



connection

The Commonwealth's Developmental Disabilities Council

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Creating Inclusive Workplaces Opens Doors for People with Disabilities

by William Seaton, Business Development Manager, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, over twenty years ago, many barriers to employing individuals with disabilities have been dismantled.

Surveys show that some employers still have uncertainties about hiring people with disabilities. However with the recent push for overall diversity and inclusion efforts the landscape is changing for people with disabilities. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 12.5 % in April, compared with 7.6% for people without disabilities, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

In a survey released in April by the Society for Human Resource Management, 61% of the 662 HR professionals responding said that their organizations now include

disabilities in their diversity and inclusion plans.

Companies are realizing the value of creating inclusive workplaces for not only people with disabilities but for all staff. Companies like Yahoo, Google, Elephant Insurance, and Capital One have found that treating employees well and enhancing diversity efforts creates a better corporate culture in the workplace and thus reduces turnover and improves overall morale.

Creating an environment in which people with disabilities feel valued and respected is critical to successfully recruiting and retaining them. Workplace inclusion is a strategy and product of company-wide policies, attitudes and practices.



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From the Chair

by John Kelly

*"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but
tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."
~ Lyndon B. Johnson*

As a Nation, we have a checkered history regarding our treatment of individuals with disabilities. Disability was synonymous with defect or dependence and, as such, individuals were stigmatized and segregated. We are making progress, however, in recognizing disability as a natural part of the human experience and in helping all Americans live as part of society.

Virginia has lagged behind as one of only 10 states with more than 1,000 individuals living in large institutional settings (per most current, 2011 Residential Information Systems Project data) but we have much to celebrate with the planned closure of almost all these public institutions and with a continual decrease in institutionalized population since 2011, now at about 760. We also, unfortunately, have reason for great concern as a private segregated facility seems ready to take root instead.

Vanguard Landing is a large, gated community in the Tidewater area designed specifically for people with intellectual disabilities. 185 of our neighbors will live, work and socialize within its borders—once again stigmatized and segregated. Additionally troublesome is the City of Virginia Beach's support of the project, offering a nearly \$3 million dollar loan when the Commonwealth is investing to close similar public facilities.

History has clearly taught us the ills of segregation and that "separate but equal" is never truly equal. Vanguard Landing is a step backward. It is contrary to the progress made by both the Commonwealth and the Nation. I fear that a tomorrow in which private segregated facilities replace public institutions will not be judged as a win, but rather become an unrecoverable yesterday. ■



Constant Contact eNews

The Board sends its eNews updates through Constant Contact on a periodic basis. Haven't seen one in a while? Add us to your inbox filter (or check "promotions" tab in Gmail). If you haven't signed up, look for the link on the Board's Facebook page that says "Join my list" right next to the map under the cover photo. *The Board values your privacy and does not share your email address.* You can unsubscribe at any time by clicking the link in the e-news that says "unsubscribe" or by sending an email to news@VBPd.virginia.gov that says "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



Public Comment: We Hear You!

by Linda Redmond

In June 2014, the Board will publish the fourth edition of its comprehensive report, *Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia*. An initial step in the development process was to obtain public comment on disability services, specifically:

- ▶ Significant improvements in the past 2 years;
- ▶ Service gaps or weaknesses;
- ▶ The most critical current disability issues; and
- ▶ Most important changes or improvements that should be made in the near future.

The strategy for obtaining comments was changed from previous years based on expansion of electronic media and our monitoring of its use. Announcements and comment forms were placed on the Board webpage and on Facebook. Staff distributed hard copy comment forms at numerous conferences and meetings, such as the VACSB conference, the Transition Forum, and the Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Conference, among others. Special comment sessions were held at two annual conferences (Commonwealth Autism Services and the ARC of Virginia) and a forum was held at the Lee District RECenter (Franconia). Additionally, 3 video conferences were held with Centers of Independent Living (CILs), covering Southwest, Southside and upper Valley areas of the state.

A total of 70 individuals with disabilities and family members participated in discussions in person or by videoconference, which was more than double the number in 2010 and was comparable to participation in 2007. Two letters were received and 20 comments were received by e-mail or online. Another 34 comment forms were completed and handed in at conferences.

The themes about services echoed those of previous years. The major themes were:

- ▶ Improvements were recognized—and appreciated—in education, Waiver availability, the Individual and Family Support Program, web information on services, START and other behavioral supports, and community supports generally.
- ▶ Importance of transportation was emphasized, both for employment and for health. Much frustration was voiced about the quality and reliability of Logisticare and paratransit services; stronger oversight and accountability is sought.
- ▶ Lack of affordable, accessible housing.
- ▶ Limited employment opportunities and vocational assistance.
- ▶ In the Southwest, inadequate amount and array of community providers. Individuals have to travel long distances to see specialists, in particular. ■

New and Returning Board Members

by Nan Pemberton

During the last three months, Governor McDonald commissioned five new members to begin four year terms or complete unexpired terms on the Board. These appointments come at an exciting and busy time as the Board continues to increase its visibility and effectiveness as a policy resource and advocate within the executive branch and the community at large. Broadly representing the Commonwealth and the Board's constituencies, these new members are: George Randolph Burak (Gloucester), Ethel Paris Gainer (Richmond), Marisa Laios (Chantilly), Summer Sage (Stanardsville), and Angela Yong West (Chesapeake).

The Board is also privileged to welcome back three members reappointed by the Governor for second four year terms: Stephen Joseph (Lynchburg), Charles Meacham (Glen Allen), and Rose Williams, (Charlottesville).

Additional information about the Board, including brief biographies of its members, may be found at <http://vaboard.org/aboutvbpd.htm>.



Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)

by Kara White

"If You **Believe It**, You Can **Achieve It!**" was the mantra that propelled YLF 2013 the week of July 29 through August 2. The photo above was taken during Capitol Day. See more YLF photos on pages 6 and 7.

Held on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University, most of the week's activities took place in the meeting spaces of VCU's Student Commons. Twenty-two Student Delegates and over twenty-five staff of YLF Alumni, PIP Alumni, ASL Interpreters, and Personal Care Attendants met on July 29 at Gladding Residence Hall where most would stay the week.

Capitol Day, the pinnacle of the YLF week, was held on Wednesday, July 31. Governor McDonnell's address to student delegates was a memorable event. Students providing testimony was a highlight of the week for many.

Speakers were specifically asked to engage delegates. For example, Justin Graves encouraged delegates to actively care for others and to "pass it on" by passing out wrist

bands asking people to pass them on when a good deed is witnessed. Michael Beers' session on Disability History got the delegates moving around and involved in a passionate discussions. At the networking luncheon, speaker and entrepreneur LeDerick Horne inspired delegates with his story and poetry.

Delegates and staff regarded Youth Leadership Forum 2013 as victorious in achieving its goals to educate, inspire, and empower young leaders. Legislators Senator Henry Marsh III and Delegate Rosalyn Dance commended delegates on their Capitol Day testimonies. Many parents commented to staff the noticeable impact the program had on their child.

"Brady had such a wonderful time and came home excited, motivated and ready to take on the world!"
~ Charlene Polk, parent of YLF Delegate



Welcome Thirty New Partners in Policymaking (PIP)

by Rachel Loria

On September 13, the newest Partners in Policymaking class gathered at their first session. The class includes 8 self advocates and 22 parents. Partners heard from Ed Turner and Kelly Hickok about the history of the self advocacy movement. They learned from Jerry Adams about the history of human services. The class also had a chance to look ahead at what they would like the disability movement to look like in the next 10 years.

October is Disability History Awareness Month in Virginia, and the first session of Partners in Policymaking focuses on the history of the disability rights movement. Before the Partners arrived at session, they were told to look at the *Parallels in Time* website (<http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels/>) and find a fact that they could share with the class.

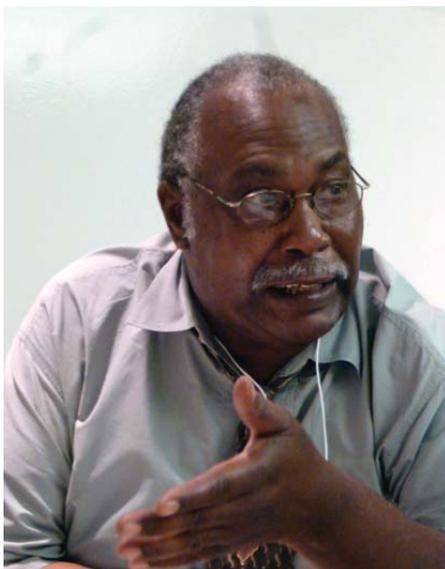
With each new class comes the new possibility for advocacy and change, and we are thrilled to watch the Partners in Policymaking Class of 2014 grow and learn and then share in their own communities. ■



PIP Class of 2014

Sandhya Bikmal (Ashburn)
Nickie Brown (Newport News)
Kelly Carpenter (South Chesterfield)
Erin Croyle (Alexandria)
Robin Davis (North Chesterfield)
Jamie Diefenbacher (Smithfield)
Jill Dolan (Powhatan)
Amanda Echterling (Harrisonburg)
Amy Fields (Bumpass)
Felicia Hamilton (Suffolk)
Krysti Henton (Poquoson)
Danny Hodges (Hampton)
Anthony Howard (Disputanta)
Todd Humphrey (VA Beach)
Susie Juhl (Williamsburg)

Leigh Ann Kaman (Richmond)
Traci LaGanke (Glen Allen)
Laura Lenz (Newport News)
Jennifer Lupo Reese (Sterling)
Becca Oliver (Richmond)
Amy Ouellette (VA Beach)
Ronald Parker (Richmond)
Donna Robel (VA Beach)
Jennifer Gaston Smith (King George)
Will Rosser (Hampton)
Virginia Sprague (VA Beach)
Rose Sutton (Stafford)
Zoe Watson (Hampton)
Travis Webb (Norfolk)
Carlye White (Richmond)



Photos: New Partners in Policymaking work together to discuss and map out goals for VA's future. Above top: Rose Sutton, Jamie Diefenbacher, Sandhya Bikmal, and Anthony Howard. Above middle: Donna Robel. Left: Willie Rosser





Creating an Inclusive Workplace

Continued from page 1

Together these factors influence employee perceptions about the work environment which, in turn, impact engagement, job satisfaction and productivity. Creating a positive work environment for employees of diverse backgrounds should include strategies for the inclusion of people with disabilities, acknowledging that all employees desire to participate in an environment that allows them to work to their full potential.

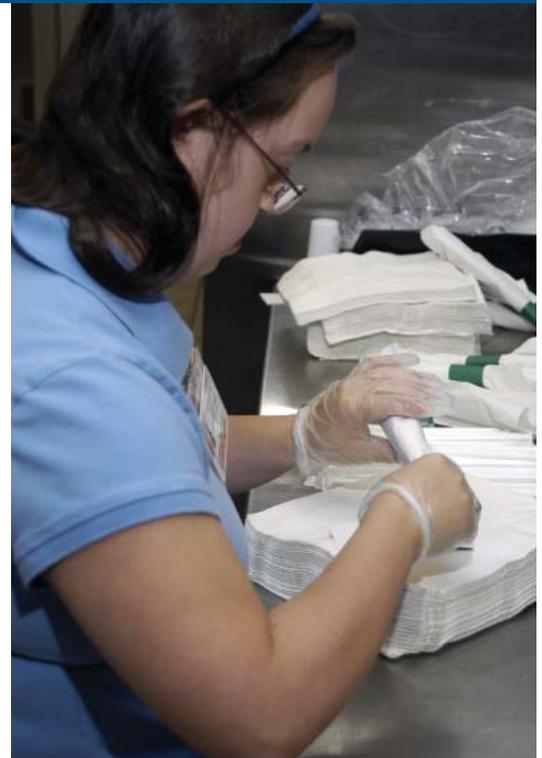
Advantages of an Inclusive Culture

- ▶ Helps the organization create a reputation as an “employer of choice” and thereby attract diverse job applicants, including those with disabilities.
- ▶ Increases the likelihood that employees with non-apparent disabilities will disclose their disabilities to their supervisor or human resource representative. Increases employee job satisfaction, engagement, and retention. Reduces turnover and absenteeism.
- ▶ Improves accessibility for employees and customers.

Communicating an Inclusive Culture

There are a variety of ways that organizations, supervisors and human resource professionals can create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities:

- ▶ Include individuals with disabilities as part of your company’s diversity statement.
- ▶ Ensure website accessibility.
- ▶ Offer written materials in alternative formats.
- ▶ Include an Equal Employment Opportunity statement in job advertisements and notices.
- ▶ Include images of persons with disabilities in marketing and outreach materials.
- ▶ Train frontline managers to focus on job performance of individuals, not their disabilities.
- ▶ Train all front line staff to understand accommodations requests and disability disclosure for people with disabilities and aging populations in interviewing.
- ▶ Provide diversity training to employees on disability issues in the workplace.
- ▶ Implement effective accommodation policies and practices.
- ▶ Establish a disability focused employee resource group and provide top management support for the effort. ■



William “Wes” Seaton is a Business Development Manager for the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. William has over 18 years of experience in helping individuals seek and find employment. Questions or comments can be sent to: William.Seaton@dars.virginia.gov

Getting the Right Job Accommodation

by Ed Turner, VBPD Board Member

In today's economy, and with only 27% of people with disabilities employed, it is essential that applicants understand their accommodation rights under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This right not only applies after a job offer has been made to the person who has a disability, but also should be requested during the recruitment and hiring process. Potential employees with disabilities should understand that they must be qualified for the job for which they are applying before requesting accommodations.

It is difficult and challenging enough to find the right job opportunities. Many times, those with invisible disabilities are reluctant to disclose their disability because of the stigma it may cause or actually the fear of losing the job opportunity. However, not disclosing one's disability is cutting applicants off from their right to get an accommodation that would enable them to get the job and be successful in maintaining it. Individuals with an invisible disability should carefully weigh the consequences of not disclosing during all phases of the employment process.

Most applicants with invisible and those with visible disabilities understand that they can request a reasonable accommodation after a job offer is made. Many still do not know they can be accommodated during the recruitment and hiring process. For example, a hearing impaired applicant can request a sign language interpreter for the interview; an applicant with coordination challenges can request writing assistance if writing is a part of the interview process; and an applicant with a visual impairment can request application and other recruitment material in an alternative format or be read to them. These are only a few examples of reasonable accommodations that can be requested during the recruitment and hiring phase of the employment process. To be on a level playing field when competing for a job all applicants with disabilities should consider requesting accommodations. Not to do so is limiting your chances of getting the job because you are giving your competitors the advantage.

Once a job offer has been made, it is the responsibility of the employee with a disability to request reasonable accommodations that will enable them to perform the essential functions of the job. To do this, the employee needs to have a thorough knowledge of the job description, understand what the essential functions of the job are, and what supports or assistive technology would enable them to perform those functions. One trap to avoid when requesting assistive technology is not asking for technology that would be cool to have but is usually very expensive and is not really needed to accomplish the essential functions of their job. This can also give the employer the opportunity to deny the request for not being reasonable.

A few examples of on-the-job accommodations include: a workplace assistant to enable the qualified employees to complete the essential functions of the job, a computer screen reader for employees with a visual impairment so they can do their job independently, or putting a desk on blocks to enable the employee who uses a wheelchair to access their workstation. Many accommodations are simple and cost less than \$100. If you, as an employee with a disability, lack the experience to negotiate with the employer for the needed reasonable accommodation, you may want to consider consulting a Rehabilitation Engineer, Rehabilitation Professional or an Employment Specialist to help prepare you for meeting with the employer or attend the meeting with you as a support. This will probably increase your chances of having the accommodation approved.

If you are a qualified applicant or employee with a disability, you have the right to be accommodated under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act. You cannot only be accommodated on the job but also through the recruitment, interviewing and hiring process. If you need assistance with requesting a reasonable accommodation, consult with a rehabilitation professional that you feel comfortable confiding in and seek their support. A job is difficult to find for those of us with disabilities, so use all of the tools at your disposal. ■

Project SEARCH Connects Work and Life Skills for High School Students

by Matthew Deans, Supported Employment and Project SEARCH Coordinator, DARS and Lynne Talley

Project SEARCH is an innovative high school transition program that meshes workforce and career development for Virginia youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Nearly 90 students participated in Project SEARCH in 2012-13 in 11 locations throughout Virginia. In 2013-14, approximately 100 students will participate in 13 locations. "The addition of two more sites in 2013-14 is a tribute to the student success and hard work we have seen in our current sites. For most high schools students, this is their first work experience and partnering with these businesses readies them for competitive employment," said DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock.

The goal for each student participant, who is typically in the last year of their special education program, is full-time employment earning at least minimum wage and benefits. The program provides up to three, 10-week long, real-world work internships, based on their interests, combined with training in employability and independent living skills in a classroom at the host business to help youth with significant disabilities make a successful transition from school to a productive adult life. In many cases, students are offered full-time jobs with their host hospital or in local businesses nearby. Last year, five VA Project SEARCH sites placed more than 60 percent of the Project SEARCH Interns in competitive jobs.

This year Project SEARCH involves approximately 15 local field offices from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Education, 17 local school divisions and is hosted by 13 hospitals which all come together as a partnership to implement this unique team approach to Transition Services. Each site has enrolled approximately 8 to 12 student interns and is staffed by an instructor from the local school system and at least one full-time job coach from a local Employment Service Organization to meet the education and on-the-job training needs of the students. ■



Did You Know...



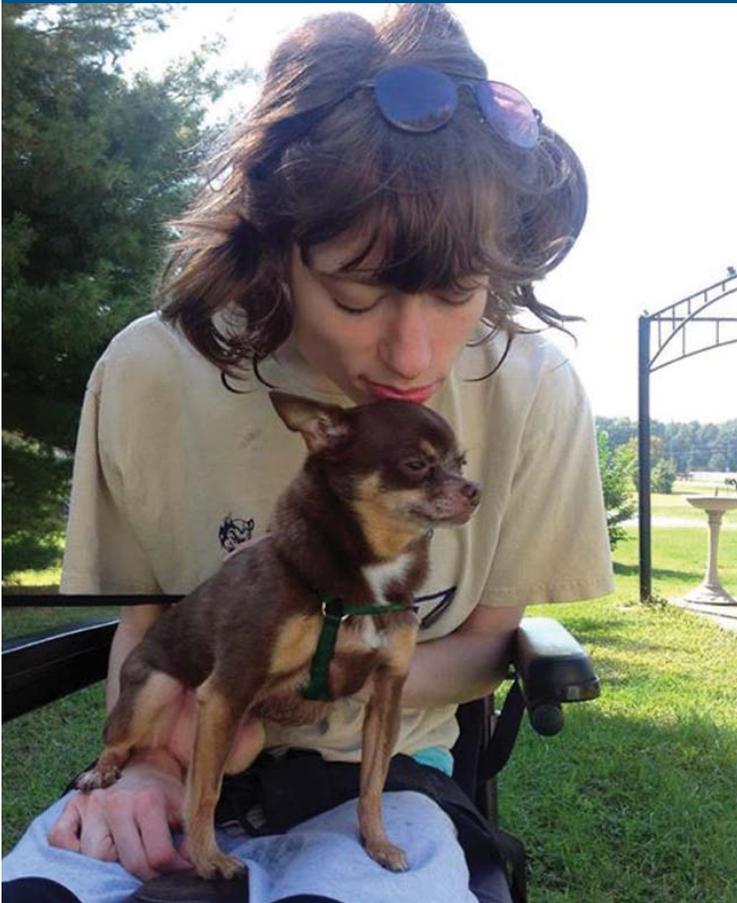
Did you know that independent living does not necessarily mean living alone?

Did you know that the American School of the Deaf, in Hartford CT, was the first institution to serve people who have disabilities and use sign language? The school opened in 1817.

Did you know that in the late 1960's Dr. Bengt Nirje organized a club comprised of people who had intellectual disabilities and people who did not? The members would meet to plan social outings and later go on outings together.

Did you know that the first self advocacy conferences were held in England in 1972 and British Columbia in 1973?

[Source: *Parallels in Time*, <http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels/seven/7b/3.html>]



Brooke with her client, Stella

A “Tail” of Self-Employment

by Brooke Yarbrough (written with assistance from her mom, Dana Yarbrough, PIP 1997)

I come from a long line of women business owners: women in my mom’s family owned craft, antique, cottage rental, and jewelry businesses. My mom has been the sole proprietor of a disability organization since 2000. Before I was born, my mom expected any female children to carry on the tradition. Although I only weighed 2 lbs. 4 oz. at birth, my mom never gave up. She continued to dream of me being self-employed regardless of all the disability labels I was given.

Beginning in fifth grade, conversations took place at my IEP meetings about my future. Not everyone bought into my mom’s dreams. She was often told, “You’re in denial. Brooke has significant disabilities and can’t work.” In high school, I had great support from my teacher (Ms. Melton) and transition specialist (John Stewart) who listened to me and my mom and paved the way for me to participate in business classes each year. I even won a Business Department award my junior year!

I have always loved dogs and participated in a number of volunteer opportunities in high school related to pets. My favorite was volunteering at a dog rescue. High school class assignments and a meeting with the Department of Rehabilitative Services helped me and my family conduct a market analysis about different types of dog businesses and develop a business plan.

I started Brooke’s Happy Tails Dog Boarding in 2012—just two weeks after I graduated! My cousins developed my logo; my parents helped me file paperwork with federal, state and local governments; and my mom helped me start a bank account. I currently have six 4-legged clients. They stay with me when their owners go out of town. They celebrate holidays with me. I give them food and water, play with them and groom them. Right now, my dad walks them for me because most of the dogs are not used to my wheelchair.

My mom and I believe that everyone can work. We’re honest with everyone about how much work it takes to run your own business and how it is okay to have help from others—every owner has help with parts of their business. If you have an idea for a business, surf the web to see if others have started a business in that interest area of yours. Learn from them about what it takes to make it successful.

Plan start-up costs, how much money you might earn, and know your expenses. There are even grants and loans for people who want to be self-employed. Follow your dreams! ■



Meet Commonwealth Coordinated Care (CCC)

by Kristin Burhop, Department of Medical Assistance Services

Commonwealth Coordinated Care (CCC) is a new Virginia initiative to coordinate care for individuals who are currently served by both Medicare and Medicaid and meet certain eligibility requirements. Designed to be a single program to coordinate delivery of primary, preventive, acute, behavioral, and long-term services and supports, CCC offers individuals high quality, person centered care focused on their needs and preferences.

For those currently enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, accessing healthcare services is often a complicated system with different rules, multiple providers, and a lack of communication. CCC aims to streamline the healthcare process, beginning with one phone number to call and one ID card to show.

Beginning in 2014, CCC will offer eligible individuals access to health plans that offer all the benefits currently available under Medicare and Medicaid PLUS additional benefits including person-centered care coordination. Additional benefits will vary by health plan. A comparison of benefits by health plan will be available when finalized by Virginia's Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and participating health plans (MMPs). MMPs are actively enhancing their provider networks to meet the standards of this initiative: coordinated care that addresses a continuum of acute, behavioral health and long term support services.

For more information on Commonwealth Coordinated Care (CCC), visit the website at: <http://1.usa.gov/GzlnkV>. ■

Let's Talk College!

by Dana Yarbrough, Training Specialist, ACE-IT in College

Did you know that...

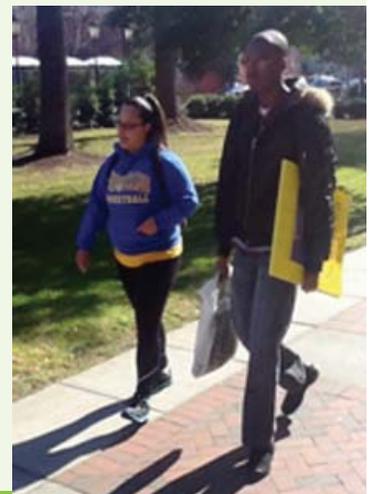
- ▶ Exposure to college can increase job opportunities for a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- ▶ Congress included students with intellectual disabilities in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008?
- ▶ Young adults with intellectual disabilities are the least likely among students with disabilities to attend college?

In 2009, a group of committed parents, young adults with disabilities, advocates, staff and faculty from several two and four year colleges/universities, and state agency representatives formed the Virginia Collaborative for College. Since that time, the Collaborative has: discussed barriers for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) accessing college; developed a blueprint for meeting its mission; acted as an advisory committee for ACE-IT in College at Virginia Commonwealth University (www.aceitincollege.org); and engaged the Virginia Disability Commission in dialogue with stakeholders interested in raising awareness of the move nationally and in the Commonwealth to open access to college for students with I/DD receiving a Special Diploma.

While there are a handful of colleges and universities in Virginia providing opportunities for young adults with I/DD to take classes and participate in social activities (visit www.thinkcollege.net to search what is available), there is much work to be done. If you would like more information about the Virginia Collaborative for College and/or to join the conversation about college as a pathway to employment for people with I/DD, please contact Elizabeth Getzel at lgetzel@vcu.edu or Dana Yarbrough at dvyarbrough@vcu.edu.

Mission of Virginia Collaborative for College

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have inclusive, individualized and authentic postsecondary experiences on Virginia college and university campuses that lead to successful career and life paths.





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People with Disabilities**

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Board Meetings

Meetings of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities are open to the public. Please contact Nan Pemberton (804-786-7335 or Michal.Ketner@vbpd.virginia.gov) if you wish to present public comment during the Full Board Meeting.

Dates and Times

12/04/2013	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
03/05/2014	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
06/04/2014	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
09/10/2014	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm

Location

Four Points by Sheraton Richmond Airport Hotel
4700 South Laburnum Avenue
Richmond, VA 23231

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Above: YLF Program Assistant Kara White meets YLF graduate Mary McAdam's son, Gabe.

Below: YLF 2013 Delegates listen intently to a fellow Delegate's presentation.

