



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

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February 27, 2012

Mr. James W. Stewart, III, Commissioner
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health &
Developmental Services (DBHDS)
P. O. Box 1797
Richmond, VA 23218-1797

RE: Draft New Policy 1044 (SYS) 12-1 Employment First

Dear Mr. Stewart:

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) is writing in response to the State Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' solicitation of public comment on Draft New Policy *1044 (SYS) 12-1 Employment First*. VBPD supports the proposed Employment First policy and commends DBHDS for formally implementing this important change in philosophy in working with and providing services to individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

We request consideration of the following recommendations:

Page 2 (Purpose), fourth line: change "intellectual disabilities" to "intellectual and other developmental disabilities."

Page 4 (Policy), first bullet after, "Finally, it is the policy of the Board that the Department and CSBs shall: Establish clear outcome expectations for employment to include specific goals and state and local strategies for addressing barriers to employment..." In implementing the policy, VBPD recommends that the Department and community services boards (CSBs), perhaps in collaboration with the Virginia Employment Commission, establish a baseline regarding employment rates for individuals with ID/DD for each catchment area to ensure outcome measurability.

VBPD also recommends adding a bullet to this list, which affirms DBHDS and CSB commitment to collaborating with local school divisions to promote (1) early transition planning, (2) assessment for and use of appropriate assistive technology, and (3) ongoing involvement of relevant state and local agencies.

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VBPD wishes to express its appreciation to the Department and the State Board for this and other initiatives that promote community inclusion and integration for all individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at 804-786-9369 or Heidi.lawyer@vbpd.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,



Heidi L. Lawyer

cc: Christy Crowther, Chair, VBPD

Heidi Dix, Assistant Commissioner, DBHDS

Lee Price, Director, Office of Developmental Services, DBHDS

Dawn Traver, Community Resource Consultant, Office of Developmental Services, DBHDS

Adam Sass, Community Resource Manager for Employment, DBHDS

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