

**PROTECTION and ADVOCACY for BENEFICIARIES of SOCIAL SECURITY (PABSS)**

**ANNUAL PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**REPORTING PERIOD: From 10/1/2011 To 9/30/2012**

**GRANT AWARD NUMBER: 17-B-20051-3-05**

**STATE: VA**

**AGENCY NAME: VIRGINIA - Virginia Office for Protection & Advocacy**

**AGENCY ADDRESS: 1910 Byrd Avenue  
Suite 5  
Richmond, VA 23230**

**REPORT PREPARED BY: Robert Gray**

**TELEPHONE NUMBER: 8042252042**

**FAX NUMBER: 8046627057**

**E-MAIL ADDRESS: colleen.miller@vopa.virginia.gov**

**DATE SUBMITTED: 7/30/2013**

**Part I - Quantitative Statistics****Section A: Information and Referral**

1. How many individuals received Information and Referral under the PABSS program during the Report Period? (Do not count individuals more than once for this response.)

Individuals Receiving I&R	1243
---------------------------	------

2. How many Information and Referral requests were made under the PABSS program during the report period? (Include all I&R requests, even if more than one for some individuals. This number should equal or exceed Section A. 1.)

Information and Referral Requests	1249
-----------------------------------	------

**Section B: Individuals and Issue Area Service Requests/Workload Statistics****1. Individuals**

a. How many individuals had open PABSS issue area service requests at the start of the report period?	5
b. How many new PABSS individuals were added during the report period?	15
<b>Total Individuals Served</b>	<b>20</b>
c. Total number of individuals with all issue area service requests that were closed during the report period under the PABSS program	16
<b>Total Individuals Still Being Served</b>	<b>4</b>

**2. Services**

a. Total PABSS issue area service requests open at the start of the report period.	7
b. Number of new PABSS issue area service requests added during the report period?	24
<b>Total Services</b>	<b>31</b>
c. Total number of issue area service requests closed during the report period?	27
<b>Total Services Still Open</b>	<b>4</b>

**Section C: Individual Demographics**

1. Please provide counts of individuals served by Gender:

a. Male	5
b. Female	10
<b>Total individuals receipted</b>	<b>15</b>

**2. Please provide counts of individuals served by Ethnicity:**

a. Alaskan Native	0
b. American Indian	0
c. Arab American (Middle Eastern)	0
d. Asian	0
e. Black (Not Hispanic/Latino Origin)	7
f. Hispanic/Latino	1
g. Multi Racial / Multi Cultural	0
h. Pacific Islander	0
i. White (Not Hispanic/Latino Origin)	6
j. Unknown	1
Other (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)	0
<b>Total individuals received</b>	<b>15</b>

**3. Please provide counts of individuals received by Age Bracket:**

a. 14 to 18	0
b. 19 to 21	1
c. 22 to 40	6
d. 41 to 59	8
e. 60 to 64	0
<b>Total individuals received</b>	<b>15</b>

**4. Please provide counts of individuals received by Beneficiary Status.**

a. SSI eligible	3
b. SSDI eligible	11
c. Dually eligible	1
<b>Total individuals received</b>	<b>15</b>

**5. Please provide counts of individuals received by Primary Disability:**

a. Absence of extremities	0
b. Autism	1
c. Auto-immune (lupus, thyroid, ALS, etc.)	0
d. Blindness (both eyes)	1
e. Cancer	0
f. Cerebral palsy	1
g. Deaf-blind	0
h. Deafness	0

<b>i. Diabetes</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>j. Digestive disorders (chronic pancreatitis, esophageal stricture, fistulae, chronic liver, etc.)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>k. Epilepsy</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>l. Genitourinary conditions (kidney, prostate, etc.)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>m. Hard of Hearing (not deaf)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>n. Heart and other circulatory problems including cardiovascular</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>o. HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>p. Mental illness (diagnosis according to DSM-IV)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>q. Mental retardation</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>r. Multiple sclerosis</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>s. Muscular dystrophy</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>t. Muscular / Skeletal impairment (arthritis, fibromyalgia, osteogenesis imperfecta, osteomyelitis, etc.)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>u. Neurological disorders (brain tumors, convulsive disorders, Parkinson, etc.)</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>v. Other emotional/behavioral (Provide detail)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>w. Other intellectual such as ADD/ADHD (Provide detail)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>x. Physical / orthopedic including spinal cord injuries, paraplegia, quadriplegia, back problems, etc.</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>y. Respiratory disorders (emphysema, asthma, pulmonary hypertension, cystic fibrosis, etc.)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>z. Specific learning disabilities (SLD)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>aa. Speech impairment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>bb. Spina bifida</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>cc. Substance abuse (alcohol or drugs)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>dd. Tourette syndrome</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ee. Traumatic brain injury (TBI)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>ff. Visual Impairment (not blind)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>gg. Disability not known/Other than Above (Specify)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total individuals receipted</b>	<b>15</b>

#### **Section D: Major Source of Concern**

Please Provide counts of all PABSS issue are service request receipts by major source of individual's concern for the current report period:

<b>1. State Vocational Rehab Agency (public VR program)</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Employment Networks (SSA contractor)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>3. Agencies other than 1. or 2. above</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>4. Employment discrimination – hire, fire, promotion</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>5. Employment wages and benefits</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>6. Housing</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>7. Healthcare (not 5 above)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>8. Insufficient/improper benefits planning</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>9. Transition services (Student beneficiary between 14-18 (or under age 22) engaging/needing a transition plan)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>10. Post Secondary accommodation</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>11. Transportation</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>12. Social Security benefits cessation based on SGA (including CDR's) – not Overpayment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>13. Benefits Questions/Work Incentives – Not 12 or 14</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>14. Work Related Overpayment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>15. Other (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total issues/service requests of individuals receipted.</b>	<b>24</b>

### **Section E: Closed Issue Area Service Requests**

#### **1. What was the problem/sub-problem area?**

<b>a. [AT] Assistive Technology</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>b. [Education] Transition school to work</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>c. [Employment] Discrimination in employment benefits</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>d. [Employment] Discrimination in hiring</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>e. [Employment] Unlawful termination / firing</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>f. [Employment] Other employment discrimination</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>g. [Employment] Reasonable accommodation – not d, e, or f from above</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>h. [Employment] Service provider issues – not c-g above</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>i. [Employment] Wage and hour issues</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>j. [Financial Entitlements] SSI: Overpayments based on work issues</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>k. [Financial Entitlements] SSDI: Overpayments based on work issues</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>l. [Financial Entitlements] (other) – Specify</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>m. [Healthcare] Medicaid only issues</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>n. [Healthcare] Medicare/Medicaid issues</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>o. [Healthcare] Medicare only issues</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>p. [Healthcare] Private Insurance Issues</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>q. [Housing] Accommodations in housing</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>r. [Housing] Subsidized housing/Section 8</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>s. [Housing] Rental termination – not q .</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>t. [Housing] Other – Specify</b>	<b>0</b>

u. [Childcare]	0
v. [Rehab Services] Related to State VR	14
w. [Rehab Services] Related to Employment Network (EN)	0
x. [Rehab Services] Related to Agencies other than State VR or Employment Network (EN)	0
y. [Post-Secondary Ed] Accessibility	0
z. [Post-Secondary Ed] Funding issues	0
aa. [Post-Secondary Ed] Grievance Against College – Not y or z above	0
bb. [Post-Secondary Ed] Other – Specify	0
cc. [Services] Personal assistance – not Employment	0
dd. [Transportation]	0
ee. [Benefits Planning] referral / access to BPAO services	2
ff. [Other] (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)	0
<b>Total closed issue area service requests.</b>	<b>27</b>

## 2. What was the reason for closing the individual's issue area service request?

a. Issue Resolved in Individual's Favor	17
b. Issue Partially Resolved in Individual's Favor	8
c. Issue Lacked Legal Merit	0
d. Individual decided not to pursue resolution or Individual Withdrew Complaint (Not e-g below)	0
e. Other Representation Obtained (Individual found other representation)	2
f. Individual Not Responsive to Agency / Individual refused to cooperate with P&A	0
g. Services Not Needed Due to lost contact, Death, Relocation, etc.	0
h. Advocacy efforts/appeals were unsuccessful (Issue not resolved in Individual's Favor)	0
i. Other (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)	0
<b>Total closed issue area service requests.</b>	<b>27</b>

## 3. What was the highest intervention strategy used?

a. Short Term/Technical assistance	12
b. Informal Resolution	0
c. Investigation/Monitoring	0
d. Negotiation	6
e. Mediation / Alternative Dispute Resolution	0
f. Administrative Remedies	5
g. Legal remedy / Litigation	4
h. Class Action Suits	0

<b>i. Systemic / Policy activities</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total closed issue area service requests.</b>	<b>27</b>

**4. As a result of P&A intervention, the following major outcome was achieved:**

<b>a. Individual gained / maintained access to services including those of VR, EN or other agency</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>b. Individual obtained employment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>c. Individual regained employment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>d. Individual maintained employment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>e. Individual advanced in employment</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>f. Individual's employment opportunities increased</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>g. Individual obtained an increase in salary and/or benefits</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>h. Validity of discrimination complaint was upheld</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>i. Overpayment situation addressed (it doesn't matter if it was waived or the efforts weren't successful)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>j. Individual acquired knowledge concerning his/her rights</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>k. Outcome information is not available</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>l. Other outcome (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total outcomes of closed issue area service requests.</b>	<b>27</b>

**Part II - Narrative Reporting**

**Section A: Description of Progress and Status Update**

Please provide a brief overview of overall project status, staff changes, staff training or other major developments with regard to the PABSS program. This could include information about boards and committees where decisions are made concerning disability service delivery and local policy.

The Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy's (VOPA) PABSS program operated successfully, assisting Social Security beneficiaries who are attempting to return or are in the process of returning to work. Using FY 2012 PABSS Program, VOPA provided training and outreach to 533 individuals, information and referral to 1243 individuals, and case level services for 20 individuals.

VOPA participates on the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and the SRC for the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires the establishment of a Statewide Rehabilitation Council to be appointed by the Governor. The amendments identify specific organizations or individuals, including current or former recipients of vocational rehabilitation services, to be represented on the councils. Until FY 2012, VOPA staff fully participated in both council meetings, although the Governor did not make any formal appointments for VOPA staff for either council.

**In FY 2012, Virginia's Governor appointed a VOPA Disability Rights Advocate to the DARS SRC. This council provides advice to DARS regarding vocational services provided pursuant to Title I and Title VI of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, including development of the State plan and completion of the federally required needs assessment. VOPA's involvement in this SRC positively impacted Virginians with disabilities. For example, in FY 2012, DARS decided to make changes about its appeal policy, including language that would have changed how often appeal rights are given when an individual is denied services. Due to the Disability Rights Advocate's advocacy on DARS SAC, DARS dropped this language. Therefore, whenever an individual's Individualized Plan for Employment is changed, he or she is provided information about his or her appeal rights.**

**Also, the Governor appointed a VOPA Disability Rights Advocate to DBVI SRC in late FY 2012. This SRC provides advice for creating opportunities in career development and employment-related services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.**

**Under a separate contract with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), we conducted on-site investigations of sixteen (16) Social Security Administration (SSA) Representative Payee organizations in Virginia. PABBS funds were used to initiate these investigations until NDRN approved and paid for completed investigations. Of the sixteen (16) representative payee organizations reviewed, fifteen (15) also provided housing services for the beneficiary. None of the representative payees reviewed were also employers of the Social Security beneficiaries. Every organization investigated was the representative payee for at least five beneficiaries. Our investigations consisted of reviewing financial records, examining living conditions, and interviews with both representative payee organization staff and SSA-designated beneficiaries. Two (2) of the reviews identified improper funds management, in that the representative payee was commingling SSA beneficiary funds with the general business operating accounts. No loss of beneficiary funds was found, and VOPA offered technical assistance to the representative payee on proper funds management, providing a copy of the SSA publication "A Guide For Representative Payees." These irregularities were also reported to SSA for follow-up.**

**In addition to the NDRN representative payee investigations, VOPA served two (2) individual clients with Representative Payee funds. These matters focused on providing individuals with practical, how-to information on requesting a change in a representative payee and general representative payee responsibilities.**

**VOPA's PABSS-trained staff included the following: two (2) Managing Attorneys, two (2) staff attorneys, and two (2) Disability Rights Advocates. Also, the Executive Director, one (1) Managing Attorney, and one (1) Disability Rights Advocate have achieved the required security clearances to work on the Representative Payee Review Project.**

**VOPA hired one (1) Data Analyst and two (2) Disability Rights Advocates in FY 2012. VOPA's Deputy Director resigned in FY 2012. This position remains vacant. VOPA created four (4) coordinator positions to assume the responsibilities and duties of the**

Deputy Director for the following newly-created programs: Quality Assurance and Compliance, Volunteer and Council, and Staff Training and Development. Furthermore, one (1) Managing Attorney, one (1) Staff Attorney, and one (1) Disability Rights Advocate resigned in FY 2012. However, these resignations had no effect on the implementation of the PABSS advocacy work.

No later than January 1, 2014, VOPA will convert from a state agency to a private non-profit pursuant to state law. VOPA's Governing Board fully supports this conversion. During the 2012 Session, the Virginia General Assembly passed, and the Governor of Virginia signed, House Bill 1230. The law requires VOPA's Executive Director to complete a transition plan and to create a private non-profit capable of assuming the duties of the state's designated protection and advocacy system. The law also requires that the Governor redesignate VOPA as a private non-profit by January 1, 2014. This conversion will likely lead to the reorganization of VOPA staff while preserving the implementation of PABSS advocacy work.

### **Section B: Detail of Actions Taken on the Project**

1. Issue Area Service Requests Summaries: [Please provide summaries of three Issues/Service Requests undertaken as part of the PABSS project. Indicate clearly the issue or problem, the PABSS intervention, and the results if known]

Example 1: Janet, who has various physical and learning disabilities, applied for services from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). DARS had doubts about Janet's ability to work, and therefore, assigned her to a Trial Work Experience ("Application T") status. DARS placed Janet into a trial work position with Goodwill Industries. Janet got sick during her trial work. Consequently, she took longer than originally planned to complete the trial work experience. Janet told VOPA that DARS discriminated against her because she got sick and took a long time to complete her trial work experience at Goodwill. Specifically, DARS found that she was too disabled to benefit from vocational rehabilitation and found her ineligible based on one trial work experience. VOPA represented Janet to contest the finding of ineligibility. VOPA filed an appeal of the decision through DARS' Informal Administrative Review (IAR) procedure. VOPA emphasized that state and federal regulations require DARS to provide clients with a variety of trial work experiences before determining that they are too disabled to benefit from vocational rehabilitation. In Janet's case, DARS provided only one work experience at Goodwill, contradicting the required provision of variety of trial work experiences. Moreover, Goodwill is not an integrated setting for assessments. VOPA submitted the IAR and then met with DARS' regional manager to advocate for the decision to be reversed. The DARS manager agreed that DARS was wrong to find Janet ineligible after only one trial work experience. The manager ordered DARS to develop a new trial work plan and to provide Janet with new assessments and a variety of trial work experiences, with appropriate supports, to determine if she is eligible for DARS' services. Janet was pleased to have a new trial work plan. Due to VOPA's advocacy, Janet was ultimately found eligible for DARS vocational services.

Example 2: Tom, an individual with intellectual disabilities, contacted VOPA, stating

that he had been assessed with an overpayment of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). VOPA reviewed Tom's records and determined that he had a good case to request a waiver of the overpayment. It appeared that the Social Security Administration (SSA) miscalculated. Specifically, VOPA found that SSA did not apply a work subsidy when it did its most recent work review of Tom's work record, resulting in the overpayment. On Tom's behalf, VOPA contacted SSA to advocate for a waiver of Tom's overpayment. VOPA worked closely with SSA's Area Work Incentives Coordinator (AWIC) and explained SSA's error. As a result, SSA properly applied Tom's subsidy and overturned its assessment of their original finding of an overpayment. In addition, SSA awarded Tom two months of back payment of benefits. Tom steadily worked during this entire process of the overpayment issue. Despite the overpayment issue, Tom did not quit his job as he was confident that the issue would resolve itself. Tom continues to enjoy working at the pizza place where he has worked for years. Due to VOPA's advocacy and education, Tom now understands how to use appropriate work incentives from SSA, including the subsidy.

**Example 3:** Sam, who has Down syndrome, contacted VOPA to challenge DARS' finding of ineligibility, saying he was too severely disabled to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services. VOPA represented Sam in an appeal of the decision. After a full hearing, the hearing officer found DARS made an error in its finding and ordered DARS to find Sam eligible. DARS then appealed the hearing officer's decision. VOPA represented Sam in the appeal. The appeal officer affirmed the hearing officer's decision. Sam then asked VOPA to advocate for him to receive an appropriate Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). On Sam's behalf, VOPA requested DARS to complete assessments to determine his strengths and areas of need. VOPA and Sam then met with DARS to review the assessments. Although the assessments showed some barriers to employment, VOPA advocated for DARS to provide services and supports to help Sam overcome his barriers. For instance, he worked at a restaurant and enrolled in a skills development center to address his barriers to full-time employment. Sam recently completed his work assignment at the restaurant. He is now working with DARS to determine an appropriate vocational goal and to develop his IPE. Sam enjoyed his assessments and looks forward to obtaining employment.

**Example 4:** Sara, an individual with physical and mental disabilities, contacted VOPA complaining that DARS had improperly closed her case. Sara said she did not receive appropriate notice of her case closure. She further stated that she did not reach her maximum employment level. VOPA reviewed Sara's complaint and found that DARS did close her case, but failed to provide her notice of the closure until months later after her appeal timeframe ended. VOPA also found that the reason for case closure was inappropriate, as Sara had not reached her maximum employment potential. VOPA represented Sara to contest the closure. VOPA filed an appeal of the closure through DARS Informal Administrative Review process. VOPA then met with Sara and DARS regional manager to advocate for Sara's case closure to be reversed. The regional manager agreed that the case was improperly closed and that DARS did not provide proper notice of the closure. VOPA and Sara worked with the manager to develop an appropriate plan for Sara, which included meeting with the area benefits coordinator to ensure that she understands how returning to work could affect her disability benefits. VOPA also negotiated for Sara to receive increased Vocational

Rehabilitation (VR) services.

## 2. Outreach Statistics:

<b>Total Number of Outreach/Presentations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total Number of Persons Reached by Outreach/ Presentation Events</b>	<b>533</b>

## 3. Other Information Dissemination Activities: (Number of Instances)

<b>1. Radio/TV appearances by PABSS staff</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2. Newspaper/Magazine/Journal articles prepared by staff</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>3. PSAs/videos/films aired by the Agency</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>4. Reports disseminated</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>5. Publications/Booklets/Brochures disseminated</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>6. Number of Website hits</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>7. Other media activities (IF SELECTED MUST SPECIFY)</b>	<b>140</b>
Annual Report to General Assembly members	140

**4. Outreach Narrative: [Describe the agency's outreach efforts. Describe the trainings presented by the staff including information about the topics covered, the purpose of the training, and a description of the attendees. Describe media events, informational materials developed or other activities undertaken as part of the PABSS project.]**

**Due to limited PABSS funding, VOPA conducted many outreach and training related to PABSS work in conjunction with other funding streams. It is logical to our constituents and more practical for VOPA to provide presentations and training on related topics regardless of the funding source. VOPA uses printed PABSS-related materials that were developed by another entity and previously approved by SSA.**

**To educate about options and barriers regarding transition from school to work, VOPA presented statewide outreach and trainings to diverse groups about a variety of topics including, but not limited to, employment rights under the ADA, work incentives for Social Security beneficiaries, and vocational rehabilitation services. For example, VOPA gave two (2) presentations to 38 high school students, teachers, and Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) case workers. VOPA also participated in a fair for high school students, providing the above-mentioned information to at least 100 students and their families. Furthermore, VOPA conducted trainings for five (5) child-advocacy organizations, comprising of 73 students, parents, teachers, and advocates. With an added focus of special education rights of children in foster care, VOPA gave two presentations to 31 foster care or adoptive parents and advocates.**

**To educate individuals about work incentives and barriers to work for Social Security beneficiaries, VOPA trained 55 clients and staff of DARS and Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) at two separate locations – Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) and Virginia Rehab Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI). Both locations serve individuals statewide, including those from underserved areas.**

To inform clients at WWRC and regional DARS offices, DRS staff, clients at state and private rehabilitation centers, and consumer and advocacy groups, VOPA conducted 10 trainings to 321 individuals regarding employment rights and protections under the ADA and Virginia Disabilities Act. VOPA conducted several of the presentations via Skype, a group video over the Internet, which allowed VOPA to reach more individuals in diverse and underserved geographical areas.

VOPA developed an “annual report” for the members of the General Assembly and to be used with other audiences.

VOPA maintains a website that posts the following: our federal grants’ goals and objectives, notices for the Board of Directors’ and VOPA’s Advisory Councils’ meetings, job vacancies, announcements, VOPA publications, and disability-related links. The annual public comment process is also posted and visitors can participate online.

Through our Speakers Bureau, VOPA routinely provides training, speaking engagements, and presentations that are related to the Office’s current Goals, Focus Areas, and Objectives (priorities). There is a link on the VOPA website for public to request for a Speaker’s Bureau presentation. VOPA also provides exhibits and materials for fairs, conferences, and meetings on request. Whenever a presentation is conducted about VOPA in general, it addresses some of the work we do related to work incentives and Social Security issues.

VOPA uses a “VOPA alert,” an email distribution list service to communicate with our constituents. In the past year, “VOPA alert” notified constituents of important legal and legislative developments, as well as changes in other service agencies.

VOPA also uses “The Directors’ Blog” on our website. VOPA offers this blog to alert the public about VOPA activities, as well as news and developments in disability law. VOPA also uses the blog to obtain feedback about our work.

### **Section C: Problems Encountered and Steps Taken to Resolve Problems**

Problems encountered and steps taken to resolve problems: [Please provide detail information about problems encountered in implementing or administering the PABSS program and actions you have taken to resolve the problems you encountered.]

VOPA has a strong and positive working relationship with the Area Work Incentives Coordinators. We continue to have problems communicating with local SSA staff. We also encounter limited PABSS funding to serve individuals with disabilities to gain or maintain employment. Despite the willingness and preference of many individuals with disabilities to work, SSA limits our ability to address overpayment work and to provide assistance and education on the available valuable work incentives. Therefore, many individuals continue to misperceive that beneficiaries with disabilities who gain employment will lose benefits or will experience painful overpayment situations.

**Section D: Planned Future Activities**

**Planned activities: [Please provide activities you plan to undertake to further the objectives of the PABSS project.]**

**VOPA accepts cases that we believe will have a strong systemic impact on the lives of Virginians with disabilities. We will continue to open a targeted number of individual cases in order to obtain systemic reform and to make a significant impact on a much larger population group. VOPA plans its objectives based on the needs within the state, not by funding stream or specific disabilities. Some of the identified estimated cases and proposed activities may be addressed in conjunction with other funding streams, but the result is still a positive impact on PABSS-eligible individuals.**

**VOPA will continue to provide trainings about work incentives, to offer information and referral, and to represent beneficiaries attempting to gain, maintain, or re-gain employment.**

**Section E: Diversification Activities**

**Diversification activities: [Please provide a description of activities undertaken to address the needs of individuals with disabilities from diverse ethnic and racial communities.]**

**VOPA has two (2) Advisory Councils: The Disabilities Advisory Council (DAC) and the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illnesses (PAIMI) Advisory Council. The Councils' primary responsibility is to advise the protection and advocacy system on policies and priorities to be carried out in protecting individuals with disabilities. This function helps VOPA to identify underserved and unserved Virginians.**

**In FY 2011, VOPA translated 12 of its publications into Spanish, using other funding. We completed the translations and posted them on our website in FY 2012.**

**VOPA provided several PABSS-related trainings in southwestern and western Virginia where individuals with disabilities are historically underserved by disability-related service providers and advocacy efforts, due to these areas' rural nature and economic climate. VOPA conducted trainings at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) and Virginia Rehab Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) in Richmond, VA. Both locations serve individuals statewide, including those from underserved areas.**