



In Virginia

Disability Commission Hears Housing Report, Sets Date...

... for Legislative/Budget Priority-Setting Meeting to be held on January 15th. Visit the Board's Web site for more information: www.vaboard.org. The Disability Commission (at its November 19th meeting) also received a briefing on the housing study for people with disabilities conducted by NCB Development Corporation, Wash, DC, and Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., Boston, MA. The report, "An Analysis of Means and Alternatives for Expanding Affordable, Accessible Housing for Persons with Disabilities and Frail Elders Statewide" described lack of access to information, inadequate collaboration, insufficient funding, and sparse availability of alternatives for obtaining housing and related services as barriers to obtaining housing for Virginians with disabilities. Several spokespersons from Virginia's housing service system attended the meeting and committed to increasing inter-agency collaboration regarding housing, especially within the context of Virginia's new Olmstead Plan.

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) Holds Public Forums...

... during November seeking input on vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services that will be provided under the auspices of the Department's upcoming State Plan. The Department is considering amending its current State Plan for delivery of rehabilitation and employment services to establish an Order of Selection in Fiscal Year 2005. The Order of Selection process would involve prioritizing vocational rehabilitation services based on severity of disability and is being proposed as a mechanism, similar to that in other states, for maximizing use of diminishing funds available for providing such services. Most of DRS' ten regional hearings were conducted via videoconference in order to enable staff to receive input from diverse regions of the state efficiently and effectively. The Department's 2003-2004 State Plan is available at the DRS Web site at www.vadrs.org. Written comment, due by February 1, 2004, may be sent to Elizabeth E. Smith, Director of Policy and Planning, Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23229. Written comments may also be faxed to 804-662-7696.

Resources for Children and Youth with Disabilities Wanting to Learn About Leading Successful Lives....

...are available from the Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) located at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and at other T/TACs across the state. According to an article in the T/TAC's newsletter, VCU Innovations & Perspectives (Summer, 2003), the Virginia Department of Education's T/TAC at VCU is "dedicated to helping children and youth with disabilities (birth to 22 years) and children who have disadvantages or who are at risk for school failure (birth to 9 years)." The T/TAC provides training such as site specific professional development, and presentations to diverse

audiences; *technical assistance* projects that may last as many as five years examining certain topics in depth collaboratively with other professionals; *information services* including library materials, electronic information, referrals and publications; and materials, products and equipment related to instructional technology, curricula and videos. Educators and other instructional professionals provide the link between the T/TAC's resources and the students who need them. The VCU T/TAC Web site is: <http://www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac>. It's worth a look.

In the Nation

✈ **Education Sec. Paige Noted...**

... that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that protects the rights of persons with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funds. The department's Office for Civil Rights enforces the law at the nation's education institutions. More information about Section 504 and the Office for Civil Rights is available at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>. "This law...inaugurated a new era of disability rights and transformed American public policy toward persons with disabilities.

Paige noted that, in the last thirty years, the nation's education system has gone from not serving more than a million school-aged children with disabilities (at that time) to serving today more than six million children with disabilities with special education and regular education services. In addition, in the last two decades, college enrollment rates of students with disabilities have tripled, and these students complete their programs at a rate nearly as high as that of other students.¹

✈ **Interface Between No Child Left Behind and the New Freedom Initiative....**

...was highlighted in Secretary Paige's remarks on education and employment of young people with disabilities. "... the president's New Freedom Initiative continues the work of opening doors to Americans with disabilities. President Bush declared that we 'must speed up the day when the last barrier has been removed to full and independent lives for every American with or without disability,' and we will do it."

The New Freedom Initiative is the blueprint for federal policy to improve the education, employment and independent living outcomes for persons with disabilities through the use of technology. As part of this initiative, the Office for Civil Rights provides information to schools and parents to help students with disabilities prepare for and succeed in college and vocational education.¹

¹ Information adapted for Policy Flash from "The Achiever," Oct. 15, 2003, V. 2, No. 12.

✈ 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).