

Virginian's with Disabilities Act 20th Anniversary

SUMMARY REPORT

- In preparation for the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Virginians with Disabilities Act, advocacy groups and the Disability Services Agencies were asked to submit the top 3 issues facing Virginian's with disabilities today. The goal was to encourage groups and individuals to collaborate around current issues.
- 67 groups and 7 State Disability Agencies were surveyed.
- The top three issues named were funding, employment and housing, with transportation running very close behind.
- The top 3 issues were discussed by breakout groups at the conference



5 overarching themes emerged from these groups:

- The desire to have available the services that support independence and “participation in the social and economic life” of their communities, i.e. the same as the promise made in §51.01.1 of the Virginians with Disabilities Act.
- There are large numbers of people not being served.
- Inadequate funding underlies all issues/needs areas.
- Changing attitudes is key to meeting the needs of people with disabilities.
- Collaboration among disability advocacy groups and other entities is necessary in resolving current issues. Persuading those in decision-making positions to recognize the need for increased funding is the primary focus.

Funding & Housing

- In the area of funding, the focus is on:
 - Lack of Political Will and Support
 - Medicaid issues – Lack of slots, rates too low and waiver issues
 - Limited/lack of fiscal support that reflects a lack of valuing people with disabilities
 - Lack of resources for a myriad of specific disability groups and services
- In the area of housing, the foci are:
 - Insufficient funding and capacity/supply for available, affordable, accessible housing
 - Lack of knowledge/education across private and public sectors about the full scope of need for housing for people with disabilities
 - The threat of reduced supply of subsidized housing
 - The full use of existing building codes and universal design applied to help meet existing need.



Employment

- In the area of employment, the foci for action, as identified by symposium participants, are:
- Attitudes and consequent discrimination on the part of employers;
- Affordable, accessible transportation;
- Medicaid “buy-in” that does not force recipients to choose between health care and work
- Problems within the workforce one-stop system

Solutions



The basic solutions to all of these issue areas include:

- Establish a political action organization with representatives from all the advocacy groups plus representatives from organizations who have been opponents in the past,
- Educate/train advocates and decision-makers,
- Change attitudes,
- Increase funding, and
- Unite to support candidates who will support needed changes.