held Forums under the principles and guidelines it set forth. Virginia held its first Forum in July 2000, and to-date, over two hundred student Delegates have benefited from sharing its energetic and socially enriching experience.

YLF alumni in Virginia and nationally visualize themselves as part of a growing network of highly motivated young people prepared to challenge the status quo. They are relentless in their pursuit of inclusion, equal opportunity, and equal access. As leaders, they will take advantage of innovative new technologies and connect over the internet through social media in unprecedented ways.

"Rebooting" to create "VA-YLF 2.0" will include additional planning committee meetings in February and May, followed by an alumni event this July. At that gathering, alumni will reconnect and reenergize with old friends as well as share their feedback and insights on the recommendations developed by the planning committee. ♡

News from YLF Alumni

Ibem Obasi (2008) participated in the fall food drive in his hometown of Fairfax, sorting non-perishable food items and preparing bags for delivery to needy families.

Kimberly Walters (2003) is in her first year at Columbia Law School in New York City.

Liam Cornwall (2009) was a junior host for the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon at Galludet University in September and was invited to speak with employees at his local Safeway Store about MDA's Aisles of Smiles program. During training at Woodrow Wilson Rehab Center to obtain his driver's license, he participated in filming about adapted vehicles, and he is receiving inquiries about an adaptive device which he and a friend demonstrated that enables easy access to the backpack on his powerchair.

Elizabeth Pappas (2007) has found professors very willing to accommodate her needs during her first year at the University of Mary Washington. She is helping her classmates learn basic Braille and ASL, and she is seeking assistance to overcome some resistance and promote ASL at UMW.

Joey McGeary (2009) volunteered for a local candidate and assisted at the polls during last fall's election. He is also busy helping out with community activities, including the TJ Community Center, the Semi-Annual Market Fair at Claude Moore Memorial Farm, the Friends of the Arlington Central Library book sale, and the Cherrydale Baptist Church Fall Fun Festival. On Sundays, he teaches and supervises pre-schoolers at Capitol Life Church.

Caroline Elgin (2009), with Sajen, her loyal companion, was the only person with a disability to compete in the Virginia State Fair's 4H Dog Show. (Check out the video on YouTube!) Caroline also helps young children with disabilities in the Mary's Family Respite Program, represented Canine Companions for Independence at George Mason University's Future Quest event, and is active in 4H, FFA, and FCCLA. Follow-up on her YLF General Assembly mock testimony, she has filed a Department of Justice complaint regarding ADA compliance by Fauquier County and the Town of Warrenton.

*Delegates, let us know how you are using your YLF leadership skills. Send in your **Blue Cards!***

Mobilizing and Supporting Self-Advocates

Katherine Lawson, Community Outreach & Program Manager

The Partnership for People with Disabilities, the Board's DD Network collaborator at Virginia Commonwealth University, recently concluded a Board solicited and funded grant project to mobilize individuals with disabilities to affect systems change at the local, regional, and statewide levels. The **Self-Advocacy Mobilization (SAM)** grant was the next step in the Board's ongoing fulfillment of its commitment and federal DD Act mandate to support self-advocates' direction of their own lives and meaningful participation in shaping disability policy and practice.

Soon after the start of SAM in June 2007, a State Steering Committee was formed, followed by the creation of two localized Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs).

The team based in Virginia Beach, comprised of seventeen self-advocates supported by the Partnership, the Hope House Foundation, and other local organizations, has seen sustained success. After identifying issues of importance to them and adopting the name People for People, members of the Virginia Beach CMT have participated in a variety of advocacy activities. They attended a state rally supporting community services, testified at state budget and legislative hearings, and participated in a radio program on community organizing. Here to stay, People for People continues to meet monthly, and its members are discussing the formation of a People to People civil rights organization.

The establishment of a second CMT focusing on more rural areas of the state, at first the Middle Peninsula then the northern Shenandoah Valley, encountered greater difficulties. Those efforts have not proved as self-sustaining, but contrasted with the Virginia Beach experience, they have provided important lessons on the transportation, infrastructure, social isolation, and other challenges unique to urban and non-urban areas. A model "toolkit" developed by the Partnership based on this information will be useful in future mobilization of self-advocates statewide.

While the number of individuals involved in SAM was small, it built effectively on the Board's previous New Voices I & II initiatives with the Partnership. SAM laid the groundwork for the Board's next step in mobilizing and supporting self-advocacy. In June 2009, the Board approved Self-Advocates Leading Together (SALT, www.vcu.edu/partnership/salt.html), a new solicited grant proposal from the Partnership, that will lead to establishment of a statewide non-profit organization to be directed and run by self-advocates themselves. It is hoped that organization will provide self-advocates throughout Virginia with the opportunity and means to come together around a common agenda of their own making to educate and influence Virginia policymakers on issues important to individuals with disabilities. ♻

Get Involved: Make Your Voices Heard! *(Continued from page 2)*

Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH), and **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD)** would continue to be provided by DRS. Associated savings would come from eliminating the positions of the agency directors and other unspecified efficiencies. A review of federal legal requirements for the structure of state-provided services to these populations must be undertaken before finalizing this action. (Savings of \$0.8 million)

Reduces funding for Public Guardian and Conservator Program by 5%. This reduction is in addition to the 5% included in the introduced budget. (Savings of \$0.1 million)

Eliminates funding for local dental services in 24 health districts. (Savings of \$2.4 million)

At this time, these are recommendations from the Governor to the members of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees as they work on their versions of the budget. Reports from those two committees are due to be released on Sunday, February 21, 2010; however, the budget process will continue through the end of the General Assembly session on March 13. ♻

We Need Your Feedback on Virginia's Disability Services

Next year, the Board will produce two important documents that will impact both its own activities and inform individuals with disabilities, their families, advocates, service providers, policymakers, educators, the media, and all Virginians for years to come. In late spring 2011, the Board will publish a new edition of its *Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia*. In August 2011, it will submit its **2012-2016** State Plan to the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, its federal oversight and funding agency.

Constituents will have opportunities to provide input on both documents and are strongly encouraged to do so. A major public comment opportunity over the next few months will be the first step in the Board's assessment. A second opportunity in spring 2011 will solicit comments on the draft State Plan.

Periodic assessment of Virginia's disability services system by the Board is mandated by state statute. A recent amendment by the General Assembly changed the interval between assessments to every three years rather than every two years, making the assessment a triennial rather than biennial effort. This was done in part to enable the Board to better track and report changes in the system and trends in service needs and provision. The Board is also required to provide an assessment as a part of its federal five-year State Plan and uses information from the state assessment and other sources to do so. Since publication of its inaugural 2006 Biennial Assessment and a greatly revised and expanded 2008 edition, this report (www.VABoard.org/biennial.htm) has become an essential resource for anyone wanting to learn more about Virginia's disability services system or expand and improve it. Content is organized by types and sources of publicly-funded services and includes information on their availability, eligibility, costs, and oversight, as well as references for additional information. Sections identifying areas of concerns and Board recommendations to address them are strongly informed by the public comments that the Board receives.

There will be six **Public Comment Forums** across Virginia. Locations and dates are listed below; all Forums will run from 3:30 to 5:30pm. Stakeholders in Virginia's disability services system are strongly encouraged to attend. Additional information, including directions to each location, will be posted to the Board's events calendar at www.VABoard.org/meetings.htm.

Warsaw: Monday, March 15, Rappahannock Community College Workforce Development Center, Room 183.

Charlottesville: Tuesday, March 16, Albemarle County Government Complex, 401 McIntire Road, Room 235.

Radford: Wednesday, March 17, Radford Public Library, 30 West Main Street.

Richmond: Tuesday, March 23, Westover Hills Library, 1408 Westover Hills Blvd.

Portsmouth: Wednesday, March 24, Churchland Branch Library, High Street & Cedar Lane.

Falls Church: Monday, March 29, University of Virginia Northern Virginia Center, 7054 Haycock Road, Room 213.

Public comment can also be submitted by postal or other delivery to Attention: Triennial Assessment at the Board's address found on the last page of this newsletter, by e-mail to VBPD@VBPD.virginia.gov, by fax to 804-786-1118, or by phone to 1-800-846-4464. To be considered, comments must be received by no later than Friday, April 30, 2010.

Interpreters will be provided at all Forums. Those needing additional accommodations should contact the Board at least two weeks prior to the event to allow adequate time for arrangements. Requests for accommodations or additional information can be e-mailed to INFO@VBPD.virginia.gov and faxed or phoned to the numbers above. **VV**

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Meetings & Events of Interest

Virginia Office of Protection & Advocacy

(VOPA) Governing Board
 February 20, 9:00am
 1910 Byrd Ave., Suite 5, Richmond
 lisa.shehi@vopa.virginia.gov
 (804) 225-2042 (P), (804) 662-7431 (F)

State Rehabilitation Council

March 15, 9:00am
 Holiday Inn Valley View
 3315 Ordway Dr., Roanoke
 Barbara.tyson@drs.virginia.gov
 (804) 662-7010 (P), (804) 662-7644 (F)

Vocational Rehabilitation Public Comment Forum (DRS & DBVI)

March 15, 4:30-5:30pm
 Hotel Roanoke Conference Center
 110 Shenandoah Ave., Roanoke
 Elizabeth.Smith@drs.virginia.gov
 804-662-7071 (P), 804-662-7696 (F)

Community Integration Advisory Commission

March 23, 11:00am
 Virginia Housing Center at Innsbrook
 4224 Cox Rd., Glen Allen
 Bonnie.Scott@dmas.virginia.gov
 (804) 786-6114 (P), (804) 225-4512 (F)

Board of Medical Assistance Services

April 13, 10:00am
 Dept. of Medical Assistance Services
 600 E. Broad St., 13th Fl. Board Rm.,
 Richmond
 mamie.white@dmas.virginia.gov
 (804) 786-8096 (P), (804) 371-4981 (F)

Board for the Blind & Visually Impaired

April 13, 1:00pm
 Dept. for the Blind & Vision Impaired
 397 Azalea Ave., Richmond
 Eva.Ampey@DBVI.virginia.gov
 (804) 371-3110 (P), (804) 371-3157 (F)

State Special Education Advisory Committee

(SSEAC)

April 15, 8:30am
 Location to be determined
 Margaret.Roberts@doe.virginia.gov
 (804) 225-2540 (P), (804) 225-2524 (F)

Statewide Independent Living Council

April 22, 9:00am
 Appalachian Independence Center
 230 Charwood Dr., Abingdon
 rhonda.jeter@drs.virginia.gov
 (804) 662-7509 (P), (804) 662-9532 (F)

**Next Board Meeting
 March 10, 2010
 Wyndham Richmond
 Airport Hotel
 4700 S. Laburnum Avenue
 Richmond, VA**

**Meeting agendas, minutes, and public comment policies can be found at
www.vaboard.org/aboutvbpd.htm.**

For meetings and events across Virginia, visit www.vaboard.org/meetings.htm

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