



News Release

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VIRGINIANS BENEFIT FROM DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Beginning July 1, the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services will focus on improving the response to seniors and Virginians with disabilities who need some aid in maintaining their options for independence, safety and employment.

The agency was created by legislation signed this spring by Gov. McDonnell to take the programmatic units of the current Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and the Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA) and create a new entity with a wider menu of service options. In 2013, the adult services units from Virginia's Department of Social Services will become part of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, or DARS.

DARS will provide and advocate for the highest quality of services to help older Virginians and those with disabilities maximize and secure their employment, independence and full inclusion into society and guide the Commonwealth in preparing for an aging population.

The agency will be at the center of the Commonwealth's response to two critical emerging issues, according to DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock, who served as DRS Commissioner and VDA Interim Commissioner.

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“Many Virginians who are often referred to as ‘boomers’ or ‘seniors’ are in, or are approaching, their retirement years. They rightly expect to be secure in their efforts to age in place and to have safe options for their long-term care needs. DARS will be there for them,” Rothrock said. “Virginia is also committed to having *livable communities* for those Virginians with disabilities who are transitioning from institutions to community settings or those who wish to live and work with long-term supports and services.”

About 12 percent, or nearly 1 million, of Virginians are age 65 and older, with the number of older Virginians expected to double to 1.8 million by 2030, and about 20 percent of the population is estimated to have a disability at some point in their lifetime.

Secretary of Health and Human Resources Dr. Bill Hazel said that under Gov. McDonnell’s leadership, the new agency was created to work with community partners to be more effective in strategic planning, budgeting, program monitoring and evaluation, training and technical support. “DARS will work with older Virginians and those with disabilities and their families to realize our vision of increased options for adults and a true ‘Commonwealth of Opportunity’ for all,” he said.

The DARS website, www.vadars.org, features information on aging, employment services, community-based services, assistive technology/devices and equipment and disability determination. Consumers who visit the current DRS or VDA website automatically will be redirected to the new site. The agency’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/vadars, offers information, photos and videos on related topics.

Consumers who receive services through one of the state’s 25 Area Agencies on Aging or other “disability oriented” partners that are locally governed will continue to do so. Consumers will also be able to obtain vocational rehabilitation programming through DARS’ offices across the Commonwealth. Phone numbers for services offered by former DRS or VDA programs remain unchanged.

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For more information about the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and its services, visit www.vadars.org.