

Policy Flash

The latest news, views & information on policy issues for Virginia's DD Council members
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In Virginia. . .

VA Adult Homes...

... were the subject of a recent news article (Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 30, 2004) in which State officials reported that "it will take more money and tougher regulation to clean up Virginia's decades-old problem with patient abuse and poor care at adult homes." Officials reported that the homes, which care for nearly 35,000 elderly persons and persons with mental disabilities, need more money to provide for residents who are older and sicker than ever. Problems range from not feeding residents enough, administering the wrong medications, and not cleaning and repairing facilities. "We have a very troubled system, with huge areas where things have gone terribly wrong," said Joani Latimer, Virginia's long-term care ombudsman. Del. Philip A. Hamilton, R-Newport News, noted that most people who have followed the issue realize that health-care issues have "taken a heavy hit during lean budget years and that it will be up to the legislature to provide the money for increased scrutiny and higher reimbursement levels for assisted-living facilities" in Virginia.

Governing Magazine Lauds Virginia Officials...

... including Governor Mark Warner and Senate President Pro Tempore John Chichester—along with officials in other states such as Georgia, Minnesota, North Carolina, Utah, Rhode Island and California—for outstanding achievements at the state and local level in 2004. Virginia officials were commended for "form[ing] a bipartisan alliance that moved a comprehensive tax reform package through an initially hostile legislature." In its annual recognition of select public officials, the magazine noted that ... "These people came into situations that involved almost unbelievable complexity....and they accomplished remarkable things...got budgets balanced, schools built and infrastructure repaired..." As reported in the July issue of Policy Flash, as the result of bipartisan budget negotiations, the State's 2004 budget includes provisions for additional funding of early intervention services and hundreds needed waiver slots for persons with developmental disabilities.
(Source: Governing, The Magazine of States and Localities, September, 2004)

In the Nation. . .

\$2.4 Million in Telework Grants Authorized for People with Disabilities....

... including veterans with disabilities to help fund initiatives to increase employment opportunities in Connecticut, Minnesota and Virginia. The grants will provide necessary training so that these individuals can acquire skills to


become more fully integrated into the workforce by expanding telework employment opportunities. The grants will also fund research to help individuals with disabilities get the training they need to find meaningful employment in the telework employment sector. In Virginia, the award recipient -- of \$829,925 -- was Virginia Commonwealth University, Office of Sponsored Programs. The 36 month projects awarded to three states are being funded through the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to investigate, develop, and validate strategies likely to yield the largest number of telework positions for people with disabilities in cooperation with federal and state agencies. More information about these projects can be obtained at www.dol.gov/odep.

Emergency Preparedness Needs of People with Disabilities Addressed...

.... On July 22, in an Executive Order issued by President George W. Bush, entitled "Individuals with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness." With this Executive Order, the President intends to make government agencies responsible for properly taking into account agency employees and customers with disabilities in agencies' emergency preparedness training activities. The Order also establishes the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities to coordinate this effort under the leadership of the Department of Homeland Security. To read the Executive Order in its entirety, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/orders/>.

No Child Left Behind Improvement Act...

Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and other Democrats on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, introduced the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Improvement Act of 2004**. The bill amends the NCLB in several ways, including the addition of a new \$50 million grant program to assist with the implementation of assessments for students with disabilities.

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