

Policy Flash

*The latest news, views & information on policy issues regarding Virginia's service system
for people with developmental and other disabilities*

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In Virginia. . .

VCU School of Education Receives Federal Grants to help boost...

. . . lagging employment among people with disabilities. The school's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center will use the money to help people with disabilities find meaningful employment. "Nationally, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities remains stubbornly intransigent at 65 percent," said Paul Wehman, Ph.D., the center's director. "We will study ways to improve employment for people with disabilities." The center is slated to receive nearly \$3.5 million over five years from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The center will collaborate with Manpower Inc., SunTrust Bank, the Virginia Business Leadership Network, the VCU Business Roundtable, and other groups to implement grant activities. A second award of \$5.2 million from the Social Security Administration will enable a research team, led by John Kregel, Ed.D., Chairman of VCU's Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, to work with Youth Transition Process Demonstration projects in California, Colorado, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi and New York to help young people with disabilities become economically self-sufficient through improved transition from school to work.

Virginians With Disabilities Have Major Stake in SS Reform.....

. . . and disability advocates remain concerned that policy decisions regarding social security do not seem to take into account the significant number of Americans with disabilities who depend on Social Security (SS) disability benefits. There are, for example, approximately 7.6 million people who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) nationwide (includes spouses and children of disabled workers). This group is one of three SS beneficiary groups, the other two being 1) persons who are retired, and 2) persons who are survivors of deceased workers. Persons receiving SSDI represent 16 percent of all SS beneficiaries nationwide.

In Virginia, it is estimated that there are nearly 1.3 million individuals with disabilities out of a total state population of 7.08 million (VBPD Interim Biennial Report, March, 2005). According to a recent report from the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, approximately 191,525 Virginians receive SSDI, and this number represents about 18 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries in the state.

The Partnership for People with Disabilities Offers On-Line Course...

. . . , developed under a Project of National Significance grant, that addresses the serious issue of abuse and neglect of adults and children with disabilities. The VCU-based on-line course, *Abuse and Neglect of Children and Adults with Developmental Disabilities*, is designed to educate health professionals and other service providers about recognizing, understanding, treating and preventing maltreatment of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan. In fulfilling project requirements the Partnership collaborated with seven other UCEDDs, five P&As throughout the U.S., Virginia's DD Planning Council (the Board) and a host of other collaborators and experts. Registration for the web-based course, which consists of 13 self-paced instructional modules, began on February 1, 2005. Course information is available at: <http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/maltreatment/>.



2005 General Assembly Passes Sweeping Legislation...

... pertaining to Long-Term/Assisted Living Facilities. A number of bills introduced during the session were rolled into two identical bills, HB 2512 (Hamilton) and SB 1183 (Hanger) that require new levels of regulation for assisted living facilities; rename the Board of Nursing Home Administrators the Board of Long-Term Care Administrators in the Dept. of Health Professions; permit the Social Services Commissioner to issue an order of summary suspension for any facility in which the health, safety, or welfare of residents is threatened; requires medication aides to be registered by the Board of Nursing; and increases from \$500 to \$10,000 the maximum civil penalty for a facility not in compliance with licensing regulations, among other provisions.

In the Nation ...



Underutilization of One-Stops by People with Significant Disabilities...

... was documented by the Institute for Community Inclusion in a recently-released paper examining the issue. The paper explained that part of the problem may be the result of limited staff training and inadequate assistive devices, both of which can make a potential customer with significant disabilities feel that it might not be worth the time to visit the One-Stop. Several examples of what can be done to make a One-Stop more accessible and inviting are provided in the Institute for Community Inclusion study, including making the most of limited resources and creating external linkages with disability-specific community agencies. (Source: *Institute for Community Inclusion web site, February, 2005*)



The FY 2006 Budget Calls for Level Funding for....

... Developmental Disabilities Councils (DD Councils) at the FFY '05 level. In FFY 2004, DD Councils were budgeted \$73 million overall, and the budget estimate for FFY 2005 is \$72 million. If level funding remains intact through this year's budget process, DD Councils nationwide will generally receive the same allocations in FFY '06 as they received in FFY '05. Maintaining level funding was seen as somewhat of a victory since over 150 federal programs, considered duplicative or ineffective, were slated for reductions or elimination in the upcoming budget. (Source: *Report of Disability Law, Feb, 2005*)



Medicaid Cuts Forestalled...

... via successful passage of the Smith-Bingaman amendment to the Senate Budget Resolution to strike all Medicaid cuts. The amendment passed on Thursday by a vote of 52-48. Republican Senators voting for passage were Chafee, Coleman, Collins, DeWine, Smith, Snowe, and Specter. All Democratic Senators and Senator Jeffords (Independent) voted for the amendment. Now all efforts will be to preserve this victory in the Conference Committee process. Led by Senator Gordon Smith, R-OR, the measure seeks to eliminate all \$14 billion in five-year savings proposed in the health care program for the poor and elderly. That would be a one percent reduction from the \$1.12 trillion Medicaid is projected to spend over that period. (Source: *The Disability Law & Policy e-Newsletter, March 9, 2005*)



SSA and Dept. of Veterans Affairs Still Experience Delays in...

... processing times for disability claims, and lack clear understanding of the extent of possible inconsistencies in decisions between adjudicative levels, according to a recent Government Accounting Office report. The report also found that federal disability programs "remain grounded in outmoded concepts that equate medical conditions with work incapacity." The report is available on-line (www.gao.gov/new.items/d05207.pdf). (Source: *Report on Disability Law, Feb, 2005*)