



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

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July 1, 2008

The Honorable Lacey E. Putney, Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
General Assembly Building, Room 947  
P.O. Box 406  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Delegate Putney:

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 786-0607 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'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'R'.

James S. Reinhard, M.D.

Enc

cc: The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner  
Susan E. Massart



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July 1, 2008

The Honorable Charles J. Colgan, Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Senate of Virginia  
P.O. Box 396  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Senator Colgan:

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 786-0607 or via email, [neila.gunter@co.dmhmsas.virginia.gov](mailto:neila.gunter@co.dmhmsas.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Reinhard'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then loops back under the name.

James S. Reinhard, M.D.

Enc.  
Cc: The Honorable Marilyn Tavenner  
Mr. Joe Flores

**REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
***Implementation of Career Pathway for Direct Service Associates***  
***July 1, 2008***

BACKGROUND:

This report is a quarterly update on the progress of the direct services associates' training and the development of career pathways, as directed in both the 2006 and 2007 *Appropriations Act* (Item 311 R) directing that the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) "...implement a developmental career path program for direct service associates at mental health treatment centers and mental retardation training centers. The funds shall be used to provide training and educational programs and to increase salaries to qualifying direct service associates."

Current rates of staff turnover are significantly higher than the state average and result in excessive overtime costs for our facilities. The career path program under development will provide training and salary increases to these valuable direct care employees who have fulfilled skill and competency requirements and who demonstrate higher-level competencies on the job.

Prior to the 2006 General Assembly allocation, efforts began in 2003 through a pilot program funded by DMHMRSAS and the Department of Business Assistance (DBA) to begin to address the significant difficulty in recruiting and retaining quality direct care personnel. The College of Direct Support was funded by DMHMRSAS in 2005, with the formation of a workforce advisory council that included stakeholders throughout the system. The DSA Career Pathway was identified as a priority in the agency's workforce development plan.

PROGRESS REPORT:

Because in this legislative session the funding for the program was less than expected the rollout sessions that were planned to begin in the months of December and January were delayed. These sessions were to introduce to the Direct Service Associates (DSA) and their supervisors the DSP Career Pathway program. With funding uncertain only some implementation plans continued. With the limited funding available, 804 Direct Service Associates who completed all academic modules from the College of Direct Support were granted a one-time retention bonus of \$720 that was paid June 16, 2008. In addition, they received a \$28.25 employee recognition award.

The pathway program calls for DSAs to receive competency evaluations by their supervisors and those evaluations to be reviewed by a Review Panel. Upon completing all academic, competency and performance requirements the DSAs should become eligible to receive recognition at the 1<sup>st</sup> competency level in the DSP Career Pathway. With the limited funding it is recommended that, rather than grant base pay increases, other recognition awards and perhaps small one-time bonus increases be provided to the DSAs after 6 months of satisfactorily demonstrating the identified competencies at that level. This pay out could

occur in December 2008. Also, we expect to continue providing to those DSAs who complete all eligibility, performance and College of Direct Support academic requirements of fifteen (15) modules, a small one-time bonus.

The Review Panels at each facility will help ensure a fair and consistent evaluation of competencies across the facilities and across the agency. 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 Community college course work and College of Direct Support on-line courses.

As a reminder, 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, and contribute to the attainment of goals of the organization.

Next Steps: On July 31, 2008 the full development team will meet to discuss administrative issues such as how to proceed with the program given current funding and whether it is feasible to proceed to compensate with one-time bonuses to those DSAs who achieve level 1. Finally, we intend to submit a request for additional funding in the next legislative session to help fully implement the DSP Career Pathway including competency evaluations and on-going program monitoring and adjustment as necessary.

**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 July 1, 2008**

Facility Name	Total Direct Service Associates	Assigned as Learners in CDS
Catawba Hospital	76	63
Central State Hospital	416	190
Central VA Training Center	767	50
Commonwealth Center for Children & Adolescents	71	65
Eastern State Hospital	366	214
Hiram Davis Medical Center	63	63
Northern VA Mental Health Institute	70	70
Northern VA Training Center	275	84
Piedmont Geriatric Hospital	104	104
Southeastern VA Training Center	260	142
Southern VA Mental Health Institute	59	59

Southside VA Training Center	624	342
Southwestern VA Mental Health Institute	172	172
Southwestern VA Training Center	287	287
Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation	38	38
Western State Hospital	244	244
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,892</b>	<b>2,187</b>

As of July 1, 2008, 2,187 Direct Service Associates are assigned as Learners in the College of Direct Support Internet web-based training program. This constitutes 56% of the Direct Service Associates workforce within the sixteen state facilities across disabilities. Currently, there are 1,594 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 intellectual 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  
April 1, 2008*

***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 workforce. 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 for the DSA workforce that comprises approximately one-third of the Department's total workforce.

The career pathway has been 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) Where funds are available and employee satisfies all eligibility, performance and College of Direct Support academic requirements, i.e. fifteen (15) modules, the employee becomes eligible for a base pay increase when fully funded.
- 2) Employee satisfies all eligibility, performance, academic and demonstrated competency requirements for the desired level.
- 3) Supervisors and Managers or other officials verify the competencies at desired level using the competency checklists.
- 4) Supervisor and Employee compiles documentation package that includes transcripts and verification of demonstrated competencies.
- 5) 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 when fully funded)
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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 level. (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 consistently 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 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 level 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 consistently 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 participating 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 participating 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 consistently 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 participating 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 supervisors 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. .