

Brain Injury in Virginia: State Action Plan 2009-2013



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What is a brain injury?

The brain can be injured in many ways, and a brain injury is called by many different names. However, all brain injuries are classified by when they occurred and what caused them. Brain damage that occurs before or during the birth process is “congenital” and resulting impairment is considered to be a developmental disability because it happens during the early, developing years of the child. Injury to the brain following birth is “acquired” and can be caused by traumatic or non-traumatic means, or both.

- **Non-traumatic** brain injuries that result from internal causes such as strokes and aneurysms, lack of oxygen or blood to the brain, and exposure to toxic substances.
- **Traumatic** injuries that result from external causes such as blunt force against the skull or the skull hitting against a fixed object, which can occur in car crashes, falls, gunshot wounds, and assaults, including those due to domestic violence and child abuse.

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***Friends Derrick Manzlak and Michael Myatt
enjoying time together***

Facts and Statistics

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that 1.1% of the population in the U.S. is living with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) related disability. Based on current Virginia census estimates, nearly 85,000 Virginians are disabled as a result of TBI, and 937,019 are disabled because of a stroke.

More than 1 million residents of Virginia may be living with a brain injury related disability.

The range of effects of brain injury include impairments in physical, cognitive, emotional, and sensory functioning that can impact every area of a survivor's life. The costs of injury, both in terms of economic and social impact, are immense.

Recent estimates put brain injury's annual cost to society at \$60 billion annually.



Page and Hopie Melton with Delegate Dr. John O'Bannon at Brain Injury Awareness Day at the Virginia General Assembly

The ***2009-2013 Brain Injury Action Plan*** was created to shape the development of a comprehensive service system for Virginians with brain injuries. It will involve collaboration among persons with brain injury, family caregivers, state agencies, and community partners serving persons with brain injury throughout the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Brain Injury Council, the advisory group to the Department of Rehabilitative Services, will monitor the implementation of the plan. The Council's vision, that Virginians and their families who experience disability due to brain injury will build a quality of life of their choosing, is shared by those whose lives have been touched by brain injury. The ***2009-2013 Brain Injury Action Plan*** is intended to propel the Commonwealth toward that vision.

The extent of the problem compelled Virginia's brain injury community - survivors of brain injury, family members, caregivers, service providers, and state government - to develop a comprehensive plan to address the needs of people with brain injury and their family members across the Commonwealth. A **Statewide Needs and Resources Assessment** was completed in 2000 through Virginia's initial Federal TBI Act Planning Grant (1998-2000), and was the basis for the development of the **2000 Statewide TBI Action Plan**.

Progress and goals of the 2000 TBI Action Plan were re-examined:

- Achievements in Virginia toward meeting the goals of the *2000 TBI Action Plan* included increased state appropriations for the development of a network of core services across the state, including Regional Resource Coordination, Case Management, and Clubhouse / Day programs. The expansion of services improved access to specialized case managers, increased supported living options, developed and strengthened survivor and family support groups across Virginia, and offered web-based access to educational materials.
- Community support services (e.g., life skills training, transportation) and residential programs (e.g., supported living, neurobehavioral treatment) remain a challenge for people with brain injury in Virginia. In addition, supported employment services, a crucial approach to vocational rehabilitation, continued to be funded at the same level although this service has been proven successful in helping people with brain injury gain and maintain employment.

Three important developments also contributed to the evolution of the *2009-2013 Brain Injury Action Plan*:

- In 2006 the Virginia General Assembly directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to conduct a study on access to brain injury services in Virginia. JLARC conducted independent research and participated in interviews and focus groups with persons with brain injury, family caregivers, and professionals across the Commonwealth, as well as the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), the lead agency for coordinating brain injury services. The release of their 2007 report provided an estimated number of Virginians living with disabilities from brain injuries; described gaps in services; and reported on the success of state-funded, community-based services. The JLARC report concluded with recommendations to enhance access to services for Virginians with brain injury.
- In 2008 the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety collected data on brain injury prevalence rates among incarcerated populations in Virginia, a neglected segment in past studies of brain injury in Virginia. As a result, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, the TBI Model Systems Program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and the Brain Injury Association of Virginia will be working collaboratively to initiate a screening process to identify juvenile offenders with brain injury, and to develop intervention strategies.
- In 2008, legislation was passed by the Virginia General Assembly to create Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program. The Department of Veterans Services, in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Department of Rehabilitative Services were charged with developing a program to monitor and coordinate mental health and rehabilitative services for Virginia veterans, including Virginia National Guard members and Virginians in the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service. The program included supports to family members affected by the covered military member's service and deployments. The purpose of the program is to ensure that adequate and timely assessment, treatment, and support are available to veterans, service members, and affected family members.

The *2009- 2013 Brain Injury Action Plan* was developed over the last three years; the process involved surveys and town meetings throughout the state to collect information and revise the original action plan. The plan continues the work of the *2000 TBI Action Plan* and addresses current (and remaining) gaps in services and resources as determined by Virginia's brain injury community. The three major goals in the 2009-2013 Brain Injury Action Plan are:

- 1. Expanded Access to Brain Injury Supports and Services** – seeking increased funding for brain injury programs that provide accessible, appropriate and affordable services for all Virginians with brain injury; focusing on expanding residential and community-based treatment options; and improving community living supports and opportunities that facilitate increased participation in community activities.
- 2. Systems Change** – forming collaborations with state agencies and service providers to develop specialized services to veterans, juvenile offenders, and others with brain injury; identifying individuals who may have mental health or substance abuse issues in addition to brain injury; and providing leadership in the development of public policy that enhances access to services.
- 3. Community Impact** – continuing efforts to increase awareness of the incidence and consequences of brain injury among service providers and the public about the needs of Virginians with brain injury; reaching out to persons with brain injury and their family members in unserved or underserved areas; and seeking relationships with cultural and ethnic minority communities to increase awareness of and access to services.



*Commissioner Vince Burgess and Steven Moore
at the Virginia Wounded Warrior bill signing*



*Megan Murphy and Wes Ashberry
at Camp Bruce McCoy*

Virginia's Brain Injury Action Plan for 2009-2013 was developed collaboratively with the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Virginia Brain Injury Council and the Brain Injury Association of Virginia.



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