



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

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PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REPORT  
**HIGHLIGHTS**



**Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities**

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# Message from the Chair

It's an honor to share this year's annual report from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities. The 2024 federal fiscal year was one of progress, purpose, and partnership.

Over the past year, we've deepened our commitment to creating a Virginia where people with developmental disabilities are fully included in all aspects of community life. Through strong collaboration with self-advocates, families, organizations, and policymakers, we've continued to elevate voices that have too often gone unheard.

From strengthening advocacy networks to shaping policy and investing in leadership development, our work has centered on ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities have the tools, support, and opportunities they need to lead fulfilling lives. A key part of this effort has been improving access to clear, timely, and accurate information—ensuring that individuals and families have the information they need to access services and make informed choices.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on bold goals—with the same passion, persistence, and belief that meaningful change is not only possible, but essential.



Thank you to our dedicated Board members, VBPD staff, and partners across the Commonwealth. Your hard work and unwavering commitment make this progress possible.

With gratitude,

***Dennis Findley***  
***Chair, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities***

# 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: Championing Inclusion Across the Commonwealth

Since 1992, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) has been a driving force behind a more inclusive, supportive Virginia—where people with developmental and other disabilities are empowered to lead full lives.

We're not just advisors, we're changemakers. VBPD informs the Governor, lawmakers and state leaders on how to improve policies, systems and services for people with disabilities. Our goal? A Virginia where everyone can fully participate in community life.

We get things done by:

- **Researching** how disability services can be stronger and more accessible
- **Training** tomorrow's leaders through our signature programs
- **Funding** innovative projects that make real impact
- **Raising awareness** and driving change across communities

Our 40-member Board includes people with disabilities, family members and passionate advocates who bring lived experience to the table. We meet quarterly in Richmond—and your voice matters. Whether you've got questions, feedback or bold ideas, [we want to hear from you](#).

Together, we can build a more inclusive, empowered Virginia. Let's make it happen.

# one

Our **first goal** is for people with disabilities to have better access to supports, so they can live in the community.

*The Board outlined four main goals in its State Plan. Each Board activity is categorized according to the corresponding State Plan goal.*

## Improving Information Access Across Virginia

In partnership with the Information Access Steering Committee, VBPD launched Information Access Champions—a bold new initiative led by VBPD to improve how people with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families access vital information.

Through a shared pledge, local and state agencies commit to:

1. Making information accessible,
2. Ensuring information access is inclusive,
3. Collaborating for continuous improvement and
4. Holding each other accountable.

To support these Champions, VBPD created online resource guides that reflect the initiative's core values: accessibility, inclusion, collaboration and ongoing growth. The guides promote best practices such as clear/plain language, translated content and accessible web design. Approximately 30 agencies and departments have taken the Information Access Champions pledge so far.

VBPD also developed outreach materials for distribution—including posters and flyers in Spanish and braille—and interviewed individuals with DD and their family members to amplify real experiences and challenges.

In alignment with this work, VBPD remained a key partner in the **Virginia Secretariat of Health and Human Resources' Language and Disability Access Initiative**, in collaboration with VCU's Partnership for People with Disabilities. This statewide effort has grown from agency assessments to full implementation of compliance plans—moving the needle on equitable information access across the Commonwealth.



## Goal 1

### A Fresh New Look: Redesigning VBPD's Website for Better Access

This year, VBPD proudly launched a completely redesigned [website](#)—built with accessibility, inclusion and user experience at the forefront.

To bring this vision to life, VBPD:

- Partnered with a professional vendor to design and build a modern, user-friendly site;
- Held multiple strategy and design sessions to ensure the new site met both our mission and users' needs;
- Seamlessly transitioned to a new platform with the help of a third-party host; and
- Collaborated with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and design experts to incorporate stakeholder feedback and technical know-how.

The result? A streamlined, accessible website that makes it easier than ever for people with developmental disabilities, their families and partners across the state to find the information they need. The new website reflects VBPD's commitment to clear communication and equitable access for all.

### Spotlight on Access: Assessment of Geographic Disparities in Access to Healthcare

VBPD completed and released an [Assessment of Geographic Disparities in Access to Healthcare](#). The assessment focused on access to telehealth services to shine a light on the challenges people with developmental disabilities (DD) face when trying to get the care they need, especially in rural areas.

The report included **10 key recommendations** to improve access, with a strong focus on:

- Expanding broadband access and making it more affordable
- Improving telehealth accessibility
- Boosting digital health literacy through local, community-based solutions

It also called for more training for both telehealth providers and patients, and more funding for programs that help people with DD get the technology they need.

To spread the word, VBPD created an easy-to-understand infographic—available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)—that was shared widely and posted on our website.

VBPD staff also spoke about the findings in an interview with the Virginia Telehealth Network, which was featured in a blog post. In September, staff led a workshop to dive deeper into the results. The response was overwhelmingly positive. This work moves us one step closer to making healthcare more accessible for everyone, no matter where they live.

## Goal 1

### Collaboration in Action: Partnering for Stronger Community Supports

This year, VBPD staff actively participated in 11 key workgroups focused on strengthening community supports for people with developmental disabilities. These included the Developmental Disabilities Waiver Advisory Committee, Interagency Housing Advisory Committee, Richmond International Airport Accessibility Advocacy Group and the No Wrong Door Resource Advisory Committee, among others.

Through these workgroups, VBPD helped advance best practices such as installing adult-sized changing tables in airports, improving sensory accommodations, ensuring housing units are leased to people with disabilities and supporting service animal access.

When federal partners from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Administration for Community Living visited Virginia to review compliance with the Home and Community Based Services Settings Rule, VBPD joined The Arc of Virginia, VCU's Partnership for People with Disabilities and others to prepare. Our input emphasized the power of real-life stories and clear communication—both of which were used in the final presentation.

VBPD also signed onto a letter urging better census data accuracy to ensure the disability community isn't undercounted—critical for fair funding.

### Making Legislative Impact: Five Key Wins

VBPD testified on five important bills during the General Assembly session, educating 65 legislators and contributing to real policy change. All five bills passed and resulted in new laws:

- 1. Curbside Voting Access:** Expanded access to curbside voting for individuals with disabilities.
- 2. Medicaid Waiver Simplification:** Helped reduce barriers for individuals seeking Medicaid waiver services.
- 3. Guardianship Reform:** Supported use of guardianship only when absolutely necessary.
- 4. SSDI Income Disregard:** Advocated to ensure SSDI payments are not counted when determining Medicaid DD waiver financial eligibility.
- 5. Support for Family Caregivers:** Improved safeguards for family members serving as paid caregivers under consumer-directed services.

These wins reflect VBPD's commitment to policy change that makes a direct, positive impact on the lives of Virginians with developmental disabilities.

## 1. George Mason University (GMU)



VBPD continued to fund a \$149,921 grant to George Mason University (GMU) (\$50,073 in matching funds) to better understand how and where people find information about disability services and supports in Virginia. The project began on April 1, 2023, and concluded on May 31, 2024. This year's project activities included surveying 74 people with developmental disabilities and 509 family members to better understand how they get information about services and supports. GMU also surveyed 95 providers.

GMU will use what they found to develop a final report in 2025. This report will review what they learned and include recommendations to make it easier for people to get information.

## 2. ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia (ECNV)

VBPD awarded a \$300,000 grant to the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia (ECNV) (\$100,000 in matching funds) to develop and give disability-related information to Latino Virginians with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families. The project, called "Bienvenidos Todos: Disability Inclusion," started February 1, 2024, and will end December 31, 2025. ECVN developed information so

Latinos can get access to disability services, supports and opportunities. This year's activities included training one person with DD, eight family members and one other person, who all served as "trusted advisors" to reach Latino Virginians with DD.

ECNV held a conference called "Transition on the Road," where people spoke about empowering the Latino community to access support and resources for families and people with DD. 40 people, including 35 family members of people with DD, attended the conference.

ECNV also shared information about the project on its website, through Spanish media and social media, which got 5,562 hits and reached about 1,000 people. ECVN will evaluate the project and report outcomes in 2025.

## 3. Children's Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S.)



VBPD continued monitoring its grant project with Children's Assistive Technology Service at Emory & Henry College, called "Making Assistive Technology Accessible and Meaningful to Early Intervention Families in Rural Southwest Virginia." The active grant period was from August 1, 2021, through July 31, 2023. It aimed to help babies and toddlers with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families in southwest Virginia by giving them assistive technology devices and

## Goal 1: Goals & Investments

teaching them how to use them. The goal was to help children develop self-determination skills and support families in better meeting the needs of their child.

During 2024, they 1) gave assistive technology devices to 26 babies and toddlers with DD and taught 22 family members how to use them; 2) worked with early intervention coordinators at three Community Services Boards (CSBs) in rural southwest Virginia to understand what assistive technology the babies and toddlers and their families needed; and 3) maintained 38 pieces of equipment for their “Lending Library,” which adds to the collection of assistive technology and medical equipment that families can borrow.

60% of participating family members who took a survey said they were happy with the training, help or device their child got. 60% also said their child started doing more things on their own and that they felt more empowered.

### 4. Brain Injury Services of SWVA (BISSWVA)

VBPD continued monitoring its grant project with Brain Injury Services of SWVA (BISSWVA), called “Providing a Link for Survivors (PALS).” The project aimed to increase socialization and reduce isolation for brain injury survivors with a developmental disability and their families. The brain injury survivors were matched with a volunteer for socialization, increased community integration, social and emotional connection, as well as relationship building. The active grant

period was from August 1, 2021, through July 31, 2022.

During 2024, the grantee 1) continued working with Emory & Henry College to get more people to participate in the grant; 2) trained 10 volunteers on how to interact with brain injury survivors; and 3) recruited five brain injury survivors to participate in the grant. While survey response rates were low, 100% of participating brain injury survivors who did take a survey said they were satisfied with the services they received through the grant. 100% of volunteers who took a survey said that the grant increased their knowledge of brain injuries, and they were satisfied with participating.

### 5. Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH)

VBPD continued funding a \$214,450 grant (\$86,821 in matching funds) to the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) for a project called “Support Service Provider (SSP) Pilot Project,” which aimed to support the service provider workforce by training SSPs and people with deafblindness on how to use SSP services.

During 2024, VDDHH 1) worked with Reynolds Community College and the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired to develop a guide for training SSPs and getting new participants with deafblindness; 2) gave project information to eight people with deafblindness without developmental disabilities (DD) and 19 SSPs; 3) trained



## Goal 1: Goals & Investments

12 people with deafblindness (eight with DD) on how to use SSP services; and 4) made a website to share the project information and a list of trained SSPs.

100% of people with deafblindness with DD that took a survey said they were happy with the project training they got, and that it made them feel like they could work with an SSP if they wanted to. VBPD will continue monitoring the grant project in 2025.

### 6. The Arc of Virginia

VBPD continued funding a \$200,000 grant (\$66,666 in matching funds) to The Arc of Virginia for a project called “Diversity, Inclusion & Visibility,” so the public can learn more about the experiences of people with disabilities and the benefits they provide to society. The project started January 16, 2023.

During 2024, The Arc of Virginia worked with a storytelling company to make five accessible videos about the experiences of four people with developmental disabilities (DD). The videos, which were about inclusive neighborhoods, workplaces and communities, got over 700,000 views on YouTube. They also created three how-to guides on inclusive housing, communities and employment in Virginia that were downloaded 556 times. They trained 57 people, including nine with DD and 14 family members, to help get the word out about the project. Finally, they created the “Are You In” campaign to show the guides and videos. During 2024, 690 people took a pledge to be more inclusive. The campaign also reached over 1 million people on social media.

Of the people who took a survey, 100% said they were happy with the materials and would be more inclusive now that they signed the pledge. The project ended March 31, 2024.



# two

Our **second goal** is for people with disabilities to have better access to services, so they can be healthy and safe.

## Advocating for Better Healthcare Access

This year, VBPD staff continued to push for healthcare improvements for people with developmental disabilities by actively participating in three key workgroups:

- **Advisory Committee on Health Disparity and Health Equity (VDH)**
- **Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Committee (DMAS)**
- **Future of Public Oral Health Taskforce (Virginia Health Catalyst)**

Through these groups, staff made 12 recommendations aligned with eight best practices—ranging from collecting stakeholder input and setting policy goals to improving language access and training healthcare providers. The Virginia State Health Commissioner took special interest in our recommendations around language access and data collection, leading to a one-on-one meeting to discuss our recommendations.

VBPD also contributed to a statewide needs assessment for the **Title V Child and Maternal Health Program**, emphasizing the need for provider training on disabilities and funding for accessible healthcare improvements.

In public comments on a proposed federal rule about accessible medical diagnostic equipment, VBPD pushed for stronger requirements and faster implementation timelines. While the final rule didn't adopt all recommendations, it still marked progress toward more accessible care.

One of VBPD's past recommendations paid off: a federal proposal to remove a national oral health performance measure was reversed—thanks in part to VBPD's advocacy—**helping to keep oral health for people with disabilities on the national agenda.**



## Goal 2

### Improving Access to Dental Care

VBPD completed an [Assessment on the Accessibility of Dental Care](#). The report, which includes **18 policy recommendations**, focused on key areas such as:

- Training dental providers, IEP teams and support staff
- Improving Medicaid access, coverage and provider reimbursement
- Making dental services and sedation more accessible
- Involving people with disabilities in program design
- Encouraging stronger collaboration between state agencies

VBPD created and shared a user-friendly assessment infographic in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The full report and infographic were distributed widely—through social media, email lists and direct outreach to over 325 policymakers and dental professionals.

To keep the momentum going, VBPD launched a **Dental Information Exchange workgroup**. Two meetings were held this year, bringing together 42 stakeholders to discuss findings, set goals and prepare for a new dental clinic focused on people with disabilities at Virginia’s only dental school. The group will continue to meet quarterly in FFY 2025.

This work is a big step forward in making oral health care more inclusive, informed and accessible across Virginia.

### Ensuring Safety & Quality Through Collaboration

VBPD staff participated in five quality assurance workgroups this year—each focused on improving safety, accessibility and supports for people with developmental disabilities:

- **I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory Board**  
Worked to protect people with disabilities from abuse and stay informed on related laws and partner projects.
- **Coalition for Community Safety**  
Collaborated on efforts to improve safety in community settings, including incident monitoring, legislative updates and setting goals for the coming year.
- **House Bill 888/Senate Bill 176 Workgroup**  
Joined a new workgroup to improve crisis services and placements for people with neurocognitive and neurodevelopmental disabilities—hearing directly from those with lived experience.
- **Building Accessible Justice in Virginia**  
Participated in a new learning community focused on survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), safety in online spaces, cultural competency and creative, person-centered solutions.
- **988 & Crisis Services Policy Academy**  
Represented Virginia at a national event to improve the 988 crisis system. VBPD staff emphasized the importance of using clear, plain language in crisis resources to ensure accessibility for all.

Through these efforts, VBPD continued to bring the voices of people with disabilities into critical conversations about safety, justice and quality care.

## Goal 2

### Addressing Delays in Facility Oversight

VBPD staff reviewed eight certification reports from Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IIDs) in Virginia this year. While every ICF/IID is supposed to be recertified every 15 months, only 13% (eight out of 62 facilities) had current reports.

This delay is a growing concern. As of September 2024, 66% of Virginia’s ICF/IID certifications were overdue, up from 40% in 2023 and far above the national average of 12%. These delays increase the risk of health and safety issues going unnoticed.

In response, VBPD met with Virginia’s Medicaid agency to discuss the problem. Staff shared findings from monitoring activities and past assessments. Medicaid staff agreed to investigate their oversight authority and work with VBPD in FFY 2025 to raise awareness among key decision-makers.

This collaboration marks an important step toward stronger accountability and better protection for residents in these facilities.

### Making Emergency Preparedness More Inclusive

VBPD completed an [Assessment of Inclusive Preparedness, Response and Recovery in Virginia](#) and shared the report widely—through social media, email and direct outreach to around 200 policymakers and stakeholders.

The report included **14 recommendations** supporting three focus areas:

- Collaboration (eight recommendations)
- Adequate funding and oversight (four recommendations)
- Training and outreach (two recommendations)

One key recommendation called for the creation of a full-time Access and Functional Needs position at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). Thanks to VBPD’s strong advocacy—and the success of a similar temporary role funded by VBPD through the American Rescue Plan—VDEM created the position in July 2024.

This is a major win for inclusive emergency planning and ensures that people with disabilities are better supported before, during and after emergencies.



### James Madison University (JMU)



VBPD continued monitoring its grant project with James Madison University (JMU), called “Ability First: Transforming Homes and Communities in Rural Areas of the Shenandoah Valley.” The project educated organizations in rural areas in the Shenandoah Valley about inclusive wellness programs to better the health of people with developmental disabilities (DD) and their family members. The project began on August 1, 2021, and concluded July 31, 2023.

During 2024, JMU 1) got three new wellness organizations to join a group called the Shenandoah Valley Inclusive Wellness Coalition, which met every other month to make access to wellness programs easier for people with DD and had 109

people with DD and 71 family members join the meetings; 2) received 57,070 hits to their website, which has resources about inclusive wellness programs, including training videos; 3) had 211 wellness instructors use the videos, with 96% reporting that the videos increased their knowledge and that they would likely create inclusive programs at their organizations; and 4) had 83 people with DD and 31 family members start new wellness programs in 2024.

After joining the programs, people with DD and their families reported improvements: 78% reported a reduction in thoughts of sadness; 79% reported a positive change in at least one nutritional behavior; 93% had increased willingness to start wellness activities; and 98% reported an increased quality of life. VBPD will continue monitoring this impactful project for two years.

# three

Our **third goal** is for schools and employers to better include people with disabilities.



## Advocating for Education

VBPD joined two key education workgroups to help make schools work better for students with disabilities:

- **State Special Education Advisory Committee:** This year's meetings focused on transition issues. VBPD supported using grading systems that fairly and accurately measure student progress. VBPD also pushed for students with disabilities to be considered when creating school policies, like those related to cell phone use.
- **Virginia Department of Education Transition – High Performing States Workgroup:** Formed after 2021 legislation, this group explored how top-performing states support students transitioning from school to adult life. VBPD joined three meetings to learn and share ideas.

## Legislative Advocacy

VBPD educated 17 legislators and provided input on several important bills during the General Assembly:

1. **Student Support Roles (Did Not Pass):** VBPD supported a bill to add more support staff in schools to help students with disabilities.
2. **College Disability Services (Passed as a Study):** VBPD backed a bill to improve how colleges document and provide disability services.
3. **Discipline Reform (Defeated):** VBPD opposed a bill proposing a one-size-fits-all discipline system, which could harm students with disabilities.
4. **Positive Discipline Recommendations:** VBPD met with a legislator to recommend adding funding and training for alternatives to suspension, and to promote more inclusive approaches to school discipline.

## Goal 3

### Breaking Down Barriers to Employment

This year, VBPD focused on making it easier for people with disabilities to find and keep meaningful jobs. VBPD joined three statewide efforts to push for inclusive employment practices and better support.

#### 1. Building Inclusive Workplaces

VBPD continued partnering with **Virginia Ability**, a business group that helps employers create inclusive workplaces. VBPD staff served on their **Community Advisory Council**, sharing ideas to connect businesses with talented people with disabilities.

VBPD also teamed up with **Virginia Ability** and the **Virginia Chamber of Commerce** to publish an article about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. It was featured in the **Chamber Briefing**, reaching over **30,000 businesses across Virginia**.

#### 2. Promoting Employment First

VBPD took part in the Employment First Advisory Group (E1AG), which works to make employment the first option for people with disabilities. This group was created as part of Virginia's agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Here's what we pushed for:

- More education and training on Virginia's Medicaid Works program for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD), families and support coordinators.
  - A demo project using technology and virtual supports to help people with disabilities gain more independence at work.
  - Expanding efforts to encourage employment planning conversations—not just for students on DD waivers, but for all students with disabilities.
- #### 3. Connecting School to Work
- VBPD also joined the Project PEACE & Project EPIC workgroup, which is working to better connect students with disabilities to employment resources as they move from school into the workforce.
- **Project PEACE** helps local systems work together to make that transition smoother.
  - **Project EPIC** aims to end the use of sub-minimum wage and promote fair pay for all workers.

Our goal: help students with disabilities move into meaningful, competitive jobs with the support they need to succeed.

# four

Our **fourth goal** is for people with disabilities and their families to be better able to advocate for themselves and others.



## **Train-the-Trainer for Self-Advocates**

VBPD biennially hosts a **Train-the-Trainer (TTT)** event to help people with developmental and other disabilities learn and practice the skills needed to be trainers. VBPD staff identified self-advocates interested in participating in the TTT training through a variety of outreach activities including through social media, disability organizations, advocacy partners, and alumni of VBPD's Partners in Policymaking and Youth Leadership Academy training programs. A total of 20 individuals attended the TTT training.

The all-day virtual TTT training provided an opportunity for self-advocates to engage in individual and group work. The training agenda included several topics, such as: roles and responsibilities as trainers; effective communication; time management; professional appearance; and understanding the difference between a workshop presenter, facilitator and public speaker.

The training had a positive early impact, based on evaluation findings. All survey respondents said they were very satisfied with the training overall and felt more empowered to be a trainer because people with developmental and other disabilities helped facilitate the training.

## **Using Self-Advocates as Trainers in Board Programs**

**VBPD prioritizes working with trainers with developmental and other disabilities** whenever possible, both to improve the quality of VBPD's programs and give self-advocates more opportunities to develop their presentation skills. VBPD staff recruited a total of 20 people with developmental disabilities as trainers in VBPD programs, including three in the Partners in Policymaking program, six in the Train-the-Trainer event, and 11 in the Alumni Development Program's continuing education workshops and leadership conference.

The use of people with developmental and other disabilities as trainers positively impacted the trainees, with 100% of participants reporting that they felt more empowered to advocate because they had presenters who had developmental disabilities. VBPD will continue to use people with developmental disabilities as trainers whenever possible.



## Goal 4

### Empowering New Leaders Through Partners in Policymaking

VBPD hosted its **Partners in Policymaking (PIP)** program this year—a leadership and advocacy training program for people with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families. The program is held every other year and ran from September 2023 to April 2024, offering seven sessions in a hybrid format (both in-person and online).

This year’s class included **14 passionate advocates—nine family members and five individuals with DD**—ready to make a difference.

#### What Participants Learned

Over the course of the program, **36 expert speakers** covered a wide range of important topics, including:

- The history of the disability rights movement
- Special education and person-centered planning
- Supported decision-making and supported living
- Advocacy and leadership skills
- Inclusive employment and positive behavior supports
- Media training, parliamentary procedures and Medicaid basics
- How to apply for and serve on state boards and commissions

These sessions helped participants grow their skills, boost their confidence, and prepare to take on leadership roles in their communities and across Virginia.

### The Impact

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- 100% of participants said they were satisfied with the program
- 100% felt more empowered to speak up for themselves or others
- Everyone showed higher knowledge and stronger advocacy skills after completing the program

And the impact didn’t stop there. In a follow-up survey:

- All alumni from the 2024 class said the program increased their advocacy
- Every respondent said they had actively advocated in 2024

Thanks to PIP, a new wave of advocates is stepping up to lead, speak out and drive change.

### Training Alumni

VBPD continued operating its year-round Alumni Development Program (ADP), also known as Training Alumni. The program was created in 2016 to further engage graduates of VBPD’s other training programs. This year, VBPD focused on continuing education events for both alumni and the broader community. The continuing education workshops were shaped by the voices of our training alumni, who helped choose the topics that mattered most to them.

Training Alumni held two continuing education events for alumni only:

1. 75 people attended a two-day leadership conference titled **“Celebrating Our Own: Hidden Figures Advocating for People with Disabilities.”** All survey respondents were satisfied with the conference and felt more connected to the disability community.

## Goal 4

2. 15 alumni attended an **Understanding Ableism workshop**. All survey respondents reported that the workshop increased their understanding of what ableism is, their ability to identify when ableism occurs, and their preparedness to acknowledge and address ableism when it occurs.

In addition to the alumni-only events, ADP collaborated with several other organizations to hold six continuing education workshops. A breakdown of participation and early outcomes from each event is provided below.

1. **Transition Services – Partnerships that WORK:** 205 people attended the workshop. All survey respondents said the workshop increased their understanding of transition services and that they were satisfied with the workshop.
2. **Independent Living Part I: Housing:** 140 people attended the workshop. All survey respondents said the workshop increased their understanding of available resources and reported being satisfied with the session.
3. **Transition Milestones in Special Education:** 44 people attended the workshop. All survey respondents said the session increased their understanding of the available resources and reported being satisfied with the session.
4. **Independent Living Part II: Transportation:** 99 people attended the workshop. All survey respondents said the session increased their understanding of available resources and reported being satisfied with the session.
5. **Safe Online Dating Strategies for People with I/DD:** 37 people attended the workshop. Most survey respondents said the session increased their understanding of sexuality or safe online dating strategies, and all survey respondents reported being satisfied with the workshop.
6. **Telehealth: Accessing Rural Areas; Rare Diseases and Low Incidence Populations:** 42 people attended the workshop. All survey respondents said the session improved their understanding of telehealth resources, reported being better able to say what they want or what is important to them, and that they were satisfied with the workshop.

### 1. The Arc of Virginia



VBPD began funding a \$100,000 grant (\$48,750 matching funds) to The Arc of Virginia for a project called “Strengthening Self-Advocacy through the ALLY Alliance.”

The project built on a prior grant to continue building the network of self-advocates in Virginia as leaders in the developmental disabilities (DD) advocacy movement. The Arc of Virginia provided leadership training to self-advocates with DD and to coaches who trained other people with DD. The project started February 1, 2024, and will end in July 2025.

During 2024, The Arc of Virginia worked with 12 self-advocates with DD, who developed a written plan to update the ALLY Alliance network. They hired two paid self-advocates with DD to lead the ALLY Alliance program and trained them in their new roles. Both self-advocates were happy with the training they got and said they learned more about how to train other self-advocates. The Arc of Virginia also trained 79 people with DD on how to run self-advocacy groups, using a training guide developed last year. 100% said they were happy with the training they got and learned more about training topics. Finally, The Arc of Virginia helped 24 self-advocates with DD better work with other self-advocates across the state. 100% said they were happy with the help they got

and could better work with other self-advocates in the ALLY Alliance.

Because of the grant, one self-advocate with DD was appointed by the Governor to serve on VBPD’s Board. Another person with DD served on a committee to help people with DD vote. VBPD will monitor the grant for two years.

### 2. The Arc of Virginia

VBPD finished monitoring a previous project with The Arc of Virginia called “Strengthening Self-Advocacy through the ALLY Alliance.” This grant started October 17, 2022, and ended October 16, 2023. The ALLY Alliance, which started in 2019 through a past VBPD-funded grant, is an alliance of self-advocacy organizations across Virginia that is led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

During 2024, 17 self-advocates advocated to their state representatives to set aside money for Medicaid waiver slots. Because of this, 3,400 new waiver slots were added. They also advocated to increase the pay for Direct Support Providers (DSPs). These self-advocacy efforts resulted in a 3% increase in the pay rate for DSPs. There was also a 2% increase for agency and consumer-directed Personal Care, Companion and Respite services.

### Investing in Self-Advocates: Scholarships That Open Doors

VBPD is proud to support self-advocates with developmental disabilities by offering scholarships that help cover the cost of attending disability-focused events.

This year, we provided scholarships to **three self-advocates** so they could attend **The Arc of Virginia's Annual Convention**—a powerful gathering specifically designed to uplift and empower people with disabilities.

At the convention, they learned how to:

- Talk with legislators at the local, state and federal levels
- Start self-advocacy groups in their own communities
- Connect with advocacy networks across Virginia

**The impact was clear:** All three participants said the event **boosted their knowledge** about disability services and advocacy—and all of them walked away **satisfied and inspired**.

This is just one way that VBPD is helping to build confident leaders who speak up and drive change in their communities.

### VBPD participated on approximately 22 advisory councils, stakeholder groups and workgroups in FFY 2024:

- 2022 Oral Health Report Card Workgroup
- Coalition for Community Safety
- Community Engagement Advisory Group
- DD Waiver Advisory Group
- Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services No Wrong Door Resource Advisory Council
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Community of Practice for Supporting Families
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Employment First Advisory Group
- Department of Education State Special Education Advisory Committee
- Department of Housing and Community Development Interagency Housing Advisory Committee
- Department of Justice Settlement Agreement Stakeholders Meeting
- Department of Special Education Advocacy Stakeholders Group
- Future of Public Oral Health Taskforce
- Home and Community Based Services Advisory Committee
- Link Center 988 Policy Academy
- Partnership for Healthy Virginia Workgroup
- Richmond International Airport Accessibility Advocacy Group
- Virginia Ability Community Advisory Council
- Virginia Brain Injury Council
- Virginia Department of Health Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity
- Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services Medicaid Managed Care Advisory Workgroup
- Virginia Health Catalyst Policy Committee
- VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities I-CAN! Accessibility Project Advisory Board



# **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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