

# Policy Flash

---

The latest news, views & information on policy issues for Virginia's DD Council members  
Vol. II, No. 6 July, 2004

---

## In Virginia. . .

### **Housing Advocates Met With Governor Warner....**

... to discuss delaying implementation of new HUD administrative rules that would adversely impact people with disabilities. The meeting, held on June 17<sup>th</sup>, was arranged by Keith Kessler, founder of the Disabled Action Committee for Virginia. Virginia Board member Barbara Gilley attended the meeting with Governor Warner to express concerns on behalf of the disability community about the new rules. Following the meeting, Governor Warner sent a letter from his office to Secretary Jackson and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development expressing concerns about the pending HUD administrative rules that affect the Housing Choice Voucher program. Concerns include: 1) reduction in administrative fees that have [already] weakened the capacity of the program to provide critical supports for people with disabilities; 2) allowing HUD program administrators to shift income mix [sources of program funding] without reducing the number of extremely low income participants or lowering rent subsidies. Without these strategies, the new rules would have a negative impact on SSI recipients and other extremely low-income people with disabilities; and 3) implementing budgetary reduction strategies such as time limitations, raising minimum rents, eliminating exception rents, and reducing the availability of vouchers. Governor Warner's letter stated: *"Given current public policies that define income supports for this group of citizens [people with disabilities] it is clear that rent support policy changes such as the ones currently being implemented target the most vulnerable segment of people with disabilities and pose a significant threat to attempts to implement the spirit and intent of the Supreme Court's decision in Olmstead."*

(DAC News V.5., No. 5, July 5, 2004)

### **New Advocacy Registry Provides Opportunity for Consumer Input...**

...on Department of Medical Assistance (DMAS) billing and payment policies. The public registry will compile, in a centralized database, a listing of persons and organizations willing discuss how DMAS billing and payment policies affect people with disabilities. The registry was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living, the statewide Community Action Specialist Program, Disabled Action Committee, and other advocacy groups. The program seeks to increase the involvement and leadership of persons with disabilities in systems change related to Virginia's Medicaid Waivers Programs. Individuals wishing to participate in the registry should contact Dr. Rob Jarvis at [rjarvis@lacil.org](mailto:rjarvis@lacil.org)

(DAC News V.5., No. 5, July 5, 2004)

### **Virginia Early Intervention Program Funded...**

.... with an additional \$750,000 as part of the budget adopted by the 2004 Special Session of the General Assembly. The money will become available for the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia, the state's early intervention program that identifies and connects infants and toddlers (0-3 years) with developmental delays and disabilities to the services and supports they need. In 2003, the program served more than 8,050 babies. An estimated 10,000 children could benefit from the program through increased awareness and public education. The new funding will be distributed to the 40 early intervention councils in the state. Studies show that every dollar invested in early intervention saves seven dollars future remedial costs for these children.

(DMHMRSAS Press Release, June 1, 2004)

# In the Nation. . .

## **Lifespan Respite Care Act (S. 538/H.R. 1083))....**

... language was incorporated into the caregiver supports sections of both the House and Senate bills of the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004. The bill strengthens the National Institutes of Health funding for Alzheimer's Disease research to \$1.4 billion (up from \$700,000 million) and includes all of the Lifespan Respite Care Act language sought by disability advocates. The bill adds provisions for tax credits of up to \$3,000 to help pay for care-giving costs, including respite, and increases authorization levels for three existing caregiver support initiatives – the National Family Caregiver Support Program (\$250 million), the Alzheimer's Demonstration grant program (\$25 million), and the Safe Return Program (\$1,million).

(NACDD L.A.W., V. 1, No. 3, June 17, 2004)

## **New Office of Patient Advocacy Considered by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)...**

... to provide the diverse array of advocacy groups, including disability organizations, opportunities to weigh-in on policy and coverage issues affecting their constituencies. According to CMS administrator Mark McClellan, the agency is considering the creation of this office to provide greater input into its policy deliberations. Stay tuned to Policy Flash for updates on this initiative.

(Inside Health Policy, June 15, 2004; NACDD L.A.W., V. 1, No. 3, June 17, 2004)

## **HHS Expands Demonstrations to Recruit and Retain Personal Assistance Workers...**


... for people with disabilities. In June, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson announced nearly \$5.6 million in funding for five new demonstration grants to facilitate recruitment, training, and retention of direct service workers who provide important self-care services for people with disabilities including eating, bathing, dressing and other activities of daily living. Information in the announcement includes good news for Virginia: as part of the President's New Freedom Initiative (NFI), Virginia's Department of Medical Assistance Services, along with agencies in Washington (state) and Indiana, will receive \$1.4 million each to offer health insurance to direct service workers during the three-year demonstration projects. Other grants have been awarded in other states to build capacity among direct service providers by developing education materials, training service workers, developing mentorship programs, and other initiatives. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services director Mark McClellan said, "These demonstrations will help determine if access to health insurance and other work incentives will attract and retain these workers."

(Source: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom>)

## **Medicaid is Affected by the Olmstead Decision Because...**

...it is the major source of public financing for long-term services and supports for people with disabilities. In 2002, Medicaid provided coverage to more than 8 million non-elderly people with disabilities and an additional 5 million seniors, many of whom have disabilities.

(Kaiser Commission Report on Medicaid and the Uninsured, June, 2004)

 *Policy Flash* is an e-publication of Virginia's Developmental Disabilities Council—the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities. The publication is funded with federal funds under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (P.L. 106-402, 2000). The publication is available in alternative format by request. For comments and feedback contact Dr. Barbara J. Ettner at [ettnerbj@vbpd.state.va.us](mailto:ettnerbj@vbpd.state.va.us).