People with Disabilities Have a Past, Present, and Future!

Virginia Disability History Timeline

This timeline is designed to provide you with the rich history of persons with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. If you have a disability or know someone who is disabled, it is important to remember how people with disabilities were treated and the successes in the disability rights movement in order to continue to move forward. This timeline provides a historical perspective on some key dates of the rich history of disability in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Some key federal legislation and landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions have been included to provide you with a national context and how their impact on disability history in Virginia. Youth with disabilities in Virginia have been the impetus to this timeline in remembering people with disabilities who experienced segregation and isolation in society. This still continues today and we need to remember the past in order to move forward. This timeline will be a tool to educate people who are interested in the history of people with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. From this timeline you can explore the history of Virginia, although the timeline is not meant to be a comprehensive document.
**Eastern Lunatic Asylum, Williamsburg, VA, opened**
Now is known as Eastern State Hospital, this place has the distinction of being the first public facility in the United States constructed solely for the care and treatment of people with mental health needs.

**Western Lunatic Asylum, Staunton, VA, opened**
In 1894 Western Lunatic Asylum changed its name to Western State Hospital.

**Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind, Staunton, VA, opened**

**Central Lunatic Asylum, Petersburg, VA, opened**
Now known as Central State Hospital. The hospital was former Confederate Facility, known as Howard’s Grove Hospital, and was designated as a mental health hospital for African-Americans. In 1967 the hospital opened its doors to accept patients regardless of race.
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Virginia Association of the Deaf established</td>
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| 1887 | Southwestern Lunatic Asylum, Marion, VA, opened  
Now known as Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute. |
| 1900 | Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind, Hampton, VA, opened  
In 1909 designated for Colored Deaf and Blind Children. |
| 1906 | Catawba Hospital, Catawba, VA, opened  
Catawba Hospital began as a health resort. In 1909 the health resort converted to a tuberculosis sanatorium. In 1972 the Commonwealth of Virginia opened the hospital as a treatment and rehabilitation center for people with mental health needs. |
| 1909 | Virginia State Epileptic Colony, Lynchburg, VA, opened  
Now known as Central Virginia Training Center. Previous names included; 1919 State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded; 1940 Lynchburg State Colony; 1954 Lynchburg Training School and Academy; 1983 Central Virginia Training Center. Training Center. The center is an institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities. |

1917  Federal Law: Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act becomes law

1917  Piedmont Sanatorium, Burkeville, VA, opened

1918  Federal Law: Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act becomes law
The act established a vocational education program for returning veterans with and without disabilities.

1920  Federal Law: Smith-Fess Vocational Rehabilitation Act becomes law
This act established a civilian vocational education program, which is administered at the state level.

1922  Industrial Commission and State Superintendent for Public Instruction established
The Commission and the State Superintendent were established to administer the rehabilitation program.

Commission for the Blind established
Beginning of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

1923  Virginia Mental Hygiene Association established
Now known as Mental Health America of Virginia.

1925  Virginia Industries for the Blind established
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| 1927 | U.S. Supreme Court: *Buck vs Bell*  
Virginia based case stated that forced sterilization was constitutional for people with mental disabilities. |
| 1928 | Division of Vocational Education established under the State Department of Education  
This division eventually became the Department of Rehabilitative Services. |
| 1930 | DeJarnette Center for Human Development, Staunton, VA, opened  
Now known as Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents. Originally it was a private pay mental health facility and eventually designated for children with mental health needs. |
| 1935 | Federal Law: Social Security Act became law  
Provided federal old age benefits and grants to the states for assistance to blind people and children with disabilities. |
| 1938 | Special Education Program established  
During the 1938-39 Session, the General Assembly appropriated $50,000 per year for the 1938-1940 biennium budget. |
| 1940 | Federal Law: National Mental Health Act became law  
The act created a significant funding stream for mental health education and the National Institute of Health. |
| 1946 | |
Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville, VA opened
State operated comprehensive rehabilitation center. The Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center is the first state-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation center in the country.

Parent Movement began
Across the nation, parents of children with disabilities began to organize into groups. In Virginia groups such as The Arc and Parent to Parent, American autistic Society, and the Down Syndrome Association chapters began to form in the 1960’s and still growing.

Association for Retarded Citizens of Virginia established
Now Known as The Arc of Virginia.

Federal Law: Civil Rights Act became law
Significant impact on subsequent disability rights legislation.

Federal Law: Social Security Act Amended, establishing Medicare and Medicaid

State Law: Community Services Boards and Behavioral Health Authorities created.
Community Services Boards and Behavioral Health Authorities are local government agencies created by the Code of Virginia and amended through the years to govern delivery of community-based mental health, intellectual disability, and substance use disorder services to citizens with those disabilities.

Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute, Falls Church, VA, opened
State mental health hospital.
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Disability Rights Movement began&lt;br&gt;Specific disability groups such as the Deaf and the Blind have been advocating for their rights since the late 19th century. During the 1970’s people with disabilities began to work together to exercise their rights. This movement led to the formation of Centers of Independent Living, People First chapters, and other groups for people with disabilities across the nation.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Federal Law: Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Act became law&lt;br&gt;This act provided comprehensive services for individuals with mental disabilities and developmental disabilities through a partnership with states.</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Southside Virginia Training Center, Petersburg, VA, opened&lt;br&gt;The Center is an institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Southeastern Virginia Training Center, Chesapeake, VA, opened&lt;br&gt;The Center is an institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities.</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia: Mills v. Board of Education&lt;br&gt;Decided that every school aged child is entitled to a free public education regardless of the nature or severity of the individual’s disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>U.S. District Court for Pennsylvania: PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;Decided that every school aged child is entitled to a free public education regardless of the nature or severity of the individual’s disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council established&lt;br&gt;Later known as the Department of the Rights of Virginians with Disabilities and eventually became the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.</td>
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1973

**Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Richmond, VA, opened**

**Federal Law: Rehabilitation Act, including Section 504, becomes law**
Section 504 prohibited the discrimination based on disability from business and other entities that received federal funds, grants, and contracts.

**Northern Virginia Training Center, Fairfax, VA, opened**
The Center is an institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

**Southwestern Virginia Training Center, Hillsville, VA, opened**
The Center is an institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

1974

**Virginia repealed forced sterilization for people with disabilities**

1975

**Federal Law: Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) became law**
This act provided grants to states to develop programs for people with developmental disabilities.

**Federal Law: Education for All Handicapped Children Act became law**
Later became know as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This act provided federal protection to insure children and youth with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education.

**Parent to Parent in Big Stone Gap established**
The formation of Parent to Parent started the parent movement in Virginia which led to local chapters of American Autism Society and Down Syndrome Association chapters forming across Virginia in the 1980/1990’s.

1977

**Virginia Developmental Disabilities Protection and Advocacy Office established**
Now known as Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy.

1978

**Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center established**
Provides special education information to families
with children with disabilities. Virginia’s federally described Parent Training and Information Center.

Handicaps Unlimited established
First cross disability coalition.

1979

1980

Virginia withdrew from participation in the Federal Developmental Disabilities Program for “excessive cost for the required evaluation system” and the “proposed requirement to guarantee employment to employees who would be affected by reductions in the number of patients in mental hospitals.

Virginia Developmental Disabilities Protection and Advocacy Office became the State Advocacy Office for the Developmentally Disabled with state funding replacing federal mandate for office to pursue “legal remedies.”

Endependence Center, Norfolk, VA, opened
First of 16 Centers for Independent Living in Virginia.

1981

1982

Re-entry into the Federal Developmental Disabilities Program negotiated.

1984

Federal Law: The Rehabilitation Act Amendments
Established the Client Assistance Program, housed within the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired until the passage of the Virginians with Disabilities Act, at which time the program was moved to what is now Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy. 

Insure Virginians Equal Status Today (INVEST) established
An alliance of 64 advocacy groups formed INVEST to work towards passage of the Virginians with Disabilities Act which was introduced on January 24 with 91 patrons but stalled when business,
manufacturing, and transportation interest objected. The bill was carried over.

**Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities created**
Virginia’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. Changed name in 2003 to Partnership for People with Disabilities.

**State Law: Virginians with Disabilities Act became law**
The landmark Virginians with Disabilities Act that encouraged and enabled persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in all areas of the social and economic life of the Commonwealth including employment was enacted. The law re-codified the Department of Rehabilitative Services and established both the Department and Board for the Rights of the Disabled merging the former Governors Overall Advisory Council on the Needs of the Handicapped and the Virginia Developmental disabilities Planning Council into one board.

**1986**

**Federal Law: Mental Health Planning Act became law**
The Protection and Advocacy of the Mentally Ill program, later revised as Protection and Advocacy of Mentally Ill Individuals, and now the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness, was established as a federal block grand, administered by Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy.

**1988**

**Federal Law: The Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (Tech Act) became law**

**1989**

**State Funded Consumer Directed Personal Assistance began**
The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awarded the Department of Rehabilitation Services a grant to allow individuals with disabilities to direct their own personal care assistance.

**Virginia Brain Injury Council established**
### 1990

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| 1990s | **People First Movement in Virginia began**  
During the 1990’s People First chapters across Virginia started. |
| 1990 | **Federal Law: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law**  
This act insured full participation for people with disabilities in the U.S. |
| | **Virginia Assistive Technology System established**  
The Department of Rehabilitative Services established a network of assistive technology sites that provide refurbished equipment to people with disabilities. |
| | **Virginia Disability Commission established**  
The Virginia Disability Commission has served as a primary forum through which the needs and issues of people with disabilities can be addressed through the collaboration of members of the legislature, the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor’s appointees, and the agencies of the Executive branch. |
| | **Parent to Parent State Office established**  
Based at Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities. |
| 1991 | **Home and Community Based Services began**  
The Department of Medical Assistance Services amended the state Medicaid plan to include home and community based services, which are commonly known as Medicaid waivers. These programs allow people with disabilities who are institutionalized or are at risk to live in their home community by using supports. |
| 1992 | **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**  
The state Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council moved under the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. |
| | **Disability Services Boards established**  
The General Assembly legislated the development of the Disability Services Boards to assist localities in identifying and addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. |
physical and sensory disabilities in their communities.

1993

**Federal Law: The Rehabilitation Act Amended**
Establishing the Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights Program, administered by what is now Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy.

1994

**Federal Law: The Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology Program**
The program was created within what is now Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy.

**Statewide Independent Living Council established**

1995

**Virginia Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority established**
In 2007, the Authority became a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and was renamed the NewWell Fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide low interest loans to people with disabilities to purchase assistive technology and other equipment to maximize their independence.

1996

**First Partners in Policymaking class graduated**
Partners in Policymaking trains parents and People with Disabilities to become system change advocates and is sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.

1997

**John Hager was elected Lt. Governor of Virginia**
He was the first individual with a physical disability to be elected to high office.
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Trust Fund established</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>U.S. Supreme Court Decision: <em>Olmstead v L.C. and E.W.</em> Decided that individuals with disabilities must be offered services in the “most integrated setting”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>First Youth Leadership Forum held Youth Leadership Forum trains youth with disabilities to become advocates and is sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Virginia Organization of Consumer Asserting Leadership (VOCAL) established</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy established Became an independent state agency. Formerly known as Department for Rights of the Disabled and the Department for Rights for Virginians with Disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Office of Community Integration for People with Disabilities and cross-agency Community Integration Implementation Team established in the Governor’s office.</td>
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2006 Cross-Disability Community Integration Advisory Commission established in state Code

2010 Office of Community Integration for People with Disabilities moved to Department of Rehabilitation Services