



**Supporting Virginians' efforts  
to secure independence and employment**

**DARS | VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

*Message from DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock*

**OUR MISSION**



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*The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families.*

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Key elements of our new mission statement are:

**The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services,**

Our name designates Virginians with disabilities and "Vintage Virginians" as our primary consumers.

**in collaboration with community partners,**

Nothing we do can be done without our partners: Employment Services Organizations, Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living and Brain Injury programs. Our school systems and colleges and universities around the state are key collaborators along with community services boards and local departments of social services.

**provides and advocates for resources and services**

We are fortunate to have passionate and committed citizens who are appointed to more than 10 advisory boards and councils that serve in an advocacy role. They are supported by skilled professionals who develop the policies, often defined by our federal partners, which define our quality driven programs.

Other talented colleagues manage, monitor and train our staff and partners on new developments and opportunities and assure solid stewardship of those state and federal funds entrusted to us.

Our Ticket to Work and Partnership Plus staff work with our partners to bring new funding to the Commonwealth to fund additional long term supports for employment efforts.

**to improve the employment,**

The program that created the agency that has morphed into DARS was Vocational Rehabilitation. The primary goal of this initiative is to help Virginians with disabling conditions go to work. Now DARS has another program that helps older Virginians transition back into the workforce and find work in public agencies around the Commonwealth.

We fully realize that without our business employers hiring our clients these programs would not survive. We do benefit from an ever widening employment network of employers who can see beyond the age and disability of our clients to hire them based on their abilities.

Using assistive technology and specialized services for persons with sensory problems and changing disability demographics we are positioned for the future. Another asset for more than 60 years is our

*continued*



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own [Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center](#), where each year more than 3,000 individuals, many of them young adults, learn to be able to live on their own and enter the workforce upon completion of training.

### quality of life,

Within DARS are several entities committed to defining and supporting an array of services to offer our consumers a better quality of life in an increasing number of livable communities. The [Adult Services](#) function of the [Department of Social Services](#), which joins DARS in July 2013, supports a menu of funding and programming that support many of our most fragile Virginians within community settings. Our Office on Community Integration recommends measures the Governor can consider to increase community based options and services for this population.

### security,

A strong Public Guardianship is part of DARS. Fifteen contracted entities offer an invaluable service to more than 500 "unbefriended" Virginians. They represent them at meetings and assure their voice is heard in plans for their lives.

DARS' responsibility for management was extended to support the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Key leadership at the state level supports almost 40 part and full time Ombudsmen working with individuals in nursing homes and community settings.

In July 2013, DARS becomes the home for the state level management of the [Adult Protective Services](#) effort. Cases of financial, physical and emotional abuse or neglect are increasing all too steadily and the collaboration of these programs will serve some of the most deserving better than when they were all hosted by different entities.

### and independence

In the 1980s, state rehabilitative services expanded to include Virginians with disabilities who did not find work as their most immediate goal. Centers for Independent Living spread across the Commonwealth offering consumer direction and empowerment. Brain injury programs sprung up to serve those who survived brain injury and support their care givers. Long-term Case Management reached out to many who may have fallen between the cracks. Personal Assistant Services offered what has become respected as a cost effective and consumer directed alternative to institutional care.

Now we are also seeing the effort began at the beginning of this century—No Wrong Door—become operational and the collaborative potential of Aging and Disability Resource Centers being realized. Few programs increase independence as well as resources. Our Disability and Determination Services annually evaluates almost 100,000 claims for Social Security Disability benefits and for those found eligible, more than \$1 billion is brought into the Commonwealth.

### of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families.

With the "Age Wave" dynamics that are becoming well known to all and the Commonwealth's emphasis on community based services, we must embrace a broader and growing population that has many differences and yet some very real similarities for beneficial long term services and supports. A small but incredibly popular grant for Lifespan Respite Care demonstrates the need to support care givers across the Commonwealth for young and mature Virginians with serious needs requiring informal care. Families are part of our network of services and through working with them, our other partners and our qualified staff, we will be able to realize our mission as captured in this statement.

