

Housing Landscape in Virginia

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities serves as Virginia's Developmental Disabilities Council. In this capacity the Board advises the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, federal and state legislators, and other constituent groups on issues important to people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. The following summarizes the Board's most recent assessment of housing services and outcomes and is intended to serve as a guide for policymakers who are interested in improving the housing outlook for Virginians with disabilities. To see the Board's full 2018 Housing assessment, please visit <https://vaboard.org/assessment.htm>

Leading by Values

The Board's work in this area is driven by its vision, values, and the following core beliefs and principles:



Inherent Dignity

All people possess inherent dignity, regardless of gender, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability status.



Presumed Capacity

All people should be presumed capable of obtaining a level of independence and making informed decisions about their living arrangements.



Self-Determination

People with disabilities and their families are experts in their own needs and desires. They must be included in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. This includes decisions about their housing needs and supports.



Integration

People with disabilities have a civil right to receive services and supports in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs and desires, consistent with the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision. Housing options for people with disabilities must not be unnecessarily segregated from the general population.



Diversity

Diversity is a core value. All people, including people with disabilities, should be valued for contributing to the diversity of our neighborhoods and of the Commonwealth.



Freedom from Abuse & Neglect

People with disabilities must be protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in all settings where services and supports are provided.



Fiscal Responsibility

Fiscally responsible policies are beneficial for the Commonwealth, and they are beneficial for people with disabilities.

Virginia has made significant progress in improving the living situations of people with developmental disabilities in recent years. Fewer people with developmental disabilities reside in large segregated facilities today than did in the recent past. More people with developmental disabilities who are eligible for Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services are living independently.

Despite this progress, people with disabilities continue to face barriers to accessing independent housing options including affordability, discrimination, and physical accessibility. Data on the rates of housing discrimination is insufficient to identify clear trends, but evidence suggests that housing discrimination, both overt and subtle, continues to limit the housing options available to people with disabilities. Current demographic and housing trends threaten to further strain housing resources for people with disabilities and other housing disadvantaged groups.

Key Housing Recommendations



The Board offers 18 recommendations to improve the availability of affordable, accessible, independent housing options to individuals with disabilities. The recommendations are mostly directed towards state policymakers, but local decision-makers should also receive input from people with disabilities and other constituents about their housing needs.

The Board's 18 recommendations are grouped into three main goals:

- 1 Expand access to affordable independent living options for people with developmental disabilities in Virginia.
- 2 Vigorously enforce Virginia's Fair Housing Laws.
- 3 Adopt state and local policies and practices that encourage accessible development and hold violators of accessibility requirements accountable.

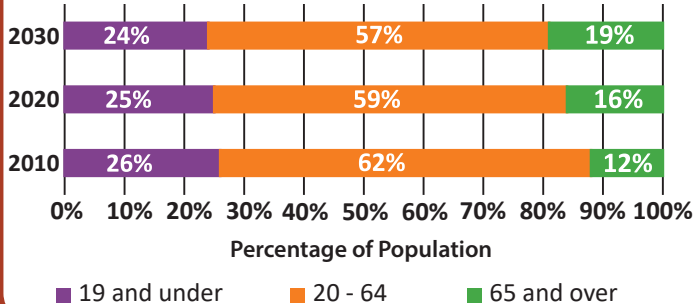
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Virginia's Aging Population

Virginia's population is aging. The percentage of Virginians age sixty-five and over is projected to increase substantially from 12 percent in 2010 to 19 percent in 2030. This trend is even more pronounced in rural regions of the state, which already struggle to meet the needs of people with disabilities.



Virginia Population by Age Group



Increased Community Integration

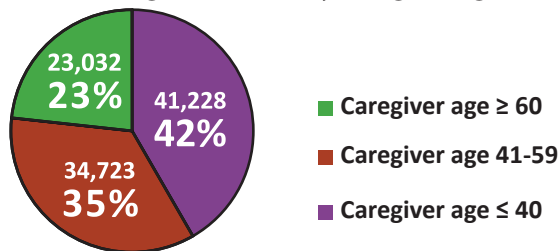
Individuals with disabilities are increasingly living their lives in the community, rather than in institutions, often with the support of family caregivers. This shift from institutional to community-based care has been ongoing for many years and has been accelerated by recent regulatory and policy actions.

Virginia's Aging Caregivers

An increasing number of individuals with developmental disabilities rely upon aging caregivers for housing and supports.



Virginians with a Developmental Disability Living with a Caregiver in 2015, by Caregiver Age



Barriers to Independent Housing

Virginians with disabilities must overcome multiple barriers in order to obtain accessible, independent housing. Many people with disabilities are capable of living independently in the community with or without paid and/or natural supports, but face substantial barriers.

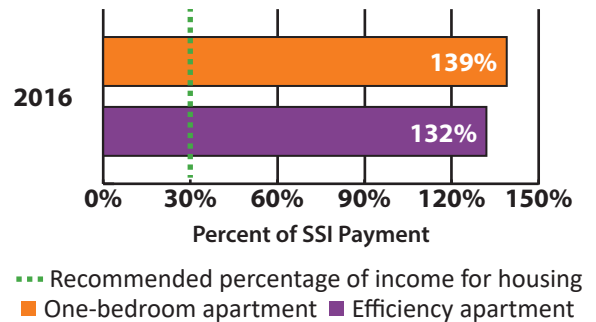


Affordability of independent housing options



The unaffordability of rental housing is a pervasive barrier to independent housing for people with disabilities. Based on the graph below, the cost burden is substantially more than the commonly accepted guidance that housing should cost no more than 30% of an individual's monthly income.

Statewide Average Rent as a Percentage of SSI in Virginia



Housing discrimination against people with disabilities



Despite strong Fair Housing protections in both state and federal law, housing discrimination against people with disabilities is a continuing and pervasive problem. A positive change, in 2020 the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 357 making discrimination based on source of income illegal. The Bill defines "source of income" as any source that lawfully provides funds to or on behalf of a renter or buyer of housing, including any state or federal assistance, benefit, or subsidy program. SSI does not provide sufficient income to afford housing without a housing subsidy.

Physical accessibility of independent housing options



There is an insufficient supply of physically accessible housing in Virginia to meet growing demand, according to available data. Increasing demand threatens to further undermine Virginia's ability to meet this critical need.



Virginia Board for
People with Disabilities

(804) 786-0016

WWW.VABOARD.ORG

1100 BANK STREET
7TH FLOOR
RICHMOND, VA 23219