



Virginia Board for
People with Disabilities

2022

Program Performance Report **HIGHLIGHTS**



Message from the Chair



It is my pleasure to present the annual report for the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities' 2022 federal fiscal year. Throughout the year, we have made significant progress towards our goals. We have worked closely with community leaders and organizations to promote inclusion and accessibility in all areas of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. We have also

continued to provide valuable resources and support for families and people with developmental disabilities.

Our Board has been actively engaged in shaping policy and legislation to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of those we represent are heard and that their needs are met. As we look to the future, we remain committed to advocating for the rights and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all of our Board members and staff for their dedication this year.

Sincerely,

Niki Zimmerman



**Washington Office Building
1100 Bank Street, 7th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219**

**804-786-0016
800-846-4464 (Toll-free)
804-786-1118 (Fax)**

**email: info@vbpd.virginia.gov
www.vbpd.virginia.gov**

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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.

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The **first goal** is for people with disabilities to have better access to supports so they can live in the community.

Assessment

During the development of the Board's five-year State Plan, Board members identified access to information about community-based services and supports as a significant barrier for people with disabilities and their family members. To understand the barriers, the Board prioritized an assessment of information access, which was accomplished by awarding a \$100,000 grant (\$33,000 matching funds) to Management Support Solutions, Inc. (MSSI). The assessment, titled Access to Information for People with Disabilities and their Family Members, was released in August 2022.

To gather first-hand information and the lived experiences of people with DD and family members when accessing information, MSSI held a series of focus group discussions in English, Spanish, and Korean and conducted an online survey with self-advocates and family members – 73 family members, and 43 people with DD participated. Additionally, MSSI conducted an environmental scan of numerous websites and databases to determine accessibility features and whether information is easily located and understandable.

The Board's Assessment of Access to Information for People with Disabilities and their Family Members was distributed to 140 members of the Virginia General Assembly and 48 others representing key state agencies and stakeholders. The Board's assessment included 17 recommendations to improve the accuracy, reliability, and accessibility of information. Advocacy for the recommendations and other system change initiatives will be ongoing.



Workgroup Participation & Collaboration

Board staff participated in 15 workgroups related to community supports.

The Board, through its participation in a workgroup to develop recommendations for a language access policy for Virginia state government, made recommendations that supported eight best practices. Of the eight recommendations made, six were included in the final report:

- Invest in cultural brokers who provide compensated input to state agencies
- Encourage training in the development of agency Limited English Proficiency guides
- Encourage agencies to create an information sheet to provide to staff on how to access and use translation services
- Encourage cross-agency collaboration
- Provide demographic information to state agencies showing language needs by region or service area

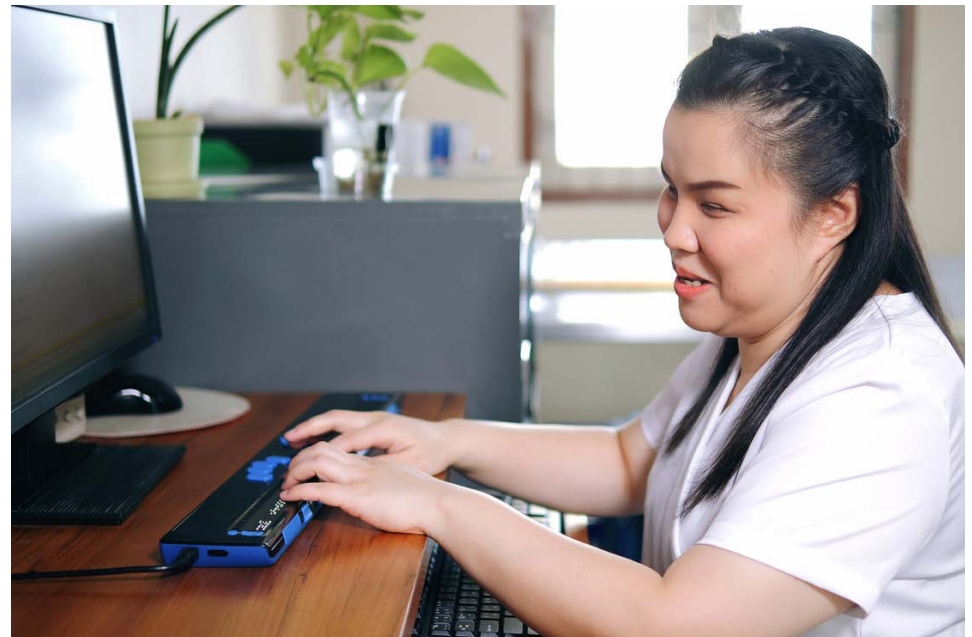
Legislative & Policy Advocacy

The Board values collaboration. Collaboration is necessary to influence change. In collaboration with DD Coalition partners, the Board advocated for recommendations from the Board's 2021 assessment of residential and day support services in the DD waivers being considered by the General Assembly. Including –

- 1) bundle assistive technology (AT), environmental modifications (EM), and electronic home-based support funding caps;
- 2) Provide a self-directed service option for AT and EM; and
- 3) establish rates for supported living services that are comparable to the rates for group home residential services.

The first two gained good support, but they did not pass. The third item did pass, substantially increasing DD waiver rates for supportive living services.

Board staff testified on seven bills relating to community supports, educating 55 legislators about the positive and negative impact of specific bills.



FIRST GOAL

Board staff provided public comment to eight members of the Disability Commission supporting House Joint Resolution 85, which requested that the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) study the feasibility of implementing a spend-down provision for individuals on a DD waiver.

The Board collaborated with The Arc of VA and vaACCSES on a letter to DMAS regarding the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) that Virginia would receive due to the pandemic. In the letter, we recommended that DMAS incorporate public/stakeholder involvement and transparency into their suggestions to the General Assembly on how the enhanced FMAP can be reinvested in Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS).

Board staff commented to the Virginia Beach City Council opposing the development of Vanguard Landing, a proposed 185-bed, campus-style community for people with IDD. Board's public comment educated 11 City Council members regarding inclusive home and community-based services and the danger of creating segregated community settings.

In addition, the Board collaborated with the disAbility Law Center of Virginia on a letter to Virginia Housing requesting that their resources not be used to develop segregated settings for people with disabilities, including Vanguard Landing.



Active Grants Activities:

Children's Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S.)



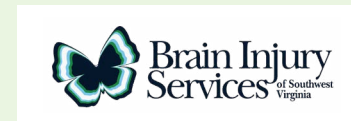
The Board continued funding a \$41,000 grant (\$11,000 in matching funds) to Children's Assistive Technology Service at Emory

& Henry College to conduct its project titled, "Making Assistive Technology Accessible and Meaningful to Early Intervention Families in Rural Southwest Virginia." The project began August 1, 2021 and aimed to work with early intervention programs administered by four community services boards in southwest Virginia to provide them with assistive technology devices and technical assistance to support the development of infants and toddlers and their families. The assistive technology is intended to develop self-determination skills in the young child with a developmental disability and empower the family to better meet the needs of their child with a disability and the rest of the family.

During 2022, the grantee 1) Collaborated with early intervention coordinators at four Community Service Boards (CSBs) in rural Southwest Virginia to gain a better understanding of the assistive technology needs

of the infants and toddlers and their families that interact with their local CSB; 2) Created a "Lending Library" to supplement an existing inventory of assistive technology and other durable medical equipment that is made available to families of infants and toddlers in the CSB catchment area. During the reporting period, the grantee purchased 13 pieces of equipment in order to fill developmental gaps; 3) Provided assistive technology devices to seven infants and toddlers with DD and training on how to utilize the devices to seven of their family members. The two-year grant project will conclude on July 31, 2023, after which, the grantee will continue to report outcomes to the Board for a period of two years.

Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia (BISSWVA)



The Board continued funding a \$10,000 grant (\$29,281 in matching funds) to Brain Injury Services of Southwest

Virginia to conduct its project titled, "Providing a Link for Survivors (PALS)." The project, which began August 1, 2021, aimed to increase socialization and reduce isolation for individuals with a developmental disability

FIRST GOAL GRANTS/INVESTMENTS

(as a result of brain injury) and their families. Through the grant project, individuals with DD were matched with a trusted community volunteer for socialization, increased community integration, social and emotional connection, as well as relationship building.

During 2022, the grantee 1) Launched its PALS grant program where brain injury survivors are matched with a trusted community volunteer for socialization, increased community integration, social and emotional connection, as well as relationship building; 2) Worked with several local community organizations, including the YMCA and Radford University and recruited and provided training to 11 volunteers on how to appropriately interact with clients with brain injuries; and 3) Recruited a total of 11 brain injury survivors, two of which were individuals with DD (as a result of the brain injury). The one-year grant project concluded on July 31, 2022, and the grantee will continue to report outcomes to the Board for a period of two years, through July 31, 2024.

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)



The Board began funding a \$111,364 grant (\$37,123 in matching funds) to Virginia Commonwealth University, the state's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), to build the equity-centered capacity of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) through training

on inclusion, diversity and equity. The grant project began in August 2021 and will continue through December 2022, after which there will be two years of post-grant monitoring.

During 2022, the grantee completed an environmental scan of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training for provider communities. They convened a steering committee to advise on project planning and development and met several times with faculty from the VCU School of Education. The steering committee included at least two providers, two self-advocates, two parents, four staff and two DEI experts from VCU's School of Education. The training curriculum consisted of six modules:

- 1) culturally responsive and inclusive practices;
- 2) unpacking implicit bias;
- 3) shifting perspectives to provide more equitable support;
- 4) examining disparities through intersectionality;
- 5) moving from allyship to co-conspiratorship; and
- 6) sustaining equitable supports.

In addition, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion toolkit for community-based providers was developed. The toolkit is intended to help them address bias within their organizational processes and policies. The grantee held a total of eight pilot training sessions during FFY 2022, with 58 individuals participating in the trainings. The dedicated website to house the training curriculum and content is available at <https://tide.partnership.vcu.edu/>.

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The **second goal** is for people with disabilities to have better access to services so they can be healthy and safe.



Workgroup Participation & Collaboration

Board staff championed policy changes that would help people with DD access healthcare via participation in six interagency workgroups. Through these workgroups, Board staff made 28 recommendations that supported three promising practices and 12 best practices. The promising practices included low-cost COVID-19 tests, COVID-19 mask mandates, and COVID-19 vaccination mandates. The best practices included school-based vaccination clinics, telehealth, Medicaid outreach, the appeals process for adverse service level determinations, hiring and retention of school nurses, accessible financial assistance applications, and diversity training for health professionals. There were also several best practices that pertained to data collection and analysis, both generally and specific to COVID-19, oral health outcomes, health care providers, and health network adequacy.

In response to Board feedback, the Virginia Department of Health revised its State Health Assessment survey to better identify people with disabilities and their health barriers. This change will lead to better data collection to inform the State Health Assessment and Health Improvement Plan, which could ultimately improve the health of people with disabilities if implemented.

Board staff educated a total 42 members of the State Health Commissioner's Advisory Council on Health Disparities and Health Equity and other members of the public, who attended the workgroup meeting about health challenges within the disability community and ways to address them.

SECOND GOAL

Legislative & Policy Advocacy

During the 2022 Virginia General Assembly session, Board staff educated 23 policymakers about three health-related bills including 1) Medicaid agency staff about a bill that was successfully passed to improve the accessibility of Medicaid information; 2) 19 legislators via testimony about a bill that was successfully passed to study the potential Medicaid coverage of complex rehabilitation technology manual and power wheelchair bases for nursing facility residents; and 3) state health department staff, the Secretary, and the Governor via emails and a Legislative Action Summary regarding a bill that would have prohibited medical mandates but ultimately failed.

In addition, Board staff educated two state health department staff about the importance of plain language and available health data and one Medicaid agency consultant about barriers to accessing dental care and potential ways to address them.

Board staff testified on three bills related to quality assurance, educating a total of 38 policymakers. One of the bills was successful, creating a workgroup to study when autopsies should be performed for people who die in the care of a licensed program.

Board staff continued to advocate for the recommendations in Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ICF-IIDs) policy assessment it released in June 2021. Council staff educated four key staff from the Virginia Department of Health on recommendations relevant to them. The recommendations that were discussed

during the meeting supported five best practices: Limiting development of larger ICF-IIDs, conducting certifications within the federally required timeframes, enforcing implementation of Plans of Correction, imposing remedies in proportion to the deficiency, and coordinating with other relevant state agencies. One key barrier to implementing the recommendations, which all stakeholders are facing, is limited resources including state and federal funding as well as personnel. The Board will continue to advocate for the recommendations and related resources as opportunities arise.



Active Grants Activities:

James Madison University (JMU)



The Board continued funding a \$275,000 grant (\$91,667 in matching funds) to James Madison University to educate stakeholders in rural communities across the

Shenandoah Valley about inclusive wellness programming to transform the physical and emotional health of individuals with developmental disabilities. The grantee received a previous Board grant to begin this work, which will be expanded upon in this grant. The grant project began in August 2021 and continues through July 31, 2023, after which there will be two years of monitoring.

During 2022, the grantee added 23 member organizations to the Shenandoah Valley Inclusive Wellness Coalition that they established during the previous grant to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to access wellness programs. Four events were held to engage and educate the Coalition members, which 79 people with DD and 55 family members of people with DD also attended. The Coalition website received 4,871 hits during 2022. The website houses various resources about inclusive wellness programming, including online training modules that were developed during the previous grant. An additional 212

wellness instructors and other stakeholders used the training modules this year.

The project has yielded positive early outcomes for the wellness program instructors. The mentorship they received significantly increased their comfort level when interacting with people with disabilities. It also significantly increased their self-efficacy to lead inclusive physical activity and address the needs of people with disabilities.

The project yielded positive early outcomes for the wellness program participants. The grantee collected pre- and post-participation measures from participants using physical fitness tests, quality of life surveys, and physical activity level surveys administered to a subset of participants. Results from the eight-week spring programming included significantly increased fitness scores among a majority of participants with DD. They also significantly reduced perceived stress among family member participants.

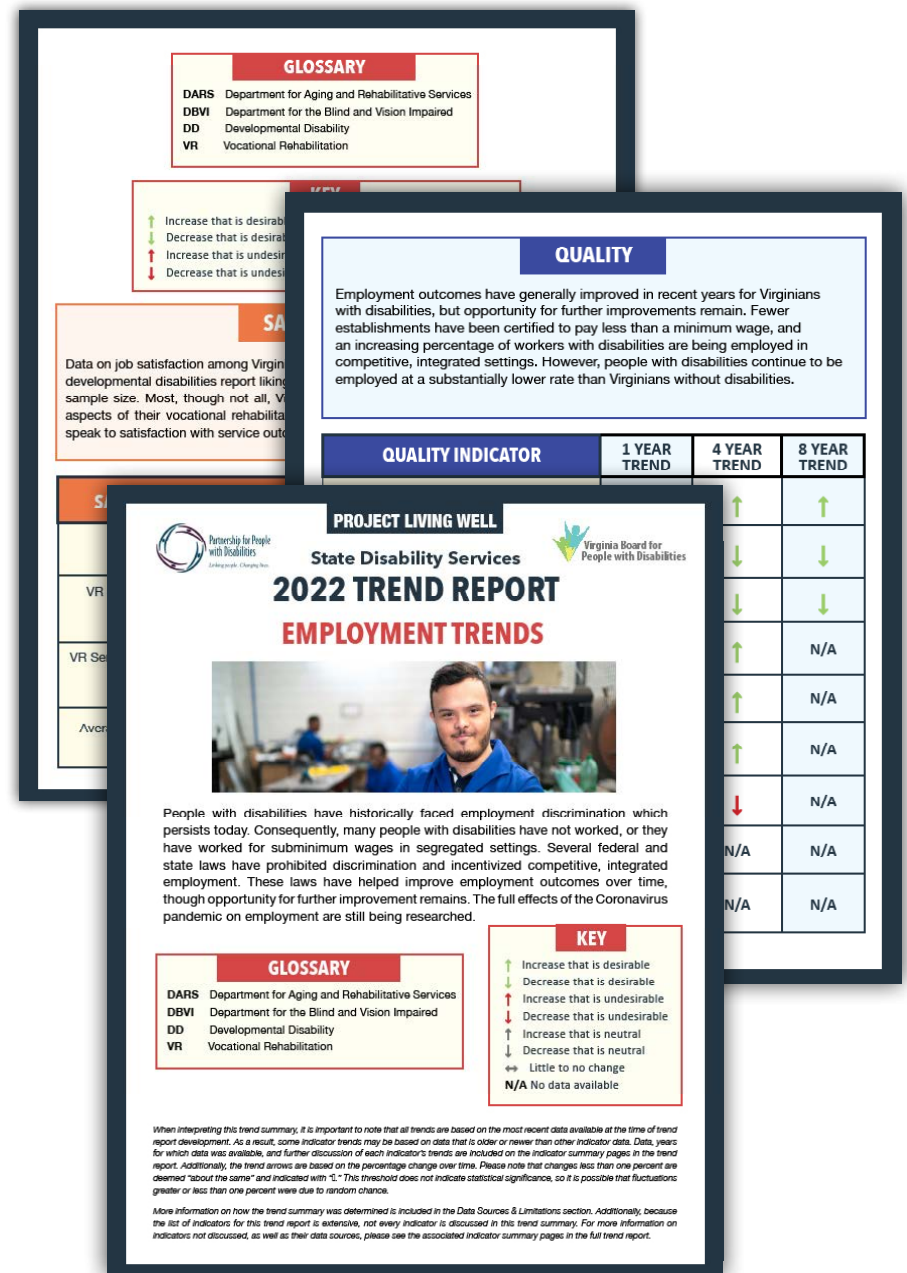
Project Living-Well – A Project of National Significance

The Board continued as a sub-grantee to the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to participate in a grant project titled “Project Living Well.” The goal of the project is to support people with DD who are using Home and Community-based Services, as

SECOND GOAL GRANTS/INVESTMENTS

well as those waiting for services, by implementing a replicable and sustainable model of 1) evidence-based and informed capacity building; and 2) community monitoring that will align and augment disparate monitoring and quality initiatives. The five-year project, which began in September 2017 received a 12-month extension through September 2023.

This year, the Board continued to develop trend reports to track the performance of Virginia's developmental disability system. In previous years, the Board released trend reports regarding early intervention, housing, and education. This year, it released an employment trend report and took steps to finalize the design and accessibility of trend reports on community supports and health which will be released next year. The Project Living Well webpage had 1,232 visitors overall during 2022. The trend reports and trend summaries were downloaded 326 times. The trend summaries were more popular than the full reports, and early intervention was the most popular topic. The Board also continued to develop simple comics to share the trend reports in a more accessible way, including a housing comic in both English and Spanish, providing accessible information via plain language and in multiple languages. The resources developed through the Board's partnership with VCU can be found at <https://www.vbpd.virginia.gov/projectlivingwell.htm>



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The **third goal** is for schools and employers to better include people with disabilities.



Assessment

In Virginia, students with disabilities, and particularly Black students with disabilities, are over-represented in three key points of the school to prison pipeline: exclusionary discipline, referrals to law enforcement and sentencing to juvenile correctional centers. The goal of the assessment was to assess current trends in school discipline that disproportionately affect students with disabilities and students of color with disabilities and to highlight school-based interventions that can reduce the discipline disparities that lead to the disproportionate criminalization and school push out of students with disabilities. The Board completed and released the assessment of The School to Prison Pipeline in August 2022. The assessment, which included 13 recommendations, was distributed to all members of the Virginia General Assembly.

Workgroup Participation & Collaboration

The Board advocated for inclusive education through participation in four workgroups: State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC); Special Education Advocacy Committee; Children's Services Act (CSA) Workgroup; State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

This year, the Board participated in two collaborative efforts focused on employment. The Board is a member of the Virginia Ability Community Advisory Council. Virginia Ability is a business association focused on building inclusive communities and cultures through disability diversity in the workplace. Discussion topics included strategies for linking employers with people with disabilities, employer education on the ADA and employment, planning for an annual disability employment awareness event, and more.

THIRD GOAL

Board staff also participated in the Employment First Advisory Group which has been focused exclusively on promoting employment first policies and practices in the Commonwealth. This year, discussion topics included: 1) staffing challenges during the pandemic; 2) the Department of Justice and the settlement agreement independent reviewer's acknowledgement of workforce and other issues impacting employment; 3) settlement priorities including adding more narrative space in the Individual Service Plan so more detail can be provided regarding discussions about employment and family member concerns; 4) updates to the support coordinator quality review process; and, 5) requirement for more information about expectations for meaningful employment conversations and barriers to employment in the Individual Service Plan.

Legislative & Policy Advocacy

The Board educated 27 legislators through 1) writing to the House Education committee in support of improved access to augmentative and alternative communication tools for students in K-12, unfortunately the bill failed; and 2) writing to bill patrons who sponsored legislation to require mandatory referrals to law enforcement for some types of misdemeanors to educate them about disparate impact on students with disabilities. The bill was ultimately passed with an exception that does not mandate the referral to law enforcement for students who have IEPs.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Board supported a bill to eliminate subminimum wage for people with disabilities through testimony to 10 legislators about the value of competitive, integrated employment. Unfortunately, the bill failed. The Board will continue to educate legislators and others on this important topic.



Conference/Event Activities:

Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond



The Board provided a \$2,500 grant to the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond (DSAGR) to support the 1st Virginia

Virtual Down Syndrome Speaker Series “Learning thru the Lifespan.” The event consisted of twice weekly webinars for four weeks, providing information to parents and support professionals of individuals with Down Syndrome. The topics included: the Down Syndrome Diet; the First 5 years; VA Diploma options & state assessments; ABCs of Effective Reading Instruction; Mental Health Strategies for Adults with Down Syndrome; and Employment for Youth with Disabilities: Preparing for a Bright Future from Preschool to Transition.

A total of 179 individuals participated in at least one of the live virtual presentations and/or viewed one of the recordings that were made available following the live sessions. Evaluation activities indicate that the conference had a positive impact on participants. Of the family member participants who took

the end of conference survey, 100% indicated that they were satisfied with the conference, and 100% of the attendees who took the end of conference survey reported feeling more empowered to advocate as a result of the conference.

Virginia Ability



The Board provided funding in the amount of \$1,500 to support VA Ability’s event “Flexible Working: Best Practices and

ADA Considerations.” The event was held in July 2022 and was attended by 50 individuals (primarily employers, HR managers, etc.). Attendees heard best practices for providing flexible working accommodations to satisfy ADA requirements under a hybrid workforce model. Of the 30 individuals who completed the post event survey, 100% found the presented content helpful, felt the speakers were engaging, and gave the program a good to excellent rating. In FFY 2023, VA Ability will evaluate whether employers made any changes to their policies and procedures as a result of attending the event.

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The **fourth goal** is for people with disabilities and their families to be better able to advocate for themselves and others.



Training Programs

The Board annually hosts a Train the Trainer (TTT) event to help self-advocates learn and practice the skills needed to be trainers. The Board identified self-advocates interested in participating in the TTT training through a variety of outreach activities including social media, disability organizations and advocacy partners, and alumni of the Board's Partners in Policymaking and Youth Leadership Academy training programs. A total of 12 individuals attended the TTT training. All 12 participants took a post-participation survey. Of them, 92% said the event increased their understanding of their responsibilities as a trainer, and 100% said they felt more prepared to be a trainer.

The Board aimed to use self-advocates as trainers whenever possible, both to improve the quality of the Board's programs and give self-advocates more opportunity to develop their presentation skills. A total of 11 people with developmental disabilities participated as trainers in Board programs, including five in the Partners in Policymaking program, five in the Train the Trainer event, and one in Training Alumni Association events.

Partners in Policymaking



The 2022 Partners in Policymaking program had 21 participants graduate. Of the 21 participants, 14 were family members of people with developmental disabilities and seven were people with developmental disabilities. The 2021-2022 PIP program featured 36 different presenters who educated participants on a variety of topics.

FOURTH GOAL

The program yielded positive early outcomes, based on results from a variety of participant surveys administered before and immediately following the program.

- Participants reported substantially higher knowledge and skill levels at the end of the program compared to before the program, with the most growth regarding Medicaid and delivering legislative testimony.
- Of those surveyed, 100% of respondents reported that they felt better able to say what they want, or what is important to them, because of the program.
- Of those surveyed, 100% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the program overall.

Training Alumni Association



The Board continued operating the year-round Training Alumni Association (TAA). The program aims to facilitate advocacy among graduates of the Board's other training programs, the Youth Leadership Academy and Partners in Policymaking. This year 28 alumni participated in at least one TAA meeting or activity.

This year the TAA hosted a three-part series of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion events for alumni and members of the public. This series was highly successful in engaging alumni and the broader community with over 250 members of the public attending the three virtual DEI events.

Conference/Event Activities:

Release of Self-Advocacy Request for Proposal (RFP)

During FFY 2022, the Board released a new self-advocacy Request for Proposal and ultimately awarded a \$50,000 grant (\$12,500 matching funds) to build the capacity of self-advocates in Virginia as leaders in the DD advocacy movement through grassroots expansion of the membership, leadership and training of liaisons and coaches that began in previous years. The 12-month grant project titled, "Strengthening Self-Advocacy through the ALLY Alliance," began in October 2022 and will conclude in October 2023. The Board will report on progress from this grant activity in its 2023 Program Performance Report.

WORKGROUPS

The Board participated on approximately 26 advisory councils, stakeholder groups and workgroups in FFY 2022:

- Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services No Wrong Door Resource Advisory Council
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Employment First Advisory Group
- Department of Special Education Advocacy Stakeholders Group
- Department of Education State Special Education Advisory Committee
- Department of Housing and Community Development Interagency Housing Advisory Committee
- Department of Medical Assistance Services Developmental Disabilities Waiver Advisory Council
- Project Living Well Advisory Council Leadership Team
- 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 Medical Assistance Services Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Workgroup
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Community of Practice for Supporting Families
- Department of Justice Settlement Agreement Stakeholders Meeting
- Supported Decision Making Workgroup
- Virginia Ability Community Advisory Council
- Permanent Use of Virtual Supports Workgroup

WORKGROUPS

- Coalition for Community Safety
- Home and Community Based Services Advisory Committee
- Virginia Health Catalyst Policy Committee
- 2022 Oral Health Report Card Workgroup
- Future of Public Oral Health Taskforce
- Partnership for Healthy Virginia Workgroup
- Children's Services Act Workgroup
- Quillo Connect Advisory Group
- Virginia Brain Injury Council
- Language Access Workgroup
- Community Engagement Advisory Group
- ADA Coalition Building and Roundtable Discussion





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**Washington Office Building
1100 Bank Street, 7th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219**