

In Virginia. . .

Virginia's Budget Is on Track...

... according to the November, 2004 "State Budget Update" compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures. The report notes that Virginia's fiscal status is, like most states, improving, at least in the near term. Budget revenues exceeded projections for the first few months of FY '05, budget gaps are practically non-existent and state finances are generally stable. Virginia's original FY '05 revenue estimate was 7.4% and as of October, '04, collections were performing at 10.5% -- roughly \$400 million ahead of the end of October '03. For most states, including Virginia, Medicaid is the category most frequently cited as being over budget along with welfare, mental health services, court services and K-12 education.

The Virginia Public Guardianship and Conservator Program...

... ,that serves individuals with mental retardation and/or mental illness ≥ 18 years old, will receive an appropriation of \$132,000 on July 1st for which the Department for the Aging will be issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP invites community organizations, public guardianship programs, and faith-based organizations to utilize the monies to develop leadership initiatives in expanding or developing public guardian and conservator services in the Commonwealth. The RFP will be available on June 27th at www.vda.virginia.gov.

ADA4VA Provides Resources on Accessibility...

... along with training and I&R services pertaining to the implementation of the ADA in Virginia. The organization will be conducting a statewide ADA "Ask the Experts" Conference in August, on the 24th, in Charlottesville. The all-day event will feature speakers from the Department of Justice, the Access Board, EEOC and the ADA and IT Information Center for the Mid Atlantic Region. All Virginia CILs and offices of local ADA Coordinators have been mailed information about the conference. Additional information about the Mid Atlantic regional ADA office and its services and programs can be found at the website www.adainfo.org. The conference will provide local advocates with more information on the latest ADA changes and resources. The registration fee is \$25 and, on a limited basis, scholarships are available for attendance at the forum through the VBPD-sponsored Consumer and Family Participation Fund (www.cfps.net).

Arc of Virginia Issues Position Statement on Community-Based Service System...

... for persons with mental retardation and related disabilities. The position paper was released in response to a report issued by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substances Abuse Services to the 2005 General Assembly on capital outlay costs for maintaining Virginia's five training centers. The Arc of Virginia document contains several sections explaining the rationale, background, evolution of the present system, and the economics of renovating existing facilities versus restructuring the system into one that, consistent with Olmstead, is focused on providing community-based services. The report notes, "Experience in Virginia and other states... has clearly shown that community care, if adequately funded, works for consumers and families [and that]... community is better than institutional, inclusion is better than segregation, smaller is better than larger, individual support is better than group, flexible is better than rigid and choice is better than restricted...options." The Arc of Virginia document, in clearly stating its opposition to Virginia's institutional-based service system for people with mental retardation and related disabilities, notes that, "After almost 40 years of 'all deliberate speed,' it is time to embrace and fully implement community-based care."

In the Nation. . .



Proposed Flexible Voucher Program Proposed...

. . . to replace the existing Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the proposed State and Local Housing Flexibility Act of 2005 (S.B. 771/H.R. 1999), introduced in Congress in May, is characterized as "disastrous" by housing advocates for people with disabilities. The Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC), for example, noted that the proposed changes would ". . . undermine critically important federal housing policies. . . [and] eliminate valuable civil rights and fair housing protections that help people with disabilities. . . ." Though TAC notes that short-term protections for people with disabilities are embedded in the legislation, the potential long-term impact, especially the provision allowing Public Housing Authorities to adopt tenant selection policies, is an area of concern. This month the TAC is slated to release a study demonstrating how people with disabilities and other low-income populations would be severely affected by the proposed legislation, including pricing them out of the housing market as well as undermining civil rights protections. The impact of the legislation on low-income populations would be particularly severe for people with disabilities since HUD's FY '06 budget proposal eliminates housing production under Section 811 -- Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program. TAC notes that the proposed legislation along with budget cuts would "totally undermine stated Administration disability policy goals to promote community integration through the New Freedom Initiative. . . ." The rationale for HUD's sponsorship of the bill and budget recommendations is that the proposed voucher program would be more effective and cost-efficient. (Source: Technical Assistance Collaborative, May, 2005)



Medicaid Commission to Develop \$10 Billion Savings Recommendations...

. . . required by the FY 2006 Budget Resolutions passed in April. The Commission will be comprised of 15 voting and 18 non-voting members. Voting members will include federal Medicaid program managers, former or current governors, and others with expertise/experience in health, finance or administration. Non-voting members will include eight legislators – 4 Democrats and 4 Republicans. The panel will receive input from ten people involved in Medicaid programs including state and local government officials, consumers and health care providers. (Source: Legislative Advocacy Weekly, May 13, 2005)



Hearings Continue on Social Security Reform...

. . . and will be ongoing throughout the summer, 2005. Congressman Jim McCrery (R-LA), Chairman of the Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee on Social Security, is organizing a series of hearings, which began in May, on such topics such as the fiscal solvency of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance (Social Security) Trust Fund. In the 2005 Annual Report to Congress, trustees of the fund reported that benefits payments will exceed revenue from payroll tax collections beginning in 2017. and that in 2041 the Social Security Trust Funds will be exhausted. Projections are based on a number of demographic and economic factors including fertility rate, rate of decline in mortality, future real earnings growth, real interest rate, inflation rate and the unemployment rate. (Source: Legislative Advocacy Weekly, May 24, 2005)



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