



connection

The Commonwealth's Developmental Disabilities Council

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Working to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

By John Eisenberg, VDOE Assistant Superintendent

Over the next year, the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Office of Special Education and Student Services will be working in number of areas to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Our goal is to ensure that students with disabilities develop the knowledge and skills necessary to learn, live, work and play in communities of their choice to the maximum level of independence.



We have two primary objectives:

1) assist local schools to close the academic achievement gap (Mathematics, English, Science and Social Science) between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers and 2) assist local schools to close the outcome gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. The outcome areas that will be our focus are:

- ▶ Improve the number of students with disabilities who obtain standard or advanced studies diplomas
- ▶ Decrease the dropout rate of students with disabilities
- ▶ Improve the time that students with disabilities spend in the regular classroom
- ▶ Decrease the number of segregated placements
- ▶ Decrease the number of student referrals for discipline procedures
- ▶ Increase the number of students with disabilities who graduate to employment and post-secondary learning

The following is a short list of highlighted strategies that will be used to obtain our objectives:

Charter Schools

Charter schools provide options for parents and students while allowing communities and educators to create innovative instructional programs that can be replicated elsewhere in the public school system. All charter schools



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From the Director

By Heidi Lawyer

2012 was a defining year for the Commonwealth of Virginia committing to the goals of community integration, self-determination, and quality services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Virginia has been moving towards increased community integration for years, but has continued to operate an economically unsustainable dual system of services (institutional and community) and to segregate individuals with developmental disabilities from citizens without disabilities. The work of the Commonwealth to improve and increase community supports zoomed ahead with the signing of the Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Board has been involved in many of the stakeholder and other workgroups assisting the Commonwealth in shaping the future of the disability services system for individuals transitioning out of state training centers as well as those currently living in the community. Housing, employment options, case management, provider training, quality assurance, and individual and family supports are just some of the areas being addressed through work on the settlement agreement.

Between July 1, 2011 and December 31, 2012, 166 individuals successfully transitioned out of training centers into the community, helping to lead the way for others who are still planning for transition between now and 2020. The Board is currently

working with the Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and a few individuals transitioning from training centers to the community who would like to share their experience, showing both the successes and the challenges.

The work that needs to occur to transform the system cannot be done just by state agencies. It requires continuing efforts by legislators, individuals with disabilities, family members, advocates, and professionals. While we have different agencies and different Secretariats in Virginia, all of our work is inextricably linked. Our early intervention system must be adequately funded so that infants and toddlers receive the supports they are entitled to under federal law and which have been proven effective in reducing or in some cases eliminating the need for specialized services and supports later. Our health professionals must be proactive in linking families to services for their children at the earliest juncture and in ensuring optimum health through the lifespan.

Our education systems must set high expectations for achievement for students with developmental and other disabilities, ensure that families understand the implications of educational and assessment decisions, and prepare students for college and for integrated, competitive employment from a very early age. The Commonwealth must go back to being the leader in supported employment that it



was in the 1980s and reduce its reliance on day support services for individuals with developmental disabilities, especially those exiting secondary school.

The Commonwealth must continue to move beyond the traditional congregate models of housing such as group homes to more creative and independent options that separate housing from services so that an individual who is dissatisfied with his or her services can change providers and not lose their residence (and vice versa).

Our Medicaid Waiver waiting lists must be reduced at a vastly increased pace, and the Waivers themselves must be restructured so that individuals with significant behavioral and medical needs can receive the supports essential to successful community inclusion. Waivers should be based on need—not diagnosis—and include a menu of available service options. Virginia should join other states that have embraced individualized budgeting as a way to better meet needs and control costs. Correspondingly, rate structures must be modified so that providers are able to effectively and comprehensively support those with the most significant needs.

The DOJ settlement agreement sets forth the legal framework by which the Commonwealth is moving forward. It does not address the many specific actions that need to take place to effect true systems change. As stakeholders in the process and as advocates, we must work to ensure that the tenets of the Agreement represent the floor, not the ceiling; that we work together where we have or can achieve consensus; and that we seek to understand and work through the disagreements that will always exist during transformational times.

We wish all of our partners a safe, happy and productive 2013 and look forward to working with all of you. ■

General Assembly Session 2013

The 2013 General Assembly Session is underway and the VBPD, like many other agencies, organizations, and individuals, is tracking bills of interest that can affect individuals with developmental and other disabilities. This is an ever-changing effort and the disposition of many of the bills is likely to have taken place by the time this newsletter goes to print. The easiest way to obtain information on bills of interest to you is to visit the Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS) at www.lis.virginia.gov. You can view bills by legislative member, by date filed, and by subject.

In addition to bills of interest, legislative members have put forth their budget amendments for the 2013-2014 biennium. The member amendments can be located at the following link: <http://bit.ly/SDEH5Q>. You can access these proposed amendments by patron name, by Secretariat, and by agency. The House and Senate will present their final respective amendments that will move forward on Sunday, February 3. Those will then move forward to a conference committee.

If you have concerns or wish to support a bill or budget amendment, you can contact your legislators in the house and senate. Don't worry if you cannot meet directly with your legislator. It is equally effective to meet with his or her legislative staff. Be sure to have your facts correct, particularly if expressing a concern and if you are asked a question to which you don't know the answer, just say so and offer to do the research and get back to them. Your advocacy counts and all voices are important.



VDOE Working to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Continued from Page 1

in Virginia are nonsectarian alternative public schools located within a school division and under the authority of a local school board. Legislation proposed by Gov. McDonnell and approved by the 2010 General Assembly increases the level of state support and guidance in the development of charter schools in Virginia to ensure that local school boards receive quality charter school proposals. This year we will be working to assist local school divisions in the establishment of unique charter programs for students with disabilities focusing on improving the transition from high school to work. These programs would not be segregated placements but be integrated into regular high schools with a focus on providing significant community based internships during a student's final years of school.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Waiver

The waiver allows the state Board of Education to establish challenging but attainable goals for increasing overall student achievement and the achievement of students in demographic subgroups. Annual benchmarks will be set with the goal of reducing the failure rate in reading and mathematics overall and of each student subgroup within six years. In contrast, NCLB, as passed by Congress in 2001, requires all students—regardless of circumstance, disability or current achievement level—to demonstrate grade-level proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014. Virginia schools and school divisions, however, will no longer receive annual "Adequate Yearly Progress" or AYP ratings. Under the approved waiver, information on schools meeting and not meeting the new, annual federal benchmarks for narrowing proficiency gaps will be reported separately in August. VDOE also will report on low-performing schools identified as "priority" and "focus" schools and recognize high-performing Title I schools as "reward" schools. Helping school divisions close the achievement gap for students with disabilities will receive critical funding and technical assistance from our department.

Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports

Educators, parents, and the public express concern about students' classroom conduct and the impact misconduct has on academic achievement. Traditional approaches to student discipline that are reactive and use negative consequences have not been successful in reducing disruptive behavior. The goal of the Effective Schoolwide Discipline program (ESD) is to establish a safe and effective learning environment that promotes academic success for all students. Virginia's ESD program is based on research where schools implemented

positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS). Schoolwide positive behavior support is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both

Did you know?

Did you know that there are over 160,000 students in Virginia receiving services under an Individual Education Program (IEP)?

social and academic success. The core elements of ESD are integrated by teams, working with administrators and behavior specialists, to provide the training, policy support and organizational supports needed for (a) initial implementation, (b) active application, and (c) sustained use of the core elements. The Virginia Department of Education's ESD program began in 2005-2006 with 37 schools in 18 school divisions and has been steadily increasing to the current 227 schools in 43 divisions. The program is implemented under the Department's leadership with Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs) and external contractors, who are trained ESD facilitators. The facilitators provide training and technical assistance to school division coordinators, school coaches, and school teams to build the capacity of schools and school divisions to address the behavioral needs of their students in order to minimize inappropriate behavior and maximize instructional time and academic success. ■

Individual and Family Support Program

By Lee Price, Director of DBHDS Office of Developmental Services

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) is developing the Individual and Family Support Program to be implemented in the early spring of 2013. It is designed to assist individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities on the waiting list for the Intellectual Disability (ID) or Individual and Family Support (DD) Waivers (and their families) to access short-term person/family-centered resources, supports, and services. This program is cited in the Settlement Agreement with the US Department of Justice as one of the initiatives agreed upon.

Services and items that may be funded through the Individual and Family Support Program may include:

- ▶ Professionally provided services and supports, such as respite, transportation services, behavioral consultation, and behavior management;
- ▶ Assistive technology and home modifications, goods, or products that directly support the individual;
- ▶ Temporary rental assistance or deposits;
- ▶ Fees for summer camp and other recreation services;
- ▶ Temporary assistance with utilities or deposits;
- ▶ Dental or medical expenses of the individual;
- ▶ Family education, information, and training;
- ▶ Peer mentoring and family-to-family supports;
- ▶ Emergency assistance and crisis support; and
- ▶ Other direct support services as approved by DBHDS.

Individual and Family Support Program funds may be provided to individuals or family members in varying amounts, as requested and approved by DBHDS, up to the established annual maximum of \$3000.00 per individual per fiscal year.

DBHDS is currently in the process of creating an on-line application system and will also be accepting paper applications through U.S. mail should individuals or families not have access to the Internet. All individuals who are currently on the waitlist for the ID or DD Waiver will be receiving letters of notification explaining the program and how to apply in the early spring.

For further information on the IFS Program please contact Cindy.Gwinn@dbhds.virginia.gov or call 804-371-2887. ■

New Tool for Improving Workforce Diversity:

Database of nearly 3,000 candidates with disabilities awaits employers

In support of President Obama's Executive Order, "Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities," the U.S. Dept. of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity recently announced the launch of its 2013 Workforce Recruitment Program database (WRP). This represents an exciting development that provides a great resource for private sector employers that will better equip them to implement a diverse workforce that includes employees with disabilities.

The database contains profiles of postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities, including veterans who are seeking full-time, part-time and summer employment and who have been prescreened by federal recruiters.

According to ODEP, more than 20 federal government agencies already utilize the WRP as a recruiting source and more than 6,500 students have obtained federal employment through its use. Federal employers access the WRP at <https://wrp.gov>; now non-federal employers will be able to access this tremendous resource at www.AskEARN.org or by calling toll free, 855-275-3276. Spread the word!

Advocacy in Action: Cross-Disability Group Unites Virginians

Ann Benner, VAULT Executive Director

VAULT (Virginia Advocates United Leading Together), Virginia's cross-disability self advocates' organization, has identified six priorities for improving the lives of Virginians with disabilities.

The issues are affordable and accessible:

- ▶ health care;
- ▶ transportation; and
- ▶ housing (integrated into the community).

Other urgent issues include:

- ▶ inclusion oriented education with appropriate accommodations;
- ▶ "employment first" policy, meaning offering all clients a route to employment as a first option in services; and
- ▶ giving personal care assistants respectable pay and health care benefits.

VAULT arrived at these priorities after reviewing results of a December on-line survey of Virginians with disabilities, considering priorities of member organizations, remembering priorities from the 2010 SALT self-advocates' forum which launched VAULT, and considering the VAULT values: empowerment, inclusion, and least restrictive options.

In its first year of advocacy, VAULT will use its values and priorities in responding to proposed state legislation during the 2013 Legislative Session, and in pursuing the best interests of Virginians with disabilities in the coming year.

Funded by a grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, VAULT represents the Autism Self-Advocacy Network, the Hearing Loss Association of Virginia, Virginia Association of The Deaf Blind, Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living, Virginia Organization of Consumers Asserting Leadership, Voices of Virginia, and Youth Leadership Forum Alumni as well as individuals with disabilities.

For more information see www.virginiavault.org or call (804)822-1966.

My Perspective: Rally & Advocacy Day in Richmond

By Ivy Kennedy, Partners in Policymaking 2011

I have known about the Coalition Rally and Advocacy Day for many years now, but this was the first time I was able to attend thanks to The Arc of South Hampton Roads. I was so excited to be there!



It was beautiful weather, which is rare for Richmond in January. The sunlight lifted up our spirits even further. I arrived on a tour sized bus along with my fellow local advocates; as we were pulling up the bell on the Bell Tower was already ringing. For some reason that gave me a joyful feeling for the day ahead.

A small band was playing happy rallying tunes to further pump the spirits of the crowd up. I couldn't wipe the smile off my face when watching all different types of people with disabilities dancing and laughing to the music.

It was exhilarating to see so many long time friends gathered in one place. It was also a wonderful opportunity to make some new friends too! There were so many fabulous speakers: some delegates, people representing mental health services, and many self-advocates. As a board member, I was honored to speak on behalf of VAULT--the first cross-disability advocacy group in the state, Virginia Advocates United Leading Together. I'm glad so many strong self-advocates wanted to speak. It's a sign of a bright future for all. After the rally, the energetic crowd headed up the hill to do what they traveled all that way for; to advocate for themselves and loved ones, so the delegates knew for sure to listen to our voice! ■



Facing page: Ivy Kennedy speaks to group gathered for the Coalition Rally and Advocacy Day on Capitol Square in Richmond.

This page: Hundreds of people at the January 21, 2013 rally listened to speakers, listened to great music, and met new friends with shared advocacy interests.

Comment Opportunities for 2014 VBPD Assessment

One of the Board's flagship documents is its triennial Assessment of the Disability Service System. If you know of someone who would like to offer feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the system, please encourage him or her to make their voice heard. Comment will be taken between March 1 through August 31, so be on the lookout for more information on www.VaBoard.org and on the Board's Facebook page soon! ■

Partners in Policymaking (PIP)

By Rachel Loria

Throughout the 8 month Partners in Policymaking program, Partners hear from local and nationally known speakers about a variety of issues that affect their lives and the lives of their families and community members. In November, Partners heard from Bobby Silverstein, a nationally-recognized disability policy analyst and attorney with over 30 years experience negotiating and drafting bipartisan, consensus landmark legislation including pieces of legislation that continue to affect everyday life such as the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). During Mr. Silverstein's presentation with Partners he spoke about how to be an effective disability policy change agent and shared his top ten guidelines for meeting with a legislator.

Bobby Silverstein's Guidelines for Meeting with a Legislator

1

Prepare for Meeting

Before you meet with or testify before a policymaker prepare, prepare, and prepare more. Specifically, identify the topic, prepare a personal story, identify your reasoning and justifications, know your "ask" and identify who else supports your position.

2

Introduction

In addition to providing your name and where you live, use the introduction as an opportunity to establish your credibility e.g., I am a constituent; I write a newsletter that reaches 5,000 families....

3

Subject matter

Identify the topic/subject matter in a single sentence that goes to the essence of the issue—grabs their attention and ensures that the sentence reflects basic core American values.



4

Personal Story

Tell a personal story that lays the foundation for your "ask." Get to their heart and soul. The best stories are positive—a problem existed; there was a positive intervention, and now things are better. The positive intervention reflects the policy you are trying to get adopted.

5

Reasoning

After you have gotten to their heart, now it is important to get to their head by relating the personal story to a policy objective. Explain how the policy you are advocating for will improve the lives of people with disabilities and their families and at the same time how the policy will have a positive impact on society. Also explain how the policy is cost-effective.



7

Other Supporters

Identify others who support your position, preferably people who the policymaker trusts or identifies with e.g., leaders in his/her own party, a leader in the community, or a member of the clergy.

8

Ask Policymaker his/her position

Ask the policymaker to articulate his/her position and suggest follow-up activities.



Take a picture.

10

Provide feedback to professional advocates

Share insight you secured from your meeting with the state and national advocates and key organizations.

11

Write a thank you

Thank the policymaker for meeting with you. Restate your ask and offer to provide additional information.

12

Follow up

Be persistent, follow up and ask the status of your request.

Youth Leaders Wanted for the 2013 Youth Leadership Forum!



By Kara White

Do you know a high school student with a disability who is highly motivated? The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is looking for rising high school juniors or seniors with disabilities who are eager to develop their leadership skills and have a desire to share their thoughts and opinions.

The YLF will offer 25 students an opportunity to: discover their leadership potential; work in small groups to explore their plans for the future; and in large groups, be inspired by and network with peers and motivational speakers with disabilities; experience public speaking in a friendly environment, and have fun. This "life changing" experience will take place July 29 through August 2 on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University with all expenses paid and accommodations provided.

Alumni of the Youth Leadership have returned to their homes, schools, and communities empowered to take control of their futures and be influential leaders to others. They have taken a more active role in their academics and gotten involved in extracurricular activities, matriculated to institutions of higher learning and earned degrees; and as they've blossomed into adulthood, they've become gainfully employed, committed in relationships, and are living independently. They have joined or been appointed to local or national civic advocacy organizations and become decision makers.

To become a YLF Student Delegate, apply today! **The six page application, two reference letters, and all other required information must be received by close of business, March 29, 2013.** Only 25 students will be selected for the 2013 YLF.

For additional information visit www.vaboard.org/y/f.htm, e-mail Kara.White@vbpd.virginia.gov, or call 1-800-846-4464 (toll-free, voice & TTY). Electronic submission of applications is strongly encouraged.

Want consumer-directed services? Or want to work as a consumer-directed services assistant?

Having an adequate workforce of individuals to provide personal care and other direct services is important to many people with developmental and other disabilities. To help expand the available workforce, VBPD funded a project conducted by the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL). This project was a two year grant (October 2010-12).

VACIL conducted extensive outreach and awareness activities among individuals with disabilities, their families and caregivers statewide as well as explored workforce initiatives in other states for consumer-based services. Based on their findings, VACIL developed workshop materials to assist recruitment efforts by a Project Consultant at each Center for Independent Living (CIL). Sixty-seven workshops, conducted throughout Virginia, educated 739 people on career opportunities as a direct care worker and on topics such as consumer control, independent living and disability etiquette. Participants included high school juniors and seniors, college students and others who were interested in working as a consumer-directed professional. As of October 2012, 23 workshop participants reported that they had been hired as a consumer-directed assistant. Two of the 23 identified themselves as a person with a disability.

A second project goal, which will have long-lasting benefit, was development and implementation of a web-based directory to help connect individuals with disabilities with job-seeking personal assistants. Begun online in Fall 2012, this directory will enable workers to announce their availability and skills and families to find direct care workers more easily. Public Partnerships, LLC (PPL), which is the Department of Medical Assistance Services' (DMAS) fiscal agent for people who use Medicaid consumer-directed services, is hosting the directory at: <http://bit.ly/WQEudM>

VACIL has been promoting, and will continue to promote, voluntary participation in the directory. More than 246 people have placed information in the directory indicating that they were interested in being hired as

consumer-directed assistants. VACIL also developed and activated a website about consumer-directed employment at: www.CDSupport.info.

During the project, VACIL also was able to identify and facilitate resolution of a barrier experienced by individuals with disabilities who used consumer-directed (C-D) services. Feedback from their outreach activities indicated difficulties in accessing travel reimbursement for C-D assistants who provide transportation for their clients to Medicaid-funded services. Working with DMAS, VACIL was able to have processes improved.

VACIL has made a long-term commitment to the directory. The CILs will continue to distribute the educational materials and conduct workshops on career opportunities as a direct care professional, especially at schools, colleges and job fairs and will continue ongoing promotion of the directory. VACIL will maintain its website on consumer-directed services. Resources to maintain the online directory will be provided by PPL. ■

Have you seen the new videos?

You may have heard about the settlement agreement between the U.S. Dept. of Justice and the Commonwealth of Virginia, but do you know how this impacts your community? You can learn more about what happens when a person leaves a training center, the choices available for people who are moving to local communities, and what people can expect before, during, and after a move. Visit VBPD's YouTube channel at <http://bit.ly/WWAS89> or the Board's website at www.vaBoard.org to view several informative 2-minute videos. Spread the word and share the links on your Facebook page!



YouTube
www.bit.ly/VBPD_playlist



Facebook
on.fb.me/VBPD_FB



Survey Says: Your Opinion Counts

Every year the VBPD is required to survey constituents. This year's Consumer Satisfaction & Stakeholder Feedback Survey had 412 respondents. Organizations who received grants, participants in Board training programs, and others participated in the survey, primarily via an online link.

Board outreach activities, such as information and referrals, show how people are finding the Board—whether through the website (45%), social media such as Facebook or YouTube (16%), or receiving a newsletter or other information (20%). A section of the survey focuses on the *2011 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia*, a major publication of VBPD.

People who have not participated in Board activities or may not have heard of VBPD are often frustrated that the survey does not have a category marked "not applicable." Staff is aware of this issue and working to resolve it in future survey efforts.

Major topics that arose included comments about the Board's training programs (Partners in Policymaking and the Youth Leadership Forum) as well as key focus areas such as special education, employment, transportation, housing, advocacy, and policy impact.

Raising awareness about VBPD and its activities is an ongoing process, and we need you to keep sharing the news... forward an e-news to a friend, log onto Facebook and "like" the Board, share a post or YouTube video with your Facebook friends, and help us continue to provide timely, topical information to you!

Board Meetings

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

Dates and Times

03/14/2013	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
06/05/2013	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
09/11/2013	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm
12/04/2013	Full Board Meeting	11:45am – 4:15pm

Location

Wyndham Richmond Airport
4700 South Laburnum Avenue
Richmond, VA 23231

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Coalition Rally and Advocacy Day on
Capitol Square in Richmond