



VOICES & VISIONS

A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES; A PROMISING VISION FOR TOMORROW

Board Votes to Change Quarterly Meetings, Committee Structure

At its quarterly meeting on March 26, 2004 the Board voted to change both its meeting schedule and its standing committee structure in order to enhance and expand its deliberations on policy and program issues that affect the lives of people with disabilities in the State. In making these changes, the Board implemented two key recommendations brought forward at the Board's 2003 Fall Retreat: to enhance the Board's role as a policy leader for all people with disabilities in the State, and to strengthen its capacity to plan and oversee the wide array of federally-funded activities it conducts under the auspices of its Five Year State Plan.

Changes in the Board's meeting schedule involve lengthening the time available at the quarterly meetings for enhanced Standing Committee and Executive Committee deliberations, and for expanded constituent input and feedback regarding the Board's activities. Previously, the Executive Committee met for a half-day prior to a full-day Board meeting each quarter. Beginning in September,

such as meetings of sub-committees, ad-hoc committees, work groups, task forces, and so forth.

Beginning in September, the Board's Standing Committee structure will change -- from three Standing Committees to four. Previously, the Board's initiatives were supported by three Standing Committees: Inclusive Education and Early Intervention; Employment; and Community Inclusion. However, because of expanding national and statewide advocacy regarding community integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, and in order to better respond to Virginia's Olmstead initiatives, the Board decided that it could more effectively plan, implement, and monitor its Community Inclusion activities by establishing an additional Standing Committee under that priority area. Subsequently, the Board created two Standing Committees to address Community Inclusion priority area goals: the Community Living / Transportation Committee -- to focus primarily on the substantive issues of transportation, housing, accessibility, assistive technology, and self advocacy; and the Community Integration Committee -- to focus primarily on Olmstead implementation, waiver services, restructuring of the MH/MR system, and other programs, services and supports that foster and support community inclusion. ✍



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ber, the Executive Committee will meet for a half-day prior to the full Board meeting each quarter, and, on that day, an additional half-day will be scheduled for activities



Board Sponsors "Independence" Track at Guardianship Conference

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Vice Chair

Jeananne Dixon

Secretary

Cindy Weinstock

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Martha Adams

John Burgess

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Calvin "Chip" Coleman

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Sudan Ra

Marilyn Riddle

Kathy Vesley

Delphine White

The First Annual 2004 Joint Conference of the Virginia Elder Rights Coalition and the Virginia Guardianship Association was held on March 22-23, 2004 in Williamsburg, Virginia. The conference, entitled "*Building New Partnerships: Guardianship, Elder Rights and Supporting Independence*," drew over 200 participants for the two-day sessions and many additional attendees on Monday and Tuesday.

In the fall of 2003, the Board learned that the Virginia Elder Rights Coalition and Virginia Guardianship Association were planning a joint Spring 2004 conference. Knowing the Board's interest in guardianship issues, conference planners invited the Board to participate in coordinating the conference by sponsoring a track entitled, "Supporting Independence." As the result of Board support, the track featured several informative workshops conducted by state agency and non-profit service provider representatives.

The "Supporting Independence" track included a plenary session, workshops and seminars:

- *Individual and Surrogate Decision Making Workshop*
- *Limited Guardianship Workshop*
- *Circles of Support & Micro Boards (Plenary Session)*
- *Disability Sensitivity Training Seminar*
- *Assistive Technology Seminar: Practical Solutions for Independent Living*
- *Improved Medicaid Home and Community Based Waivers Workshop*

At the March 26th, 2004 Board meeting, the Community Inclusion Committee discussed the success of the



conference and the \$3,000 investment that had been allocated to the Virginia Guardianship Association to

support two individuals with developmental disabilities to attend the conference and to support the track itself. In particular, the committee was pleased that there were 75 participants in the Medicaid Waiver Workshop alone.

One scholarship recipient said, "I found it helpful, gaining insight into how many options there are. It was good to put into perspective the full range of alternatives to guardianship and there are options for people not just either a full guardian or no guardian." The participant also attended the seminar on assistive technology and noted, "I learned that there are new ways to help people to secure funding for assistive technology so they can remain independent." ✍

Virginia DD Network News ... MTARS is Coming.....

Heidi Lawyer

In early summer, the Virginia DD Network will undergo a federal Monitoring and Technical Assistance Review (MTARS) by its mutual funding agency, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD). The MTARS process was developed jointly by federal officials, program representatives, and consumers in response to a shift in focus of federal policy from process to outcomes. MTARS is an administrative tool designed to institute change in ADD program monitoring by fostering partnerships and collaboration, involving consumers and peers, using measurable outcomes, and emphasizing and enhancing technical assistance. It increases opportunities for consumers and peers to participate in their review and assessment of each program. The simultaneous review of the entire DD Network is designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the Developmental Disabilities program in the Commonwealth than would generally be afforded through site visits focusing on an individual program.

Virginia's site visit will take place the week of June 21 and will involve interviews with the Directors of each program, representatives from each agency's staff, Board members and Advisory Councils; review of fiscal and other records as appropriate and an assessment of the extent of collaboration among the DD Partners. In addition, a public forum will be held on June 21 to ensure public participation in the review process. This forum will be widely advertised. The overall goals for MTARS will be

to answer the following questions: (1) Are Virginia's DD network programs doing what the law requires? (2) Are our programs making a difference in the lives of people with developmental disabilities? and (3) What kind of technical assistance, if any, do Virginia's DD Network agencies need to improve performance or compliance?

Virginia's DD Network partners look forward to the MTARS review being a positive and productive experience. The review will provide each agency an opportunity to highlight its accomplishments and to proactively and positively address any concerns that may be identified through the technical assistance and review process.

The DD Network Partner agencies include: the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (Heidi Lawyer, Director), Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy, (Colleen Miller, Director), Partnership for People with Disabilities (Fred Orelove, Director). ✍

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Governor Warner Announces Medicaid-Buy-In Grant Award

On April 7, 2004 Governor Mark Warner announced that Virginia had been awarded funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to further enhance employment options for workers with disabilities. The \$500,000 in funding is the third award that Virginia has received under the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant program which seeks to encourage people with disabilities to work without losing eligibility for health benefits such as Medicare and Medicaid.

The Governor, in announcing the award noted, "A major disincentive for people with disabilities who are willing and able to work is the fear of losing crucial health care coverage if their earnings reach a certain level. These funds can ultimately help bring changes in our system so that workers with disabilities will no longer have to choose between employment or health care." The current focus of Virginia's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant project is to establish a Medicaid Buy-In program for the state. Similar programs, which are authorized by the 1999 Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act currently exist in 28 other states. ✍

YLF Alumni Association Planning Committee Hosts Picnic

Teri Barker-Morgan



As reported previously, graduates of the Board's four annual Youth Leadership Forums have organized an alumni group, the Youth Leadership Forum Alumni Planning Committee (AAPC). The purpose of the AAPC is to provide YLF alumni with opportunities for developing and demonstrating their knowledge of leadership principles after they have graduated from the program. The AAPC held its first meeting in January at which the group developed committees and a governance structure. Subsequently, the committee has met several times to plan and organize an alumni event that would bring together YLF alumni from forums conducted between 2000 and 2003.



Chris Skinner and Danielle Fortney

On April 17, 2004 the AAPC hosted the first YLF alumni reunion – a picnic at Dorey Park which is located near Richmond. At the picnic YLF alumni had the opportunity to network with old friends from their classes and to make new friends from other classes. YLF delegates, family members, and Board staff enjoyed a typical picnic spread of coleslaw, potato salad, grilled hot dogs and hamburgers. Chris Skinner, a motivational speaker with a disability, spoke to the alumni about the importance of a “Yes, you can...” attitude in order to succeed and achieve dreams. It was a great day!

The Board's website (www.vaboard.org) contains a press release announcing the selection of the 2004 YLF Student Delegates. ✍

“The Ninth Session” Planned for Partners Alumni

Teri Barker-Morgan

Recently, all graduates of the Board's sponsored program, Partners in Policymaking (PIP), were invited to participate in the PIP Advanced Learning Session – “The Ninth Session” on May 28-29, 2004. “The Ninth Session,” developed to provide a continuing training opportunity for PIP participants following graduation, features presentations, discussions, and small group work focused on strengthening advocacy skills and re-energizing alumni commitment to working on systems change in their local communities.

Modeled after the PIP final project requirement, eight PIP alumni work groups will identify issues, formulate outcome-based goal statements, and develop strategic action plans for how they, as a group, will reach their goals.



The small group work is designed to be an opportunity for Partners to network with others from all regions of the state and to get together with those from their own areas to brainstorm exciting systems change and capacity building project ideas they can implement in their communities.

Partners will work together in a creative and unprecedented way to develop and organize a strategic action plan detailing how they will reach their goal. They will be required to continue to work together after the May 28 & 29 Ninth Session and will develop a plan on how they will manage this.

Like the eight Partners sessions that participants attended during their basic PIP training, “The Ninth Session” will provide many opportunities for work, thinking hard, and having fun! ✍

Employment Committee Chair Attends National Workforce Conference

Monica Schlessinger Smyth



Board member and Employment Committee Chair, Monica Schlessinger Smyth, attended the 1st Annual Emerging Workforce Conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in February 2004. She presented a summary of conference activities at the Board's quarterly meeting in March. Conference topics included discussion of President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, the Ticket to Work Program, innovations in supported employment, transition services, accessible workplace technology, job development in the public sector, and other employment-related issues. The theme of the conference was "We Are...We Can...We Will" and its goal was to maximize employment opportunities and successes for the untapped labor pool of the nearly 54 million unemployed people with disabilities in the U.S.

Ms. Smyth noted that the conference, sponsored by Nova Southeastern University, the Social Security Administration, the U.S. Office of Special Education

Programs, and the Department of Health and Human Services, sought to foster dialogue between employers, consumers, employment service providers, and policy-makers. She was able to network with representatives of these constituent groups at the conference and urged other Board members to network with similar constituent groups in their areas of interest. She observed, "My dialogue with this group [of advocates around the country] was probably the most meaningful experience at the conference because not only did we share the same agenda, but I was also able to compare and contrast Virginia with other states – Connecticut, Vermont, and Massachusetts." Major areas of difference, she observed, were Virginia's sizeable waiting lists and lack of funding for community-based services compared to other states.

Ms. Smyth noted that this conference was a life-changing event for her and observed that, "Perhaps the single most valuable piece of information I took away from the conference was the over riding importance of transition, that...we can work with the young to achieve competitive employment and self determination." ✍

Employment Grant Promotes Independence Through Work Incentive Training

Amy Wright

In June, 2003, the Board awarded \$75,000 to VA ACCESS to implement its Employment State Plan goal of supporting system change initiatives that provide increased employment opportunities and minimize disincentives for employment of people with developmental and other disabilities. Many people with disabilities want to be employed, but they are hesitant to pursue work opportunities because they do not know how the maze of federal and state regulations regarding employment will affect their medical and other benefits. Having improved access to competent and comprehensive benefits planning services -- which is the goal of the Employment and Benefits Outreach Project (Project WIT) under the auspices of the Board's Employment Committee -- is an important factor in facilitating employment opportunities for people with developmental and other disabilities.

VA ACCSES was selected, through the Board's competitive grant making process, to conduct **Project WIT** (Work Incentives Training) with the primary goal of supporting outreach and sharing information regarding benefits planning targeted to individuals with disabilities, family members, employment service providers, and related professionals. A component of the grant is to develop and implement nine 2-day **WIT** trainings in each of the state's five Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) Regions.

As of April, 2004, registrations for the **WIT** trainings have far exceeded expectations and waiting lists to attend trainings in certain regions have had to be created. Spots for people with disabilities and family members take priority. The Board is encouraged that there has been such a positive response to this critically important employment information and will monitor the work to ensure that opportunities exist for interested parties to attend. Each of the training dates will be posted on the Board website (www.vaboard.org), but registration requests should be forwarded to Marilyn Morrison at VA ACCSES: (703) 970-3675 or mmorrison@ourpeoplework.org. ✍

What's New with Olmstead?

Heidi Lawyer

The February *Voices and Visions* included a summary of Governor Warner's Executive Order 61: The Olmstead Initiative. This initiative, based on the Olmstead Task Force Report submitted to the Governor in September 2003, included appointment of a Director of Community Integration for People with Disabilities, Julie Stanley, and establishment of an 18 member Interagency Implementation Team and a 15 member Oversight Advisory Committee.

Since issuance of Executive Order 61 in January 2004, both the Implementation Team and the Oversight Committee have been meeting monthly. The Board is pleased to be an active member of the Implementation Team working with service delivery agencies and other agencies that will make implementation of the Olmstead decision a reality.

Monthly meetings of the Implementation Team have focused on comprehensive review of each of the 201 recommendations included in Virginia's "One Community" Olmstead Report and assignment of a lead executive branch agency to cost out implementation of each recommendation. The cost out will be



Julie Stanley

done in two phases with the first phase to be completed in May 2004. Phase 2 cost outs are anticipated to be completed in January 2005. The interagency Implementation Team, under Julie Stanley's direction, will deliver a written formal report to the Oversight Advisory Committee in July 2004. In a recent positive development, Dr. Barbara Bolin, Special Advisor to the Governor on Workforce Development, was asked to join the Implementation Team as a member and serve as the lead for costing out a number of workforce related recommendations critical to Olmstead implementation.

The work being done by the agencies is an enormous and challenging but extremely rewarding undertaking. There is much to be done and it will take time to do it. But it is exciting to see so many state agency representatives, at all levels, talking, learning, and committed to achieving the Olmstead mandate in Virginia. ✍

Board Seeks to Nurture Creative Approaches to Solving Human Service Problems

Amy Wright

Tight budgets! Red Tape! Work Overload! Sound familiar? These are just some of the barriers that human service professionals experience everyday in their work environments. In addition to creating enormous stress and frustration, these barriers often stifle the ability of human service workers to solve problems using creative, innovative approaches. In today's human service environment, it is often easier to rely on the "status quo" rather than to develop new approaches to problem solving that might be more effective and less stressful in the long run.

Recognizing the existence of these barriers to creative problem-solving, the Board intends to sponsor a series of four workshops throughout the state to stimulate, in a dynamic and interactive environment, innovative problem-solving and the development of creative approaches for managing and overcoming the formidable challenges associated with providing services for people with developmental and other disabilities. The overall goal of the seminars, titled "**Nurturing Innovation - Moving from Needs to Creative Solutions**," is to stimulate what is known as "ah-hah!," "light bulb," or "out-of-the-box" thinking. Using brainstorming techniques, case studies, and activities that promote creative thinking, the seminars will lead participants in discovering new approaches to solving everyday problems and developing realistic approaches and strategies to address real-life, job-related problems. Participants will come away from the seminars with renewed confidence that barriers to service delivery can be overcome, with increased knowledge of creative problem-solving, and with usable skills for conceiving and developing innovative approaches to service delivery.

By conducting these seminars, the Board seeks to improve the capacity of service providers, to engage in creative thinking to solve problems and develop approaches to better serve people with disabilities using new strategies or strategies they have not tried before. More details about the "**Nurturing Innovation - Moving from Needs to Creative Solutions**" sessions will be available at the Board's website www.vaboard.org in June. ✍

Transportation Initiatives Stepped Up in Virginia

Amy G. Wright



In late February of 2004, in support of the New Freedom Initiative, the US Secretary of Transportation, Norman Mineta, along with the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, Education and Labor announced the "United We Ride" initiative to make it easier for government agencies and non-profit organizations to share transportation resources in order to provide more and better transportation services without increasing costs. There are currently 62 federal programs that fund transportation services, but more programs and additional funding has not necessarily resulted in improved service for those who need to access community supports and resources and can be especially frustrating for those wishing to access employment opportunities.

As many people with disabilities well appreciate, "getting a ride" is often anything but simple, with issues ranging from a lack of information on service provision to the issue of coordination that serve people's needs, which can frequently result in less service at a higher cost. The "United We Ride" initiative is promoting the use of coordinated resources with five different elements:

- **Technical assistance**
- **Self-Assessment Tools**

As many people with disabilities well appreciate, "getting a ride" is often anything but simple ...

- **State Coordination Grants**
- **National Leadership Forum Conference on Human Service Transportation Coordination**
- **State Leadership Awards**

Related to this project, Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has taken on a coordinating role regarding human service transportation in the State and has formed an interagency work group that includes representatives from human service agencies providing transportation services within the HHR Secretariat. A Memorandum of Understanding between DRPT and the Department of Aging has already been formulated and three meetings of the

workgroup have already been held to discuss this issue. The Board has a seat on this workgroup and is very interested in the coordination of resources. The Board funded an initiative in this very area in June of 2003 that continues and hopefully will produce a workable model for a rural area. The Board will continue its transportation work through studying the states recognized for leadership and identifying key techniques used as well as participating and sharing information with the interagency workgroup. More information on United We Ride can be found at www.fta.dot.gov. *✍*

Melissa Edmonds Ends Term as Board Chair

Barbara Ettner



Melissa Edmonds

Melissa Edmond's year-long term as Board Chair will end in June, 2004. As VBPD Chair, Ms. Edmonds aptly presided over intensive study and planning activities that resulted in significant, positive changes in the Board's structure (see related article in this newsletter). She guided the Board through its annual State Plan Update process and its competitive grant making activities in 2003-2004 which resulted in exciting new initiatives to improve the independence and community inclusion of people with disabilities throughout Virginia in the Board's priority areas of Education, Employment, and Community Integration.

Upon assuming the role of Chair last year, Ms. Ed-

monds, who has served as an employment service provider for people with disabilities for 13 years, noted, "This is an exciting time to be the Chair of the Board... The Board is in a planning state and [we want] the input of all Board members... in the upcoming planning process." Ms. Edmonds led a Board retreat in the Fall of 2003, and subsequent planning meetings in the Spring of 2004 during which the Board's vision, activities, and structure were reshaped and focused to more effectively fulfill the goal of "...making the Board the lead agency in Virginia that impacts systems change for people with disabilities in Virginia." On behalf of the Board we wish Ms. Edmonds well in all her future endeavors and thank her for a job well done during a challenging and exciting year. *✍*





Meetings of Interest



Medicaid Waiver Workshops

June 2, 2004 — Norfolk, VA
757-461-8007
10:00 am—12:30 pm

June 2, 2004 — Richmond
804-353-6503 x 13
3:00 pm—5:30 pm

June 11, 2004 — Winchester
10:00 am—12:30 pm
540-665-0461

To register call listed number above
or 1-866-323-1088 or VAWaivers@aol.com

T/TAC Technology Network Conference

June 24-25, 2004
AT and Aug Com
Making the Connections '04
Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center
Roanoke, VA
For more information email gsgustaf@vt.edu or
lkingma@vt.edu or call 540-231-6248, 1-800-848-2714

State Special Education Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting

July 15 - 16, 2004
Radisson Hotel Historic Richmond,
301 West Franklin St. Richmond,
804-521-3402

Contact: Ossie Lawrence 804-225-2932,
TDD 804-371-2822

**This publication was prepared with
100% federal funding under the
Developmental Disabilities and
Bill of Rights Act**

**VBPD publications are available in
alternate formats, upon request**



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Next Board Meeting

June 15th
9 - 4:30

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www.vaboard.org