



# News Release

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## **WOODROW WILSON REHABILITATION CENTER WINS GRANT FROM NATIONAL AUTISM ORGANIZATION**

(FISHERSVILLE, Va.)— The Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center has won a \$25,000 grant to launch a pilot program that will help young adults with autism spectrum disorders develop skills to live independently and join the workforce.

The grant was recently awarded by the nonprofit organization Autism Speaks. The Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, a division of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, offers comprehensive rehabilitation services on a residential and outpatient basis for persons with physical, mental, sensory and/or emotional disabilities.

During the one-year grant, DRS vocational counselors in Fairfax and Henrico counties will work with up to 30 qualified young adults referred to the rehabilitation center for services. By collaborating on the program with the clients, their families and the staff at local employment services organizations, WWRC hopes the clients will achieve greater independence and success in the workplace.

“Young adults with autism spectrum disorders are challenged by the basics of communication and socializing and can find it difficult to establish good working relationships with colleagues and employers,” said WWRC Director Rick Sizemore. “With this grant, the center can expand its efforts to provide intensive job preparation training and develop life skills that can help these clients become valued employees.”

The grant will fund specialized training of agency vocational counselors in using assessments and intervention strategies aimed at helping individuals with autism spectrum disorders prepare them for employment and community living. Participants will be able to borrow iPod touch and similar handheld devices to learn life skills such as maintaining a daily calendar or scheduler and tracking tasks with reminder systems or visual organizers. The grant funding runs through February 2012 and the program will begin this spring.

Autism Speaks, based in New York City, is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families.

For more about WWRC, go to [www.wwrc.virginia.gov](http://www.wwrc.virginia.gov).

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The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services provides and advocates for the highest quality of services to help persons with disabilities maximize their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. Through its five regional offices, 35 field offices, and various partnerships within the private and public sector, DRS assists more than 30,000 consumers annually with services including vocational counseling, career exploration, training, assistive technology and other specialized programs that cater to individual needs. For more information, visit [www.vadrs.org](http://www.vadrs.org).