

Virginia Autism Council Update

**Created by the
Disability Commission
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Why the need for autism training is so critical now . . .

- **Autism is emerging as the 4th disability when considering those who have cognitive, learning, or behavioral disabilities --**
 - **People with autism require specialized services and supports that are tailored to their unique needs**
 - **Frequently, when staff receive training and alter their approaches to meeting the needs of persons with autism, they are very successful in providing high quality community based services**

Why the need for autism training is so critical now . . .

- **The state workforce of service providers receive scant (if any) training in the unique profile and support needs of persons with Autism**
 - **Many service providers struggle to serve individuals with autism across the age range**
 - **Their lack of knowledge often results in much higher cost care and services options for person's with autism and an inability to provide services altogether**

Why the need for autism training is so critical now . . .

- No one agency in Virginia 'owns' autism
 - All of the agencies in Virginia serve persons with autism to greater or lesser extent
 - Agency efforts at training have been short term and are not able independently to keep up with staff turnover
 - Agency efforts are valiant, but not systematic to meet the overwhelming need

Council is able to produce strong outcomes at low costs with low administrative overhead . . . This year:

- On-line Course (Autism Foundations) developed and hosted by GMU beginning January 2004 (90 teachers/ teachers aides have gone through web course);
- Developed a tuition reimbursement program for VA approved college course work: 14 teachers or assistant teachers received full tuition reimbursement to complete 3-credit graduate or undergraduate college course in autism in 2004;
- Fall 2004- 8 Regional didactic trainings in Autism Awareness held for 541 new and regular ed. teachers and school personnel
- The Council's Autism Awareness Curriculum and VA Resource Manual was disseminated to 800 teachers, school systems, CSBs, EI programs. More→

- Web course brochures printed and disseminated to 3000 VA programs (Stipends exist for teachers only)
- Website created containing an autism training calendar, which shows all training approved by the VA Autism Council on a month by month basis-- AutismTrainingVA.org
- Council members (experts in autism) completed a draft of VA approved Competencies for Professionals and Paraprofessionals Supporting Individuals with Autism Across the Lifespan in Virginia by September 30, 2004 (now focus groups to build consensus)

With our funding from DOE . . .

- We have been able to provide training to teachers and a few parents, but . . .
- We have had to say 'no' to all other service providers when they don't have funding
 - Adult Service Support Staff
 - Group Home and Day Support
 - Job Coach and Employment Support Staff
 - MR and DD Waiver Providers
 - Day Care Workers
 - Assisted Living Facilities
 - Family Members

What we need to continue our work for all citizens in Virginia affected by Autism . . .

Disability Commission Requests \$100,000 to funnel through each agency/program for increased training & education of staff in autism specific competencies



Autism Planning Council Provides Regional Training, web courses, & tuition reimbursement for college course work in Autism

Supporting this Training Effort Helps Meet Olmstead Recommendation #11

- Recommendation #11: Support Attempts to expand curricula to tailor care to specific disability needs

If First Option not Available . . .

- Request set aside of Olmstead Funds from Governor's Budget
 - Logical Places in Governor's Budget where such training funds might be available:
 - Transition Waiver Funds
 - Crisis Stabilization Funds
 - Guardianship Funds
 - Assisted Living Facilities Funds