



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 8, 2011**

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## **FORUM HELPS YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES PREPARE FOR LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL**

**(RICHMOND, Va.)**—Nearly 1,000 students, families, advocates and service providers will meet in Norfolk March 14-16 at the Virginia Transition Forum to discuss topics ranging from safe driving, autism, employment and assistive technology to help students with disabilities prepare for a successful transition from school to adulthood.

Each year, about 28,000 students with disabilities in the commonwealth receive services that prepare them for transitioning to work or postsecondary education and greater independence. The annual Virginia Transition Forum brings together many of these students and their parents with representatives from education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development and business to address the complex issues facing these young adults as they prepare for life beyond high school.

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Virginia Department of Education and other transition service partners will host this year's forum at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott. The forum, now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year, is the single largest source of training and technical assistance for state and local rehabilitation and education personnel serving youth with disabilities.

“Transition planning is a critical step in guiding students with disabilities toward opportunities for post-secondary education, vocational training, employment and independent living,” said DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. “We are pleased to participate with our many partners to provide this forum every year for youth and their families to learn what programs and resources are available to them.”

The keynote speaker at the 2011 forum is Commissioner Lynnae Rutledge of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. Ms. Rutledge, who was appointed in 2009 by President Obama, previously served as the executive director of the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“The transition forum is one of the reasons Virginia is a leader in transition planning,” said VDOE Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services Doug Cox.

“Practitioners, administrators, parents, and students come from all over the commonwealth with the goal of improving transition services and, therefore, post-school outcomes for young people with disabilities.”

Among the forum's more than 120 sessions provided is a daylong technology fair March 15 by the Virginia Assistive Technology System with demonstrations of a wide range of low-tech to high-tech devices. Related conference sessions that morning will cover lessons learned on computer accessibility features as well as the use of the iPad, iPod Touch and "smart phones" as devices to assist those with disabilities overcome barriers and gain independence.

For more information about the Virginia Transition Forum, including registration information and session schedules, please visit [www.virginiatransitionforum.org](http://www.virginiatransitionforum.org).

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The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services provides and advocates for the highest quality of services to help persons with disabilities maximize their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. Through its five regional offices, 35 field offices, and various partnerships within the private and public sector, DRS assists more than 30,000 consumers annually with services including vocational counseling, career exploration, training, assistive technology and other specialized programs that cater to individual needs. For more information, visit [www.vadrs.org](http://www.vadrs.org).

The Virginia Department of Education provides support, technical assistance, guidance and oversight to the commonwealth's school divisions and public schools. VDOE's Division of Special Education and Student Services, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations, works with local school divisions to provide education and related services for children with disabilities. For further information on special education and student services, call toll-free (800) 422-1098 or visit [www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov).