

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Consumer-Directed Services in Virginia
LISTENING POSTS
Partnership for People with Disabilities
Virginia Commonwealth University

Background

In 2002, the Partnership for People with Disabilities, at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), entered into a contract with the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to provide training and technical assistance on consumer-directed (CD) services provided under Virginia's Medicaid Waivers. As part of this contract, the Partnership held Listening Posts in eight locations in the Commonwealth to hear from individuals with disabilities, families, providers, and others about their experiences with Virginia's CD services. This executive summary provides the major findings from the Listening Posts Report, which summarizes the input from 89 individuals who depend on CD services and those who provide support to individuals managing CD services. The information gathered at the Listening Posts should not be considered "research." The comments presented in this report represent the views of participants in the Listening Posts and should not be viewed as representative of all individuals receiving CD services through Virginia's Medicaid Waivers.

Strengths of Consumer-Directed Services

- Individuals who receive CD services can be more flexible in their support.
- Information is starting to be provided in a more "user friendly" way, for example the *Employee Management Manual* for the Mental Retardation Waiver.
- Individuals appreciate the assistance they receive in being CD employers.
- Choice is important and individuals receiving Medicaid Waiver services have a choice of agency-directed or CD services, or a combination of both options.
- Medicaid services that support individuals such as behavioral support, other Medicaid services (insurance, medication) and assistive technology are greatly appreciated.
- The ability to be the employer, and to hire friends, neighbors, family members, and others gives individuals and their families a greater level of comfort because they know their CD employees and they have control over how and when they are supported.

Suggestions for Improving Consumer-Directed Services

- Create one set of regulations for CD services to be used in all Waivers. The regulations should include components of existing Waivers and suggestions from the Listening Posts that promote CD principles.
- Promote and explain CD services to individuals with disabilities, their families, and providers, with information that is user-friendly, comprehensive, and not in draft form.
- Ensure individuals who need assistance in managing CD services are eligible for CD services.
- Promote options for people currently in institutions by providing emergency access to Waivers and ensure all regulations promote community living and independence.
- Create a uniform eligibility process for CD services that enables a smooth transition from one Waiver to another to ensure the best fit.
- Limit the paperwork and bureaucracy to encourage the choice and control of individuals with disabilities and their families. Some existing rules are hindering individuals with disabilities and their families from hiring whom they want and getting what they need when they need it.
- Increase the control individuals with disabilities and their families have over systemic decisions being made through participation on state and local advisory groups, boards, and screening teams.
- Create more providers to ensure all interested individuals and families, in all regions of Virginia, have access to case managers, support coordinators, services facilitators, and CD employees.
- Develop training and materials for individuals and their families that promotes the goals, values, successes, and opportunities of CD services.
- Improve the financial security of CD employees.
- Let individuals decide how much support they need and eliminate arbitrary caps for hours.