



**Virginia Board for
People with Disabilities**

2017 Annual Report

Highlights





Mission

To create a Commonwealth that advances opportunities for independence, personal decision making, and full participation in community life for individuals with developmental and other disabilities.

Vision

Virginians with developmental and other disabilities direct their own lives and choose how they live, learn, work, and play.



The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (the Board) serves as Virginia's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council under the federal DD Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 and the Virginians with Disabilities Act. Since 1992, the Board has been an executive branch state agency located within the Secretariat of Health and Human Resources.

The Board advises the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, federal and state legislators, and other constituent groups on issues related to people with DD and other disabilities in Virginia.

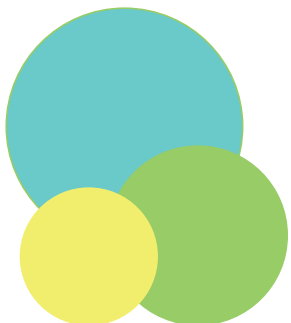
The Board's purpose is to facilitate full inclusion of individuals with DD and other disabilities into all facets of community life. The Board engages in advocacy and capacity-building activities focused on improving the system of services and supports that enable people with disabilities to exercise self-determination and maximum independence.

The Board's major activities include educating policymakers and influencing policy/practice; assessing and reporting on the disability services system; investing in new or promising approaches to community based services and supports; conducting advocacy and leadership training; and educating communities through information dissemination and outreach.

The Governor appoints 31 of the Board's 39 members, while the remaining eight members are designees from state agencies and other organizations. Sixty percent of the Board's 39 members are people with DD or family members of people with DD.

The Board meets at least quarterly in Richmond, Virginia. The Board encourages public comment on its planning activities and at Board meetings, and encourages individuals to contact the Board regarding needs, information, or concerns about disability- and policy-related issues.

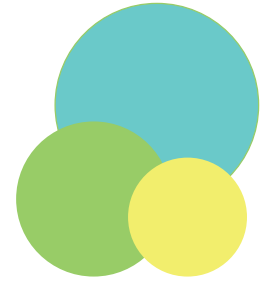
About the Board



**Virginia Board for
People with Disabilities**

Grant Funding

The Board is authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (the "Act") of 2000 (P.L. 106-402) to receive federal funds and act as an agent for systems change, capacity building and advocacy on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Board awards grants to non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, local public agencies, state agencies and institutions of higher education.



Project ABLE

Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL)

The Board's initial grant for \$171,049 to conduct **Project ABLE** was extended to 2017, with an additional award for \$150,000. **Project ABLE** initially trained over 300 participants on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ADA accessibility guidelines, Fair Housing Act, American National Standards Institute guidelines, and universal design concepts. Over 800 copies of the "Accessibility Reference Manual for Building Professionals in Virginia" were distributed. The extension improved upon that by adding interactive and immersive computer-based training that included audiovisual and accessible video game engine-based technology training designed to teach student selected 2010 ADA Guidelines to provide real-life relevance for Virginia's home builders. Since October of 2016, 119 professionals have been trained on the new modules and 500 flash drives were created to distribute them. After the extension concludes, post-grant monitoring will continue until March of 2019.



disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV)

The Board approved funding for a \$60,000 grant, with an additional \$20,000 leveraged, in March of 2017 for the disAbility Law Center's project titled **Improving Transportation Planning in Cities and Counties to Increase Access to Community-Based Healthcare**, which aims to ensure that individuals with developmental and other disabilities are able to better use public transportation to meet their healthcare needs. By using data-driven analysis and measurable evidence, dLCV will influence local communities to ensure that sidewalks, curb-cuts, and routes from travel from public transportation to medical services are fully accessible. Research is already underway in Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke, and Leesburg/Loudoun County and a working model of a survey tool has been created. Forty volunteers had been trained by the end of the fiscal year.



disAbility Law Center
of Virginia

Post-Grant: Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

The Board awarded VCU a grant of \$178,125 in 2014 for a project titled **Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention (LEAP)**, which was designed to teach people with disabilities about healthy relationship and how to protect themselves from sexual assault, abuse, neglect, and violence. A total of 519 people were trained through LEAP. A training manual was created and five training teams, consisting of individuals with disabilities and professionals, were established. The project ended in September, 2016, and is now in its two-year post-grant monitoring phase. LEAP staff have submitted a proposal to the Raliance Foundation and negotiations are underway for a Jenkins Foundation grant. The program has also been awarded a federal grant and will train an additional 200 people.

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

The Board awarded a grant for \$199,999, with \$66,906 leveraged, to VCU's project **Communication and Health Advocacy Training**. This project will increase the skills and knowledge of people with disabilities regarding basic health information and how to communicate effectively with their healthcare providers about their needs and priorities.

An agent for systems change ...

Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation (VHREF)

The Board funded a \$125,000 grant to the Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation, with \$41,670 leveraged, **to improve the referral process for children who spend time in neonatal intensive care units (NICU) to early intervention services**. VHREF successfully laid foundations for system change by receiving commitments from 22 Virginia NICUs, 80% of all those eligible and initiated contact with remaining units. A partnership was also established with the Virginia Early Intervention Administrator, at Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Additionally, a 13-member Virginia NICU Advisory Council was created to help guide the project. VHREF also produced a "Gap Analysis" and "Change Packet," after compiling feedback from 28 NICU leaders supported by data from NICUs themselves and early intervention staff. Stakeholders were then educated on the topics through a series of in-person meetings and webinars. A model referral protocol will also be completed.

One of the participants who engaged in the LEAP training was a young woman with intellectual disabilities and co-occurring mental illness. According to the background provided by the sponsor agency, the woman had a history of sexual assault while still enrolled in school. The agency coordinator work with her was not sure if she would want to participate given her personal history. However, the woman attended all four sessions and stated at the end of the program that, "I wish I had had this training when I was 14 years old. It would have really helped me." She has since become a LEAP trainer working with the program.



Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation

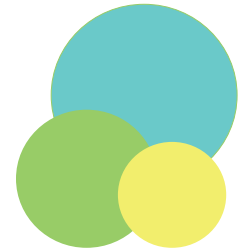




James Madison University

James Madison University (JMU)

The JMU project **Improving Health and Wellness through Empowerment** received a grant for \$182,591, with \$61,500 leveraged, to create a collaborative, community-centered wellness program that serves people with disabilities throughout the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia. By combining a wellness coalition and on-line training, organizations in the region will be training on the skills and provided with the support and resources to offer improved inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities.



capacity building ...



Arc of Northern Virginia

The Board funded a new project for the Arc of Northern Virginia beginning in May of 2017 called "Creating Inclusive Communities." The grant was for \$124,782, with \$41,600 leveraged. The overall project goal is to increase access to information and resources related to early intervention, education, transition, and benefits planning for people with developmental disabilities, and their families, who speak languages other than English in the Northern Virginia area. The translated literature will be available in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Chinese.

Virginia Department of Education

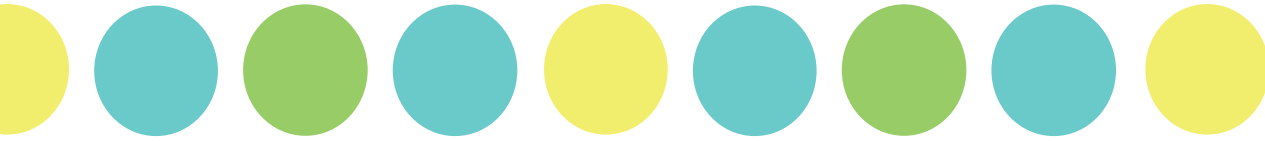
The Virginia Department of Education received a grant for \$150,000, with \$50,000 leveraged, to improve post-school outcomes and opportunities for employment and higher education for students by educating families, school and parent resource staff, and other stakeholders. VDEO will develop and maintain a curriculum on critical decision-making points including diploma options and course requirements, assessments, key grade level decision-making points, credits and credit accommodations, and long-term planning for graduation, among other goals. The curriculums will be incorporated into a reader-friendly guide for parents which will be published in multiple languages. At least ten technology-based training modules to be made available on the VDOE website. In-person training will also be conducted.



Post-Grant: Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL)

Following an initial grant in 2013, to conduct the Empowerment to Prevent Institutionalization (EPI), VACIL has developed educational resources for medical and related health-care professional on community services and supports available to individuals with developmental disabilities in

order to help maintain their place in the community and prevent institutionalization. The students were provided with training materials, and attended various health and wellness fairs/conferences throughout the process. In total, VACIL provided the materials to over 1,800 members of the public.



Post-Grant: Arc of Southside

The Board continues to receive post-grant updates regarding Arc of the Southside's work to continue progress in transitioning individuals served in its sheltered workshop into community-based employment. The workshop no longer accepts referrals into its sheltered employment program and no longer accepts them from individuals interested in obtaining supported employment in the community. The number of individuals employed in the sheltered workshop has also decreased from 114 to 56, while 33 have been placed in community-based employment settings. The workshop is scheduled to close by the end of 2018.

Alan (full name withheld for privacy) attended a sheltered workshop for more than 20 years, completing various tasks. He seemed content and showed no interest in the supported employment program when it began. However, as time passed and more of his friends moved into that program, he saw many of them find work they enjoyed and heard them speak regularly about how much they loved their new positions, and particularly how much more money they were making compared to before. In some cases, his friends were even able to afford their own place to live. After realizing the difference, Alan began working at a supported employment position which raised his pay from \$1.50 per hour to \$8.00 per hour for two days per week. Not content with so few hours, he worked with a job coach and was able to secure a new position at a local restaurant working five to six days per week during the evening. Alan now tells everyone he can he is "living his dream."

& advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities.

Policy

The Board works with cross-agency committees, advocacy partners, legislators, and workgroups to support and influence proposed policies, laws, regulations, and budget actions, including those related to:



- Education, by assisting the State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC) shape its policy advice to the Virginia Board of Education, including recommendations that SSEAC be involved in reviewing the developing comments on the Board of Education’s regulations on seclusion and restraint in public schools; that a recommendation be added to the SSEAC annual report to work with the Office of Children’s Services and other stakeholders to move students with disabilities out of private day treatment placements and back into their neighborhood school divisions with needed supports.

- Education, via participation in a local education agency (LEA) Results Accountability Rubric Stakeholder meeting, where the Board and other advocates recommended weighting results heavier than compliance by 10 percent, for a 60/40 split. Some slippage then occurred in the compliance area which prompted the Virginia Department of Education to address the issues through a “Back to Basics” training, currently in development.

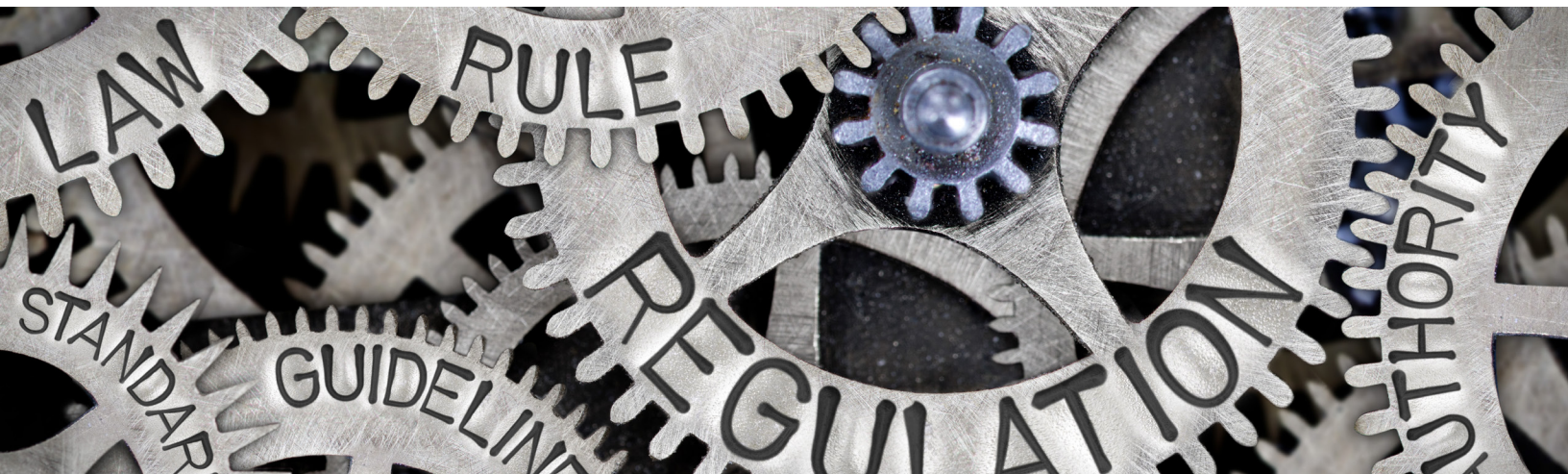
- Education, by participating on Virginia Commonwealth University’s Autism Center for Excellence (VCU-ACE) Community Partners Advisory Council which provided guidance to VCU on development of a regional program for Richmond-area students with Autism, with the goal of keeping as many children as possible in their home school division

through direct training technical assistance and instructions in the pilot schools.

- Education, by participating in the Virginia Department of Education’s Advisory Council on Dispute Resolution, initiated this year and focused on lessening conflict situation between families and schools. The first meeting addressed the development and implementation of a facilitated Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process which trains facilitators to ensure IEP meetings run efficiently and effectively. Thirteen facilitators have been chosen and will help families and schools, with consent of both parties, work through conflicts or challenges in the IEP process in a civil and productive manner.

- Seclusion and restraint, by providing public comment to the eight-member Virginia Board of Education in concert with the Coalition for Improvement of School Safety. The Board continues to recommend that seclusion and restraint in the public schools only be allowed when there is an “imminent threat of physical bodily harm to self or others.” Work on these regulations is ongoing.

- Restraint in assisted living facilities (ALFs), via public comment on the Commonwealth’s regulations governing ALFs. The Board initially provided feedback in late 2015. The final version of the recommendation was published in February 2017, and included many of the Board’s recommendations.



including a prohibition on certain types of restraints and clarification on restricting emergency restraints when necessary to protect the residents or others.

- Abuse, by participating in the I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory board. I-CAN! is collaboration between the Partnership for People with Disabilities and the VCU School of Social Work designed to promote awareness of the abuse of people with disabilities, including sexual and domestic violence. The Board has participated since inception.

- Finances, by helping educate the public about the rollout of Virginia's ABLEnow program which is designed to help individuals with disabilities build savings in order to pay for their needs and expenses. Debuting in late 2016, ABLEnow accounts are available nationwide and allow users to save in special tax-advantaged accounts that can be contributed to by any friend or family member. ABLEnow funds are also disregarded when applying for many means-tested benefit programs. The Board worked with program officials at Vir-

ginia529 prior to the implementation of the program, assisting with numerous policy and disability community issues. Since the debut, the Board has used its social media and other outreach tools to inform over 16,000 individuals about the program. In total, nearly 2,000 new accounts were registered in Federal Fiscal Year 2017.

- Employment, through continued tracking of regulatory proposals and participation in numerous workgroups focused on integrated employment. In 2017, the Board released its Disability Assessment. One of its recommendations was that DARS redirect its state general fund Long Term Employment Services and Supports dollars away from sheltered workshops and allow it to be utilized only for competitive, integrated employment. This recommendation was supported by many, but there has also been significant resistance and opposition from some organizations who support funding segregated employment.



The Board educated policymakers on matters of relevance by:

- Informing legislators about the effect of proposed changes to Virginia's Fair Housing Law that would have criminalized fraudulent requests for reasonable accommodations related to pet policies to accommodate assistance animals. The Board was concerned that the new criminalization component could have a negative effect on people with disabilities pursuing their right to reasonable accommodations in this area. The Board was successful in removing the proposed change.

- Working with advocacy partners to inform the 13 legislative members of the General Assembly Local Government Committee about potential Fair Housing issues related to a proposed statute that would have established burdensome procedural barriers to the establishment of a new group home in Virginia. The Board and its advocacy partners explained that the change would likely violate federal Fair Housing Law. The Bill was ultimately pulled.

- Providing formal written comment on proposed changes to Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Auxiliary Grant program regulations. The program, though the adult social services program, provides supplemental state financial assistance for low-income residents of assisted living facilities. The proposed change in regulations would allow assisted living facilities to accept funding from third parties on behalf of Auxiliary Grant recipients to pay for goods and services not covered by the program itself. The Board made several recommendations to ensure the facilities use such payments for their intended purposes, all but one of which was implemented.

In 2017, the Board specifically included increased college access as an objective in its federal State Plan as part of its ongoing effort to improve college access for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2015, findings and policy recommendations regarding college access were presented to the legislative Disability Commission by VCU's Partnership for People with Disabilities and the VCU Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. As a result of information presented, the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) agreed to study access to higher education. Publication of the report, *Improving Access to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities*, was delayed by about a year and broadened to reflect the needs of all students with disabilities. The draft report completed in FFY 2017 included two of the Board's recommendations—creation of an Advisory Council, co-led by SCHEV and the Board, and a review of testing barriers affecting acceptance to community colleges. Progress has been slow but partners are increasingly engaged and activity is expected to increase in FFY 2018.



In FFY 2017, the Board provided comments on a diverse array of proposed initiatives that included:

- 10-17-2016: BOE Proposed Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia, Coalition for Improving School Safety
- 03-13-2017: DBHDS Policy 4038 (CSB) 94-1 Department and CSB Roles in Providing Services to Children Under the Children's Services Act
- 08-07-2017: Public Comment on proposed federal Partnerships for Innovation, Inclusion and Independence Program
- 04-26-2017: DARS Proposed Amendments to Regulations on Auxiliary Grants-Third Party Payments



Medicaid Waiver Redesign

In September 2016, the redesign of three of the Commonwealth's home- and community-based waivers providing services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities was implemented. The redesign is a principal strategy for achieving the requirements of Virginia's Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to serve individuals in the most integrated setting. The Board was involved in the redesign efforts, which took several years, and has continued to be involved in efforts to facilitate implementation and help problem solve implementation challenges.

The Board has worked both formally and informally with the Commonwealth's Medicaid and DD agencies in this area and is an active participant on the DD Waiver Advisory Council (DD-WAC), formed in late Federal Fiscal Year 2017 to address systems challenges.

In addition to the Board and other responsible state agencies, the DD-WAC includes representatives of providers, advocacy organizations and families, addressing areas such as provider issues with the Virginia Waiver Management System; provider issues with the reimbursement for and approval of service hours for the new community engagement service; issues with the new Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus Medicaid Program including transportation and the involvement of guardians; a report for the General Assembly on implementation of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS); access to services; case management services as the system undergoes change to align with the newly redesigned Medicaid waiver; and provider issues with

getting new homes and beds approved in a timely manner. The Board provided feedback on a variety of Medicaid memos related to Waiver redesign, a Waiver Navigation Guide for families and a variety of documents seeking to clarify the long term care supports provided through the three DD Waivers vs the new Commonwealth Coordinated (Managed) Care Plus program in which all waiver recipients are enrolled but for which DD Waiver services are carved out. Board efforts helped prevent passage of bills that would have reduced quality and access to services, including a bill that would have required that Medicaid waiver funds be used to support segregated, gated communities. Participation by the Board on the Community Engagement Advisory Council also helped facilitate better provider and individual education regarding the new community engagement Medicaid waiver service.



Medicaid Managed Care



In August 2017, Virginia began transitioning Medicaid enrollees who have disabilities, as well as other select enrollees, into a new managed care program called Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus (CCC Plus). In managed care, the state contracts with private health plans to provide health insurance on behalf of the state. CCC Plus covers the same services that were previously covered under Medicaid, including medical, behavioral health, and pharmacy services, as well as some additional services that vary depending on the individual private health plan. CCC Plus does not cover long-term ser-

VICES and supports provided through the Developmental Disability home- and community-based waivers. These will continue to be covered through the traditional fee-for-service system for at least the next several years.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2017, the Board monitored the transition and provided feedback to address challenges. The Board participated in the Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus Advisory Council, which advised the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) on planning for the transition. The Board monitored weekly

conference calls with Medicaid enrollees and providers to understand what implementation challenges they faced and to ensure their questions were adequately addressed. Additionally, the Board provided feedback to DMAS on the CCC Plus member handbook and on a handout regarding how CCC Plus impacts the Developmental Disability waiver services, in order to ensure they provided clear, accurate, and useful information for people with disabilities. Nearly all of the Board's suggested changes were adopted. This work will be ongoing as stakeholders continue to adjust to the new program.



The Board approved \$50,000 in funding in late 2016 for a new Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) training initiative after participating in a stakeholder group to determine the training needs of law enforcement office in regards interaction and communications with people with disabilities. The Department of Behavioral Health and De-

velopmental Services (DBHDS) is also a co-funder. Working with DCJS, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), DBHDS, and other stakeholders, a competitive Request for Proposals was issued and ultimately awarded to Niagara University for disability awareness training for law enforcement officers in the Commonwealth. The training includes coursework on dementia; developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and autism; acquired brain injury; sensory disabilities; mental health; and physical disabilities. The focus is on the ability of law enforcement officers to successfully interact with individuals with disabilities they encounter and to help prevent some of the tragic situations that have occurred nationwide. It is a Train-the-Trainer model that will be incorporated into the overall DCJS Training portfolio. The Board helped develop the RFP and reviewed and provided input on training content and continues to work with DCJS and DBHDS to refine and monitor the program.

Law Enforcement Training

Assessments



The Board released its Assessments of the Disability Services System, Education and Employment, in June, 2017. It was delivered to all 140 members of the Virginia General Assembly, Virginia's 11 U.S. House representatives and both Senators, the Governor, Virginia's Secretaries of Health and Human Resources, Education, and Commerce and Trade, as well as nearly two dozen state agency heads.

Education

In June of 2016, the Board approved Education as one of two focus areas for its 2017 Assessment of Disability Services in Virginia. The Assessment serves as a guide for policymakers who are interested in improving the education of Virginia's students with disabilities.

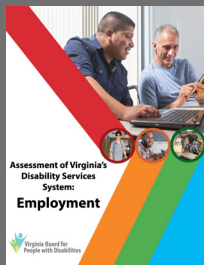
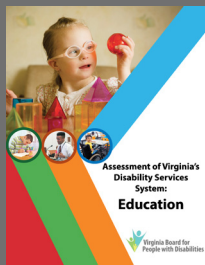
The 2017 Education Assessment found that educational outcomes for students with disabilities in the Commonwealth have improved somewhat, according to standardized assessments, but that growth has been slow over recent years. More students with disabilities are spending more of their school day in general education classrooms, however significant opportunities for improvement remain.

The Education Assessment includes five global and 19 sub-recommendations for systems improvement, focusing on providing services in the least-restrictive environment possible, decreasing the use of overly-harsh and harmful behavioral interventions and discipline, ensuring students and families have accurate and clear information on education decisions, increasing the number of students who have access to employment-related education and real work experiential employment opportunities, and increasing post-secondary education opportunities for students with developmental and other disabilities.

The Assessments serve as a guide for policymakers who are interested in improving the education and employment policy affecting people with disabilities.

They are available for download at:

vaboard.org/assessment.htm



Employment

In June of 2016, the Board approved Employment as one of two focus areas for its 2017 Assessment of Disability Services in Virginia. The Assessment serves as a guide for policymakers working towards improving the employment outcomes for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

The Employment assessment contained several major key findings, including:

- The employment gap between people with and without disabilities in Virginia has not changed significantly in recent years
- Many people with developmental disabilities continue to work in segregated employment settings in Virginia.
- Virginia continues to invest in segregated day and employment settings
- There are significant regional disparities in employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Virginia.

To address these issues, the Assessment contains seven broad recommendations, along with 21 sub-recommendations to outline the necessary steps to each. They include:

- Updating the Commonwealth's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined state plan to better address individuals with disabilities
- Improving access to accurate and disability-friendly information about work incentives programs, the effects of employment on benefit eligibility, available tool to minimize the impact on employment on benefits received.
- Increasing and revising business outreach and engagement strategies focused on improving integrated competitive employment for people with disabilities
- Decreasing Virginia's reliance on sheltered employment settings and redirecting state funds to competitive, integrated employment
- Increasing capacity for integrated employment opportunities in rural and underserved areas
- Eliminating Order of Selection in Virginia's vocational rehabilitation programs
- Expanding registered apprenticeship opportunities for young people with disabilities.

Board Workgroup Participation

- Coalition for Improvement of School Safety
- Community Health Worker Advisory Group
- Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Community Integration Implementation Team
- DARS Executive Order 46 workgroup
- DARS No Wrong Door Resource Advisory Council
- DARS Virginia Brain Injury Council
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) Advisory Consortium for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- DBHDS Community Engagement Advisory Group
- DBHDS Employment First Advisory Group
- DBHDS Dept. of Justice Settlement Agreement Stakeholder Advisory Group
- DBHDS Virginia Supportive Housing Advisory Council
- Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)
- Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus Advisory Council
- DMAS Developmental Disabilities Waiver Advisory Council
- National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities Board and Public Policy workgroup
- Partnership for People with Disabilities I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory Board
- Partnership for People with Disabilities Consumer Advisory Council
- VDH Advisory Council for Health Disparity & Health Equity
- Virginia Accessible Housing Solutions Board
- Virginia Autism Council
- Virginia Business Leadership Network
- Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence Community Partners Advisory Council
- Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Advisory Council on Dispute Resolution
- VDOE Advocacy Stakeholders Group
- VDOE State Special Education Advisory Committee
- VDOE Applied Studies Diploma Roundtable
- VDOE Inclusive Education Stakeholders Group
- VDOE Local Education Agency Results Accountability Rubric Stakeholder group
- VDOE Special Education Dispute Resolution Advisory Council



Communications



The Board's Communications efforts focused heavily on rebranding and relaunching its public materials and outreach capacity for the year. New logos and branding were developed for the Board and all three of its training programs, along with a complete aesthetic overall of all materials. The Board's website was also redesigned and relaunched in the spring of 2017 and now includes expanded and easier-to-access information on all of the Board's activities, as well as enhancements to the Partners in Policymaking, Youth Leadership Academy, and Training Alumni Association pages.

The Board also completed its overhaul of web material in compliance with the new Federal WCAG 2.0 accessibility requirements, further enhancing ease of access to its web materials for individuals with disabilities. The Board was also the first of Virginia's disability services agencies to meet this requirement.

Training

The Board operates three training programs for people with disabilities, and their families, to improve personal skills, ensuring they are empowered to engage in leadership and systems advocacy on local, regional, and statewide levels.

Partners in Policymaking (PIP) is dynamic leadership and advocacy training experience for adults with a developmental disability and parents of a child with a developmental disability. The program is conducted over seven two-day sessions that begin in September and end in April. Participants attend advocacy training, resource development, and skill building workshops led by state and national experts. Topics covered include the history of the disability rights movement, self-advocacy, independent living, employment, building inclusive communities, natural supports, legislative advocacy, assistive technology, communication, team building, and more.



The Youth Leadership Academy (YLA), formerly known as the Youth Leadership Forum, is a four-day intensive learning seminar for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This year's session will take place on the campus of Virginia State University from July 9-12. YLA Delegates learn directly from peer mentors and successful adult role models while they work on their own personal leadership plans, improve their communications skills, visit the state capitol, and have a chance to speak directly to state legislators and policymakers. Food and lodging for all Delegates are covered by the Board and numerous Board staff and program volunteers are on hand at all times to provide a safe and appropriate learning environment.

The Training Alumni Association (TAA) encompasses graduates of both PIP and YLA and is designed to further engage training program alumni with one another, the Board, and other disability organizations to build ground-level capacity for systems change advocacy. Alumni are affiliated with regional chapters and have a defined organizational structure with leadership roles.

“Partners has literally been life changing for myself, my family, and my son. It is an amazing program.”

*— PIP Graduate,
2017 Feedback Survey*



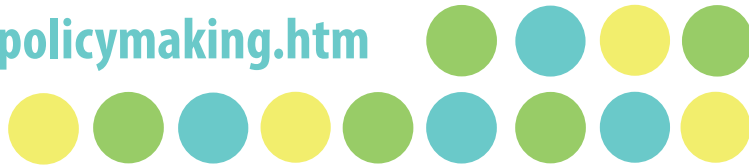
PIP

Partners in
Policymaking

Federal Fiscal Years 2017 was largely a planning year for PIP, with the most recent class beginning in September, 2017. Prior to that, both the program curriculum and branding were given a substantial overhaul with an eye towards modernization and increased ease of use. This included a new logo, as well as a ground-up recreation of all application, orientation, and marketing materials, in order to establish a fresh, modern look for the program. The pre-course testing of knowledge and skills was also revised and will be followed with an enhanced post-course test in order to more accurately gauge the growth and development of PIP participants throughout the

course. This year's PIP session will include dynamic and substantive training from advocacy and thought leaders from around the country and cover topics like disability rights, getting appointed to boards and commissions, supportive decision making, and the historical perspective of human services systems and self-advocacy. As in years past, participants are given the opportunity to speak directly to Virginia legislators and policymakers in the "PIP Capitol Day," which takes place in Richmond and features a variety of guests including state legislators and disability services agency leadership.

More info at:
vaboard.org/policymaking.htm



Partners in Policymaking Class of 2018

2017/18 PIP Presenter

Kathie Snow

Parent, Author, and Activist

Kathie is the author of *Disability is Natural: Revolutionary Common Sense for Raising Successful Children with Disabilities* (now in its third edition); *Apple-Bites: Commonsense Disability Strategies for Everyone*; hundreds of articles that are incorporated into two different books of reproducible articles; and the widely-disseminated *People First Language* article. She's also the creator of the *Disability is Natural* DVD as well as a wide assortment of bright, colorful, and positive "Disability is Natural" products.



A graduate of Texas Partners in Policymaking in 1991, Kathie presents at Partners programs in many states and provides technical assistance to many Partners coordinators. She also presents keynotes and workshops at international, national, and state conferences; provides day-long trainings for parent groups, schools, and human service agencies; and has coordinated conferences and developed training curriculum.

Kathie and her family lived in Colorado for over 20 years, but recently returned to their home state of Texas. Before the births of her children, she was a broadcast television writer, producer, and director and a print journalist. She's energetic, positive, and determined to help create a society where all are valued and all belong.



The Youth Leadership Academy was redesigned in 2017 to better meet the needs of Youth and to enhance recruitment. While the Board had been successfully operating its Youth Leadership Forum since 1999, an increase in youth-focused advocacy and training programs, which the Board welcomes, contributed to challenges in recruitment. To examine the future of the Board's Youth training program to which it has a strong commitment, the

Board convened an interagency committee including the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), and the Virginia Health Youth Foundation as well as the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center, YLA program alumni, and Board members and staff. Several recommendations for changes were made and implemented, including:

- **Opening up the program to rising high school sophomores**
- **Implementing improved marketing and recruitment strategies, including enhanced collaborative work with the partners listed**
- **Enhanced technological implementation to better cater to today's youth**
- **More directly engaging youth in the development and implementation of the training**
- **Changing the name of the program to reflect its evolution**

As a result of this work, DARS, VDOE, and DBVI have all committed financial resources to the 2018 YLA for their constituencies. The 2018 YLA will be held at Virginia State University from July 9-12.



More info at:
vaboard.org/YLA.htm





VBPD Training Alumni Association

The Training Alumni Association (TAA), as the newest Board program, also received a great deal of attention over the past year. A newly-enhanced TAA web page has been added to the overall Board site, giving Alumni immediate access to a variety of organizational, instructional, and advocacy resources, as well as listings of chapter leadership and events. The leadership model for each chapter was reorganized into a co-chair system, allowing for greater flexibility and better work/life for participants as they work to include Alumni activities into their already busy schedules. This change included hands-on training for program officers to prepare them as effective leaders for their chapters. Alumni chapters are reporting increased activity levels across the board as members engage in more advocacy both on an individual and collective basis.



Central Virginia (CVA)

Co-Chairs: Lia Tremblay & Sean Campbell

The Central Virginia Alumni chapter has welcomed a host of new members and a new Secretary, Sarah Gray. During the Annual October Survey Drive, CVA Alumni completed the survey more than any other region. Lia and Sean receive the credit for helping VBPD significantly improve its return rate. CVA regularly has new attendees at their Chapter Meetings and consistently receive positive feedback from Alumni.

Northern Virginia (NoVA)

Co-Chairs: Debbie Stachkunas & Kristie Bowie-Young

Last August this highly energetic Leadership Team took on the challenge of strengthening the NoVA chapter and increasing alumni participation. The NoVA Chapter has created a 2018 Calendar of Advocacy Events and has conducted two Chapter Meetings. Debbie, Kristie, and Eileen are interested in developing more collaboration with the disability organizations that NoVA members are currently working with and how to utilize technology to better engage alumni.

Southwest Virginia (SWA)

Co-Chairs: Kennedy Rose & Catherine Childers

The SWA Alumni Regional Chapter has recorded the most meeting participation out of all the four chapters. Leadership developed an effective strategy of calling Alumni, frequently updating alumni through sending several list serve reminders, and using social media. Several new members have joined SWA since their first fiscal year Chapter Meeting in October 2017.

Tidewater (TARC)

Co-Chairs: Kristin Osborne & Robyn Rutkowski

The Tidewater Alumni Chapter has hosted numerous events, including Autism, Food Allergy, and Down Syndrome workshops for members. TARC has the most Facebook Members out of all the regional chapters with over two dozen and counting. Four new members attended their January Chapter Meeting at the Endependence Center.

