

# **Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA)**

## **Disabilities Advisory Council (DAC)**

### **Member Description**

#### **Purpose of the Advisory Council**

VOPA established the Disabilities Advisory Council to:

1. Provide independent advice and recommendations to VOPA
2. Work jointly with the VOPA Governing Board of Directors in the development of policies and goals
3. Prepare and submit the Council's annual report to VOPA.

The Disabilities Advisory Council is VOPA's link to the community.

- Members are based in their own community
- Members understand local attitudes and concerns
- Members offer perspectives from their community groups of important issues in Virginia
- Members evaluate VOPA's goals
- Members help VOPA remain focused on its Mission

#### **Mission**

The Council's mission is to provide recommendations to the Governing Board of the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA) on policies and goals to be implemented to assure that individuals, not covered by the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Act, are free from abuse, neglect, and related rights violations.

#### **Who We Are**

The Disabilities Advisory Council is comprised of the following individuals all with a commitment to improve disability services in Virginia

- Recipient/Former Recipient of disability related services (can include: Developmental disability, Intellectual disability, Physical disability, Sensory disability, Traumatic Brain Injury)
- Family Member of Recipient/Former Recipient of disability related services
- Family member of a minor child or youth (under 18 years old) who has received or is receiving disability services
- Disability related service provider
- Disability related professional
- Attorney
- Individual knowledgeable about disabilities

Continuing efforts shall be made to include members of racial and ethnic minorities that are representative of the geographic diversity of Virginia.

## **What We Do**

The Disabilities Advisory Council members' role is

**SUPPORT:** Be familiar with the purpose, philosophy and activities of the disabilities program and to positively represent the program to the community.

**ADVISE:** Provide independent advice and recommendations for disabilities programs

**LEADERSHIP:** Work jointly with VOPA staff and VOPA Board of Directors to develop effective policies and procedures

**GUIDANCE:** Submit section of the annual Program Performance Report

## **Typical Duties and Expectations of Advisory Council Members**

- To physically attend and actively participate in all scheduled Disabilities Advisory Council meetings. Currently the Disabilities Advisory Council meets four times a year. The Disabilities Advisory Council announces an annual calendar of meetings in advance.
- To read, review and comment on materials mailed prior to each meeting for consideration at Advisory Council meetings
- To promote information on the Disabilities Advisory Council; its position and publications when meeting other groups involved with disabilities
- To provide advice, input, observations, and suggestions regarding VOPA's operations, activities, goals and objectives
- Council members have the opportunity to participate in Board committees as full voting members. Council members that serve on a Board committee should be committed to participation at the committee meetings.

## **Benefits of being an Advisory Council member**

- Member and contributor of decision-making groups
- Opportunity to highlight programs that you support
- On-the-job-training of political, administrative, technical and bureaucratic aspects of decision-making
- Public speaking experience
- Cultivate contacts
- Potential source of alternate or advanced employment

## **Reimbursement for Expenses**

Disabilities Advisory Council members volunteer their time they spend on Advisory Council activities. However, members are reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses such as travel to and from meetings.

## **Accommodations**

The Disabilities Advisory Council will meet in accessible locations. The Disabilities Advisory Council can assist with requests for reasonable accommodations. Please contact VOPA staff for accommodations requests.