



connection

The Commonwealth's Developmental Disabilities Council

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Health Reform in Virginia



Editor's Note: This article was provided by the Virginia Health Reform Initiative.

Health reform in Virginia and across the country can be categorized into three main components: Health Insurance, Medicaid, and Innovation. Over the past years the Virginia Health Reform Initiative (VHRI) Advisory Council has entered into dialogue and made significant recommendations as to how Virginia should navigate reform efforts and opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. Additional guidance and decision making has come from the Virginia Legislature and Governor McDonnell.

Health Insurance

Health Insurance changes are significant in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The industry can no longer maintain "business as usual" and the creation of health insurance marketplaces (formerly known as health insurance/benefits exchanges) has created an additional series of decision making

and infrastructure development for states. [Virginia's Bureau of Insurance \(BOI\)](#) is leading the effort to comply and conform Virginia practices to those mandated in PPACA. The health insurance marketplace for Virginia will be operated through the Federally Facilitated Marketplace (FFM), meaning the federal government will be responsible for building, marketing, and maintaining the website for Virginians to search for, compare, and purchase health insurance for small businesses and individuals. The federal government is also in charge of calculating and issuing subsidies for qualifying individuals. Virginia's BOI and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) are working together to perform *plan management* for the FFM, ensuring that plans offered in Virginia meet appropriate standards to be sold in the Virginia health insurance market. Insurance through the FFM should be available for comparison and purchase beginning October 1, 2013 and coverage begins on January 1, 2014.



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From the Director

by Heidi Lawyer

On July 4, we celebrate Independence Day, a day that we commemorate for our country achieving autonomy, and the political and religious freedom of its citizens. Independence, choice, and liberty have come much more slowly to individuals with disabilities residing in our free country. More than 20 years after the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act and nearly 40 years since the signing of the Education for all Handicapped Act (now IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act, many people with disabilities still experience discrimination, inequity, and bias.

We have made significant progress, thanks to the independent living movement started decades ago and the many disability advocates who have followed, changing laws, changing practices, and challenging myths. We have a generation of self advocates who have gone to school with their peers who expect to speak for themselves, make their own decisions, and be fully included in all aspects of life. They will not accept anything other than being accepted and respected for who they are.

Our government is making progress as well. In Virginia for the first time, we are closing state training centers and helping individuals with the most significant disabilities to be included in their communities. There is a growing recognition in the public and private sector that everyone is able to contribute, that "all" means "all" and that making communities accessible benefits everyone. Yet we have a long way to go and plenty of work to accomplish.



As we work together, it is important to remember that independence does not mean going at it alone. We are proud of our country's sovereignty, but Great Britain remains one of our most important allies. Our two countries recognize and support one another and respect each other's similarities and differences. Sometimes there are healthy disagreements on policies and actions. As advocates, whether we are individuals with disabilities, family members, public servants, or professionals, we must do the same. We can accomplish great things with mutual respect, with healthy disagreements, and by treating each other as allies in our vision for equality. ■

There is a growing recognition in the public and private sector that everyone is able to contribute, that "all" means "all" and that making communities accessible benefits everyone.

What's New for FFY 2014?

by Linda Redmond

Recently the Board reviewed and approved its annual update to the 2012-16 State Plan. This 5-year plan sets forth goals, objectives and activities that guide the Board's use of resources. The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014 State Plan Update is available online at <http://bit.ly/14MtQdZ>. The Board continues its focus on the critical goals set forth in 2012.

Goal 1: Individuals with developmental and other disabilities have improved opportunities for independence, productivity and self-determination through promotion of full inclusion in education, employment, health and civic and community activities as a civil right and an investment in Virginia's future.

Goal 2: State financial supports and policies will be directed to expanding community infrastructure, services and supports for individuals with developmental and other disabilities through the elimination of Virginia's dual system of services (institution and community).

Goal 3: Youth and adults with developmental disabilities and their families are actively engaged in leadership and systems advocacy on local, regional, and statewide levels.

Board staff remain involved in numerous workgroups pertaining to the Settlement Agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Commonwealth of Virginia, including housing, quality assurance, provider capacity, and youth in nursing homes. Monitoring and providing comment/advocacy on proposed state agency policies and regulations that impact Virginians with disabilities is ongoing. While continuing a number of activities from last year, during FFY 2014 (Oct. 1, 2013 - Sept. 30, 2014) the Board will also focus to:

- ▶ Promote involvement of Virginians with disabilities in paid and volunteer positions during upcoming state and local election processes;
- ▶ Improve public safety planning through inclusion of people with disabilities;
- ▶ Participate in policy development and advocacy for Medicaid Waiver revisions;
- ▶ Advocate for creation of a state-funded rental subsidy for people with disabilities to live independently;
- ▶ Develop and distribute an advocacy tool to increase access to supports that promote successful employment and/or education after high school;
- ▶ and award grants to:
 - ✓ Educate Virginians with disabilities on healthy relationships and avoiding sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse;
 - ✓ Address service gaps or remove barriers that contribute to institutionalization rather than community living;
 - ✓ Convert a segregated, sheltered workshop program to one that offers integrated, competitive employment;
 - ✓ Support activities to promote transition of residents at state Training Centers to community homes, including peer mentoring;
 - ✓ Expand dental service capacity in rural or poverty areas of the state through replication of successful Integrated Dental Initiatives; and
 - ✓ Increase the skills and expertise of builders, building inspectors, engineers, architects and design professionals on compliance with state and federal disability law as well as building codes that promote accessible housing. ■

Your Opinion Matters: Annual Board Survey Open Soon

The Board needs your feedback! Starting Tuesday **September 3**, the Board will distribute its annual **Customer Satisfaction and Stakeholder Feedback (CS&SF) Survey**. Your feedback is necessary as part of our reporting to the federal government. Be sure to take a few minutes and complete the survey online at www.vaboard.org or if you need an alternate format, contact a staff member at 800-846-4464.

The deadline for survey responses is September 30.

FFY 2012 Program Performance Highlights



Although a state agency, the Board is funded almost entirely by federal dollars provided under the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act of 2000. Each year, a program performance report (PPR) is produced for the federal government covering the federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30). You can read the highlights of the Board's PPR online and download an accessible PDF, or request a copy by contacting the Board at info@vbpd.virginia.gov or 800-846-4464.

You can read about the Board's policy efforts (in housing for people with disabilities) [on page 4](#).

In preparation for the presidential election in 2012, the Board teamed up with the State Board of Elections to educate and inform voters with disabilities; read about the results [on page 7](#).

Did you know about the online directory of direct care professionals? Established with the help of Board grant funding, people who want to be personal care attendants or people with disabilities have a better way to connect. [See page 9 for details](#).

The entire PPR highlights for FFY12 is [available here](#). We welcome your feedback!



- Administrative 28%
- Advocacy 29%
- Community Supports 10%
- Education 5%
- Employment 9%
- Health 5%
- Housing 6%
- Transportation 8%

How Did the Board Use its Funds in FFY 2012?

During Federal Fiscal Year 2012, the Board spent a grand total of \$1,636,454, of which \$1,464,145 was from federal funds and \$172,309 from state funds. The Board, like all DD Councils, is able to draw down federal funding over a three year period, so expenditures vary by year according to Board goals and priorities. State funds were used only for administrative expenses, which are described in the notes. Expenditures of federal funding by category are depicted in the pie chart below, which does not include the state funding. Through the Board's grants, contracts and programs, match funds from local, state and private sources totaled \$285,313. Since match funds are in-kind and cash contributions by other entities to accomplish the grant or other activity, these are not included in the chart.

All percentages are based only on total expenditures of federal funds (\$1,464,145).

Administrative Costs include: salaries/benefits for administrative staff, IT costs, office supplies, rent, telecommunications, Board meetings/management, contractual services, premiums and other operational expenses.

Compassionate Professional and Emerging Leader

by Janet Willis, Va-LEND

An example of an emerging leader in the Richmond Metro area is Jessica Cann, LCSW. Jessica is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with the Henrico Parent Infant Program. On a daily basis, she serves on interdisciplinary teams to provide services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or diagnoses in the early intervention system. As the social worker on the team, she works closely with families to provide service coordination, identify resources for young children with delays or atypical development, and offer support for the family as a whole. In the near future, she hopes to begin support groups for families in early intervention. Jessica has worked with the Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services since 2007.



Jessica earned her Master of Social Work degree from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and also completed a traineeship with the Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (Va-LEND) at the Partnership for People with Disabilities, VCU. Prior to graduate school, she worked as a special education teacher and activities coordinator for a nonprofit. In her spare time she coaches Special Olympics and is active with Comfort Zone Camp, a bereavement camp for children. Her passion is to work on teams to provide services for children with disabilities and their families. She values her interactions with children and their parents, as she demonstrates a family-centered approach in her work.

“Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately in its practice.”
~ Max De Pree,
Leadership is an Art

Throughout her studies and professional life, Jessica has been a strong interdisciplinary team member and an advocate for children and families. As part of her Va-LEND training, she researched and co-authored *Virginia’s Medicaid Waivers for Persons with Disabilities, Their Parents and Caregivers* for her leadership project. It is a practical guide for the Virginia Medicaid Waiver system. Jessica is a wonderful example of an emerging leader in our community. Download a PDF copy at <http://1.usa.gov/196YR0s>. ■

Comment on Virginia’s Disability Services System

We want your input as part of development of the 2014 *Assessment of Disability Services in the Commonwealth*. Complete the [online webform](#) or download the [Word form](#). If you are attending the ARC Conference Aug. 8-10 in Richmond, you can make a comment in person. The deadline for comment is Aug. 31.

Coming Soon



In support of the DOJ Settlement Agreement, the Board worked with Griffith Productions to create a short documentary about people moving out of training centers. If you haven’t seen the clips at www.VaBoard.org be sure to check them out. They’re captioned and on the Board’s [YouTube channel](#).

If you “like” the Board on Facebook, you’ll be the first to know when new information is available, as the Facebook page is updated several times each week. Or if you’re not on Facebook, [sign up for eNews](#) and add news@vbpd.virginia.gov to your contacts. Because we value your privacy, the Board is using Constant Contact to send periodic eNews announcements.



Overcoming Disability

by Dr. Subarna Dharia, MD FAAP

Editor's Note: Dr. Subarna Dharia is a graduate of the Board's Partners in Policymaking class (2011) and works with the Infant & Toddler Connection in Fairfax/Falls Church, VA. She is the mother of a child with disabilities as well as a physician.

As a pediatrician, I feel great satisfaction in knowing that I gave a family the tools or resources to help their child, especially those children with developmental disabilities. Empowering families to have the confidence in themselves and self-reliance are the most rewarding aspects of my job. I share these goals with my colleagues in early intervention. By working with those in different professional fields, like developmental therapists and social workers, I have learned a great deal about patience, listening, and empathy. These are key factors that underpin the success of all that we strive to do. While medical knowledge is important and I am always interested in learning more, imparting it in a family-friendly way is a skill that must be perfected.

Parents of children with different abilities are burdened with so much. Day-to-day struggles to manage their child's long-term prognosis can be daunting to even the strongest, best educated parents. Families from foreign cultures, with limited English skills, or from disadvantaged economic backgrounds are even more likely to fail—unless we can show them how to speak up for their child. This is the definition of overcoming disability in my opinion. Not necessarily “curing” a child or “fixing” them, but creating an environment in which the child has a higher likelihood of success. This starts with ensuring that both the world as a whole and each individual family understand that they CAN help their child make progress. Parents are essential to their children's success and hopefully we can help them see how integral a role they play. That is the greatest accomplishment any professional can make! ■



Subarna's sons Daman, Sachin, and Rohan are now ages 2, almost 4, and 6 years.

Health Reform

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Medicaid

When PPACA was signed into law it included a mandate that all states expand their Medicaid programs to provide Medicaid for all individuals whose income was below 133% of the federal poverty level. This mandate to states was overturned by the Supreme Court of the United States in June 2012, leaving the decision of expansion to individual states. The legislature and Governor have decided that at

this time there will be no expansion of the Medicaid program in Virginia. Understanding the significance of the Medicaid program on the Virginia budget and realizing that the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) must operate as efficiently as possible, [budget language](#) was passed by the General Assembly that directs DMAS to undertake significant reforms in the coming years. DMAS is always working to improve the development of more efficient service delivery opportunities for all beneficiaries and contractors and the budget language captures work



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Health Reform

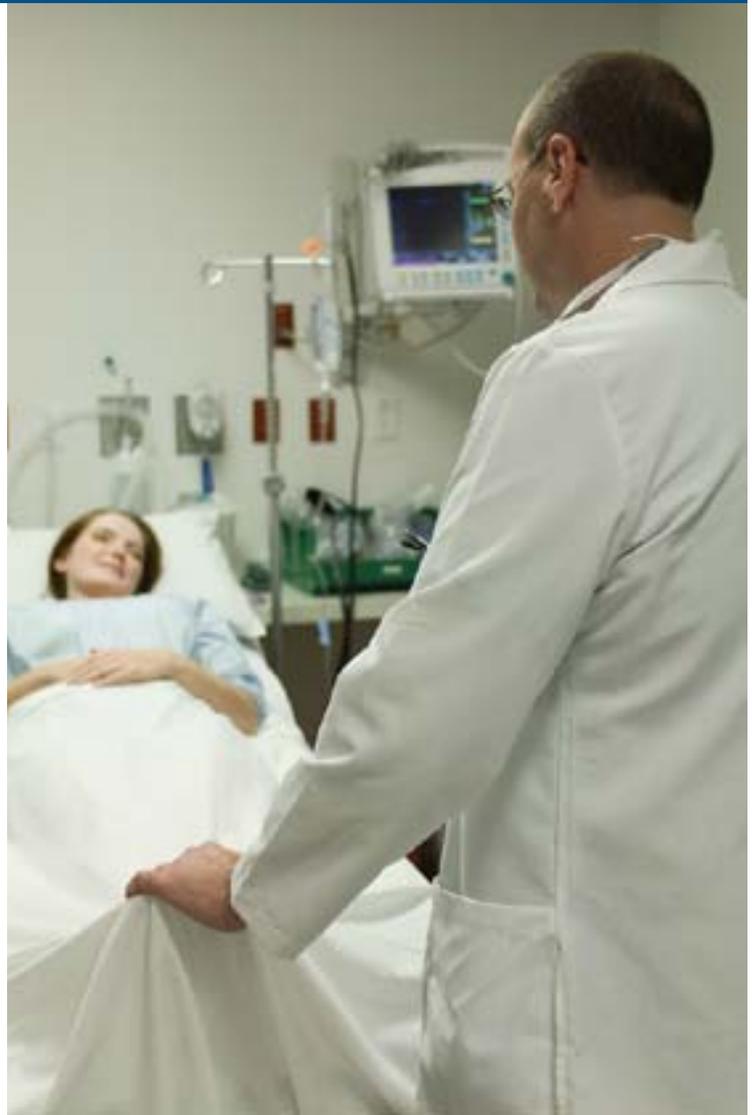
Continued from p.6

currently underway as well as describes future goals of DMAS. [The matrix](#) that outlines the budget language and steps the department must take to achieve reform has been used to receive public comment and engage stakeholders in the reform dialogue. There are 19 different areas of reform captured in 3 unique phases. The reforms span the entire breadth of the Medicaid program ranging from provider and payment reforms to care delivery reforms for all Medicaid beneficiaries.

Additional Medicaid changes pertain to how eligibility is determined as well as the systems being used to apply and subsequently enroll into Medicaid. PPACA requires that for most Medicaid beneficiaries, the national standard called the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) calculation be used. This standard formula brings changes to the eligibility determination process. Individuals will be made aware of changes at the time of their Medicaid renewal. Also, local departments of social services will be trained to answer questions and a 24/7 call center will be available for those in need of assistance. The technology systems are also being overhauled to provide easier access for applicants. Today, in addition to going to the local department of social services, individuals can also go to <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov> to apply for assistance.

Innovation

It is without question that the current health delivery system and financing is unsustainable. The costs of care continue to grow and both the public and private sectors are crumbling as a result of the expense of providing quality care. In Virginia, we believe that the solution to identifying methods of delivering quality care at an affordable price will only be found when the public and private sector come together and engage in innovative dialogue. One of the first recommendations of the VHRI Advisory Council was for the creation of a center of innovation, bringing together large and small businesses, health care systems and providers, and innovative leaders in



the health care field. As a result, the [Virginia Center for Health Innovation](#) (501c3) has been created and is housed out of the Chamber of Commerce. Working together, innovation partners are accelerating the adoption of value-driven models of wellness and health care in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The work of VCHI is already recognized as a national model of reform and it is well positioned to compete for federal innovation grant funding as well as secure corporate sponsorships, substantiating the strong work already underway.

The ongoing work of the Virginia Health Reform Initiative is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through their State Health Reform Assistance Network. Additional support and advisement is offered by affiliated state agency staff. ■

Youth Leadership Forum

by Kara White



Students from across Virginia will be in Richmond from July 29 through August 2 for a week of activities during the Board's annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) training.

This year's YLF will include activities associated with the Campaign for Disability Employment, "Fostering CAN-Do Attitudes Among Youth and Young Adults." Students (known as YLF Delegates) will discuss the value and talents they bring to businesses and organizations. Every Delegate will leave the YLF with a personal leadership plan that incorporates "Can Do/Will Do" statements with employment goals and action steps. More information on the campaign can be found at www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org.

Student Delegates will participate in small and large group activities to discover and explore their future aspirations. What resources will they need to reach their goals of higher education, employment, and independence? Staff, invited guests, and peers will help them find out.

Delegates will gain experience in public speaking and learn the history of people with disabilities, the progress that has been made, and their role in the disability rights movement today. Finally, they will graduate from the YLF with the necessary tools to take charge of their own future and mentor others. It is sure to be an exciting and transformational week.

Taking Charge of Their Future

by Kara White

Several YLF alumni have recently graduated from high school, earned college degrees, and continue to demonstrate leadership.

Anise Saunders, YLF 2012, graduated from J.R. Tucker High School where she was captain of an all-star cheerleading team; member of the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA); and manager of the student run coffee shop, Tavern On The Hill. She is actively involved with her church, a member of the National Council on Independent Living, and volunteers at the children's museum art studio where she loves to work. She is also learning to use her local paratransit service independently. **Steve Phillips**, YLF 2007, earned an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education from Northern Virginia Community College and has been accepted at George Mason University where he will continue his studies in education. **Michael Williams**, YLF 2011, an honors graduate of Heritage High School, is making a difference at Averett University where he is currently a student majoring in Sociology/Criminal Justice with a minor in Biology. He has been elected to AU's Student Government and he asked the school to consider making the campus



Michael Williams (YLF11) is making a difference at Averett University where he is currently a student majoring in Sociology/Criminal Justice with a minor in Biology.

more accessible to persons with disabilities. He was also selected to be the Public Relations Coordinator for the student union on the Board of the Code of Conduct. He has been recommended to be a Student Ambassador and to join the honors program. And he is the founding member of Averett's hype squad, the Crazy Cougars. ■



Steve Phillips (YLF07) earned his Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education and has been accepted at George Mason University.

Partners in Policymaking (PIP)

by Rachel Loria



On May 17, the 27 Partners in Policymaking from the class of 2013 joined the ranks of alumni during their graduation ceremony. After each Partner presented their final project (developed during the eight month program), family, friends, and other alumni joined them to celebrate this great milestone. During the Friday night dinner banquet Ari Ne'eman, President and co-founder of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, shared with the PIP class public policy issues on the horizon. He urged class participants to use their PIP training and to actively engage in the many important policy conversations taking place. Mr. Ne'eman reiterated this message during his graduation ceremony keynote address emphasizing ethical issues the disability community must reconcile in order to work effectively, together, and advocate for change. Best of luck and congratulations to the Partners in Policymaking class of 2013! We look forward to hearing great things! ■

Congratulations Partners in Policymaking Class of 2013

Michael Amoreno (VA Beach)
Numan Aslam (Fairfax)
Lauren Beckner (Daleville)
Sean Campbell (Powhatan)
Scott Campbell (Falls Church)
Richard Cuevas (Petersburg)
Nicole Daniel (Richmond)
Christine DeHaven (Norfolk)
Stephanie George (Manassas)
Stephen Grammer (Salem)
Sarah Gray (Richmond)
Doris Henderson-Causey (Glen Allen)
Michael Keen* (Waynesboro)
Marisa Laios (Chantilly)

Brittney Lee (Richmond)
Angel Leon (Lake Ridge)
Christine Leshner (Fredericksburg)
Mamie Nunery (Richmond)
Summer Sage (Stanardsville)
Renee Salas (Williamsburg)
Kimberly Thompson (Troutville)
Katherine Tiller (Richmond)
Lia Tremblay (Colonial Heights)
Angela West (Chesapeake)
Kerry White (Nokesville)
Shareen Young-Chavez (Richmond)
Diego Zungia (Newport News)

**Michael Keen graduated posthumously. He began with his class and passed away March 31, 2013. He will be remembered for his passionate advocacy and for the impact that he had on those around him.*

Liz Salter (PIP12), left, and a friend attended graduation in May to support the 2013 class of Partners in Policymaking.



PIP Updates

Donna Dayton (PIP06)

Donna joined the Peninsula Aging and Disability Resource Network. Congratulations to all Partners in Policymaking alumni who are earning their degrees or who have family graduating this season!

Caroline Raker (PIP12)

Caroline is fostering a 13-year old boy with significant medical needs, with plans to adopt him. We congratulate her on the addition to her family!

Vanessa Siedlecki (PIP12)

Vanessa was featured in the Hampton Roads Business Journal "Inside Business" for her PIP project and business, BrickHeadz. The goal of BrickHeadz is "to give children opportunities for social interaction, to build and explore relationships, and to connect with people in their world."

Jo Elizabeth Strong (PIP12)

Jo Beth Strong presented at the Virginia Transition Forum with her "I'm Determined" group about accommodations needed for education. She has done several speaking engagements using her iPad and showing people how it works.

Lia Tremblay (PIP13)

Lia reached her fundraising goal for the Sunshine Run, which is organized by the Parks and Recreation Department in Colonial Heights. The City Council voted to give the rest of the money so that the accessible playground can be built.

Shareen Young-Chavez (PIP13)

Shareen is working with Delegate Dance and one of her constituents to help a parent access services. She is also serving on a committee related to special needs with DBHDS Deputy Commissioner Garland. Shareen will also be leading a breakout session at the Arc of Virginia convention.

DOJ Findings

by Linda Redmond

In June, the second status report on implementation of the Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) was filed. The report's author, Donald J. Fletcher, is the Court approved Independent Reviewer for the Agreement. Mr. Fletcher based his report on monitoring of DBHDS planning and implementation of new programs and operations required by the Agreement as well as a study of outcomes on a selected sample of individuals who received new services. In addition, he reviewed numerous documents, and held meetings with DBHDS leadership and with stakeholders. This report, and many other DOJ related documents, can be viewed or downloaded online at www.dbhds.virginia.gov/settlement.htm#Review.

During the period of October 7, 2012 to April 6, 2013, Mr. Fletcher concluded:

"... the Commonwealth made a good faith, coordinated, and concerted effort to meet the requirements of the agreement during this second review period. Overall, that effort has resulted in important and considerable progress in many areas."

The report notes that new safeguards have been implemented or current ones, enhanced, such as: pre- and post monitoring of individuals who moved from the Training Centers; licensing oversight



and monitoring; crisis stabilization services; case management; and "initial components" of a quality and risk management system.

Concerns were raised in several areas needing improvement. The report notes that more than half of the 113 persons leaving the Training Centers (50.4%) during SFY 13 moved to congregate settings having five or more residents. Two identified contributing factors were: the "time and resources required to develop new residential infrastructure;" and existing vacancies in the larger residential programs. Barriers persist in providing needed supports for in-home services for individuals with complex medical needs, especially in rural areas. The high cost of housing and land for homes in Northern Virginia is another barrier. Although the report recognized DBHDS' efforts to increase housing options, it noted that the solutions are longer term in nature. The report recommended

that the Commonwealth develop additional community services to support individuals in more integrated settings, with attention to having sufficient supports for persons with complex medical needs and to resolving current barriers to services.

"... the Commonwealth made a good faith, coordinated, and concerted effort to meet the requirements of the agreement during this second review period. Overall, that effort has resulted in important and considerable progress in many areas."

The reviewer complemented DBHDS on implementing a statewide core competency training curriculum for case managers, which is based on person-centered principles. A total of 3,642 DBHDS and CSB staff,

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DOJ Findings

Continued from p.10

case managers and private providers had completed the six module curriculum as of April 2013. However, the report found that few Developmental Disabilities Waiver Case Managers had completed the curriculum and that tracking their participation may have flaws. The report recommended that DBHDS and DMAS develop reliable reporting and tracking of curriculum completion by Developmental Disabilities Waiver Case Managers. The reviewer cautioned, "significant improvements are necessary" to meet case management performance standards set in the Settlement Agreement.

Although DBHDS has initiated the START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Respite & Treatment) program for adults, the reviewer found that the regional programs had difficulty filling and maintaining clinical and leadership positions, which resulted in implementation and service delays. Data were inadequate to determine whether on-site assistance by the mobile crisis teams was occurring in a timely fashion. DBHDS is to report quarterly on START staffing to the reviewer and is to provide data on in-home crisis services to the reviewer by October 20, 2013.

The next report will be submitted to the U.S. District Court in December 2013 and will be posted on the DBHDS website. ■

Living Independently

by Angela West (Partner in Policymaking 2013)

Living independently has been a goal of mine ever since I graduated college in 2006. Many people did not think I could do it because I needed many hours of personal care. Although it seemed like a huge task to accomplish, I knew that this was something I needed to do for myself. This task was going to involve more than packing and moving; it would involve careful planning and making choices that were best for me as an individual in the community.

In the Hampton Roads area, there are so many different resources that I was completely overwhelmed. I have been blessed to know the staff at the Endependence Center for a long time and they were the first call on my list. The staff at the center helped me research different places and accommodations that I would need to live independently. The thing that I really appreciate about the Endependence Center is that they gave me information for me to make informed choices. I believe it was important for me to be able to make choices about my life and how I wanted to live. To know that I was in charge of my life was very freeing.

I think the most important lesson I learned about living independently is that it does not require me to do everything by myself unlike the word implies. I have experienced the stress that comes with trying to do everything on my own and realized that sometimes I need to ask for assistance. It is vital for me to stay connected with the resources in the

community and build a network. One form of assistance I need is a support network.

Programs like Partners in Policymaking (PIP) are important for people with disabilities to attend. It was very helpful to be in the class as I was experiencing my first year living in my own apartment. There were times that I came to a session with many questions and feeling a little defeated by the obstacles I faced. It was great to hear from people that had a wealth of knowledge. The greatest gift during PIP was the friendships that I made with my classmates. They were like my cheerleaders and I supported them as well. While living independently, it's helpful to have a network of people to rely on. Finally, I also feel it is important for people who have experienced living independently to share their stories with others. It helps give others hope and know that independence is possible. Knowledge is powerful when it is passed along. ■



Welcome Aboard!

by Nan Pemberton

Welcome to Michal (pronounced McKale) Ketner, our newest administrative staff member. She is the reception voice you hear when calling the agency and will assume complete responsibility for board management and board member communication.

Michal joined the agency in April—after the retirement of Sandra Smalls—and comes to us with extensive experience in administration, finance, procurement and managing boards and commissions. She has worked for both the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Richmond performing various administrative tasks and managing boards for over nine years. Since completing high school, Michal worked as a customer service representative for several different organizations, always in administration.

She graduated summa cum laude with an A.S. in Business Administration from J. Sargeant Reynolds and is currently working on her Bachelors in Education. Michal is a certified Virginia Contracting Officer which will become a valuable asset as we expand our marketing and outreach opportunities. Welcome aboard Michal! ■



Above: Michal Ketner joined VBPD as Administrative Staff Specialist in April.



Staff Contacts

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Kelly Bolden
Senior Fiscal Coordinator
Barbara Dodd
Marketing and Strategic Planning Manager, Council Connection Editor
Erin Hickey
Content Coordinator and Information Specialist, Council Connection Layout
Michal Ketner
Administrative Staff Specialist
Katherine Lawson
Community Outreach and Program Manager
Rachel Loria
Partners in Policymaking Assistant
Linda Redmond
Research, Policy and Program Manager
Lynne Talley
Grants Manager
Kara White
Youth Leadership Forum Assistant

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Meetings of the Board



Meetings of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities are open to the public. Please contact Michal Ketner (804-786-0016 or Michal.Ketner@vbpd.virginia.gov) if you wish to present public comment during the Full Board Meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

September 11, 2013
December 4, 2013
March 5, 2014

Left: Maggie Disney, Board Secretary, at a recent board meeting in Richmond.