



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

# 2020 Annual Report *Highlights*

# 2020 Program Performance Report Highlights

First edition

## Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

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The **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities** serves as Virginia's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council under the federal DD Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 and the Virginians with Disabilities Act. Since 1992, the Board has been an executive branch state agency located within the Secretariat of Health and Human Resources.

The Board advises the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, federal and state legislators, and other constituent groups on issues related to people with developmental disabilities (DD) and other disabilities in Virginia. Its purpose is to facilitate full inclusion of individuals with DD and other disabilities into all facets of community life.

The Board engages in advocacy and capacity-building activities focused on improving the system of services and supports that enable people with disabilities to exercise self-determination and maximum independence.

The Board's major activities include educating policymakers and influencing policy/practice; assessing and reporting on the disability services system; investing in new or promising approaches to community-based services and supports; conducting advocacy and leadership training; and educating communities through information dissemination and outreach.

The Governor appoints 31 of the Board's 39 members, while the remaining eight members are designees from state agencies and other organizations. Sixty percent of the Board's 39 members are people with DD or family members of people with DD.

The Board meets quarterly in Richmond, Virginia. The Board encourages public comment on its planning activities and at Board meetings, and encourages individuals to contact the Board regarding needs, information, or concerns about disability- and policy-related issues.



# MISSION

To create a Commonwealth that advances opportunities for independence, personal decision-making, and full participation in community life for individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

# VISION

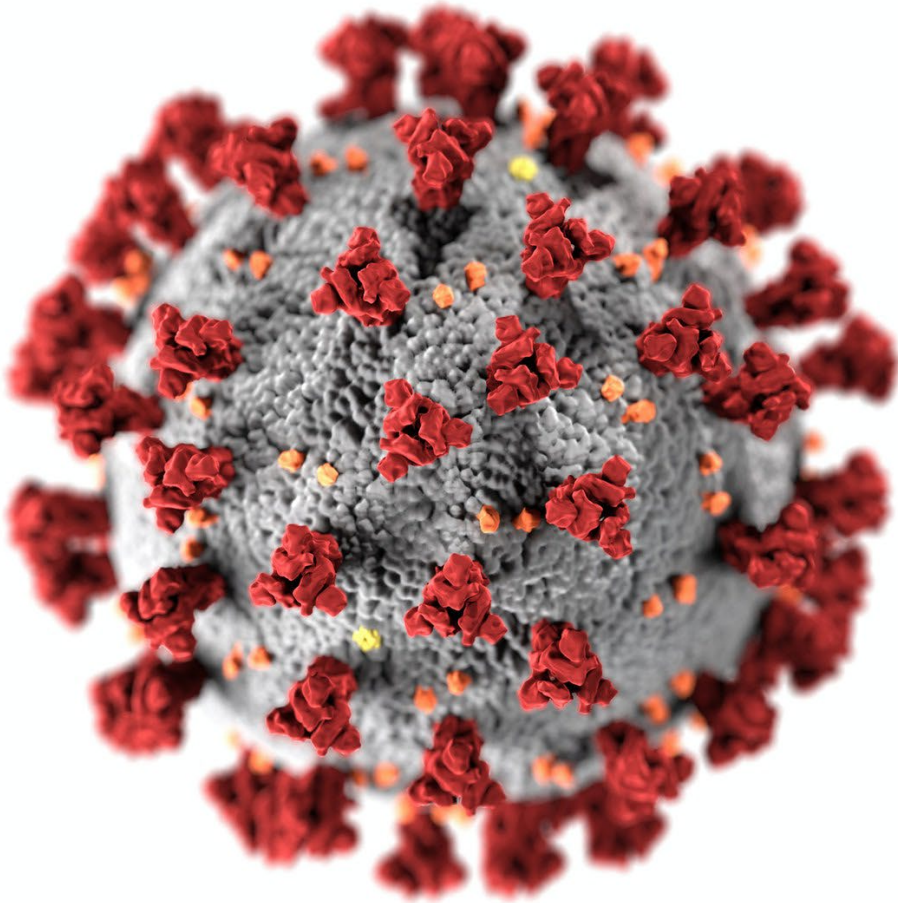
Virginians with developmental and other disabilities direct their own lives and choose how they live, learn, work, and play.



# COVID-19

## Remaining flexible in a challenging year

Like other agencies and businesses, the Board faced significant challenges during 2020, including ensuring access to personal protective equipment, health care, and reliable information for the disability community.





## Combating Isolation

The Board provided \$6,090 to the **Hope House Foundation** to develop videos to combat isolation of people with disabilities during the pandemic. The project began in May 2020 and ended in December 2020. During FFY 2020, the grantee worked with self-advocates from the Our Voices self-advocacy group and created 4 engaging videos which received 773 views. Hope House worked with a contractor to edit the videos and ensure their accessibility. The videos were shown at the Arc of Virginia's annual conference. Next year they will develop two additional videos on legislative advocacy.

### Videos:

- **When The Going Gets Tough, We Get Creative!:**

Self-Advocates share 5 great ideas for staying positive, engaged and trying new things while staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fsLRA\\_LEe0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fsLRA_LEe0)

- **We're Using Technology to Make the Most of Social Distancing:** Self-Advocates share their experience of using

technology to meet new people and staying close to others while staying safe and social distancing during the COVID pandemic. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puookT-nBsGw&t=28>

- **Smart Tech – A Vital Investment in Independence for People with Disabilities:** Smart home technology, gizmos, and devices – for many people with disabilities, they provide greater independence, dignity, and privacy while reducing the need to depend on paid staff to live independently. Here are Jesse and James to tell you how! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klk5q0gY2us&t=13>

- **Get Out The Vote 2020!** Get educated and play it safe while standing up for yourself and voting this November! Self-Advocates talk about 3 important issues for people with disabilities to consider when choosing a candidate in the 2020 Presidential Election. They also share step-by-step instructions. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6wd7Z-1J2xk&t=4s>







The Board funded the purchase and distribution of over 1,300 cloth masks and collaborated with the **Centers for Independent Living** and the **Arc of Virginia** to mail them directly to individuals with developmental disabilities. We also developed a plain-language and fully accessible information sheet for how to care for and clean the masks, which was distributed with each one.

The Board provided \$1,000 to the **Arc of Virginia** to develop a 508-compliant website to provide COVID-19 resources to people with disabilities. The Arc worked with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Department for Medical Assistance Services, and other organizations to develop content for the site, which has received over 3,000 views.

The Board created a guide, titled *“Successful Communication with People with Disabilities,”* and distributed it to local health departments across the Commonwealth, assisting public health officials as they organized care, vaccine, and other programs throughout the pandemic.

Following the distribution of COVID-19 stimulus funds, the Board worked with ABLEnow to develop a financial literacy and savings informational flyer to assist the disability community with making smart financial choices with their relief money. ABLEnow assists Virginians with disabilities in establishing tax-advantaged savings to pay for qualified expenses and maintain eligibility for public benefits.

## COVID-19 Stimulus Payments and ABL Accounts



### Frequently Asked Questions

#### WHAT IS THE STIMULUS PAYMENT I AM RECEIVING?

The federal government is providing most Americans with a special payment to spend any way they want to help the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the payment **MUST** be spent or put into an ABLE savings account within 12 months or it will count as an asset and could reduce means-tested benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Each eligible individual will receive up to \$1,200 as a one-time lump sum payment, and those with qualifying children will receive an additional \$500 per child.

People who receive disability payments from Social Security will get the stimulus payment the same way they receive their regular Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, either by paper check or direct deposit. Many people have already received their stimulus payment.

Beware of scams! The IRS will not call or email you about the stimulus payment. Do not share your personal information on the phone or over email.

#### DO I HAVE TO USE THE STIMULUS PAYMENT ON THINGS RELATED TO MY DISABILITY?

No. The stimulus is a payment from the federal government to use any way you choose. While some people will use their payment now, or within 12 months, others may contribute all or part of their stimulus payment into an ABLE account for more flexibility.

#### WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER PUTTING SOME, OR ALL, OF MY STIMULUS PAYMENT IN AN ABLE ACCOUNT?



The Board, in partnership with the disAbility Law Center of Virginia and the Partnership for People with Disabilities, sent a letter to the Department of Medical Assistance Services and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in March 2020. The letter expressed our collective concern about the pending impact of COVID-19 on Virginia's disability community. This included the potential for workforce and resource disruption and potential communications issues and ways to address these issues, as well as ways to mitigate the risk to both individuals with disabilities and support staff, such as personal care attendants.



Alongside numerous disability organizations throughout Virginia, the Board co-signed a letter to Governor Ralph Northam to address the potential impact of “no visitor” policies adopted by health care facilities in summer 2020. A lack of state-led policy had led to individuals with disabilities being denied access to in-person supports necessary to access health care. Following this, the Board supported a bill in the Virginia General Assembly during the 2021 session to guarantee individuals with disabilities have access to designated support personnel. The bill passed the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Northam on March 18, 2021.

# GRANTS

## Investing in systems change for Virginians

The Board awards grants to non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, local public agencies, state agencies, and institutions of higher education.

Grant projects are intended to benefit people with disabilities by fostering systems change and capacity building.



## 3 Cs Inclusion Project

Grant: \$144,187

Match: \$31,333

The Board continued funding to **Radford University** to conduct its project titled, *"Building Inclusive School Communities through Culture Shift, Collaboration, and Coaching (3 Cs Inclusion Project)."* The project, which began October 1, 2018 and concluded September 30, 2020, increased the capacity of schools to sustain an inclusive academic, social, emotional, and physical learning environment for students with developmental disabilities (DD) through professional development training, inclusion action plans, and online modules designed to assist schools with implementing those plans.

This year, the project trained over 300 students with developmental disabilities, family members, and school officials on professional development, including how to advocate for inclusive school practices and develop inclusion action plans. They partnered with several schools and organizations to hold disability awareness and pride day events, which were attended by over 300 individuals. Next year, the grantee plans to develop online modules from the professional development training sessions and make available via a dedicated website. They also plan to hold additional inclusion workshops at conferences across the state.



## Ensuring Accessibility to All Survivors

Grant: \$89,252

Match: \$29,757

The Board funded **Virginia's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Virginia Commonwealth University**, to conduct its project titled, *"Ensuring Accessibility to All Survivors."* The project, which began August 1, 2019 and concluded July 31, 2021, translated information about abuse and obtaining protective orders into American Sign Language (ASL) for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. The grant also provided abuse awareness training to agencies that provide services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

This year, the grantee collaborated with the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) to translate a resource booklet titled, *"Understanding Protective Orders"* into ASL. They also distributed two needs assessment surveys, including a survey for consumers to inform which content in the booklet to translate, and a survey for providers that was designed to help inform the content for the abuse awareness training videos that will be created. In addition, they created two videos; one that was



specific to Richmond and one that was statewide, about the characteristics of abuse and the available resources to assist individuals who are deaf and/or hard of hearing that may have experienced abuse. The videos received 374 views via a publicly facing YouTube page and via VDDHH's Facebook page.

The Richmond, VA specific video can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj0yWGM00Wg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj0yWGM00Wg) (Video Transcription link: [bit.ly/2UUMoJm](https://bit.ly/2UUMoJm))

The statewide video can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM4LxKmzilg&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM4LxKmzilg&t=8s) (Video transcription link: [bit.ly/2Dvbdqe](https://bit.ly/2Dvbdqe))



## Safari Board Game

**Grant: \$20,055**

**Match: \$6,685**

The Board continued to fund a grant to **The Up Center** to create a board game to increase Direct Service Professionals' (DSP) job satisfaction, reduce DSP turnover, and improve quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities that they serve.

The game, titled "*SAFARI (Sharing Answers & Forging Affirmative Relationships Inventively)*," began in August 2019 and concluded in January 2021. This year, the grantee contracted with a graphic artist to design the board game and finalized the game content.

The Up Center also held trials with 29 people with developmental disabilities and two family members. Six (86%) of seven people with disabilities who participated in the game trials, and later took a survey, reported they were better able to say what is important to them while all seven reported being satisfied with the game.

Next year, the grantee will distribute the board game and train 75 providers on the game.

## Supported Decision Making

**Grant: \$130,000**

**Match: \$45,025**

The Board continued to fund a grant to **The Arc of Northern Virginia** to empower people with developmental disabilities to use Supported Decision-Making (SDM) to avoid unnecessary guardianship and increase self-determination. The project began August 2019 and concluded in December 2020. This year, the grantee created 3 guide sheets on SDM and worked with Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University to develop 2 SDM videos that received 141 views. The grantee also created a short webinar series on the guide sheets and videos, which received 1,023 views.

The grantee created SDM plans for 10 people with DD and trained 67 people with DD, 197 family members, and 306 Direct Support Professionals on SDM. The project has shown promising early outcomes as three participants reported that they may terminate their current guardianships, and one participant was creating a Power of Attorney to formalize his SDM.

The developed resources can be found at [thearcofnova.org/sdm](https://thearcofnova.org/sdm). Next year, the grantee will continue evaluating the project and disseminating its resources.



## Integrated Employment

**Grant: \$150,000**

**Match: \$16,667**

The Board continued a project with **Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)**. The two-year project, titled "*Promoting Integrated Employment with ABLES Teams*," began on October 1, 2018. The grantee developed and implemented an in-person and online training program by and for people with DD, business leaders, and employment services staff to increase competitive, integrated employment opportunities for persons with DD living in rural areas of the Commonwealth.

This year, the grantee marketed videos created during the previous reporting year that highlighted individuals with DD working in inclusive employment settings. The videos received 821 views via YouTube. The grantee administered in-person and virtual training events to individuals with DD, family members, and employers about the benefits of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). The training was provided to 33 individuals with DD, 11 family members, and 112 business leaders and employment specialists. All 12 individuals with DD and all seven family members reported being satisfied with the trainings.

Next year, VCU plans to continue marketing the availability of resources developed during the active grant period. It plans to further engage project participants with an online message board system, which will allow participants to share successes, receive support for challenges experienced, and network with other participants and a collaborative self-advocate expert.

## The Next Move @ William & Mary

Grant: \$150,000

Match: \$74,441

The Board continued funding a grant to the **College of William & Mary (W&M)** to increase competitive integrated employment through a university-community organization partnership to provide internships and training for adults with DD. This project, titled *"The Next Move @ William & Mary: An Innovative Approach to Training Young Adults with Disabilities,"* began October 1, 2018 and concluded June 30, 2021.

This year, the program accepted 12 individuals with DD into a six-week pilot internship program. Eleven of the 12 participating interns, who completed a survey, indicated they were satisfied with their choice of job and the internship experience. Next year, the grantee plans to continue collaborations with The Next Move program and two local school districts, with the hope of accepting an additional eight interns.



## A Life Like Yours Alliance

**Grant: \$50,000**

**Match: \$12,500**

During 2020, the Board completed funding a grant to the **Arc of Virginia** that supported its *A Life Like Yours Alliance — Strengthening Self-Advocacy in Virginia* project. The grant project aimed to increase the availability of inclusive supports for residential, employment, and day activities for people with developmental disabilities, through the formation of an alliance of self-advocacy groups, working to influence changes to policy, programs, and systems.

During 2020, the Arc facilitated numerous skill-building and advocacy activities for the alliance, including recruiting an additional 44 participants representing self-advocacy organizations. It also provided training to facilitate access to inclusive services to 47 individuals with DD, 36 family members, and 166 service providers.

Twenty-four individuals with DD who completed surveys after the training and all 20 family members who completed the surveys reported that they were satisfied with the training. The program also provided education to 91 Virginia General Assembly officials on various public policy priorities focused on the criminal justice system and inclusive education. The program created a “*Declaration of A Life Like Yours*” document and narrated video, which includes empowerment statements. These materials have been shared in print and electronic format with 220 individuals since their development and will be the foundation for future communication campaigns.

Next year, the grantee plans to continue delivering presentations on inclusive supports in virtual platforms. It also plans to continue distributing training materials developed earlier in the project period on the successful use of inclusive services and supports, that can be used by people in the community, regardless of their level of support needs.





## Post-Grant Monitoring

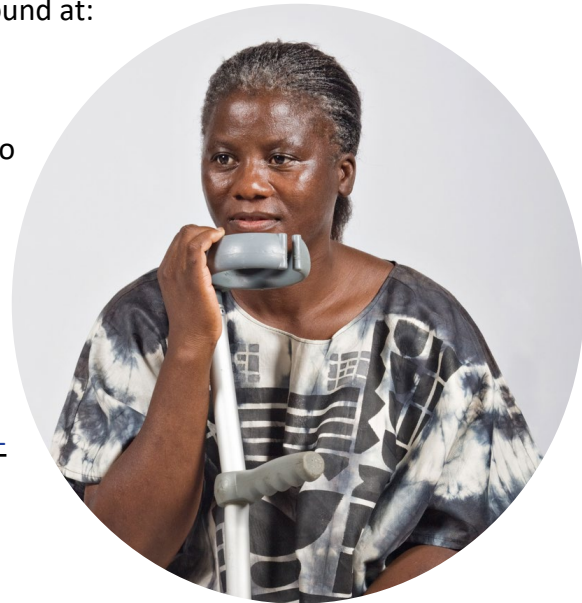
The Board completed funding a \$199,999 grant (\$66,906 matching funds) to **Virginia's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities** to train people with developmental disabilities on how to communicate their health needs. The project, titled "*Communication & Health Advocacy Training (CHAT)*," began October 2017 and was extended for 12 months through September 2020.

This year, the grantee finalized an in-person training curriculum and partner guide for direct support professionals and disseminated the information to 250 disability service professionals. The grantee also created a partner guide for healthcare providers, held 13 training sessions and trained over 30 people with developmental disabilities, 12 of their family members, and seven direct support professionals.

Next year, the grantee will enter a two-year post-grant monitoring phase, beginning Oct. 1, 2020 and concluding September 2022. The developed resources can be found at: [cdl.partnership.vcu.edu/health-advocacy-training-chat](http://cdl.partnership.vcu.edu/health-advocacy-training-chat).

The Board finished monitoring its grant to the **Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation** that aimed to improve referrals of children who spent time in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) to early intervention (EI) services.

In FFY 2020, the grantee continued to promote project resources, which received 228 views via its website. The grantee wrote an article to promote the project, which reached over 2,000 people and also trained one nurse on referral processes, which resulted in a hospital beginning to collect referral data. Resources can be found at [www.vhha.com/quality-patient-safety/virginia-nicu-early-intervention-collaborative](http://www.vhha.com/quality-patient-safety/virginia-nicu-early-intervention-collaborative).





The Board continued monitoring its grant with the **disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV)** titled, *"Improving Transportation Planning in Cities and Counties to Increase Access to Community-Based Healthcare."* The project aimed to improve the ability of individuals with developmental and other disabilities to utilize public transportation to reach community-based healthcare services.

From May 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018, a Transportation Accessibility Survey Toolkit was developed to allow any individual to report transportation barriers to dLCV, as well as their own city and county officials.

During the second year of its two-year post-grant monitoring phase, which began October 1, 2018, dLCV received over 120 views to its website to review the developed toolkit and an accessibility training video.

In addition, the grantee continued to leverage its accessibility materials by virtually presenting its developed toolkit to 320 Supreme Court of Virginia judges, to ensure they were aware how to report transportation barriers pertaining to the court system. These resources can be found at [www.dlc.v.org/transportation-access](http://www.dlc.v.org/transportation-access).

## Post-Grant Monitoring

The Board completed funding a \$182,591 grant to **James Madison University** for their project, titled *"Improving Health and Wellness through Empowerment."* The project aimed to train wellness program staff in the Shenandoah Valley region on how to improve the accessibility of their program to people with disabilities. The grant, which began October 2017, was extended for three-months through December 2019.

During the first year of its two-year post-grant monitoring phase, JMU completed online training modules on inclusive programming, which was used by over 300 wellness organizations. They also provided funds to 36 people with developmental disabilities to enroll in inclusive programming. They created a webpage, which was viewed 126 times, to house supplemental resources on inclusive programming, held coalition meetings, and distributed a resource guide on inclusive wellness opportunities to over 2,800 people via collaborating organizations, through emails and websites. The developed resources can be found at [inclusivewellness.org](https://inclusivewellness.org).





The Board monitored its grant with the **Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)** to develop and implement a training curriculum on critical decision-making points for students, families, school and parent resource staff, and other stakeholders. The goal of this project was to improve opportunities for high school students with disabilities to obtain employment and/or enroll in higher education following graduation.

This year, the grantee distributed 11,000 copies of its *"Critical Decision Points for Families of Students with Disabilities"* guide.

VDOE held multiple virtual training sessions for both parents of children with disabilities and school officials and administrators. A total of 71 individuals received training. These trainings were administered virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the end of the second year of post-grant monitoring, the grantee will continue to offer virtual training to parents of students with DD and school officials, as well as make any needed updates to the training content. The developed resources can be found at [bit.ly/2Qj61Jh](https://bit.ly/2Qj61Jh).





## Post-Grant Monitoring

The Board also reviewed its grant project with the **Arc of Northern Virginia**, titled *"Increasing Access to Disability Resources in non-English Languages."* The overall goal of the project, which began May 2017 and concluded November 2018, was to translate six previously developed guides into five languages for people with disabilities and their families who speak languages other than English, including Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Chinese.

This year the grantee continued to advertise its translated guides at various resource fairs and conferences, in its own e-newsletter and via a website called *Transition Points* that it created during the active grant period.

During 2020, the translated guides were downloaded from the grantee's website an estimated 55 times. The grantee also distributed hard copies of the guides to an estimated 309 individuals, representing people with DD and their family members, as well as individuals from local organizations.

The developed resources can be found at [thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/#guides](https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/#guides).



## Event & Conference Support

The Board provided \$2,500 to the **Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond (DSAGR)** to co-sponsor their annual educational conference. The event, which was held in Richmond, Virginia in February 2020, focused on inclusive education and transition. Over 300 individuals attended, including 104 professionals, eight people with developmental disabilities, 97 of their family members and 34 exhibitors.

The Board supplied \$1,000 to support the **Arc of Virginia's** annual conference. The Board's funding supported two sessions by Syracuse University's Burton Blatt Institute on the theory and implementation of supported decision-making. Of the 123 people who attended, 26 reported having DD, 27 reported being family members and 41 reported being other professionals.







# Policy

## Advocating & Educating for Change

A key aspect of the Board's work is to advise the Governor, legislators, and government agencies on public policy issues that foster full inclusion of people with disabilities in all facets of community life.

## Improving Community Support Services

The Board worked to implement changes to improve community support services to individuals with developmental disabilities, making multiple recommendations to the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) regarding Appendix K of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver application — which were implemented.

The Commonwealth has expanded access to community services by creating new Medicaid Waiver slots for Virginians with I/DD. The General Assembly funded an additional 785 slots through the approved State Fiscal Year 2021 budget in February 2020. Although this has been an improvement, there continues to be a shortage of service providers available to meet the needs of waiver recipients.





## Policies to Safeguard Against Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

The Board worked with DD Network partners to advocate for better protections from abuse, neglect, and exploitation for individuals with DD. Advocacy activities included monitoring, workgroup participation, and collaboration with other entities to disseminate relevant guidance on policies related to seclusion and restraint in public elementary and secondary schools, accommodations for individuals with DD in correctional facilities, service provider training on domestic violence and abuse, emergency evacuation plans for people with disabilities, and dissemination of information related to COVID-19 stimulus funds and potential financial exploitation.

In July 2020, final regulations were issued governing the use of seclusion and restraint in public elementary and secondary schools. These regulations included several supported positions of the Board and its advocacy partners, [including (i) the prohibition of the use of these interventions except in instances where there is an imminent risk of harm to self or others, (ii) prohibition of prone restraints, and (iii) mandatory same day reporting of the use of these interventions to parents]; and much of the Board's advocacy work of previous years impacted the final regulations, which took effect on January 1, 2021. The Board continues to monitor implementation.





## Workgroup Participation

In FFY 2020, the Board participated in a workgroup alongside several state agencies and entities to review the current guidelines related to accommodations for people with DD in correctional facilities. The Board recommended that data be collected on the number of people residing in the facilities who need an accommodation, supporting the best practice of data collection. This workgroup will continue in FFY 2021.

The Board staff continued participating in the I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory Board, which aims to ensure that relationships are free from abuse. In FFY 2020, the project created free e-modules to train domestic violence service providers on people with disabilities. Only one meeting was held in FFY 2020, which was largely informational.



The Board continued work as a member of the **Health Equity Working Group** to review a draft hurricane evacuation guide. The Board provided 21 recommendations that addressed four best practices: (i) ensure accessibility of the guide to people with disabilities, (ii) inform people of resources available regarding emergencies, (iii) inform people of their right to receive needed accommodations during an emergency, and, (iv) encourage adequate planning for emergencies. Of the 21 recommendations, nine were implemented and two were partially implemented, addressing three of the four best practices.

Board staff collaborated with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to develop and disseminate information to educate individuals with disabilities, families and providers on person-centered approaches for assuring individuals with disabilities benefit from COVID-19 stimulus checks/ rebates. The Board also collaborated with ABLEnow on the development and distribution of a flyer to mitigate potential financial exploitation of stimulus funds.



## Other Workgroups

The Board participated in the listed policy workgroups in 2019, helping to influence policy and services throughout the Commonwealth.

- Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services No Wrong Door Resource Advisory Council
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Employment First Advisory Group
- Department of Education Advocacy Stakeholders Group
- Department of Education State Special Education Advisory Committee
- Department of Housing and Community Development Inter-agency Housing Advisory Committee
- Department of Medical Assistance Services Developmental Disabilities Waiver Advisory Council
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities Public Policy Workgroup
- Project Living Well Advisory Council Leadership Team
- United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Roundtable
- Virginia Business Leadership Network
- Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Partnership for People with Disabilities Consumer Advisory Council
- VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory Board
- Virginia Department of Health Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity
- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Human Service Transportation Committee
- Virginia Department of Health Multi-Agency Coronavirus Health Equity Working Group
- Virginia Department of Health Vaccine Advisory Workgroup
- Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Workgroup
- State Health Assessment & Improvement Plan (SHAIP) Advisory Council
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Community of Practice
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Barriers to Services Workgroup
- Supported Decision Making Workgroup
- Virginia Department of Corrections HB 659 Workgroup
- Secretary of Health and Human Resources Scarce Resource Allocation Workgroup
- Virginia Ability Community Advisory Council



# Project Living Well

## A Developmental Disabilities Project of National Significance

The Board completed its third year of collaboration with **Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Partnership for People with Disabilities** on *Project Living Well* (PLW), which is a Project of National Significance, funded by the Administration for Community Living.

The goals of PLW are to increase the knowledge of people with disabilities and other advocates to generate policy change, and to support monitoring and quality initiatives regarding health and safety of people with disabilities. To support this project, the Board has developed trend reports that summarize the Commonwealth's performance in serving people with disabilities and other related outcomes.

The trend reports provide disability data that can be used by stakeholders to improve programs, policies, and practices. In late FFY 2020, the Early Intervention, Housing and Education Trend Reports were released. They were shared on the Board's social media and on a dedicated webpage where the public can access

the full report or a summary one-page report. A few notable findings in the reports include:

### Early Intervention Trend Report

The early intervention program provides services and supports for infants and toddlers experiencing developmental delays. Services include physical therapy, psychological services, and service coordination. Early intervention services help reduce the need for special education and other related services in the future.

Changes in the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia's assessment process resulted in increased accuracy for measuring infant/toddler development of social-emotional skills, knowledge and communication skills, and appropriate behavior.

More than 70% of families felt that early intervention services helped them know their rights, helped their children's learning and development, and helped the families communicate their children's needs.

Nearly all infants and toddlers received their early intervention services in a home- or community-based

setting in a timely manner. Most had a conference to help them transition into preschool in a timely manner as well.

### **Housing Trend Report**

Access to safe and affordable housing is essential for a person's independence and community engagement. Housing also has impacts on a person's health and employment opportunities.

Virginia is following the national trend of serving more people in smaller, community-based settings rather than larger institutions. More adults with Developmental Disability (DD) waivers have also been able to choose their homes and are happy with where they live.

Despite general improvements for some recipients of state services, the housing crisis continues. People with disabilities who are dependent on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to pay their rent cannot afford the average price for one-bedroom or studio apartments.

### **Education Trend Report**

A child's academic career can impact future employment prospects and independent living. The mode in which education is delivered may also have a

considerable impact.

Though some progress has been made, many students with disabilities are still not being educated alongside their peers without disabilities, and students with disabilities are being disproportionately suspended or expelled.

Nearly all students have consistently received a timely evaluation of eligibility for special education services, and nearly all students who are referred from early intervention to special education services have consistently had their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) developed on time.

The portion of students with disabilities who graduated with a standard, advanced, or international baccalaureate (IB) high school diploma within four years has increased from 45% in 2010 to nearly 63% in 2019.

The Early Intervention Trend Report was the most popular of the three released reports. In the quarter after its release, the full Early Intervention Trend Report was downloaded 50 times. The one-page versions of the Early Intervention, Education, and Housing reports were downloaded a total of 86 times. Plain language versions of these trend reports are in development. Trend reports on community supports, healthcare and employment were drafted and will be released in FFY 2021.



Partners in Polycymaking (PIP) is the Board's adult leadership and advocacy training program. PIP is open to those with developmental disabilities and the parents of young children with developmental disabilities.

Each PIP course consists of seven weekend sessions over eight months. The Partners participate in advocacy training, resource development, and skill-building workshops led by state and national experts across a range of topics relevant to the disability community.

The Board's 2019-2020 session started in September 2019 and included two dozen partners. Each was tasked with developing a legislative presentation addressing service needs or improvements in Virginia.

While the ending sessions and graduation for PIP were impacted by COVID, the Board was able to complete the program both virtually and by mail and graduate each of the Partners in April 2020. Work is already underway for the next PIP class, which will begin in September 2021.



The Youth Leadership Academy is Virginia's premiere opportunity for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors with disabilities to participate in customized learning and fun through personal, career, advocacy, and leadership development activities.

Each class size is limited and students are selected through a highly competitive application process. Delegates learn directly from peer mentors and successful adult role models while they work on their own personal leadership plans, enhance their communications skills, and have a chance to speak directly to state legislators and policymakers.

Due to COVID-19, the Board was forced to make the decision to cancel the Youth Leadership Academy slated for July 2020. This session was rescheduled for July, 2021, and all of the programs training and curriculum has been revised to be delivered virtually in order to ensure the safety of all participants and staff.







## **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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