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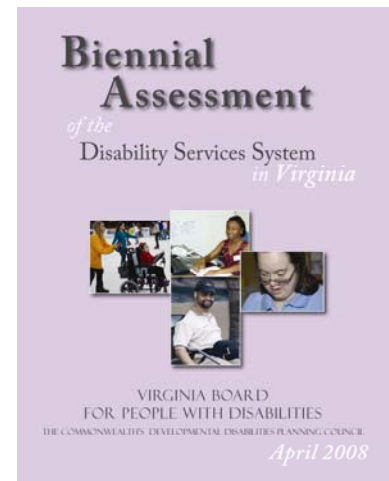
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Virginia Board for People with Disabilities Releases 2008 Assessment of Virginia's Disability Services System

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is pleased to announce the release of the new and expanded 2008 edition of its *Biennial Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia*. This report was produced in accordance with §51.5-33 (2) of the *Code of Virginia* that directs the Board "to submit biennially to the Governor, through the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, an assessment of the needs of persons with disabilities in the Commonwealth." The *Biennial Assessment* also meets the requirements of the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (P.L. 106-402) that directs each state's Developmental Disabilities Council to conduct a comprehensive assessment of its disability service system as the basis for development of its Five Year State Plan.

Recipients of the *Biennial Assessment*, in addition to the Governor and Secretary of Health and Human Resources, include members of the General Assembly, other Cabinet Secretaries, state and local boards and agencies, professional and advocacy organizations, and other disability services stakeholders statewide. The *Biennial Assessment* is also available on the Board's website (www.vaboard.org/biennial.htm) and in CD-ROM, audio, and other accessible formats upon request.



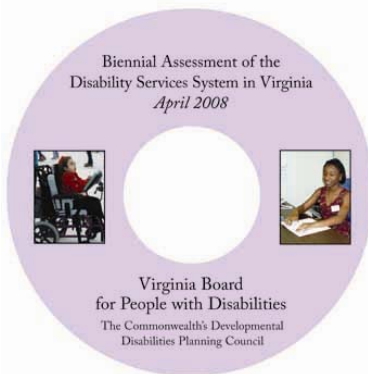
Initially released in April 2006, the *Biennial Assessment* has become an essential reference and resource guide for the many individuals and organizations working to improve Virginia's service system. Its content has been reviewed and cited by state and local elected and appointed officials, the news media, advocates, service-providers, individuals with disabilities, and their families.

Providing a VOICE for Virginians with Disabilities

Release of the 2008 edition culminates a careful and thorough research and development process that began with a series of public comment opportunities at six locations across Virginia in Spring 2007 and the receipt of additional input by individual constituents and disability organizations via mail, e-mail, fax, and telephone. Since then, program descriptions and statistical data from the first edition covering early intervention, education, community and institutional supports, healthcare, community housing, transportation, employment, and advocacy services have been updated and expanded. In response to recent events and public feedback, an additional chapter on emergency preparedness has been added.

Individual chapters focus on basic service categories across the lifespan and bring together programs from a wide range of sources to help the reader see the full range of available services as well as gaps in the system. State and local agencies and other sources were extensively consulted to obtain up-to-date information and ensure accuracy. Each chapter covers what services are available, eligibility requirements, how they are accessed and delivered, their costs, and how they are monitored and evaluated. Resource lists at the end of each chapter make it easier to locate information on specific services or providers. An additional appendix listing agency and program acronyms now accompanies the updated, user-friendly index.

As reflected in its name, the *Biennial Assessment* also identifies areas of concern for the Commonwealth's disability services system and includes specific Board recommendations for addressing them. Board members carefully reviewed and considered comments from its own and others' public feedback opportunities as well as concerns identified by partner agencies and advocacy organizations. Drawing on these sources, plus its own knowledge and experiences, the Board identified more than one hundred areas of concern and makes sixty-seven recommendations addressing them. These are introduced in the document's executive summary and further explored in the appropriate service chapters.



The *Biennial Assessment* and its associated research and public feedback have already guided the development and updating of the Board's federal 2007-2011 State Plan and state agency strategic plan. For the next two years, the 2008 edition will provide a foundation for the Board's involvement in policymaking and other activities that seek to expand and improve the disability services system and broaden opportunities for independence, self-determination, and community inclusion for Virginians with disabilities.

Additional information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities and the *Biennial Assessment* can be found at www.vaboard.org or can be requested by contacting the Board at 1-800-846-4464 (voice/tty), 804-786-1118 (fax), info@vbpd.virginia.gov, or 202 N. 9th Street, 9th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219.