

## DRAFT - Virginia Autism Advisory Council - Preliminary Recommendations - DRAFT

Recommendation	Background	Outcome
<p>Fully fund the Part C Early Intervention System to ensure children are evaluated as soon as possible and have access to the level and intensity of services and supports needed as soon as eligibility is determined.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about a lack of funding for early intervention services for infants and toddlers. These concerns were echoed by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.</p> <p>Early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Part C) improve outcomes for children and can reduce long-term medical and other costs. However, a lack of sufficient funding has limited access to Part C services in the Commonwealth, resulting in wide variability in services among localities. Increases in state funding in the last two years have not fully compensated for reductions in local funding. As a result, waiting lists for services have been established in several localities, in violation of federal law.</p> <p>In December of 2014, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services reported that no community services boards (CSBs) were reporting waiting lists and that it anticipates being able to address any shortfall that may occur in the current fiscal year.</p> <p>At the December meeting, stakeholders noted that though no waiting lists were reported, concerns continued to exist about the scope and intensity of services available.</p>	<p>No action; request an update during the 2015 interim.</p>

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<p>The Department of Education (DOE) should study its process for identifying students with dyslexia and the types of services that are or should be available to students with dyslexia.</p>	<p>At its June meeting, the Council heard testimony from the parent of a child with dyslexia about the struggles she and her son have experienced around diagnosis of her son's dyslexia and his service needs. The parent was concerned that some children with dyslexia are misdiagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder or other disorders, resulting in a delay of proper diagnosis and services.</p> <p>At the December meeting, the Department of Education noted that they are already working with stakeholders on a number of issues related to services for students with dyslexia.</p>	<p>No action taken; request an update from DOE during the 2015 interim.</p>
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<p>The General Assembly should provide sufficient long-term funding to eliminate waiting lists for vocational rehabilitation and eliminate the Order of Selection.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (Department) expressed concerns about funding for the Commonwealth's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. These concerns were echoed by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities in its 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia.</p> <p>The Department's Vocational Rehabilitation Program helps people with disabilities get ready for, find, and keep a job by providing individual training, placement, and job-coaching services as well as worksite accommodations like assistive technology, workplace accessibility, and personal assistance services. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is funded with a mix of federal and state dollars. When demand for services exceeds available funding, the Department must operate under an Order of Selection, which requires the Department to prioritize those individuals with the most significant disabilities.</p> <p>The Department reports that all categories were closed on November 1, 2014, though the Department is continuing to accept applications. Individuals who are eligible for services are being placed on waiting lists. The Department estimates that without additional funding, the waiting list for services could reach 6,676 individual by the end of the fiscal year, approximately 530 of whom have autism. An additional \$6.7 million would be required to provide services to all individuals and eliminate waiting lists.</p>	<p>The Council recommends a budget amendment providing funding to the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.</p> <p>Delegate Plum will patron the amendment.</p>
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<p>Reduce waiting lists for ID/DD waivers by funding additional slots. Consider linking the number of new slots to the rate of diagnosis.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard from several parents of children with autism spectrum disorder regarding lack of access to the ID and DD waiver programs due to long waiting lists. Parents recommended adding waiver slots to increase access to these programs.</p> <p>Currently, there are 7,654 individuals on the ID waiver waiting list (4,656 urgent and 2,998 nonurgent) and 1,608 individuals on the DD waiver waiting list. The average cost per ID waiver slot is \$68,291; the average cost per DD waiver slot is \$31,428.</p>	<p>The Council supports the idea of additional funding for ID/DD waivers.</p>
<p>Make information about the Medicaid waiver enrollment process available to parents.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard from several parents of children with autism spectrum disorder regarding the lack of awareness of the waiver enrollment process. Parents recommended making more information about the process available to parents.</p> <p>At the December meeting, the Department for Behavioral Health and Developmental Services reported that it had convened a work group of stakeholders to address this issue.</p>	<p>No action taken; request an update from DBHDS during the 2015 interim.</p>

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<p>Educate pediatricians about their role in identifying and diagnosing autism and the importance of that role in helping children and parents access waiver services.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard from several parents of children with autism spectrum disorder regarding the role of pediatricians in diagnosing children with autism spectrum disorder and the importance of timely diagnosis in accessing waiver services. Parents recommended making more information about both the importance of early diagnosis and the enrollment in the waiver process generally available to pediatricians in order to streamline the application process and help parents and children access services in a more timely manner.</p> <p>At the December meeting, Council members noted that all physicians should have access to information about their role in identifying and diagnosing autism and their role in helping individuals with autism access waiver services.</p>	<p>A resolution requesting the Board of Medicine to work with other stakeholders to develop information about the role of all physicians in identifying and diagnosing autism and helping individuals with autism access waiver services, and facilitate its distribution.</p>
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<p><b>Other recommendations presented to the Autism Advisory Council.</b> The Autism Advisory Council may vote to support any of the following recommendations presented to the Council by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities at its September meeting.</p>		
Recommendation	Background	Outcome
<p>The Department of Education should provide technical assistance and training to school divisions so that they are able to educate families regarding the importance of transition decisions, including assessments and diploma options, as early as elementary school and no later than middle school. In addition, the Department should include a review of these activities in its statewide monitoring.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including challenges associated with the transition of students with disabilities to higher education and/or integrated employment.</p>	<p>Support; request an update from the Department of Education during the 2015 interim on these topics.</p>
<p>The Department of Education should, in collaboration with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Transition Innovations, and other organizations focused on transition, support the development and expansion of innovative approaches to transition. Funding from multiple sources engaged in ensuring that youth with disabilities enter the workforce should be explored and implemented</p>	<p>Transition to higher education and/or integrated employment in the community is the ultimate goal for students with disabilities. In 2013, however, the Department of Education reported that 40 percent of students with disabilities graduating from high school in the previous two years were not enrolled in higher education or competitively employed. Research indicates that students with autism spectrum disorder have even poorer postsecondary outcomes than students with other disabilities, and adults with autism have poorer employment outcomes. The Department has expressed concern about these results and continues to devote significant resources to transition services for students with disabilities. However, substantial differences exist</p>	

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<p>The Department of Education should expand vocational education and training opportunities for students with disabilities who do not wish to pursue a college education. These students should be provided access to and opportunities in vocational education equal to those provided to students without disabilities, with instruction and training in integrated settings.</p>	<p>across local programs.</p>	
<p>The Department of Education should monitor and examine more closely patterns and trends regarding discipline of students with disabilities, including suspension and expulsion. Stricter requirements for use of positive behavioral supports should be implemented.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about significant discrepancies in the rate of suspension or expulsion of students with IEPs compared with that of students without IEPs in a growing number of school divisions in the Commonwealth.</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>The General Assembly should provide funding to support replication and expansion of innovative employment programs, including Project SEARCH, to enable more individuals with disabilities to become gainfully employed and less reliant on social security disability income and other benefits. Programs should include individuals with significant disabilities.</p>	<p>At its June meeting, the Council received information about the Department of Education's activities relating to employment preparation for students with disabilities, including Project SEARCH. At its September meeting, the Council received additional information about these types of programs from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services. Also at the September meeting, the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities recommended that the General Assembly provide additional funding to support development and expansion of these programs.</p>	<p>Support</p>

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<p>The General Assembly should provide funding for development and implementation of a data system that will provide meaningful employment outcome data in addition to service utilization data at state and local levels to establish current performance, identify future benchmarks for employment of individuals with disabilities, and drive effective decision making.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including information about the need for useful data about programs and outcomes.</p> <p>As part of the 2012 Settlement Agreement between the Commonwealth and the U.S. Department of Justice, Virginia is required to provide individuals in the target population with competitive, integrated employment activities, including supported employment. The Settlement Agreement also requires the Commonwealth to (i) maintain its membership in the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) and (ii) establish a state policy on the Employment First initiative, which prioritizes employment at minimum or competitive wages in integrated work settings for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.</p> <p>Because the various agencies participating in the Commonwealth's State Employment Leadership Network collect data differently, SELN is working on development and implementation of a statewide data collection and performance measurement system and procedures for employment data. Such data is necessary to measure progress in implementation of the Employment First initiative.</p>	<p>Support</p>
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<p>Delay plans for the expansion of coordinated care to Medicaid enrollees with an intellectual or other disability who receive supports under the ID or DD waivers as long as needed to ensure thoughtful planning, research, and stakeholder input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a process whereby the Department of Medical Assistance Services and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services perform due diligence in identifying the outcomes and challenges for the ID/DD population that result from coordinated care efforts in other states and examine the potential effect on capacity and current ID/DD service providers.</li> <li>• Implement small, regional pilot programs to identify and address Virginia-specific barriers.</li> <li>• Make consumer-directed services and person-centered practices foundational philosophies for care coordination initiatives.</li> <li>• Analyze outcomes of care, including satisfaction outcomes, provided to individuals with ID/DD who were receiving services through the Elderly or Disabled with Consumer Direction (EDCD) Waiver and opted in to the coordinated care model.</li> </ul>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about implementation of care coordination models for individuals receiving services through the ID and DD waiver programs.</p> <p>In 2012, the General Assembly directed the Department of Medical Assistance Services to develop and implement expanded care coordination programs statewide for special populations, including individuals dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare, individuals in need of behavioral health services, individuals receiving services under the EDCD Waiver, and waiver recipients who receive acute care medical services. All individuals receiving long-term care and waiver services are to be enrolled in coordinated care by state fiscal year 2016. The goals of the care coordination model are (i) to improve the coordination of care for individuals receiving services and (ii) to improve the value of services purchased by the Commonwealth without compromising access to those services for vulnerable populations.</p>	<p><b>DO NOT SUPPORT</b></p> <p>The Council does support taking steps to thoughtfully implement the expansion of coordinated care in a manner that takes into account the needs of individuals receiving services and ensures the needs of individuals with ID/DD receiving services are met.</p>
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<p>The Department of Medical Assistance Services should add comprehensive dental coverage for adults under the Medicaid state plan or, at minimum, as a service under the new ID/DD waiver as lack of preventive dental care has been identified as a contributing factor to rising health care costs.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about the negative effects of lack of access to dental care for individuals receiving services through the ID and DD waivers.</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>The Department of Medical Assistance Services should seek funding to develop a dental demonstration pilot project that will (i) improve hospital documentation of emergency room use for dental conditions; (ii) replicate or adopt the Virginia Commonwealth University ER triage model, to include counseling and referral to appropriate safety net dental service providers and, when applicable, to the national health care exchange or Medicaid for insurance coverage; and (iii) track changes in ER use for dental care over time.</p>		<p>Support</p>

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<p>The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Social Services, and Office of Comprehensive Services for At-Risk Youth and Families should proactively develop and implement a comprehensive plan for service referrals and behavioral interventions at earlier stages to prevent hospitalization, loss of placements, or incarceration. This plan should include identification of service gaps, transition issues, improvements to interagency collaboration, funding needs, and infrastructure needs.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about access to community living supports.</p> <p>Community living supports are services that enable individuals with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community and to be fully integrated in all facets of community life. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities particularly recommended that key agencies work together to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for service referrals and behavioral interventions for at-risk youth to improve services and address unmet needs.</p>	<p>Support</p>
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<p>Revise current licensure regulations to create a distinct set for ID/DD providers, which should have a set of core requirements applicable to all facilities or services for quality assurance, person-centered principles for individual health and safety, and distinct, specific licensure regulations applicable to each disability population that consider service and quality-of-life outcomes.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about existing licensing requirements for community-based service providers.</p> <p>Community living supports are services that enable individuals with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community and to be fully integrated in all facets of community life. Service providers are licensed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities notes that while there are some common requirements that should apply to all community-based service providers, each disability group has a unique array of service values, principles, and intervention models. As a result, the Board recommends distinct, specific licensure regulations applicable for each disability population that consider service and quality-of-life outcomes.</p>	<p>Support</p>
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<p>The General Assembly should provide additional funding for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) that will enable current CILs to expand service capacity and provide for the development of new CILs in underserved or unserved areas of the Commonwealth.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including a recommendation that the General Assembly fully fund Centers for Independent Living.</p> <p>Centers for Independent Living are nonresidential places of action and coalition, where persons with disabilities are empowered and develop the skills necessary to make lifestyle choices. CILs provide services and advocacy to promote the leadership, independence, and productivity of people with disabilities by working with individuals and local communities to remove barriers to independence and ensure equality of individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>Support</p>
<p>The General Assembly should expand annual appropriations for the Public Guardian and Conservator Program to eliminate waiting lists for those who do require guardianship and to improve the use of currently limited mechanisms for supported decision making.</p>	<p>At its September meeting, the Council heard information about the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities 2014 Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, including concerns about funding for the Commonwealth's Public Guardian and Conservator Program (Program).</p> <p>The Program works to provide guardians of last resort for adults who are adjudicated incapacitated and indigent and have no other person willing and able to serve as a guardian. According to the 2014 Biennial Report of the Virginia Public Guardian and Conservator Program, funding is critically needed to stabilize the program and meet urgent needs.</p>	<p>Support</p>

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<b>Items for further study.</b> The following issues were raised at meetings during the 2014 interim and may be appropriate for further study during the 2015 interim.	
Allow recipients of waiver services flexibility to select providers.	At its September meeting, the Council heard from a parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder that the current structure of the wavier programs reduces flexibility and limits parents' choices regarding service providers. The parent recommended allowing recipients of waiver services some flexibility in selecting service providers.
Identify ways to improve the waiver application process and to reduce waiting times for evaluations. Address local inconsistency in the waiver enrollment process.	At its September meeting, the Council heard from several parents of children with autism spectrum disorder regarding challenges in accessing waiver services, particularly challenges related to diagnosis, evaluation, and inclusion on waiting lists. Parents recommended exploring options for streamlining the application process and reducing wait times for evaluations.