

**Position Paper 2011-01**  
**November, 2011**

## **THE FUTURE OF SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR VIRGINIANS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

In February, 2011, the Commonwealth of Virginia received a letter of findings from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) concerning services being provided and unmet needs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in both state operated training centers and community programs. The two ServiceSource offices operating in Virginia together provide services to approximately 1,200 Virginians with disabilities, of whom approximately 465 individuals receive habilitation services in day support and center-based programs. Fifty-six (56) of these individuals currently reside at the Northern Virginia Training Center (NVTC). As a result, ServiceSource is acutely aware of the health and safety needs of these individuals and the concerns of their families regarding any possible transition from NVTC to other residential services. This position paper articulates the position of ServiceSource on this important issue.

### **Position Statement:**

1. ServiceSource fully supports the effective provision of services in community-based settings whenever possible and recognize the movement towards community-based options as desirable.
2. ServiceSource understands that the delivery of services to people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their families is a very complex issue, particularly when medical and/or behavioral issues necessitate specialized care. The critical concerns of safety, access and timeliness of specialized care, individualized planning and long-term sustainability supersede location as primary issues. Individuals and their families must have access to resources necessary to meet their needs and the ability to make informed choices based on the provision of accurate information. Families fear that a decentralized, more “generic” setting will jeopardize or dilute the well-being of their family member with significant disabilities and that they will lose the protection of public financial commitment in a transfer to alternative public capped funding programs.
3. ServiceSource believes that before the closure of NVTC or movement of any of its residents is proposed, comprehensive plans must be developed and implemented that address:
  - Community capacity to receive residents with specialized care needs, including long term sustainability of the services
  - Comparable or better physical facilities, including physical access to services and provision for assistive technology
  - Specialized medical and/or behavioral supports and staffing imbedded in the design, which meet or exceed current service levels
  - Comparable costs analysis to verify that decentralization of specialized supports is a cost effective and best use of service resources

- Transition downsizing plans, which includes options for individuals who, by choice or circumstance (e.g. medical fragility, age), may wish not to move
- Specific individualized transition and service planning for each resident
- Appropriate family access and involvement in transition plans, service design and implementation
- Investment in systems of management and oversight to ensure accountability and maintain high standards of care in service delivery

**Background Information:**

Prior to the establishment of what is now the Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC) in the 1920's and the Southside Virginia Training Center (SSVTC) in the 1960's, Virginians with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) had no access to services whatsoever. The movement toward community programs began in the late 1960's to early 1970's with the enactment of Title 37.1, Chapter 10, Code of Virginia, which enabled county and city governments to establish Community Services Boards (CSBs) that could receive state funds to support local programs such as group homes and sheltered workshops. It was at this time that several grassroots organizations, including ServiceSource (then known as Fairfax Opportunities Unlimited) and Central Fairfax Services, Inc. (CFS), were incorporated. Also in the 1970's, the Commonwealth opened three additional smaller training centers, the first being NVTC in Fairfax, in order to enable people with ID to remain closer to their families. At the same time, Congress enacted Public Law 94-142, which required local school systems to provide a "free and appropriate special education" to children with disabilities. In the early 1990's, the Commonwealth entered the federal Medicaid Waiver program, which enabled state funds to be matched by federal funds for individuals to access not only training center services, but community programs as well. As a result, the Commonwealth proceeded with a dual track service delivery system in which (1) the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services operated the five training centers and (2) local not-for-profit organizations provided local community services with funding from the CSBs. This dual track approach was meant to provide consumer choice in order to meet the individual needs of people with Intellectual Disabilities.