

Disability Resource Book

Specific to Services In Virginia



Diocese of Richmond
Ministry for Persons with Disabilities
7800 Carousel Lane
Richmond, Virginia 23294

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Ministry for Persons with Disabilities

MISSION STATEMENT

Ministry with Persons with Disabilities of the Diocese of Richmond advocates for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the full life of the Church.

The above mission was adopted by the Disability Advisory Commission on July 16, 2006.

In creating this mission, the Disability Advisory Commission reviewed 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities* including the 1988 Resolution on the Tenth Anniversary of the Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities. Further the Commission reviewed Diocese of Richmond's document, *We Walk By Faith*.

To fulfill this mission, the Parish Advocate network was formed.

As a Parish Advocate you have an opportunity to welcome individuals who are disabled as well as their families and to seek out ways to meet their needs and help them to be fully included in life of their Church.

"There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that follows a single shepherd."

USCCB Pastoral Statement #33

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Forward

Anyone who welcomes you, welcomes me . . .

Matthew 10:40

The Parish Advocate Network of the Diocese of Richmond is in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 1978 Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities. This Pastoral Statement challenges all of us to create an environment which fully recognizes the dignity, rights, and potential of all people.

Throughout the ages, Scriptures and the Church have consistently proclaimed that every human life is a precious gift of a loving God. Further, Christ's life teaches us that every human life is of such value that He would sacrifice His only Son.

This book is designed to be a resource as you continue your work as Parish Advocate. This book lists some of the major disabilities and what agency or agencies to contact for services and support.

The information in this book contains resources available at the time of printing (October 2007) and is subject to change. We hope these resources will help you and your church direct people with disabilities and their families to agencies that can help them and/or their family members. If you have additions or corrections to this book, please contact Nita Grignol, Office for Persons with Disabilities, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA 232294, 804 622-5260 or email at ngrignol@richmonddiocese.org.

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Here are some very basic guidelines for relating to people with disabilities, most of which will already come naturally to you:

- **Use common sense.** People with disabilities want to be treated the same way as everyone else.
- **Be supportive not patronizing.** Show people the same respect that you expect to receive from others. Treat adults as adults.
- **Be considerate and patient.** Anticipate what the person's needs might be and offer assistance when possible. Be patient if the person requires more time to communicate, to walk, or to accomplish various tasks. When planning a meeting or event, consider his or her needs ahead of time.
- **Be helpful – when in doubt, ask.** If it appears that the person is in need of some assistance, offer it by asking. "Is there something I can do?" However, do not automatically give help unless the person clearly needs or has asked for it. Ask first: "Do you want or need any help?"
- **Be patient with yourself in learning the specific needs of the person.** If you find yourself doing or saying the wrong thing, remember that the person with a disability is usually aware of and sensitive to your discomfort and your good intentions.
- **Communicate with the person,** not with his or her interpreter, companion or assistant.
- **Respect the person's privacy.** If you find yourself speculating about areas of the person's private life or medical condition, refrain from asking questions which would otherwise be inappropriate to ask of any person.
- **Be aware of language** that you use in relation to people with disabilities.
- **Learn what you can about the proper etiquette and protocol** for relating to people with specific disabilities.

Advocacy and Fact-Finding

Access to the human service delivery system, at times, can be a confusing and frustrating search. The following suggestions may be helpful with your search for resources for people with disabilities.

The fact finding process when you do not have a specific contact person to speak with begins with a phone call.

Typically the person who answers the phone will need to refer or connect you with the person best suited to answer your questions. Keeping the call short and accurate at this stage is recommended.

Step #1:

Formulate a brief yet concise description and introduction as to the purpose for your call. Jot these details down on a piece of paper to guide your conversation. Be prepared to be able to provide the following information:

Who are you?

What is your position or role? *I am a Social Worker. I am a Mom. . .*

What organization or person are you representing? *I am with United Cerebral Palsy. I am calling on behalf of my 26 year old brother who has mental illness. . .*

What is the purpose for your call? *I am looking for residential services. I am looking for financial assistance. I am looking for help and I do not know where to begin. . .*

Step #2:

Keep a log of your calls. Always get the name and the direct phone number of person to whom you are referred. Document date, pertinent information.

Step # 3:

In ongoing calls reintroduce yourself and restate the information from Step #1. At this point, you may be asked to provide a more thorough description of your need. If you were referred by another agency or person, it would be good to mention it at this time. Ask questions (examples):
*What is the referral process? What are the costs? What is the funding source?
What is the scope of services offered? What are the admission/intake criteria?
Other resources – people, organizations and informational material?
What are the next steps?*

Step #4: Follow-up and maintain courteous persistence. The internet is another useful way in which to gather valuable, first-step information through websites and associated links.

FACTS:

Mental illness can affect persons at any age in any family. A person with a mental illness is characterized by a substantially diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life because of severe disturbances in thinking, feeling and relating. Mental illness is not the same as cognitive impairments. People with mental illness usually have normal intelligence.

Some widely recognized factors contributing to mental disorders may include brain disease, chemical imbalance, heredity, stress, environment, and the abuse of drugs. Some disorders last only a brief period (acute) while others may continue over a lifetime (chronic). There are at least 200 types of mental disorders. Bipolar, Depression and Schizophrenia are the three major illnesses.

What we can do:

- Become more informed about mental illness to alleviate those fears which may be barriers to relationships with church members who have mental illness.
- Combat the stigma by objecting to negative stereotyping of people with mental illness.
- Invite persons with mental disorders to worship and participate in the life of the community without imposing demands and expectations beyond their current ability.
- Allow families the opportunity to share their sorrows, joys, methods of coping and information. Ask about their family member with mental illness.
- Listen to the other person without having to respond with an answer. Be accepting and understanding. Do not move from listening to assuming responsibility for a person's life or treatment.

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Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services Virginia's public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of forty Community Services Boards (CSBs) and sixteen state facilities. The CSBs and state facilities serve children and adults who have or who are at risk of mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, mental retardation and substance use disorders. www.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov/

Phone: (804) 786-3921
Voice/TDD: (804) 371-8977
Toll Free: (800) 451-5544

Virginia Association of Community Services Boards represents the forty Community Services Boards (CSBs) and Behavioral Health Authorities (BHAs) – Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Use Disorder service delivery and management in Virginia's communities. www.vacsb.org

Phone: (804) 330-3141
Fax: (804) 330-3611

Virginia Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) is a not-for-profit, grassroots, self-help, and support organization. There are local chapters. www.namivirginia.org

Primary phone: (804) 285-8264
Alternate phone: (888) 486-8264
Fax: (804) 285-8464

National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities (NCPD) is the disability voice of the US Catholic Bishops. NCPS was established in 1982 to further full implementation of the 1978 Pastoral Statement of US . . . see Mental Health Council. www.ncpd.org

Be aware: Some Basic Skills for Relating to People with Mental Illness.

| <u>When the person</u> | <u>Then You</u> |
|-------------------------|--|
| Is fearful | Stay Calm |
| Is insecure | Be reassuring |
| Becomes easily agitated | Allow personal space |
| Is withdrawn | Initiate relevant conversation |
| Believes delusions | Don't argue |
| Has low self-esteem | Affirm: give honest, positive feedback |

Awareness Education is essential for church communities who are concerned about attitudinal change that moves people toward inclusion of all people. Acceptance and appreciation of differences come with a change of attitude.

Diocese of Richmond
Ministry for and with Persons with Disabilities
804 622-5260
Nita Grignol, Director
ngrignol@richmonddiocese.org

National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities
202 529-2933
Jan Benton, Director
www.ncpd.org

Currently, the Diocesan Disability Office has the following:
Contact Nita Grignol, 804 622-5260 or ngrignol@Richmonddiocese.org to view or borrow.

- Training and special education resource materials for catechists;
- An interactive disability awareness presentation for the youth, designed to interest them in working with their peers with disabilities.
- Resource materials for educating staff and parishioners on mental illness.
- Awareness materials for educating staff and parishioners on including people with disabilities in their parishes.

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Special Needs & Children

Facts:

Today we are seeing an ever increasing number of children being diagnosed with a "Special Need." Diagnoses may be classified as a developmental disability, cognitive impairment (intellectual disability), learning disability, or a combination thereof. Current statistics tell us that over 3 million school-aged children have been diagnosed as having a learning disability and are receiving special education services in their school. Currently the diagnoses of ADD/ADHD, Autism, Epilepsy and many other disabilities are on the rise. As a community of faith and advocates for children, we are called to become aware and to always act with compassion, keeping the dignity of each individual child a priority. Swift action regarding concerns about a child's well being helps one to grow in knowledge and to become more at peace with the over-whelming nature of special needs. Undoubtedly, walking hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ will make the journey into the world of special needs one of trust and faith!

Be Aware:

- Children with a special need want to be treated like all their peers and desire full inclusion whenever possible.
- Parents of children with special needs are most often wonderful advocates for their child. They desire support and understanding from all those involved in their child's life.
- There are federal laws that help provide special education services, as well as other services, for children with a special need.

What we can do:

- Become informed. Take the time to learn about the various special needs diagnoses so that you can compassionately and knowledgeably discuss them when necessary.
- Be a voice of advocacy for children in your community that may have a special need. Help break down stereotypical behavior patterns of prejudice, fear and separation.
- Involve and invite children with special needs to participate in all aspects of the life of the community.
- Be open to accommodating the child's special need so that he/she is comfortable and secure. Often simple modifications that are not open and obvious to all may make the child most comfortable, especially in situations involving peers.
- Be a good listener. Many times parents, family members and the child himself may simply need to share their sorrows, frustrations and fears.
- Have resources available to yourself that you can share with those involved. Make contacts and connections with support groups and others your community that you can refer people to when it is appropriate.
- Offer your prayers and attempt to reconnect if appropriate.

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National Dissemination Center for children with Disabilities Source of information on disabilities in infants, toddlers, children and youth; IDEA; and No Child Left Behind <http://www.nichcy.org>

Virginia Division of Special Education & Student Services
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/transition/cpr.shtml>

Virginia Early Childhood Special Education
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/earlychildhood.html>

Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia provides early intervention supports and services to infants and toddlers from birth through age two who are not developing as expected or who have a medical condition that can delay normal development. Early intervention supports and services focus on increasing the child's participation in family and community activities that are important to the family. In addition, supports and services focus on helping parents and other caregivers know how to find ways to help the child learn during everyday activities. These supports and services are available for all eligible children and their families regardless of the family's ability to pay.
<http://www.infantva.org/>

Family Involvement Program housed at The Arc of Virginia works to strengthen and increase family involvement in Virginia's early intervention system. All of the ArcFIP staff are parents of children with special needs.
<http://www.arcfip.org/> **Phone:** 804 649-8481

REMEMBER:

When a person who is visually challenged is part of a conversation or small group discussion, she/he may need a verbal cue to participate as she/he would be unaware of visual cues.

- When speaking to a person who is visually challenged, identify yourself and indicate you are speaking to him/her by using their name.
- Let a person who is visually challenged take your arm. She/he will walk $\frac{1}{2}$ step behind you to anticipate steps and curbs. Give the person a choice of using your arm or an available handrail when going up or down the stairs. When leaving a person who is blind, let him/her know. When approaching a door let the person know which way the door opens—inward or outward.
- Give a “play by play” account of what you’re seeing. Words like “look” and “see” are all right to use. Be specific when giving directions and avoid phrases like “over there” and “sit here.”
- Converse with a person who is visually challenged in a normal manner and tone. Visual impairment does not include hearing impairment or mental limitations.
- A person who is blind may need a guide in a new situation or in crowds. It is appropriate to offer help, but allow the person to be as independent as possible.
- When helping a legally blind/blind person with a dog guide, do not call, pet or talk to the dog while it is working in the harness. This will distract the dog from performing its job.

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Xavier Society for the Blind publishes over 50 USCCB titles in Braille, large print, and audiocassette editions for the visually impaired.

www.ncpd.org/usccb%20publications.htm

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Their mission is to empower blind, visually impaired, and deaf blind individuals to achieve their maximum level of employment, education, and personal independence. www.vdbvi.org

Readings For The Blind, Inc. is a non-profit organization that records books not available elsewhere for the visually impaired, learning disabled, and those physically unable to hold a book or turn a page. They serve people of all ages, anywhere in the United States. www.readingsfortheblind.org

Facts:

- Five percent of the U.S. population is significantly hearing challenged. These persons may be either deaf or hard of hearing.
- The term "deaf" applies to persons whose hearing loss is so profound that they cannot hear or understand the sounds of speech for communicating. They rely on one or both of the following to communicate: sign language or lip reading.
- "Hard of hearing" indicates that the sounds of speech can be heard if amplified by a hearing aid or other electronic amplification.
- Persons who are deaf or persons who are hard of hearing have two very different needs. After identifying people in your congregation who are hearing challenged, ask what they need in order to share as full participants in your community.

Be aware:

- The method of communication the person uses: sign language, lip reading, hearing aid.
- The changes that can be made in the sanctuary, at board meetings, social gatherings and classes to enable people who are hearing challenged to participate fully may include better lighting for lip reading and/or more visual aids.

What we can do:

- Teach all members the simple skills for communication with persons with hearing impairment:
 - Get the person's attention before speaking.
 - Look directly at the person and speak clearly without exaggerating.
 - If necessary, reword or rephrase statements to be sure the person understands what has been said.
- Learn how to use the Virginia Relay System
- Make available a class in basic sign language.
- Provide a clear amplification system and sign language interpreter as needed.
- Make sure homilies and other spoken materials are provided in an alternative forms. (i.e., written forms or audio aids)
- Make assistive listening devices available.

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Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) works to reduce the communication barriers between persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families and the professionals who serve them.

www.vddhh.org

Central Virginia Lions Hearing Aid Bank (serves Central Virginia) – purpose is to recycle used hearing aids within Central Virginia. They collect, repair and place hearing aids with persons having a solvable hearing loss” and a “verifiable Financial Need.” www.lions24b.org/cvlhab.htm or www.lionsofvirginia.org

Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) offers a variety of human services including information and referral, advocacy, equipment demonstration, public education and facilitation of communication. Svc_ccdhh@cccofva.org

Hearing Loss Association (formerly known as (SHHH) The Nations largest organization for people with hearing loss, works to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, hearing aids, cochlear implants, tinnitus, and more. There are 9 chapters in the Richmond Diocese. Contact State Chapter Coordinator, Victor Matsui, vicmatsui@aol.com

VA Relay enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or speech disabled to communicate by TTY (text telephone) or another assistive telephone device with anyone who uses a standard phone. To make a Virginia Relay call, just dial 7-1-1, and you automatically reach a Communications Assistant (CA) at Virginia Relay. www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/va_relay.htm

The National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD) mission is “Spread God’s message through the support of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pastoral Ministry so that we may all be one in Christ.” www.ncod.org

- People who are physically challenged may have difficult walking or be unable to talk. Uneven ground and stairs may pose special problems. Many may use adaptive equipment or require physical assistance in order to be mobile.
- Physical challenges may be the result of birth defect, disease, accidents or aging. Some challenges (such as arthritis) may or may not be visible at first meeting.
- With adapted environments, many people with a physical challenge can live independently.

Be aware:

- Sit down when conversing with a person in a wheelchair.
- When with a person who is physically challenged, as if you may be of help. Let the individual tell you what is needed.
- Some physical activities may be accomplished more slowly, so allow extra time.

Suggestions for increasing accessibility:

- Consider your facility in terms of needs of persons who are physically challenged.
- Imagine yourself in a wheelchair or using a walker.
 - Try to get to every part of your buildings and grounds.
- Consider in terms of accessibility:
 - Access to church and commons area, seating, sanctuary.
 - How doors open and the width of hallways and doorways.
 - Every aspect of the worship service.
 - Parking, curbs, steps and ramps.
 - Contrasting markings on the edge of curbs and steps inside and outside buildings.
 - Restrooms and drinking fountains.
 - Meeting and conference rooms.

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Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) In partnership with people with disabilities and their families, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services collaborates with the public and private sectors to provide and advocate for the highest quality services that empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and full inclusion into society. www.vadrs.org/

Assistive Technology / Devices and Equipment

Assistive Technology Services directly assist individuals with disabilities in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. www.vadrs.org

Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) Mission is to provide a system of high quality and cost effective health care services to qualifying Virginians and their families. www.dmas.virginia.gov

Social Security Administration Information about services, benefits and publications from the Social Security Administration, including SSI, SSDI, work incentives, and other topics. <http://www.ssa.gov>

United Cerebral Palsy Research, resources, innovative projects, and other information related to cerebral palsy. <http://www.ucp.org>

Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) who represent the interests of Centers for Independent Living across the state. www.vasilc.org

Phone: 1 800 464-9950 TTY Toll Free 1 800-464-9950

Facts:

Intellectually Disabled/ Developmentally Disabled, is a lifelong condition of impaired intellectual functioning resulting from one of many possible causes. Intellectual impairment (formerly mental retardation) is characterized by limited ability to learn and reduced capacity for putting learning to use. Some people with intellectual disabilities also have other conditions that limit mobility and/or communication.

Be Aware:

- People with cognitive impairment have a need for understanding, love, and acceptance as persons.
- Opportunities to help foster participation in meaningful activities.
- Communication, including use of simple vocabulary, use of all the senses, and "hands on" experiences.
- Practical barriers to participation: physical barriers in buildings and/or need for transportation to activities.
- Inviting people with cognitive impairment to use their abilities and gifts for the church.

What we can do:

- Involve people with ID/DD in worship as ushers, acolytes, greeters, choir members and as full participants in the worshiping community.
- Involve people with ID/DD in fellowship, at social events, and in planning of special events.
- Create a partnership in your parish with group homes to offer opportunities for ministry with persons with ID/DD. Staff from these group homes can suggest opportunities for service to the residents.

Education:

- It is important to provide for the spiritual growth of members of the Church with developmental disabilities. Adapted curriculum and resources are available to assist with the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities in religious and sacramental preparation programs. Currently there are 2 separate programs in the Diocese where students meet with their peers and learn their faith. Some parents choose to home-school their children with disabilities and we encourage the DREs to assist by providing materials and guidance.

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Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services Virginia's public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of forty Community Services Boards (CSBs) and sixteen state facilities. The CSBs and state facilities serve children and adults who have or who are at risk of mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, mental retardation and substance use disorders. www.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov/

Phone: (804) 786-3921
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Phone: (804) 330-3141
Fax: (804) 330-3611

The Arc of Virginia advocates for the rights of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, so they may all lead productive and fulfilling lives. The Arc of Virginia has 24 affiliate chapters around the state. www.arcofva.org

Phone: (804) 649-8481
Fax: (804) 649-3585

Guide to Virginia's Medicaid Waivers for Persons with Disabilities, Their Parents, and Caregivers. Access to this guide is available through either website listed below.

www.vcu.edu/partnership/valend/MEDICAID%20WAIVERS%20GUIDE%207-07.pdf

www.dmas.virginia.gov/downloads/pdfs/ab-ltc_medicaid_waiver

- A. Identify person with disabilities in the parish.
- B. Develop awareness of disabilities with staff and through training as needed.
- C. Begin to assess physical barriers.
 1. Conduct a survey.
 - Set a time frame for completing the survey.
 - Decide who will conduct the survey. We recommend that you invite two or three additional people **including people with disabilities** to assist in identifying barriers and developing solutions for removing these barriers and setting priorities for implementing improvements.
 - Bring copies of this checklist, a clipboard, a pen or pencil, and a flexible tape measure.
 - Think about each space from the perspective of people with physical, hearing, visual and cognitive disabilities, noting any areas that need improvement.
 2. Summarize, barriers and solutions
 - List barriers
 - Brainstorm ideas for their removal.
 - Consider, consult and estimate cost of proposed modifications.
 3. Make decisions and set priorities
 - Review summary of survey with pastor and pastoral council.
 - Decide on best solutions and make a time line for carrying them out.
 - Consider alternatives for the modifications that are not readily achievable.
 4. Make changes
 5. Maintain documentation
 - Keep your survey, notes, summary and a record of work completed.
 6. Follow up. Re-evaluate annually.

A C C E S S I B I L I T Y

Architectural Barriers, Interior

| <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Policy and Program Issues</u> |
|------------|-----------|---|
| ___ | ___ | Inside the building, are the main paths of travel barrier free? |
| ___ | ___ | Are aisles at least 36" wide? |
| ___ | ___ | Are counter tops at least 34" high? |
| ___ | ___ | Do doors into rooms have at least a 32" clear opening? |
| ___ | ___ | Do wheelchairs have options for seating? |
| ___ | ___ | Is the floor covering maneuverable? |
| ___ | ___ | Are door handles 48" high or less and operable with a closed fist? |
| ___ | ___ | Are all thresholds level (less than 1/4), or beveled, up to 1/2 inch high? |
| ___ | ___ | Is there a clear path (no barriers) to the altar and ambo? |
| ___ | ___ | Is there an elevator/chair lift available to other floors? |
| ___ | ___ | Are edges of stairs and edges of curbs clearly marked and visible? |
| ___ | ___ | Is there bright/additional lighting near the stairways and ramps for easy access? |

Architectural Barriers in, Restrooms

| <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Policy and Program Issues</u> |
|------------|-----------|--|
| ___ | ___ | If restrooms are available, is at least one fully accessible? |
| ___ | ___ | Does the door into the restroom open easily and allow room for a wheelchair/power scooter? |
| ___ | ___ | Is a least one stall/sink fully accessible for wheelchair/power scooter? |
| ___ | ___ | Are there grab bars? |

Other

| <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Policy and Program Issues</u> |
|------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| ___ | ___ | Are there accessible water fountains? |
| ___ | ___ | Is there an accessible public phone? |
| ___ | ___ | All signage is easy to read? |

Facts “They will bear fruit in old age. . .” (Psalm 92:14)

America’s 76 million baby boomers – currently aged 40 to 58 – are ushering in a new age of elder spirituality. Not only will they be the largest group of “senior citizens” this country has ever seen, but longer life spans mean they will be older longer. By the year 2030, one in every four Virginians will be age 60 and older, at which point, Virginia will look like Florida does today.

Be aware:

- Religion and associated activities are common among older adults: 9 of 20 older adults rate faith as important in their lives.
- Studies have shown that older people who engage in religious and spiritual practice often cope better psychologically and have better physical health than those who don’t.
- With a loss there is a natural desire to find the kind of kinship, support and sources of meaning and purpose that religious and spiritual communities offer. Those who attend religious services or who engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer or meditation, are likely to live longer, feel better and enjoy life more fully.
- Because many of the present cohort of elderly were religious in their youth, a large percentage of them will retain their religious interest as they age.
- At the time when religious support is most needed, older persons are less able to access it (due to failing health, immobility or lack of transportation).
- 40-60% of parishes are composed of retired persons.
- Although diversity is a hall mark of the senior population, some changes do accompany aging, and even healthy seniors experience losses that can affect their access, level of interest and/or capacity to receive an understand information.

What We Can Do

- Make sure to include older adults in all phases of church life.
- Develop a “senior ministry” to assure that older adults are included in all programs and to educate all members of the parish about aging issues and the positive impact that aging parishioners can bring to a church.
- With the growing loss of mobility for some older persons comes isolation and loneliness. Develop a “friendly visitor” program to check on those older members of your parish who are sick or too frail to attend church.
- “Adopt” a nursing home. Choose those residents who have no family or friends that your parishioners can visit on a regular basis.
- Develop a parish nurse program in your church. A parish nurse is a registered nurse (RN) who is also a member of the parish. As a paid health educator, the parish nurse can visit the sick and monitor the ongoing health of older parishioners as well as coordinate and train volunteers with the parish to assist in delivering a wide range of non-medical services.

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Area Agency on Aging 1-800-552-3402 or www.vda.virginia.gov

Virginia has 25 Area Agencies on Aging serving every county and city.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman is responsible for listening to concerns about the care someone is receiving in a nursing home or assisted living facility. To reach the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, call your local Area Agency on Aging (see above).

Local Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) has information about Medicare, Medicaid, and prescription drug plans. VICAP is operated by your local Area Agency on Aging. (see above).

Center on Aging at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA. The Director, Dr. Henry Simmons, co-wrote *Soulful Aging: Ministry Through the Stages of Adulthood* (Smith & Helways, 2001) and edited an online bibliography on religion, spirituality and aging. 804 254-8045 or email hsimmons@union-psce.edu.