

May 2005

Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
Virginia's Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

Volume IV, Issue 2

VOICES & VISIONS

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

Mapping Projects "Zero In" on Transition Resources

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Web-based, GIS technology helps localities target resources and information for transition service providers.

A major goal of the Board's Education Committee is to improve Virginia's transition service system for middle and high school students with disabilities. Transition services empower students with disabilities to improve academically and socially while they are in school and, upon graduation, to assume adult roles in employment, higher education, independent living and other life areas.

Recognizing the importance of effective transition services, the Board funded a two-year, comprehensive study of Virginia's transition service system which was published and distributed statewide in 2002. The study, "Statewide Assessment of Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities 14-21 Years of Age," uncovered a number of gaps and deficiencies in Virginia's transition service system, including a pervasive need by Virginia's transition professionals for improved access to information about local community resources that are essential for successful transition to independent adult living.

In 2004, the Board funded three organizations (the Thomas Jefferson District

and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commissions and the ARC of Northern Shenandoah Valley) to conduct model transition resource development initiatives in: Central Shenandoah Valley (Staunton), Central Virginia (Charlottesville), and Northern Shenandoah Valley (Winchester). The goal of the transition grants is to develop, document and demonstrate the collection, cataloguing, accessing and utilization of local comprehensive transition resource information. All three grantees decided to develop interactive, GIS-based web sites to accomplish project goals and to make the transition information readily

accessible. The long-term goals of the projects include making the information gathered for the web-based "maps" available in printed versions for transition services constituents in their localities. The grantees

will be helping other localities develop similar resources. An exciting and unexpected systems change outcome of this project has been the development of regional transition councils to facilitate transition services for students with disabilities in localities where such partnerships had not previously existed. ♡



Spotlight on Board Grants

This is the second in a series of four articles highlighting grant projects from each of the Board's standing committees. Transition Mapping is a project of the Board's Education and Early Intervention Committee.



Letter from the Director

Heidi Lawyer



I have been privileged to serve as Director of the Board for over two years now and the time has flown by with new and exciting challenges every day. The agency's 40 member board continues its commitment to facilitating systems change for people with developmental and other disabilities.

Dedicated Board members and tremendous staff bring with them extremely varied expertise, knowledge, background, and perspective. I am often amazed at and gratified by the amount of consensus achieved with such diversity. What could be more unifying than providing a VOICE for people with disabilities and facilitating their full inclusion into Virginia's communities?

The Board continues to forge new territory and to move towards its aspiration to be a policy leader for the Commonwealth in the area of developmental disabilities. In March, the Board released its first Interim Biennial report on the availability of services for people with DD and other disabilities in Virginia. The statutorily required report has been sent to the Governor, the General Assembly and over 3,000 stakeholders statewide. Public forums have been planned for May and June and additional information about the forums are available on the Board's web site.

The Board continues to discuss and focus on significant policy issues. The restructuring of the Board's committees and meeting format in 2004 has facilitated substantive discussion of issues that are critical to developing and providing credible and thoughtful policy guidance. Among the issues of current importance to the Board are oversight and monitoring in group homes, Olmstead implementation and the restructuring efforts of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. The Board continues to have significant policy discussion internally and through participation on various state level Task Forces and work-

groups regarding the "institutional bias" of Virginia's service system, the future of the state's large training centers and the debate over development of new smaller ICF/MRs versus investment in waiver and other community supports.

Collaboration within the DD network is ongoing and the Board is also attentive to policy and budget initiatives on the federal level, particularly the effect of proposed housing voucher, Medicaid and SSI cuts and caps (see DD Network News Update, page 3).

The Board is currently considering responses to its 2005 solicitation of competitive requests for proposals (RFPs). Grant awards will be announced at the June 14 Board meeting.

The Board continues its outreach and awareness efforts as well. Thousands of copies of the 2005 Calendar as well as the Interactive Community Living CD, "All of Us," developed by Hope House Foundation under an Innovative Board grant have been distributed throughout the state. The Partners in Policymaking documentary has aired on local and PBS stations in about three fourths of the state, bringing with it the inspiration of what strong self advocates and family members can accomplish! Thank you for your continued interest in and support of the work of Virginia's Developmental Disabilities Council! ♡♡

United We Ride

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility is seeking public comment on technical assistance needs in the area of human service transportation. Comments should be submitted by June 15, 2005, via e-mail to: unitedweride@fta.dot.gov or by fax to 202-366-3136. Additional information can be found at www.unitedweride.gov.

DD Network Update

Heidi Lawyer

Virginia's DD Network agencies continue to work together to discuss and develop strategies for addressing issues of mutual concern with respect to people with developmental disabilities in receiving services in Virginia. However, the DD Network's initiatives are significantly affected by actions occurring at the federal level. Most recently, the Virginia DD Network joined numerous organizations across the nation to sign on to formal letters opposing Medicaid cuts.



Medicaid provides health and long term supports for approximately 7.5 million people with disabilities. In FY 2004, proposed reforms would have fundamentally altered Medicaid, eliminating individual entitlements to critical health and long term care services. Important federal protections regarding service access and quality would have been at risk. Comprehensive benefits would have been preserved for people in "mandatory" coverage groups, while states would have the flexibility to tailor coverage for "optional" groups and services.

Waiver services, critical to keeping and moving people out of institutions, are "optional services." Although the reform package was not passed, it continues to be aggressively promoted.

The President's budget proposal for FY 2006 called for \$60 billion in cuts in the Medicaid program over five years by cutting back on the allowable sources of state matching funds. In addition, the proposal was designed to provide states with "additional

flexibility...to further increase coverage among low income individuals and families without creating additional costs for the federal government." States and advocates remain extremely concerned that caps on federal spending and increased "flexibility" to the states would create a block grant situation in which states become solely responsible for expenditure increases.

Consumers and advocates won a short-term battle although the war is still raging. In an initial victory, the Senate voted (52-48) on March 17 to strike from the budget all proposed Medicaid cuts. At the time of this article, efforts were underway to ensure that this victory will be preserved in the Conference Committee process, but the road is not at all smooth.

Medicaid is not the only area in which advocates must be vigilant with respect to federal action. Social security reform, a proposed 50% cut to the Section 811 Supportive Housing program, and elimination of all funding for new unit production will magnify the already enormous problem of affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities. Consolidation of job training programs could jeopardize the vocational rehabilitation funding stream. It can be very challenging to keep up with the complexity of federal legislative and budgetary activity, but it is critically important to do so regardless of political affiliation or position.

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). ♡♡

Staff

Executive Director
Heidi Lawyer

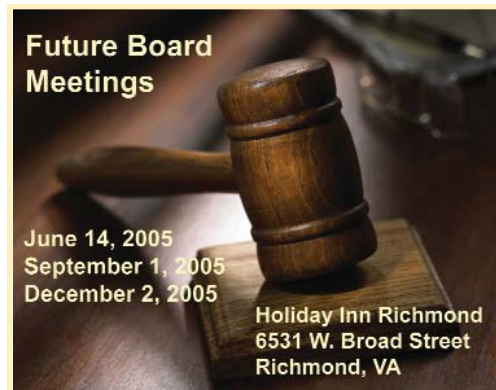
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Photos Sought for "Images of Empowerment" Project

Barbara Ettner



Staff of the "Voices & Visions" newsletter are soliciting photographs of people with disabilities, service providers, and related professionals, of all ages and in all settings, for possible inclusion in the newsletter and other Board

publications, as appropriate. Staff at the "Voices & Visions" newsletter seek to empower people with disabilities, advocates, related professionals and policy-makers through images in the newsletter and other publications that depict people with disabilities contributing, producing, creating and living in community as fully-included members. We are presently seeking to expand our inventory of images we could tap into as we develop and produce our publications.

Pictures may be submitted electronically or in hard copy to: Karen Lindley at the Board (see return address on this newsletter; e-mail to Karen.Lindley@vbpd.virginia.gov). Unless subjects in the pictures cannot be identified, all images must be accompanied by a signed release form indicating that individuals in the pictures have granted permission for their photo to be used in general publications. Where appropriate, individuals and the settings should be identified. Photos will not be returned and will become the property of the VBPD. Images provided to the Board will be used only for the purposes noted above and will not be sold or made available to other organizations. Images that may be used subsequently in publications will be used with a by-line indicating the source of the image. ♡

YLF Update

Teri Barker-Morgan



Alumni of the Board's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) presented a panel discussion on how to improve transition services for youth with disabilities at the Virginia Transition Forum held in Williamsburg in March. The theme of the 2005 Virginia Transition Forum, which is attended by hundreds of transition service providers, educators and related personnel each year, was "Connections for Life: Education, Empowerment, Community and Students." The YLF panel, led by Lenorah Adams, a current high school senior and YLF class of 2004 alumni, provided an opportunity for conference attendees to hear, first-hand, the experiences, ideas and concerns of high school students related to improving transition planning and supports in secondary education. Participating on the panel were high school graduates and YLF alumni Danielle Fortney, Sara Gray and Stephen Joseph. Ms. Fortney and Ms. Gray are currently freshmen in college and Mr. Joseph is using his YLF-learned leadership skills as a recent Governor Warner appointee to the Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council.

At the Transition Forum, the panel presenters also distributed an informative bookmark containing recommendations for educators, transition service providers and parents on how to best support and include students in the transition planning process. The bookmark initiative was a YLF Alumni Association project, and the

information contained on the bookmark, "Top Ten List of Transition Do's and Don'ts," was developed during discussions among YLF alumni on how they could take a leadership role in improving the quality and availability of transition services for students with disabilities who are currently in high school. ♡

VBPD Interim Biennial Report Public Comment Forums

June 13, 2005. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Holiday Inn I-64
6531 W. Broad St.
Richmond, VA

June 28, 2005. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Blue Ridge Independent Living Center
1502-B Williamson Rd., NE
Roanoke, VA

June 29, 2005. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
One Partnership Circle, Rm. 149
Abingdon, VA

Go to www.vaboard.org for more information!

Disability Policy Intern Completes Spring Program

Barbara Ettner

Sara Mateyka, a graduate student in Rehabilitative Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University, completed the Board's first Disability Policy Internship on April 28, 2005. During her 10-week tenure with the Board, Sara conducted research for the Employment Committee on public sector internships available in Virginia's state agencies. The information she found will assist Board staff and committee members in their efforts to promote public sector work opportunities as a vehicle for advancing work experience and career opportunities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. Sara, who has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Longwood College and has worked previously for The Autism Program of Virginia and The Arc of Virginia, also researched and catalogued newsletters and other communication strategies used by the state's disability agencies and private-sector disability organizations to inform and educate their constituents, legislators and policymakers about issues, collaborative opportunities and ongoing activities in the state's disability community.

The Disability Policy Internship also afforded Sara opportunities to attend Board meetings, Proposal Review Team meetings, Olmstead sessions, Partners in Policymaking weekends and the first in a series of public comment forums, in Virginia Beach, on the Board's Interim Biennial Report. Staff presented Sara with a Certificate of Completion of the Disability Policy Internship on her last day. She was commended for

exceptional work on project assignments as well as her enthusiasm and dedication to improving the lives of people with disabilities in her present academic work and in her future career endeavors.

The Disability Policy Internship Program falls under the purview of the Board's Education and Early Intervention Committee and is directed by Dr. Barbara Ettner, Director of Policy, Research and Evaluation. Interns are recruited from all the major colleges and universities in the central Virginia area. Graduate and undergraduate students are eligible to apply for the Board's paid internship opportunities. The application deadline for the Board's fall internship, which will begin on September 12, 2005, is August 15th. Application information is available on the Board's web site (www.vaboard.org). ♡♡



Sara Mateyka and Barbara Ettner discuss the Biennial Report



Nomination Forms Available for "Jackie Crews" Leadership Award

The "Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership," was established in memory of Jackie Crews, a Partners in Policymaking graduate, who passed away in April, 2004. The annual award will be given to a self-advocate who has demonstrated excellence in Virginia through their work on behalf of people with disabilities. The award, to be given for the first time in the fall of 2005, includes a \$1000 prize.

The four stars on the award logo represent Independence, Productivity, Inclusion and Self Determination--the four values of leadership and qualities Jackie exemplified. Nomination forms and additional information about the award will be available at the VBPD website July 1, 2005. ♡♡

Governor Signs ALF Legislation to Improve Quality of Care

Barbara Ettner



Governor Mark R. Warner signed legislation following the 2005 General Assembly session that significantly strengthens Virginia's regulation of assisted living facilities (ALFs). The legislation, which contains sweeping reforms, is designed to improve the care and safety of residents. Two bills, House Bill 2512 (Hamilton)

and Senate Bill 1183 (Hanger and Howell), passed unanimously in the 2005 General Assembly and were supported by a broad coalition of advocates for ALFs as well as seniors and people with disabilities. Among other stipulations, the bills require licensure of assisted living administrators; an increase in the maximum monetary penalty per inspection from \$500 to \$10,000; summary suspension of a facility's licensure to protect public safety or health; registration of medication aides at ALFs with the Board of Nursing; and improved

screening of residents with mental health care needs. "While most assisted living providers in Virginia provide good quality care, we all recognize there are sub-standard facilities that were not adequately covered by our current system of regulations," Governor Warner said at the bill signing at the State Capitol. "This sweeping legislation had the potential to unravel along the way, and I want to congratulate all of those activists, facility operators, regulators and lawmakers who worked with us to improve conditions for residents of Virginia's more than 650 assisted living facilities."

In addition, the Governor's budget provided \$500,000 to fund 11 additional enforcement positions in the Department of Social Services for Fiscal Year 2006 to help implement the provisions of the bills. Governor Warner also provided an additional \$4 million in Fiscal Year 2006 to increase the auxiliary grant for ALF. ♡♡



New Member Appointed to Board

The Board is pleased to welcome a new member, Eric Clark. Eric is from Richmond and has been appointed to serve an unexpired term which will end June 30, 2006.

He received his Bachelor's Degree from VCU in Business Administration and Sociology and minored in African American Studies. Eric is a graduate of the Board's Partners in Policymaking program and served as a member of the first New Voices Planning Committee. His work experience includes recruitment of personal assistants for the state Personal Assistant Services program. He has also worked for the United Way, the Central Virginia Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Muscular Dystrophy Association in Richmond. Eric is a member of the Health Promotion for People with Disabilities Task Force at the Virginia Department of Health. ♡♡

**Our Lives,
Our Voices!**
October 6 & 7, 2005
Richmond Marriott
500 East Broad Street



"Our Lives, Our Voices!" is a conference developed and organized by people with disabilities for people with disabilities and their families/friends/supporters, service providers, agency leaders, policy makers, and legislators. The conference will focus on topics important to people with disabilities and how they live their lives.

Recommendations for system change resulting from topics addressed during the "Our Lives, Our Voices!" conference will be published in a monograph and will be available later in the Fall, 2005.

Invitations for the October 6-7th conference will be mailed this summer, so save the date now! For more information about New Voices visit www.vcu.edu/partnership (click on the New Voices project button). ♡♡

New Voices, a project of the Partnership for People with Disabilities, was made possible through grant funding from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities

Partners in Policymaking Update

Teri Barker-Morgan

On Saturday, May 14th, 2005, twenty-eight individuals were graduated from the Board's Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program in a festive ceremony marking their successful completion of eight intensive advocacy training sessions that began last September. This year's PIP graduates of the Board-sponsored PIP program, now in its tenth year, joined the ranks of 268 other alumni who include self-advocates and parents of children with disabilities.

Alumni of PIP use the information, resources and newly-acquired skills they obtain during the PIP sessions to advocate, support and educate diverse stakeholders in the disability service system in local communities throughout Virginia. Congratulations PIP graduates, Class of 2005!




First Row left to right:
T. Conner, T. Lewis,
T. Nicodemus, C. Draper, B. Watkins,
P. Whritenour; *Not in photo:* S. James,
K. Hargis

Second Row left to right:
I. Moore, C. Wilson,
T. Burns, J. Vest, J. Moore,
M. Reynolds, V. Johnson,
M. Powell

Third Row left to right:
M. Copeland, E. Ogburn, S. Conway,
D. Hotaling, R. Newton, P. Shaw,
S. Gregg, C. Russell, D. Peifer,
J. Hines, J. Severtson, S. Haase

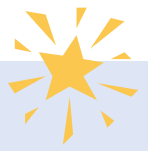
Disability Services Boards Seek Input for Statewide Needs Assessments

Each of the 40 Disability Services Boards (DSBs) in Virginia will be conducting their three-year Needs Assessments throughout the state beginning in late May. Virginia's DSB Needs Assessment results serve several purposes that are critically important to people with disabilities. First, information gathered during the Needs Assessment process is used to advise county, city and state government officials about issues important to people with disabilities during their program and infrastructure planning activities. Next, Needs Assessment information is used to educate policy makers about how to best empower people with disabilities to live productively in their communities through the provision of well-planned and efficient service systems at all levels. Finally, Needs Assessment information is used to advocate for the necessary resources, including funding, to address identified gaps in service and other barriers to service delivery. Core services identified in past Needs Assessments include case management, transportation, assistive technology, personal assistance services, accessible housing, training, education, employment, independent living and family support services.

Disability Services Boards are partnership entities involving disability consumers, local government officials and business leaders working collaboratively to increase access and to develop consumer-oriented, community based services for people with physical and sensory disabilities. Shirley Ferguson, Program Manager for Virginia's Disability Services Boards is the contact person for obtaining more information about the 2006 DSB Needs Assessments. She can be reached at the Department of Rehabilitative Services at 804-662-7070 or by e-mail at Shirley.Ferguson@drs.virginia.gov. 



Meetings of Interest

**Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission**

June 7, 2005 - 10:00 AM
Department for the Aging
1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100
Richmond, VA

Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI)

Trust Fund Advisory Board
June 17, 2005 - 10:00 AM
Department of Rehabilitative Services
Conference Room 101
8004 Franklin Farms Road
Richmond, VA

Statewide Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

June 25, 2005 - 10:00 AM
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind & Vision Impaired
397 Azalea Avenue, Assembly Room
Richmond, VA

Virginia Public Guardian & Conservator Advisory Board

June 30, 2005 - 10:00 AM
Public Guardian and Conservator Advisory Board
Virginia Department for the Aging
1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100
Richmond, VA

Board for Protection and Advocacy

July 19, 2005 - 9:00 AM
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Byrd Building, 1910 Byrd Avenue, Suite 5
Richmond, VA

Disabilities Advisory Council

July 28, 2005 - 10:00 AM
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Byrd Building, 1910 Byrd Avenue, Suite 5
Richmond, VA

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