



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

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JAMES S. REINHARD, M.D.  
COMMISSIONER

October 5, 2007

The Honorable John H. Chichester, Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Senate of Virginia  
P.O. Box 396  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Senator Chichester:

Pursuant to Item 311 R of the *2007 Appropriations Act*, DMHMRSAS submits the quarterly report on implementation of the developmental career path program for direct service associates.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Ms. Neila Gunter, Director of Human Resources, at 786-5859 or via email, [neila.gunter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov](mailto:neila.gunter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Reinhard".

James S. Reinhard, M.D.

Enc.

Cc: The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner  
Mr. Joe Flores



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COMMISSIONER

October 5, 2007

The Honorable Vincent F. Callahan, Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
General Assembly Building, Room 947  
P.O. Box 406  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Delegate Callahan:

Pursuant to Item 311 R of the *2007 Appropriations Act*, DMHMRSAS submits the quarterly report on implementation of the developmental career path program for direct service associates.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Ms. Neila Gunter, Director of Human Resources, at 786-5859 or via email, [neila.gunter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov](mailto:neila.gunter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Reinhard".

James S. Reinhard, M.D.

Enc

cc: The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner  
Susan E. Massart

**REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
***Implementation of Career Pathway for Direct Service Associates***  
***October 1, 2007***

PROGRESS REPORT:

Competency Development – The study team has completed the specific Direct Care Associates' (DSA) competencies for each of the three levels of the DSA career pathway as described in the framework for the program (see Developmental Career Pathway Program Administration below). The full study team last met on September 11, 2007 to report on the results of the focus group sessions held at the facilities with small groups of leading Direct Service Associates. The Direct Service Associates were presented with the Career Pathway program overview, introduced to the competencies and reviewed how the competencies would be evaluated. The focus groups resulted in the Direct Service Associates providing feedback on the program that was overwhelmingly positive. Some key program administration issues were identified, resolved and edits were made to the program administration document. Review Panels are now planned to help ensure a fair and consistent evaluation of competencies across the facilities. The career pathway standards include both formal instruction credits and verified on-the-job competencies to advance through the levels of the career pathway. Formal instruction includes that obtained through community college course work and College of Direct Support.

The eight competencies are Crisis Intervention & Prevention, Information Gathering, Communications, Facilitation of Services, Documentation, Organizational Participation, Community Living Skills & Support, and Advocacy / Participant Empowerment. The competencies are observable and measurable, distinct at each level, directly tied to excellence on the job, contributes to the attainment of goals of the organization.

Next Steps: A small work team was formed to develop and roll out supervisor's training on the Direct Services Associate Career Pathway. The training will occur during October through December 2007. DSA Career Pathway orientation is planned for the 3,800 eligible Direct Service Associates beginning in January 2008 and finishing by March 31, 2008.

REPORT ON PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT  
TRAINING PROGRAM:

Direct Service Associates Assigned as Learners in the College of Direct Support  
(CDS)  
As of October 1, 2007

Facility Name	Total Direct Service Associates	Assigned as Learners in CDS
Catawba Hospital	75	58
Central State Hospital	366	208
Central VA Training Center	796	102
Commonwealth Center for Children & Adolescents	68	68
Eastern State Hospital	390	124
Hiram Davis Medical Center	61	61
Northern VA Mental Health Institute	80	80
Northern VA Training Center	309	55
Piedmont Geriatric Hospital	101	101
Southeastern VA Training Center	275	147
Southern VA Mental Health Institute	55	55
Southside VA Training Center	540	325
Southwestern VA Mental Health Institute	197	152
Southwestern VA Training Center	272	272
Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation	42	13
Western State Hospital	191	191
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,758</b>	<b>2,012</b>

As of October 1, 2007, 2,012 Direct Service Associates are assigned as Learners in the College of Direct Support Internet web-based training program. This constitutes 54% of the Direct Service Associates workforce within the sixteen state facilities across disabilities. Currently, there are 1, 368 other DMHMRSAS employees participating in the Program and benefiting from the curriculum at no extra cost (RN's, LPN's, Case Managers, and support staff). The CDS curriculum (CDS VA Partnership Program) is now currently being offered at no cost to community service boards and private provider developmental disability organizations across the Commonwealth, with them only contributing to the administration fees.

*Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation &  
Substance Abuse Services  
Direct Service Associate Career Pathway  
September 2007*

*Program Description*

Skilled direct-service workers are essential to delivering high quality service to the individuals and families served by the Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) because they provide most of the hands-on care to these fragile populations. Direct service work is physically and emotionally demanding and the working conditions are often unfavorable when compared to alternative employment possibilities for these employees. Annual turnover and vacancy rates for Direct Service Associates are among the highest for any role in State government.

To improve client service, reduce high vacancy and turnover rates, and create an improved learning environment for the Direct Service Associates (DSA) the agency proposes to create strategies that offer training, competency building and advancement opportunities for direct-care DSAs. The experience, training and development opportunities are structured in three tiers that provide increasing advancement opportunities based on attaining increased experience and competencies as a DSA. The career pathway's three tiers represent career growth opportunities for all participating DSAs.

The DSA Career Pathway includes partnerships involving DMHMRSAS, community colleges, College of Direct Support, and others that promote a rich learning and work environment for DSAs within the facilities. The career pathway will support a more motivated, experienced and competent direct-care work staff providing higher quality care and service. It is envisioned that the career pathway will improve the overall competency level of staff, lead to a more positive work place environment, raise morale and improve both recruitment and retention measures at the facilities.

The career pathway will be defined through study to identify key competencies that distinguish success on the job and are profiled at each of the three tiers in the DSA's career pathway. The key competencies have the following characteristics:

- Observable and measurable behaviors
- Distinct progression to each level (validated by qualified DSA peer leaders and supervisors/managers)
- Directly tied to excellence on the job
- Used as basis for pay increases (where funds are available)

## *Developmental Career Pathway Structure*

The competencies upon which the developmental path is based are from the Community Support Skill Standards developed nationally by the Human Services Research Institute in collaboration with the Education Development Center. The competencies identified by the Human Services Research Institute also serve as the basis for the web-based training developed by the College of Direct Support.

**Eligible sub-roles:** Direct Services Associate roles include those who function as nursing assistants, psychiatric technicians, medication assistants, mental health workers, Physical Therapy Aides, Occupational Therapy Aides, Recreational Therapy Aides or others providing direct patient or consumer care and or adult daily living support.

### **Administrative Procedures:**

#### General Steps:

- 1) Employee satisfies all eligibility, performance, academic and demonstrated competency requirements for the desired level.
- 2) Supervisors and Managers or other \*officials verify the competencies at desired level using the competency checklists.
- 3) Supervisor and Employee compiles documentation package that includes transcripts and verification of demonstrated competencies.
- 4) Documentation package submitted to HR for verification of total eligibility based on a review of all criteria (eligibility, performance, demonstrated competency verification, eligibility for base pay increase)
- 5) Documentation package submitted (by employee and supervisor) to a Review Panel comprised of peer DSAs, Training representative, HR representative, and supervisor/manager representative. Primary function is to ensure consistency in ratings and fairness in the program.
- 6) Each Facility develops a specific program plan to recognize achievement of competencies at each level and plan appropriate rewards for DSAs as they navigate the career pathway.
- 7) Salary increases will be documented on a PAW using the In-band Adjustment – Application of New Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Competencies pay action. Employees are limited to 10% In-band pay adjustments in a 12-month period.

*\*Note: Qualified DSA peer leaders may sign-off on competency verification checklists. A qualified DSA is one holding a higher-level certification in the Career Pathway.*

The developmental career pathway for qualifying DSA roles will consist of the following three levels.

## ***CERTIFICATE PATHWAY - LEVEL ONE***

### **Level One Eligibility Requirements**

- 12 months of service in one of the qualified DSA roles
- New hires to successfully complete probationary period and enroll in the DSA career pathway

### **Level One Performance Requirements**

- Receive a performance evaluation of “Contributor” or better
- No active standards of conduct (active written notice)

### **Level One Competency Requirements:**

(See Competency Profiles)

- a. Demonstration of proficiency in all competencies associated with Orientation at the facility.
- b. Successfully complete 15 courses (modules) from the College of Direct Support or 6 credit hours in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester Career Studies Certificate Program at the Community College. (Coursework at other college programs may substitute for College of Direct Support courses)

### **College of Direct Support 15 required Courses:**

- Safety at Home and in the Community (8 Lessons)
- Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults and Children (5 Lessons)
- Supporting Healthy Lives (6 Lessons)
- Individual Rights and Choices (4 Lessons)
- Community Inclusion (4 Lessons)
- Positive Behavior Support (7 Lessons)
- Documentation (4 Lessons)
- You've Got A Friend: Supporting Family Connections, Friends, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness (4 Lessons)
- Direct Support Professionalism (5 Lessons)
- Introduction to Developmental Disabilities (5 Lessons)
- Teaching People with Disabilities (4 Lessons)
- Cultural Competence (7 Lessons)
- Person-Centered Planning & Supports (5 Lessons)
- Introduction to Medication Supports (7 Lessons)
- Employment Supports: Exploring Individual Preferences and Opportunities for Job Attainment (4 Lessons)

c. Consistently demonstrate on the job proficiency at the 1<sup>st</sup> level in competencies associated with:

- Advocacy & Individual Empowerment
- Communications
- Community Living Skills & Support
- Crisis Intervention
- Documentation
- Facilitation of services
- Information Gathering (Assessments)
- Organizational Participation

Note: The requirement to “demonstrate competencies” means that competencies have been observed by the evaluator over a period of no less than six months.

### **Level One Documentation Required**

- Transcripts and supporting materials from participating Community Colleges or College of Direct Support verifying course requirements and any other qualifying continuing education document.
- Performance Evaluation forms
- Competency Assessment forms scoring specific competency areas and levels

### **Level One Reward Menu**

**Job Title:** *DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL I*

**Certificate & Card:** College of Direct Support certificate to recognize academic achievement and a Facility Certificate to recognize demonstration on the job of competencies at level one.

**Salary Increase:** Where funds are available employees may receive up to 5%.



## ***CERTIFICATE PATHWAY - LEVEL TWO***

### **Level Two Eligibility Requirements**

- Service in one of the qualified DSA roles
- Complete 24 months service enrolled in the DSA career pathway
- 12 months as a Level 1 (Direct Support Professional)

### **Level Two Performance Requirements**

- Receive a performance evaluation of “Contributor” or better
- No active standards of conduct (active written notice)

### **Level Two Competency Requirements: (See Competency Profiles)**

- a. Employee must maintain all competencies indicated at Level I.
- b. Successfully complete (18) credit hours with a Career Studies Certificate in Mental Health or Developmental Disabilities at the Community College and completion of the four (4) advanced courses offered at the College of Direct Support.

### **Community College Career Studies Certificate Program - 18 Credit Hours**

#### **MENTAL HEALTH COURSES:**

##### **Program Curriculum - 12 hours**

- HMS 100 – Introduction to Human Services
- PSY 100 – Principles of Applied Psychology
- MEN 101 – Mental Health Skills Training I
- MEN 110 – Introduction to Abnormal Psychology

##### **Credit by Experience – 6 hours**

- HMS 190 – Coordinated Practice in Human Services
- HMS 161 – Professional Skill Development for Human Services

#### **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COURSES:**

##### **Program Curriculum – 12 hours**

- HMS 100 – Introduction to Human Services
- PSY 100 – Principles of Applied Psychology
- MEN 121 – Mental Retardation I
- MEN 122 – Mental Retardation II

##### **Credit by Experience – 6 hours**

- HMS 161 – Professional Skill Development for Human Services
- HMS 190 – Coordinated Practice in Human Services

c. Consistently demonstrate on the job proficiency at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level in competencies associated with:

- Advocacy & Individual Empowerment
- Communications
- Community Living Skills & Support
- Crisis intervention
- Documentation
- Facilitation of services
- Information Gathering (Assessments)
- Organizational Participation

Note: The requirement to “demonstrate competencies” means that competencies have been observed by the evaluator over a period of no less than six months.

### **Level Two Documentation Required**

- Transcripts and supporting materials from participating Community Colleges or College of Direct Support verifying course requirements and any other qualifying continuing education document.
- Performance Evaluation forms
- Competency Assessment forms scoring specific competency areas and levels

### *Level Two Reward Menu*

**Job Title:** “*DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL II*”

**Certificate & Card:** Certificate from Community Colleges in Mental Health or Developmental Disabilities to recognize academic achievement & Certificate to recognize successful demonstration on the job of the Level 2 competencies.

**Salary Increase:** Where funds are available employees may receive up to 7.5%.

## **CERTIFICATE PATHWAY - LEVEL THREE**

### **Level Three Eligibility Requirements**

- Service in one of the recognized DSA roles
- Complete 36 months service enrolled in the DSA Career Pathway
- 12 months as a Level 2 (Direct Support Professional II)

### **Level Three Performance Requirements**

- Receive a performance evaluation of “Contributor” or better
- No active standards of conduct (active written notice)

### **Level Three Competency Requirements (See Competency Profiles)**

- a. Employee must maintain all competencies indicated at Levels I & II.
- b. Successfully complete (37-38 credit hours) a Certificate in Human Services at the Community Colleges and 9 hours of continuing education units (CEU) in leadership or related supervisory management training. *(Note: All credit hours from the Career Studies Certificate program apply towards the needed credit hours for the Certificate in Human Services.*
- c. Consistently demonstrated proficiency at 3<sup>rd</sup> level competencies associated with:
  - Advocacy & Individual Empowerment
  - Communications
  - Community Living Skills & Support
  - Crisis intervention
  - Documentation
  - Facilitation of services
  - Information Gathering (Assessments)
  - Organizational participation

Note: The requirement to “demonstrate competencies” means that competencies have been observed by the evaluator over a period of no less than six months.

### **Level Three Documentation Required**

- Transcripts and supporting materials from participating Community Colleges or College of Direct Support verifying course requirements and any other qualifying continuing education document.
- Performance Evaluation forms
- Competency Assessment forms scoring specific competency areas and levels

### **Level Three Reward Menu**

Job Title: “*DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL III*”

**Certificate & Card:** Certificate in Human Services from Community Colleges to recognize academic achievement and a Facility Certificate to recognize successful demonstration on the job of the Level 3 competencies.

**Salary Increase:** Where funds are available employees may receive up to 10%.

## COMPETENCY DICTIONARY

The following competencies are thought to exist in the work place at three distinct levels that can be observed and evaluated. Please see Competency Profiles for descriptions of the three competency pathway levels. These descriptions are intended to help operationalize the competencies for supervisor's and DSA's use as they navigate the DSA career pathways. See Competency Checklists for assessment standards on each level of the eight competencies.

**Advocacy & Empowerment** – knowledge about the diverse challenges facing participants (human rights, legal, administrative and financial) and should be able to identify and use effective advocacy strategies to overcome such challenges.

**Communication** – knowledge about the range of effective communication strategies and skills necessary to establish a collaborative relationship with the individual.

**Community Living Skills and Support** – ability to match specific supports and interventions to the unique needs of individual participants and recognizes the importance of friends, family and community relationships.

**Crisis Prevention & Intervention** – knowledge about crisis prevention, intervention and resolution techniques to particular circumstances and individuals.

**Documentation** – aware of the requirements for documentation in the organization and is able to manage these requirements efficiently.

**Facilitation of Services** – Knowledge about a range of participatory planning techniques and is skilled in implementing plans in a collaborative and expeditious manner.

**Information Gathering** – knowledge of formal and informal assessment practices in order to respond to the needs, desires and interests of the individuals.

**Organizational Participation** – familiar with the mission and practices of the support organization and participates in the life of the organization. .