

Policy Flash

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

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In Virginia. . .

A Symposium That Highlights Universal Access...

.... will be sponsored by the Prince William Aging in Place Committee on September 28th in Woodbridge, VA. The symposium will be held in conjunction with local and state government housing agencies as well as several northern Virginia architect associations. The concepts of home-based community care and universal design to facilitate "living in one's own home," are catching on across the country, with state-of-the-art accessories and building/remodeling plans that meet the needs of people of all ages and all abilities. The purpose of the symposium is to "educate design professionals in the housing and building industry; health and human service professionals and community leaders..." on the emerging demand for more "user friendly," adaptable and accessible living space and accessories. This trend, attributed to the increasing proportion of elderly persons in the population, stands to benefit people with developmental and other disabilities across the lifespan and the residential spectrum. (Source: DAC News Vol. 6, No. 13, August, 2005)

Olmstead Initiative's Community Integration Oversight Advisory Committee...

... solicited comments regarding community integration initiatives in Virginia for the coming year during August and up until September 5th. The Committee, established under Governor Warner's Executive Order (EO) 61, 2004, and continued under EO 84 (2005), consists of 20 disability stakeholders, most of whom are people with disabilities and family members of people with disabilities. The Committee has met regularly and requested public comment on the top priority areas including: 1) Increase all Medicaid reimbursement rates; 2) Increase the availability of funded Medicaid Waiver slots; 3) Eliminate the State mental health facility discharge waiting lists; 4) Develop and fully fund incentives to attract and retain qualified candidates to disability fields of care; and 5) Increase Medicaid financial eligibility to 100% of federal poverty level. The Committee also plans to include in the Report to the Governor six EO 84-related recommendations in areas of increasing representation of people with disabilities on boards and commissions; establishing lists of residents in facilities who are awaiting discharge; assuring an appropriate statewide system for reporting abuse, neglect, serious injury and death by providers of community services; developing a system of rights notification for people with disabilities and track the activities; monitoring quality and coordination of services for people with disabilities and developing a complaint system; and developing a coordinated reporting system across agencies to monitor effectiveness of efforts to improve quality and coordination of services. Additional information about the Community Integration Oversight Advisory Committee can be obtained from the Office Of Community Integration for People with Disabilities by e-mailing the Director, Julie.Stanley@governor.virginia.gov.

VAProject Addresses National Issue of Children With Significant DD...

... who "age out" of the special education system upon graduation from high school. A recent Wall Street Journal article (July 1, 2005) noted that, for students with developmental disabilities, graduation from high school is often a "mixed bag" of joy and confusion about "next steps." Although these students, ages 18-22, have a high school diploma, they often face "an absence of community services and supports" regarding higher education, living, employment and transportation options when school-based services under IDEA end. To develop a replicable model for providing supports to this population, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (the Board) partnered with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Radford University to demonstrate a successful "next step" service model designed to facilitate transition to independence for these students. Last year the Board provided \$50,000 in Innovative Grants funding for the On Campus Transition Program (OCTP) and the monies were matched with \$230,000 by the grant applicants. The project is staffed by two MCPS employees who collaborate with faculty at Radford's College of Education and Human Development serving as program advisors. The benefits of the program are already demonstrated both for the OCTP students as well as the Radford Campus Community. The high school students in the program are employed, educated, and have the benefit of socializing with their peers during their on-campus activities. They and their mentors report that their self-confidence has soared, they have many new friends, they are

learning how to be independent young adults. The Board's grant to develop this model will end in August, 2006, but program strategies will be distributed and, hopefully, replicated in communities throughout Virginia. The Wall Street Journal Article (July 1, 2005 issue) is available at http://www.careerjournal.com/columnists/movingon/20050701-movingon.html?cjpos+columnists_whatsnew. (Source: Disability Law & Policy e-Newsletter, August 11, 2005)

In the Nation. . .



National Council on Disability Seeks Youth Advisory Committee Members...

... between the ages of 16 and 25 to represent all disability sectors, diverse cultures and under-represented geographic areas. The National Council on Disabilities opened the nationwide search for new members to assist with ensuring that its policy recommendations and activities include the perspectives of young people with disabilities. As noted in the announcement, "The Council's overall purpose is to promote policies, programs, practices and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability; and to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society." The recruitment process will close on September 18, 2005. For more information contact Isaac Huff, YAC Chair at I.Huff@superaleja.org or Rebecca Hare, YAC Vice Chair at harer@iel.org.



HUD Connects Centers for Independent Living With Housing Planning...

...for people with disabilities in new regulations regarding development of Consolidated Plans (24 CFR 91). "Notice CPD-05-03," entitled "Implementing the New Freedom Initiative and Involving Persons with Disabilities in the Preparation of the Consolidated Plan through Citizen," was based on community-focused directives foundational to the Olmstead Supreme Court decision, President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, and Executive Order 13217 (Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities). The new HUD Consolidated Plan regulations "require that grantees of Community Development Block Grants consider the needs of people with disabilities when preparing their consolidated plans." The new regulations also require that the consolidated plans include documentation of how many people with disabilities will be affected by the plans. HUD further recommended that block grant recipients proactively identify and work in collaboration with Independent Living Centers that service their local areas. HUD noted the importance of block grant recipients working with local disabilities advocacy groups and Centers for Independent Living to develop needs assessments that include people with disabilities and develop, with citizen participation, strategies for meeting those needs in local communities. Specific objectives under this initiative that address the housing needs of people with disabilities include: 1) supporting home ownership for people with disabilities; 2) increasing accessibility of housing for people with disabilities by rehabilitating housing units; 3) making Housing Choice Voucher rental and homeownership units accessible for people with disabilities; and 4) consulting with public housing agencies regarding the needs of people with disabilities. This new regulatory language represents a significant shift in emphasis on considering the needs of people with disabilities in local housing and infrastructure planning and offer new opportunities for advocates to work in partnership with local planning entities to improve access to affordable, accessible housing throughout the country. (Source: Info. Bulletin #92, SteveGoldADA@cs.com, August 16, 2005)



Public Policy Fellowship Aids Parents of Children with DD....

...to become more effective advocates in the disability policy arenas at federal, state and local levels. Each year the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation sponsors one-year fellowships for parents of children with intellectual disabilities to learn how legislation is initiated, developed and passed by Congress and how service programs are administered and regulated by federal agencies. The Public Policy Fellowship Program, which had its genesis in 1946, is designed to assist parents to become effective advocates for all persons with intellectual disabilities, not just their own children, and includes a stipend and relocation expense package totaling \$75,000. Questions about the application process should be directed to Jill Fossee at 301-565-5476. (Source: DAC News Vol. 6 No. 13, August, 2005)

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