

The 2007 Disability Commission Executive Summary

In the 2007 interim session, the Disability Commission held its first meeting on June 5, 2007. Staff updated the commission on passage laws relating to the livable home tax credit and the revision of the sunset provision of the Commission to 2012. In 2006, the chairwoman, Delegate Michelle McQuigg, requested that the Department of Rehabilitative Services report on outcomes of the work the Disability Services Boards and the Centers for Independent Living were doing and that is just what happened. As expected, the outcomes highlighted that the DSBs and CILs are serving disabled Virginians well, but would be able to do more if they had better funding.

Harry Weinstock reported on employment and the employment of disabled persons with employment service organizations and the possibility of having a quasi-state agency to organize employment of disabled citizens. Jim Rothrock, Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitative Services, also reported on video teleconferencing and grants to help disabled Virginians obtain employment.

The Disability Commission Housing Work Group updated the Commission on their activities and Bill Fuller gave a presentation on the Portability of Auxiliary Grants.

The next meeting was held August 13, 2007. Mary-Margaret Cash updated the commission on the Consumer Services Fund, and the Housing Work Group gave an

update on the Qualified Allocation Plan and on common issues between the Commission and the Housing Commission.

Julie Stanley gave a presentation on emergency response services for the disabled. She stated that the disabled were taken into account in the development of the state's emergency response plan, but since most emergency response planning takes place at the local level, it was necessary to monitor their planning as it pertained to disabled Virginians.

The next two meetings were held on October 16, 2007 and November 27, 2007. Most notably, Neil Sherman, Special Project Manager, Department of Rail and Public Transportation, reported that transportation for disabled Virginians had improved rapidly over the preceding two years but a special focus was needed on mass transit accessibility for the disabled.

Eric H. Messick, Principal Legislative Analyst, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, whose presentation focused on access to state funded brain injury services, stated that services for severe brain injuries was not varied enough and could benefit from transition services like those offered at the Mill House. He also stated that the report did not focus on mild brain injuries and that the reporting of the brain injuries by the hospitals to DRS was duplicative and not necessary and therefore should be eliminated.

Finally, we had to say goodbye to Chairwoman McQuigg as she left the legislature. A new chairperson, and likely the selection of several new members will be necessary for the 2008 interim session.