



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

Assessment of Virginia's  
**INFORMATION  
ECOLOGY**  
of the Disability Services System



## PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

To build on the [2022 Assessment of Information Access for Individuals with Disabilities and Their Family Members](#). To understand structural and managerial issues that could prevent access to disability and Medicaid service information.

## What is Information Ecology?

Information ecology is the arrangement of information providers, sources and users.

**Information provider:** An organization that shares information.

**Information source:** An item or tool such as a website or book.

**Information user:** A person who seeks and uses information.

The ecology shows how providers share information with the community and users' overall access to information.

Virginia's disability and Medicaid information ecologies have governmental and non-governmental information providers. Governmental and non-governmental providers have unique challenges that impact users' ability to find accurate and helpful information.

## Findings & Recommendations:

### State's Consistency Management

State-level information providers inconsistently update information because of staff turnover and resistance to new technology. To combat this problem, we need:

- Playbooks or a dashboard that provide disability service information.
- An email system, alert module or dashboard that notifies staff of policy/regulatory changes.
- Information quality validation training for state employees.

### Information Networks between Governmental Agencies

Local and non-governmental providers need consistent information networks to help them share information with one another. Possible solutions include:

- A monthly forum or ongoing chat room where support coordinators can share best practices, raise concerns and answer common questions.

### Network between Non-Governmental and Governmental Providers

Information users (people with disabilities and family members) often go to non-governmental providers for information first. Non-governmental providers end up having to share information about services their organization does not offer, such as Medicaid waiver services. These providers have increased workloads because they must make sure that their information is accurate. They also end up having to rebuild users' trust in governmental providers.

- Virginia's No Wrong Door system should be enhanced to serve as a cross-sharing information source through which various providers can update their information.

### Capacity of Government Information Sources & Validation for Non-Governmental Information

Many information users rely on other family members, friends, non-governmental agencies, social media and general web searches for information more than they rely on government-initiated websites.

- State agencies should work together to bring awareness of government information sources and services for people of diverse backgrounds and regions.
- State agencies should monitor information provided by non-government information sources to mitigate misinformation.