



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

# ACCESS TO INFORMATION

for People with Disabilities  
and their Family Members



**T**he Virginia Board for People with Disabilities advises the Governor, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, legislators and other groups on issues important to people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. In 2022, the Board assessed access to information for people with disabilities and their family members.

The Board's [Assessment of Information Access for Individuals with Disabilities and their Family Members](#) identifies the current availability, usefulness and accessibility of culturally and linguistically tailored information on community services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families in Virginia.

- For many years, Virginians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families have reported difficulty finding, understanding and using information on community services and supports.
- Challenges faced by people seeking information are compounded by the complexity of the service delivery system and the fragmentation of sources of information.

**The Board offers 17  
recommendations in  
four key areas:**

**Available, Accessible  
and Useful Information**

**System Capabilities:  
Knowledge and  
Skills of Staff**

**Process Improvement**

**Quality, Accountability  
and Customer Focus**

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## AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND USEFUL INFORMATION

Information is frequently not easily located. When located, information is

- Often **highly technical** and difficult to understand.
- **Not available** in other languages.
- **Not available** in formats to accommodate varying sensory communication needs.

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## SYSTEM CAPABILITIES: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF STAFF

**Information about community-based services and supports change regularly.** There is no thorough or consistent plan to update information. This contributes to an agency's risk of providing inaccurate or incomplete information through word of mouth, website or document.

Areas that are affected include:

- **The Medicaid home and community-based services** initial eligibility and application processes.
- Local and state agency **ability to provide accurate and up-to-date information.**

Ultimately, self-advocates and families are the ones affected and can result in a delay of access to needed services. There are opportunities to improve access to accurate and reliable information.

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## PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

There is a gap in connecting families of transition age youth to the DD services system. The gap is two-fold:

- A **knowledge gap** between local school division personnel and Community Services Board (CSB) personnel.
- **Lack of a formalized process** to ensure families receive information about community-based services and supports.

Some localities have excellent established practices and collaboration that could be replicated.

Additionally, no formal process exists for

- **Assessing the level of satisfaction** of people initially seeking information on applying home and community-based services.
- **Accountability** for timely, accurate responses to families and self-advocates who request information from a local agency regarding services and supports available.

The CSB intake process provides an opportunity to connect people to others with lived experience, but it does not appear to be fully utilized.

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## QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND CUSTOMER FOCUS

More than 50% of self-advocates said that

- A key component of useful information is a **customer-focused, respectful human contact.**
- Information was less useful when they perceived a lack of respect for individual needs.
- Information was less useful when they perceived lack of accountability for inaccurate information.

Additionally, many agencies lack **culturally-focused** information for diverse groups.