

Virginia Office for Protection & Advocacy
Board of Directors Report
To
Virginia General Assembly

The Board for the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy was created by statute, effective July 2002, 51.5-39.2 of the Virginia Code. July 2003 completed the first year of operation of the Board of Directors for the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. The Executive Director, Colleen Miller, began on April 1, 2003

The first year of meetings was focused on organizational issues and conducting the search for our new Executive Director. Our first Board meeting was held August 1 & 2, 2003 in Richmond. Day one was devoted to orientation and board training. Our first business session was conducted on the second day of that meeting. I was elected Chair and Maureen Hollowell was elected Vice Chair. We have formed a Finance Committee, an Executive Committee, several ad hoc committees (dealing with different issues) and adopted Board Bylaws.

At that first meeting in August 2002, we decided that members of the Board, in rotation, would serve as the Client Appeals Committee. More recently, at our November 19, 2003 meeting, we developed a new Client Appeals process and will offer it for public comment under the Administrative Process Act.

We have now been through the agency's priority setting process twice. The first year the Board's involvement was minimal, because the priority setting for 2003 had already begun before the Board's first meeting. It was essentially an opportunity for the Board to learn what and how priority setting had been done in the past, although the Board did formally adopt the priorities as required by law. In 2003, the Board was actively involved in the priority setting for 2004 and an effort was made to be more focused with clear measurable objectives.

The Board has taken action, at two meetings, to increase the agency's maximum employment level so as to enable the agency to be able to carry out its federal mandates more effectively.

At the August 2003, meeting, the Board decided to move its meetings to different locations around the state to enable persons with disabilities from other parts of Virginia access to our meetings. It is hoped that this will result in more awareness

and a better understanding of the agency and its work. Our first meeting under this new approach was held in Abingdon. The day prior to our November 19, 2003 Board meeting in Abingdon, we co-sponsored with the Highlands Community Services Board and the Appalachia Independence Center, a community training session on the right to Interpreter Services in Virginia.

The Board continues to meet quarterly and as needed. At each Board meeting we deal with agency related disability issues and review program progress and budget issues. Additionally, at our meetings, we participate in legal rights training sessions for the Board members before the business session begins. For example, training on the Freedom of Information Act was done at our May 21, 2003 meeting; on August 21, 2003, we had a training session on the Developmental Disabilities Act.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara S. Barrett, Chair