

TAKING CARE

A Resource Guide for Caregivers

Revised 2026



TAKING CARE

This guide was created by the Virginia Caregiver Coalition (VCC).

The VCC is composed of public, private and non-profit organizations and individual caregivers. The VCC is dedicated to improving the caregiving experience through education and resource accessibility so that caregivers are valued and supported.

Mission

The VCC will work passionately to improve the experience of caregiving through education and access to resources.

Vision

All Virginia caregivers will be valued, respected, and supported and will have easy access to information, education and services.

Who should join the VCC?

Our members include family caregivers, aging and disability organizations, state agency employees, university and independent researchers.

How Do I Get Involved?

Visit dars.virginia.gov/vcc



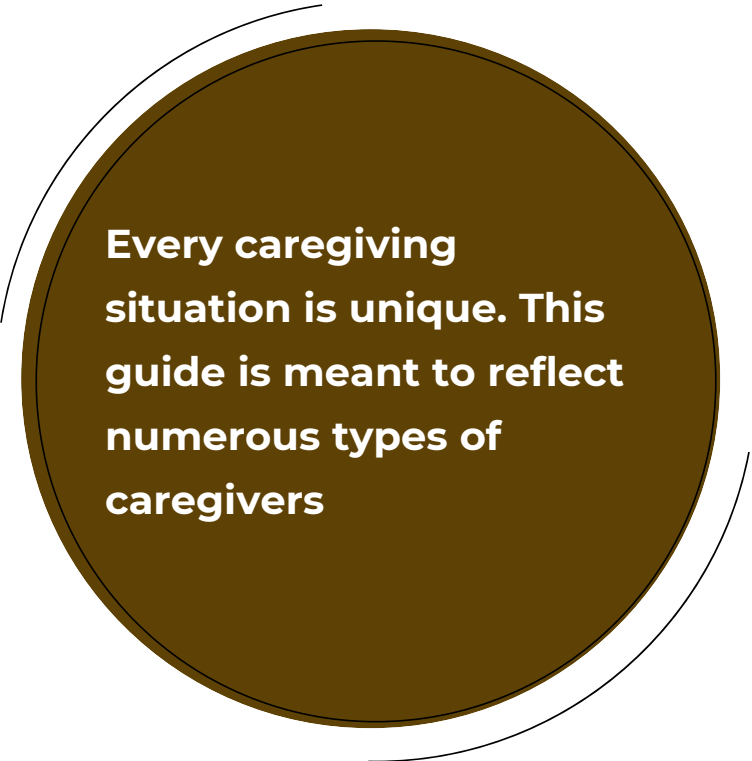
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Section 1: Introduction



Every caregiving situation is unique. This guide is meant to reflect numerous types of caregivers

Some sections and content may not apply to your specific caregiving situation. We encourage you to read what may be helpful to you!

ARE YOU A CAREGIVER?

If you help a family member, friend, or neighbor with things like cooking, shopping, getting dressed, or taking medicine, you may be a caregiver. Many people don't see themselves that way—but what you do matters a lot.

CAREGIVING IS IMPORTANT—AND HARD

Caregivers give their time, love, and energy to help others. It can be a wonderful and loving role, but also very hard. You might feel tired, stressed, or overwhelmed—especially when you're also working or taking care of your own family.

That's why it's important to care for yourself, too.

WHAT CAREGIVERS HELP WITH

Caregivers do many things, like:

- Making meals or cleaning the house
- Helping with bathing, dressing, or eating
- Driving to appointments or running errands
- Giving medicine
- Just being there to talk or visit

Every bit of help counts. Being a caregiver takes strength, kindness, and heart. You are not alone—and you deserve support, too.

Essential Resources

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

There are 25 local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) that provide services for older Virginians. Each AAA serves a defined geographic area within one of five regions in the state.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA)

If you are caring for someone who is 65+ or has a disability you should contact Social Security. Social Security provides you with a source of income when you retire or if you can't work due to a disability. It can also support your legal dependents (spouse, children, or parents) with benefits in the event of your death.

There are four main types of benefits that the SSA offers:

- Retirement benefits
- Disability benefits
- Benefits for spouses or other survivors of a family member who's passed away
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

AUTISM SOCIETY

The Autism Society is a national organization focused on supporting and empowering people with autism and their families. It works to increase understanding and acceptance, improve access to resources, and promote inclusion across all areas of life. The Autism Society provides education, community programs, advocacy, and connections to services to help individuals with autism live full, self-directed lives.

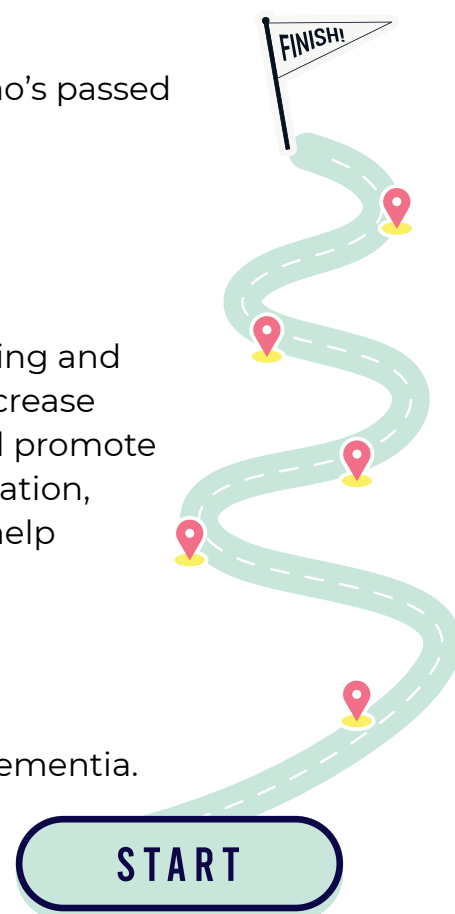
DEMENTIA CAPABLE VIRGINIA

Provides resources and training for supporting individuals with dementia.

VIRGINIA EASY ACCESS

Virginia Easy Access is an online tool and service designed to help people in Virginia—especially older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers—find and connect to helpful resources and services.

All Essential resources info can be found in section 8.



Virginia Easy Access

Virginia Easy Access—Support Starts Here

Virginia Easy Access (EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov) connects Virginians with local services. It is an official website of the Commonwealth of Virginia brought to you by No Wrong Door Virginia—an initiative to provide all Virginians with accessible information, person-centered support and streamlined access to Virginia’s network of public and private service providers.

When you are caring for someone, finding help can feel overwhelming. Instead of navigating unfamiliar websites or leaving another voicemail, you can start with Virginia Easy Access. It brings trusted local resources together in one easy starting place.

Reliable Support, Around the Clock

- Live Chat: Talk with a support specialist any time, day or night. Help is available in English and Spanish.
- Toll-Free Number: Call for help 24/7. Support is available in more than 200 languages.
- My Profile: Save helpful links, tools, and plans so you can return to them later.

Tools That Make Caregiving Easier

- Direct Connect: Send a direct connect referral for yourself or the person you care for to any participating No Wrong Door (NWD) partner.
- Health Screeners: Explore topics like social health, and brain injury. Answer questions about your own experience and create a plan with next steps and local services for additional support.
- Service Finders: Choose a topic and select your city/county to quickly find local services.

Caregiver Resources & Training

- Caregiver Guides: View, print, or save guides designed to help navigate common situations caregivers face like family conflict, or getting a good night sleep.
- National Respite Care Provider Training: A simple, step-by-step training guide that helps train people to become respite care providers.

Supported Decision Making

What is Supported Decision Making?

Supported decision making allows people with disabilities to make their own choices with the assistance of supporters. The supporters do not make the decisions for them but instead help the person living with a disability to make choices themselves.

Who Should Assist in Supported Decision Making?

Supporters can include friends, family members, or professionals. Really anyone can be a supporter as long as they have the person's best interest at heart!

What do Supporters Do?

Supporters help the person with a disability understand, consider, and communicate decisions. They give advice and often provide the person with a disability the tools they need to make their own, informed, decisions.

What is a Supported Decision-Making Agreement?

This is an agreement between the person with a disability and their supporter which states the supporter will provide assistance to the person with a disability in the decision-making process.

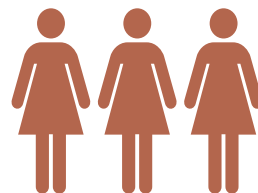
Why would someone need a Supported Decision-Making Agreement?

Sometimes doctors, lawyers, or other professionals do not believe that the person with a disability has the capacity to make their own decisions. This agreement clarifies these worries and assures them that the person is able to make their own informed and supported choices.

Nearly **1 in 5** Virginians provide unpaid care to an adult with health or functional needs



64% of caregivers work while providing care



56% of Virginian caregivers are women



Almost 13% of Virginians currently care for an adult loved one



18% of caregivers provide 40+ hours of care per week



New to Caregiving?

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A CAREGIVER:

A stronger sense of purpose

- Caring for someone can give life deep meaning. Many caregivers say it helps them feel needed, valuable, and connected to something bigger than themselves.

Emotional resilience

- You can develop strength, patience, and problem-solving skills that help you handle stress in all areas of life.

Greater empathy and compassion

- You can see first hand what others go through, which expands your capacity to love and understand.

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

There are 25 local area agencies on aging (AAAs) that provide services for older Virginians. Each AAA serves a defined geographic area within one of five regions in the state.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

(TANF) is a federal program that provides financial assistance to children through their parents or other caregiving relatives who qualify for the program.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

(SNAP) The same application that is used to apply for TANF can be used to apply for SNAP, which is an electronic benefit that can be used like cash to buy food.

MEDICARE/MEDICAID

Medicare

Medicare is the national health insurance program for people aged 65 and older and for some younger persons with disabilities. Medicare only covers a portion of medical costs such as hospitalizations, visits to the doctor, and diagnostic tests. In some cases, it may cover short-term care in a skilled nursing facility and limited home health care.

Medicaid

Medicaid is a program that provides health care insurance for low-income individuals and adults with disabilities. It also covers nursing home care for eligible individuals.

SOCIAL SECURITY

If you are caring for someone who is 65 or older or has a disability you should contact the Social Security Administration (SSA). Social Security provides you with a source of income when you retire or if you can't work due to a disability. It can also support your legal dependents (spouse, children, or parents) with benefits in the event of your death. There are four main types of benefits that the SSA offers: Retirement benefits, Disability benefits, Benefits for spouses or other survivors of a family member who's passed, Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Taking time for yourself and avoiding burnout

PLAN FREE TIME

Do something you enjoy every day—read, watch a movie, spend time with friends, or enjoy a hobby. Try to take short breaks or a weekend off when you can.

ASK FOR HELP

It's okay to need a break. Ask family or friends to help with caregiving, or contact local groups that support caregivers. You can also talk to a counselor or join a support group for extra help and understanding.

JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP

Support groups let caregivers share ideas, talk about their feelings, and learn from others. You can find them in your community, through churches, or online. Talking with people who understand what you're going through can make you feel less alone.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FEELINGS

Feeling tired, sad, or frustrated is normal. Emotions can tell you when you need rest or support. Don't ignore your feelings—getting help early can make caregiving easier for you and better for your loved one.

STAYING HEALTHY AS A CAREGIVER

WHAT IS RESPITE?

Respite means taking a short break from caregiving duties to rest and recharge. It gives caregivers time to relax while someone else cares for their loved one for a little while.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

Keep up with your own checkups, including dental and eye exams. If you feel very sad, tired, or think you might be depressed, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional right away.

WATCH FOR CAREGIVER BURNOUT

You might have burnout if you:

- Stop caring about how you or your home looks
- Feel trapped or hopeless
- Get angry often
- Cry easily or lose interest in things you used to enjoy

If this sounds like you or someone you know, get help right away. Contact your doctor, local Area Agency on Aging, mental health center, or caregiver support group.

Gives opportunity to engage socially outside of caregiver, reducing social isolation and depression

Reduces caregiving related stress

Offers the caregiver distance from the situation

Allows caregivers to rest so they can return to caregiving refreshed

Restores energy levels

Allows the caregiver to engage in his or her own life

Allows the caregiver to attend to their personal responsibilities beyond caregiving

Boosts caregiver immune system

Improves caregiver patience

Section 2: Getting Started

ASSISTANCE TO CONSIDER

Every person's situation is different, and the kind of help they need will vary. Some people may need physical or medical support, while others might need help with daily tasks, emotional well-being, or financial challenges.

The good news is that there are many services available to help both caregivers and the people they care for.

EXAMPLES OF HELPFUL SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Meals delivered to the home
- Group meals or community dining programs
- Day programs for adults or children needing care
- Care management or case management services
- In-home aides or personal care assistants
- Different types of therapy (such as physical, speech, or occupational)
- Community or wellness center programs
- Transportation assistance
- Health and wellness activities or classes
- Help with house cleaning or home maintenance
- Medication management and reminders
- Education and awareness about safety, neglect, or abuse prevention
- Information and referral services for local resources
- Respite care — short breaks for caregivers to rest and recharge

These services can make caregiving easier, improve quality of life, and help both the caregiver and the person receiving care stay healthy and supported.

FINDING CARE RESOURCES

Once you develop an idea of what kind of services your loved one needs and have a rough idea of what you can realistically contribute, the next step you will need to take is gathering information about services and resources available in your area that can assist you. You will need assistance of some kind, whether it be from friends, relatives, volunteers or service professionals, so it is best to explore options at the beginning of the caregiving process. In Virginia, there are several avenues you can take to identify resources in your local area, as follows:

LOCAL RESOURCES:

- Contacting community service agencies that support caregivers, families, or people with health needs.
- Reaching out to local organizations, such as social services, community centers, or nonprofit groups.
- Searching online for caregiver resources in your area. Many websites can help you find programs for health care, transportation, housing, or disability support.
- Calling national information lines (like 211) for free help connecting to local services.

These tools can help you discover the right programs and support for your caregiving situation—no matter where you live.

Guardianship

GUARDIANSHIP FOR A LOVED ONE

Becoming a legal guardian is a serious decision. Before taking on this role, you should learn about the responsibilities of being your loved one's full-time decision-maker.

If you decide that guardianship is the right choice, here are the main steps to follow:

FILING THE PETITION

- The petition must be filed in the county where the person with a disability lives, or where they lived before moving to a nursing home, assisted living facility, or other institution.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM

- The court appoints a Guardian Ad Litem for every guardianship or conservatorship case.
- This person represents the interests of the individual with a disability, investigates the statements in the petition, and files a report with the court.

EVALUATION REPORT

- The petitioner must provide a report showing that the person with a disability is incapacitated and needs the help of a guardian or conservator.

HEARING

- The court (or a jury, if requested) reviews the petition.
- If there is clear evidence that the person is incapacitated and needs a guardian, the court will appoint a suitable guardian.

COURT ORDER

The court order will:

- 1.Explain the extent of the person's incapacity
- 2.Define the powers and duties of the guardian
- 3.State whether the guardianship is limited in time
- 4.Specify any legal restrictions related to the incapacity
- 5.If filed before the person turns 18, state whether the order takes effect immediately or on the person's 18th birthday

GUARDIAN QUALIFICATION

Before taking office, a guardian or conservator must:

- 1.Take an oath to faithfully perform their duties
- 2.Post a bond, if required by the court
- 3.Provide written acceptance of the appointment

Develop a Care Plan

Situation	Type of help	Where to find support
Wants to meet people or be more active	Social or volunteer programs	Community centers, day programs, local recreation or faith groups
Feeling sad after a loss	Grief support	Support groups, hospitals, hospice programs, or funeral homes
Cannot drive or use transportation	Transportation help	Local aging agencies, disability services, or private ride programs
Needs new living arrangements	Housing support	Local housing office, social services, or aging agencies
Needs help with cooking or cleaning	Home help services	In-home aides, local agencies, or private care services
Needs help with bathing or dressing	Personal care	Home health aides, personal care agencies, or local support programs
Needs medical or therapy care at home	Skilled care	Home health agencies or licensed therapists
Needs someone nearby all day	Supervision and safety	Adult day programs, live-in helpers, or home care services
Struggling with health care costs	Insurance or money help	Medicare, Medicaid, or local counseling programs
Feeling sad, angry, or worried	Emotional support	Doctor, counselor, or mental health center
Has a serious illness and wants comfort care	Hospice care	Hospice programs or faith-based groups

Contact Service Organizations

KEEPING TRACK OF CONTACTS

Record for each organization:

- Name, address, phone, email
- Days/hours open
- Date/time you contacted them
- Name of the person you spoke with

HOW TO ASK

“Hello, I’m looking for help with [meals/transportation/home care]. Could you answer a few questions or direct me to the right person?”

KEY QUESTIONS

SERVICES & ELIGIBILITY

- What services do you provide?
- How do I apply, and what are the requirements?
- Can someone help me with the application?
- What identity, income, or medical documents are needed?
- Will you contact my doctor if necessary?
- Are staff licensed and insured?
- Can I bring missing documents later or get help obtaining them?

COST & PAYMENT

- Is there a fee? How much?
- Sliding scale available?
- Pay upfront or billed later?
- Accepted payment methods?
- Payment plans? Fee reductions or waivers?
- Is any cost covered by insurance/Medicare/Medicaid?
- Do you file insurance claims?

SERVICE DETAILS

- What schedules are available?
- Policies for bad weather or emergencies?

Family Caregiver Checklist

Here is a list of the documents and information that you should consider having prepared for your loved one in case of an emergency:

- ☐ Emergency Contacts
- ☐ Doctor Information
- ☐ A list of all medications and allergies
- ☐ Bank account numbers, types of accounts and the location of banks
- ☐ Insurance Company, policy numbers, beneficiaries on policies, types of insurance
- ☐ Deeds and titles to property
- ☐ Loan information
- ☐ Social Security and Medicare numbers
- ☐ Military history, affiliations and papers (discharge paperwork)
- ☐ The most up to date Will/Trusts (keep in safe place)
- ☐ Living will, advanced directive information, and/or DNR Order
- ☐ Durable Power of Attorney
- ☐ Instructions for funeral services/last wishes
- ☐ Maintain a record of where all important documents are kept
- ☐ Location of password information

Abuse & Neglect Prevention

There are many kinds and varying degrees of abuse and neglect, but they are all painful and destructive. Vigilance is needed to protect persons with disabilities and older adults in the same way that children should be protected. dars.virginia.gov/safety-security/file-a-report/

Type	What It Means	Possible Warning Signs
Abandonment	Leaving a person without care or support when you are responsible for them.	Left alone in public places or care facilities, reports being deserted.
Neglect	Failing to provide basic needs like food, clean clothes, safety, or medical care.	Poor hygiene, dirty living space, untreated health problems, lack of food or water.
Financial Exploitation	Using someone's money or property without permission.	Unpaid bills, missing belongings, unusual bank activity, sudden changes in financial documents.
Physical Abuse	Causing pain, injury, or physical harm on purpose.	Bruises, cuts, burns, broken bones, weight loss, or injuries with unclear explanations.
Emotional or Psychological Abuse	Using words or actions to cause fear, shame, or distress.	Withdrawn behavior, fearfulness, depression, anxiety, or signs of being controlled.
Self-Neglect	When a person cannot or does not take care of their own basic needs.	Poor hygiene, unsafe living space, refusing care or medication, confusion, or isolation.
Sexual Abuse	Any unwanted or forced sexual contact or behavior.	Bruises, bleeding, torn clothing, fear of certain people, or reports of sexual assault.

Adult Protective Services: 800-552-5019

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (for anyone in distress): Call or text 988

Legal Services

Some persons with disabilities and older adults experience problems that threaten their autonomy, dignity, health, income, rights and/or security. Many of these problems can either be avoided or resolved by legal intervention.

If you or your loved one is experiencing such a problem, you can call the **Virginia Lawyer Referral Service's nationwide toll-free number 1-800-552-7977** to get a list of lawyers in your area that may be able to assist you. You can also contact the **Legal Aid Helpline at 1-866-534-5243**.

All Virginia Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) receive Older Americans Act funds through DARS to offer seniors access to legal services. The AAAs contract with local legal services organizations to provide the service. Contact your local AAA for legal assistance.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, employees who meet certain eligibility requirements can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period to care for an ill family member.

Check with your employer if you have questions about your eligibility, or visit the federal Department of Labor's website at: [dol.gov](https://www.dol.gov)



Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people 65 or older, and for some younger people with disabilities or serious kidney disease (ESRD).

When you sign up, you can choose between Original Medicare or Medicare Advantage.

- Original Medicare includes Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medical insurance). You can add Part D for prescription drugs and Medigap to help pay extra costs.
- Medicare Advantage (Part C) is offered by **private companies** approved by Medicare.

It's important to know that Medicare does not cover long-term care, like help with daily activities or living in a nursing home for a long time. It only covers short-term care after a hospital stay or home health care in certain cases.

MEDICARE COVERAGE IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR PARTS:

Medicare Part A

Covers inpatient hospital stays, care in a skilled nursing facility, hospice care, and some home health care. Most people don't pay a monthly premium for Part A. If you don't qualify for premium-free Part A, you can buy it.

Medicare Part B

Covers certain doctor's services, outpatient care, medical supplies, and preventive services. Everyone pays a monthly premium for Part B.

Medicare Part C

This is an alternative to Original Medicare. Medicare Advantage plans are offered by Medicare-approved **private companies**. You must have both Part A and Part B to join, and most plans include Part D (prescription drug coverage). In most cases, you'll need to use doctors and providers in the plan's network. Many plans also offer extra benefits that Original Medicare doesn't cover, such as vision, hearing, and dental care. There may be a monthly premium for Part C.

Medicare Part D

Helps cover the cost of prescription drugs, including many recommended shots and vaccines. To get coverage, you must join a Medicare-approved plan that offers drug coverage. There may be a monthly premium for Part D.

Medicaid and Medicare

MEDICAID

Medicaid is a program that provides health insurance for people with low income, including older adults and people with disabilities. It can also help pay for nursing home care and other long-term care services for those who qualify.

For more information, call the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) toll-free at 1-888-734-6433 or visit [coverva.org/Medicaid/#home](https://www.coverva.org/Medicaid/#home).

MEDICARE SAVINGS PROGRAMS (MSP)

The Medicare Savings Program, also called Medicare Buy-In—helps people with limited income pay their Medicare premiums, and sometimes deductibles and copayments.

There are four levels of help, depending on your income:

- Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)
- Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)
- Qualifying Individual (QI)
- Qualified Disabled and Working Individual (QDWI)

WHO QUALIFIES FOR VIRGINIA MEDICAID?

You may qualify if your income is at or below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL):

- Adults without children
- Families (e.g., a family of three)
- Adults with disabilities

SUPPLEMENTAL COVERAGE

You can get supplemental coverage—also called a Medigap plan—to help pay your out-of-pocket costs, such as the 20% coinsurance you owe under Original Medicare.

You might also have coverage from a former employer, union, or Medicaid.

Medigap policies are sold by private companies. Some plans also cover services that Original Medicare doesn't, like medical care when you travel outside the U.S.

LONG-TERM CARE

Medicare and most health insurance plans, including Medigap, do not pay for long-term care, also known as custodial care.

You may qualify for this type of care through Medicaid, or you can buy private long-term care insurance to help cover these costs.

MEDICARE'S HOSPICE BENEFIT

To qualify for hospice care, both a hospice doctor and your regular doctor (if you have one) must confirm that you are terminally ill, meaning you have a life expectancy of six months or less.

When you choose hospice care, you are choosing comfort care (palliative care) instead of treatment meant to cure your illness. You'll also need to sign a statement saying you want hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered treatments for your condition. For more information about Medicare coverage and benefits, contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or visit [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov).

Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP)

VICAP counselors help all Medicare beneficiaries, including people under 65 with disabilities, to find the coverage that best fits their needs. They can help you compare health and prescription drug plans in your area and understand the quality of care each one offers.

VICAP counselors can also help you apply for medical benefits, low-income programs, and handle appeals or complaints about your health care. They work with you to solve billing issues and make sense of complex medical statements.

VICAP also partners with the Senior Medicare Patrol to teach and encourage people to spot and prevent health care fraud.

dars.virginia.gov/aging/home-community/medicare-counseling/



INSURANCE COUNSELING

The Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) is part of a national network called SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program). It offers free, confidential, and unbiased counseling to people with Medicare. VICAP counselors do not sell insurance. They are trained and certified every year to help you:

- Understand and compare your Medicare benefits
- Apply for help based on income and resources
- Learn about your rights and options

COUNSELING TOPICS

- Medicare
- Medicare Part D (Prescription Drugs)
- Medicare Advantage Plans
- Medigap (Supplemental Insurance)
- Commonwealth Coordinated Care
- Long-Term Care Insurance

Section 3: Caring for an Elder

1. INCLUDE OLDER ADULT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

While they may need you as a caregiver it is still important that they feel in control of their life. You should never make a decision for them. You should make decisions **WITH** them, when possible.

2. SHARE THE CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITY

As much you want to care for your loved one, you can't do it all. It is essential to create a caregiving team to assist you in the caring responsibilities.

3. PAY ATTENTION TO ANY CHANGES IN YOUR LOVED ONE

You may have to reevaluate your caregiving situation depending on how your loved one is doing. This includes living arrangements.

4. STAY INFORMED ON CURRENT CAREGIVING RESOURCES

Caregiving programs and services can change over time. Even if you weren't eligible for help before, it might be worth checking again later. Keeping informed about available resources can make it easier to access support when you need it.



Area Agency on Aging

Services offered at your local Area Agency on Aging serve as excellent resources for your loved one to keep them independent and at home for as long as possible. **Not all AAAs offer all services. Go to dars.virginia.gov/aging/home-community/ for more information.**

CARE COORDINATION

Helps people and their families understand their needs and find the right services and supports. This may include helping them apply for programs, receive care, and stay organized with all their services.

CARE TRANSITIONS

A process that helps make sure a person's health care continues smoothly when they move between places—like from a hospital to home or from one type of care to another.

CONGREGATE MEALS

Provides meals, nutrition education, and social activities for adults in group settings. These programs help people stay healthy, connect with others, and avoid costly medical care. They may also offer tips on healthy living and volunteer opportunities.

HOME-DELIVERED MEALS

Brings nutritious meals to older adults or people with disabilities who can't leave their homes. These programs also provide nutrition support and check-ins to help people stay healthy and connected.

CHORE SERVICES

Helps with heavy household tasks like deep cleaning, yard work, or removing snow and ice for people who can't do these activities themselves.

HOMEMAKER SERVICES

Provides help with light housework, meal preparation, and grocery shopping for people who need extra support at home.

OMBUDSMAN

An advocate who helps people receiving long-term care. The Ombudsman program looks into and resolves complaints from people in nursing homes, adult care homes, or those getting community-based long-term care services.

OPTIONS COUNSELING

A guided conversation that helps people—and their families or caregivers—make informed choices about long-term support and care. It focuses on each person's needs, values, preferences, and strengths.

FALLS PREVENTION

Helps older adults stay safe and independent by offering evidence-based programs that build strength, improve balance, and reduce the risk of falling. Programs such as A Matter of Balance and Bingocize® blend health education with guided activities to support safer movement, boost confidence, and promote overall well-being.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Offers rides to and from community programs, appointments, and other important places.

Falls Prevention

TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS!

Wipe up any floor spills quickly.

Avoid walking around in floppy slippers or “flip-flops.”

When carrying things, leave one arm free to hold on to railings or stable furniture for support.

Pick up anything dropped on the floor.

Take your time getting to the phone or answering the door when you hear the doorbell or a knock.

Install grab bars in the shower.

Take your time when moving from a sitting to a standing position.

Take your time getting out of bed.

Avoid walking on wet or slippery surfaces.

Turn on a light when entering a dark room.

Put bells on pets' collars.

HOW TO DEVELOP A FALLS PREVENTION PLAN WITH YOUR LOVED ONE

- Create a support list: Write down the names and contact information of friends and family who can help in an emergency.
- Review health conditions: Talk with your loved one about any current health issues and how they are managing them.
- Check vision care: Make sure your loved one has regular eye exams and is keeping their prescription glasses up to date.
- Watch for movement changes: Notice if they hold onto walls, furniture, or people while walking, or if they have trouble getting up from a chair.
- Review medications: Talk about all medications to ensure none are causing dizziness or balance problems.
- Do a home safety check: Walk through the home together to look for fall hazards like loose rugs, clutter, or poor lighting.
- Find community programs: Look for local falls prevention classes. Area Agencies on Aging offer proven programs such as A Matter of Balance and Bingocize to help older adults stay strong and safe.

Fire Prevention

People aged 65 and older are twice as likely to die in a home fire as the population at large. You can reduce this risk by having your loved one follow the simple tips shown below.

TIPS TO PREVENT FIRES

Give smokers a large, deep ashtray.

Also, wet cigarettes, cigars and ashes before emptying ashtrays into a trash can. Smokers should never smoke when they are drowsy, in bed or lying down.

Leave adequate space around space heaters.

At least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including people and pets. Unplug heaters when you shut them off, go to bed, or leave the house.

Remember to Stop, Drop & Roll!

If your clothing catches on fire, STOP, don't run. DROP gently to the ground and cover your face with your hands. ROLL over and over to smother the flames. If you can't do this, smother the flames with a towel or blanket. Immerse burns in cool water for 10 to 15 minutes. Do not apply butter, lotion or any type of ointment to the burns. If the burns are severe, seek medical help immediately.

Get smoke alarms and keep their batteries fresh.

Have smoke alarms installed outside all sleeping areas and on each level of the home. Test each alarm once a month by pushing the test button. Make sure that everyone in your home can hear the alarms. If a person in your home is hearing-impaired, get visual (flashing) alarms installed as well as audio (sound) alarms. Consider getting and installing carbon monoxide detectors as well.

Plan an escape to fit your abilities.

Have a telephone in the bedroom and keep the emergency telephone number near it in case someone is trapped by a fire.



Mature Driver Information

VIRGINIA'S GRANDDRIVER PROGRAM

As we age, our vision, reaction time, and coordination can change — affecting how safely we drive. The Virginia GrandDriver Program helps older adults and their families learn about safe driving habits and when to make changes.

COMMON DRIVING CHALLENGES

- Trouble turning, backing up, or changing lanes
- Slower reaction time at intersections
- Difficulty judging distances or reading signs
- Confusion with right-of-way or traffic lights

MORE DANGEROUS DRIVING CONDITIONS

- Driving at night, dawn, or dusk
- Rain, snow, fog, or glare
- Busy highways or rush hour traffic
- Long drives or unfamiliar routes

WARNING SIGNS OF UNSAFE DRIVING

- Feeling nervous or confused while driving
- Getting lost on familiar roads
- Scraping curbs or hitting objects
- Missing traffic signs or signals
- Reacting slowly to other cars or pedestrians
- If you notice these signs, limit driving to short, familiar trips or consider a driver safety course.

DRIVER ASSESSMENTS & EDUCATION

Driver clinics in Virginia can:

- Check driving skills and safety
- Suggest simple changes or tools (like wide mirrors)
- Offer low-cost or free evaluations in some cases

TURNING 75? DMV REQUIREMENTS

Drivers 75 and older must:

- Renew in person every 5 years
- Pass a vision test (20/40 vision in one or both eyes)

Virginia DMV : 1-866-DMVLINE (1-866-368-5463) or visit dmvnow.com

LEARN MORE:

granddriver.net

Why Does Socialization Matter?

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Studies show that increased social support reduces feelings of loneliness, stress, anxiety, and depression.

COGNITIVE BENEFITS

Studies also show that older adults who engage in social interactions more frequently show a slower decline in cognitive abilities.

SOCIALIZATION PROGRAMS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

CONGREGATE MEALS

Allows older adults an opportunity to meet people their own age and share a meal.

BUDDY PROGRAMS

Connects older adults with a “buddy” to come and visit their home.

SENIOR CENTERS

Provides older adults with various activities such as group exercise classes, game nights, and educational seminars.

SOCIAL RESPITE PROGRAMS

Offer socialization and activities for people in the earlier stages of dementia or other conditions like Parkinson's disease.

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AREA AGENCY ON AGING TO CHECK IF THESE OR SIMILAR PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED IN YOUR AREA.

Activities of Daily Living: Why They Matter

When caring for an older adult it is important to balance where to let the older adult have their independence and where they should be seeking assistance. Evaluation of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) allow you to safely allow the older adult to keep independence where possible, but still ensure they have the help they need with other areas.

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Includes all activities necessary to get a person ready for the day.

Activities include:

- Walking
- Bathing
- Dressing
- using the bathroom
- Brushing Hair
- Brushing Teeth
- Eating

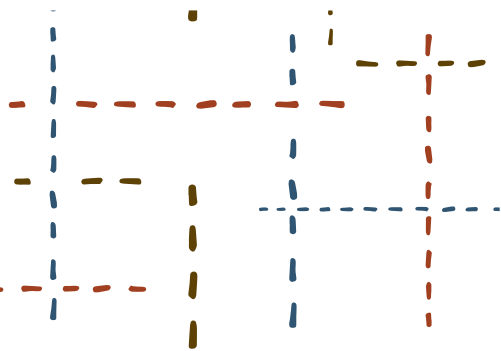


INSTRUMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Includes more complex activities required for living independently.

Instrumental Activities include:

- Using the telephone
- Cooking
- Grocery shopping
- House cleaning
- Taking medication
- Using transportation
- Managing finances



Section 4: Dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term referring to a group of symptoms such as a decline in memory, reasoning or other thinking skills.

These symptoms can be caused by diseases of the brain that include Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia, vascular dementia, and Lewy body dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of progressive dementia. Often individuals are affected by more than one cause of dementia (sometimes known as mixed dementia).

Over time individuals with these conditions experience changes in memory, thought, perception, communication, behavior, mood and personality. As the disease progresses, changes may become apparent in other functional areas such as movement and sleep.

While there are currently few treatments and no cures for many of these diseases, the symptoms of dementia may be caused by other conditions that are treatable or curable, such as thyroid problems or infections. Any concerns with memory or thinking should be shared with a healthcare provider.

Dementia VS. Alzheimer's

According to the Alzheimer's Association

Dementia describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory, reasoning or other thinking skills.



Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disease that is caused by complex brain changes following cell damage. It leads to dementia symptoms that gradually worsen over time.

Mild Cognitive Impairment

WHAT IS MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT (MCI)?

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a condition where a person has more problems with memory or thinking than expected for their age, but can still do most daily activities on their own. People with MCI may forget appointments, lose their train of thought, or have trouble finding the right words. These changes are noticeable but not severe enough to interfere with everyday life in a major way.

WHAT CAUSES MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT?

MCI can be caused by different health conditions. In some cases, it may be an early stage of Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia. In other cases, symptoms may stay the same or even improve, especially if they are related to treatable issues like medications, sleep problems, or depression.

If you notice changes in memory or thinking, it's important to talk to a healthcare provider. Early evaluation can help identify the cause and connect you to the right care and support.

WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE THERE?

For MCI, treatment focuses on managing underlying health conditions, supporting brain health through lifestyle changes (like exercise, diet, and cognitive activity), and regular monitoring by a healthcare provider. In some cases, if MCI is due to Alzheimer's disease, disease-modifying treatments that are more effective the earlier they are started may be an option, along with medications or strategies to help manage symptoms.

Dementia Services helps people with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, as well as their caregivers, across Virginia. Their main job is to support Virginia's Dementia State Plan by coordinating and guiding activities of the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission. They also share important information, help connect people to services, and identify memory assessment centers where people can get evaluated.

VISIT [DEMNTIACAPABLEVIRGINIA.ORG](https://dementiacapablevirginia.org) TO LEARN MORE.

Types of Dementia

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Occurs with the development of plaque and tangles throughout the brain but especially in areas of the brain responsible for memory.

VASCULAR DEMENTIA

Occurs when there is a blockage or reduced blood flow to the brain which deprives the brain of oxygen and nutrients. It is the second most common cause of dementia after Alzheimer's disease.

MIXED DEMENTIA

Occurs when brain changes related to more than one cause of dementia occur simultaneously. The most common form is a combination of the abnormal proteins in Alzheimer's disease coexisting with blood vessel problems linked to vascular dementia.

LEWY BODY DEMENTIAS

Caused by abnormal deposits of alpha-synuclein in the brain. Common symptoms include changes in thinking, visual hallucinations, sleep problems, and movement difficulties. These include Lewy Body dementia and Parkinson's disease dementia.

FRONTOTEMPORAL DEMENTIA (FTD)

Affects the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. They often begin at a younger age, and cause changes in personality, behavior, and language. Symptoms may also include poor judgment, loss of empathy, and difficulty speaking or understanding words.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE DEMENTIA

Occurs in people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease due to abnormal microscopic deposits composed of alpha-synuclein proteins.



10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease

Dementia is not a normal part of aging. If you notice these changes in someone you care about, it's a good idea to talk to a doctor. It may or may not be Alzheimer's. Many health problems can cause symptoms like dementia, and some of them can be treated or even reversed.

☐

Confusion with time or place

☐

Withdrawal from work or social activities

☐

Memory loss that disrupts daily life

☐

Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

☐

Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

☐

Difficulty completing familiar tasks

☐

Changes in mood and personality

☐

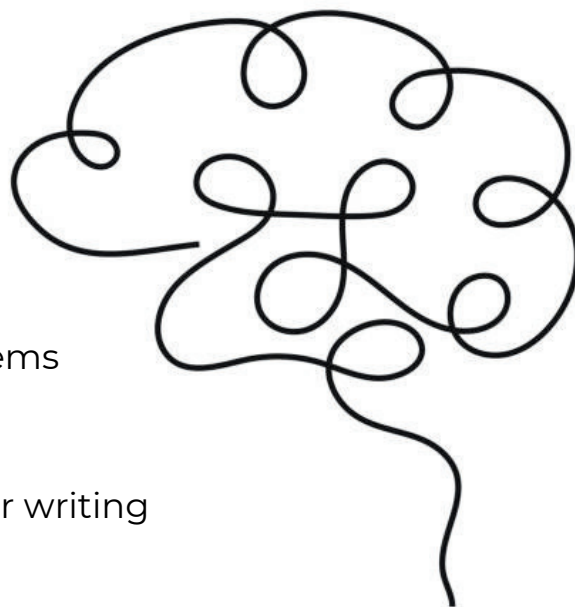
Challenges in planning or solving problems

☐

New problems with words in speaking or writing

☐

Decreased or poor judgment



The Stages of Dementia

Dementia varies widely by person and specific disease. There is no “typical” case of dementia, but there are some common challenges that can occur. Dementia-related behaviors can often be better understood as expressions of unmet needs. Understanding the underlying message, such as “I am in pain,” can help you address the behaviors.

These 'stages' of dementia are fluid and not always linear, but they are a general guide to the changes that may occur.

NO DEMENTIA

- Stage 1 – Normal: Normal memory and thinking
- Stage 2 – Very Mild: Forgets names, misplaces things, hard to notice
- Stage 3 – Mild: More forgetful, gets lost, family notices (2–7 yrs)

EARLY STAGE

- Stage 4 – Moderate: Forgets recent events, trouble with money/travel/tasks, may withdraw (≈2 yrs)

MID-STAGE

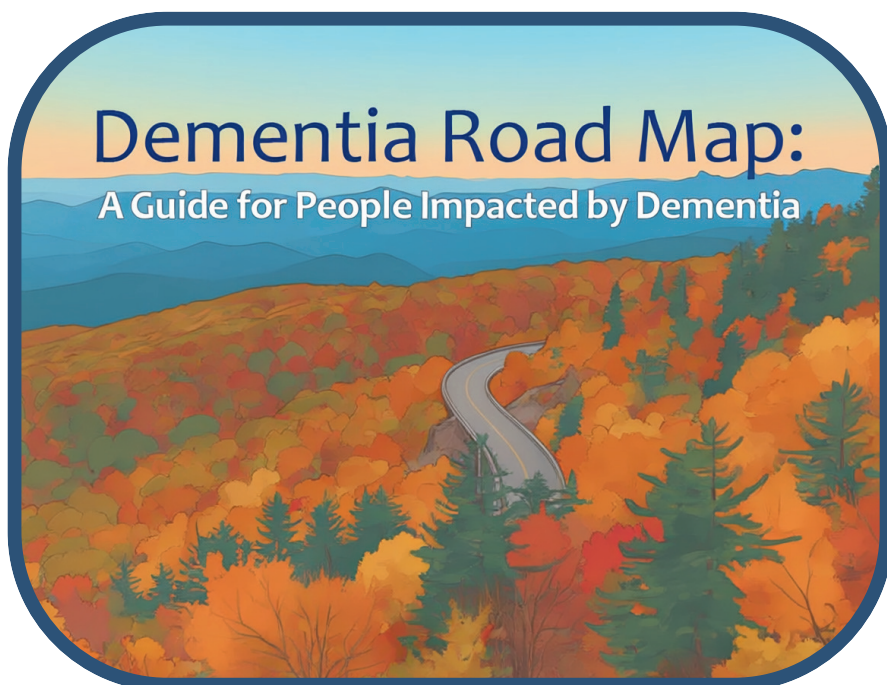
- Stage 5 – Moderately Severe: Needs help with daily tasks, forgets address/date (≈1.5 yrs)
- Stage 6 – Severe: Cannot do daily tasks alone, forgets family/events, personality changes, incontinence (≈2.5 yrs)

LATE STAGE

- Stage 7 – Very Severe: Cannot communicate or walk, needs help with almost everything (1.5–2.5 yrs)

THE VIRGINIA DEMENTIA ROAD MAP

A Guide for People Impacted by Dementia is available to view or download on DementiaCapableVirginia.org. It is a stage-by-stage guide to dementia that can help you understand what you are noticing and provides concrete action steps to think of at each stage.



Behavior as Communications

WANDERING

People with dementia may wander when they leave their home and forget where they are. This can be scary and dangerous for both the person and their loved ones. It is important to have safety measures in place to prevent wandering.

Project Lifesaver is a proven service that aids in locating people who have wandered, and is available in most localities in Virginia. projectlifesaver.org.

HALLUCINATIONS

Sometimes people with dementia may see or hear things that are not really there. This can be concerning. Reassure them and try to join them in their reality. If the hallucinations cause distress to the person living with dementia, talk to a healthcare professional.

SUNDOWNING

As the day goes on, people with dementia or Alzheimer's may become more confused, anxious, or agitated. This is called "sundowning." Try to keep your loved one calm and comfortable during these times and explore environmental or other factors that may be causing this.

ANGER & FRUSTRATION

Many people with dementia can get upset or frustrated easily, especially if they cannot speak well. They may lash out because of anxiety or confusion. Comfort them, but also make sure you stay safe.

REPETITIVE SPEECH

It is common for people with dementia to repeat questions or statements. This is not done on purpose. They may feel frustrated because they cannot remember. Be patient and understanding.

For help with these and other expressions of unmet needs that you may notice, visit DementiaCapableVirginia.org to view and download 18 tip sheets for caregivers.

Section 5: Disabilities

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A DISABILITY?

A disability is a physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as walking, seeing, hearing, learning, working, communicating, or caring for oneself. Disabilities may be present at birth or develop later in life through illness, injury, or aging. Some disabilities are visible, while others may not be immediately apparent.

TYPES OF DISABILITIES

- Physical Disabilities – Affect movement, strength, or physical functioning
- Developmental Disabilities – Begin before adulthood and affect learning or daily living
- Sensory Disabilities – Impact vision, hearing, or speech
- Cognitive Disabilities – Affect memory, problem-solving, or understanding
- Invisible Disabilities – Conditions that may not be seen but still impact daily life

EXAMPLES OF DISABILITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- Mobility impairments requiring the use of a wheelchair, walker, or cane
- Vision loss or blindness
- Hearing loss or deafness
- Intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Mental health conditions that significantly affect daily functioning
- Chronic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis or epilepsy

WHY UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY MATTERS

Recognizing what qualifies as a disability can help individuals and families access resources, protections, and services that improve quality of life, independence, and inclusion in the community.



Blind or Vision Impaired and Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

This department provides programs and services to assist individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deaf/blind in achieving independence, education, and employment. DBVI offers vocational training, mobility instruction, braille, adaptive technology education, and job placement services. The department also works closely with schools to support students who have vision loss, ensuring they have access to appropriate learning materials and resources.

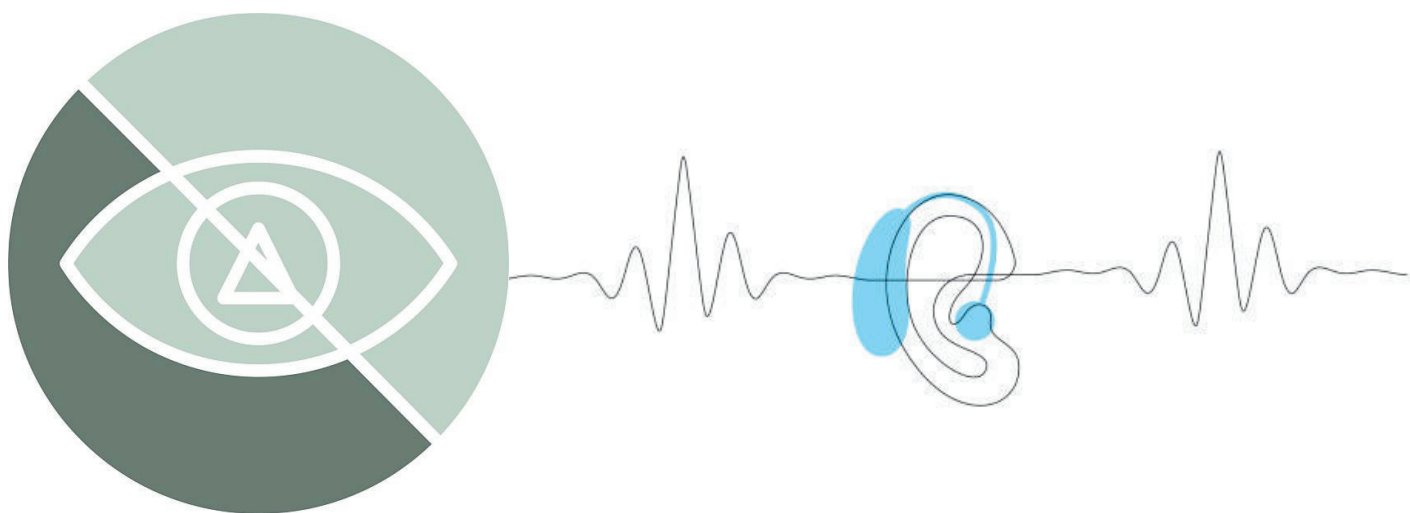
dbvi.virginia.gov

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH)

This department works to remove communication barriers for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind. Its programs include interpreter referral services, assistive technology support through the Technology Assistance Program, and community education about hearing loss and communication access. VDDHH collaborates with individuals, families, and organizations to promote equal access to communication and services throughout the Commonwealth.

Together, these departments provide vital resources that empower Virginians with vision or hearing loss to live, learn, and work as independently as possible.

vddhh.virginia.gov



DARS Brain Injury Services

DAY PROGRAMS

Focus on education, social skills, and community involvement

- Operate 5 days a week
- Provide:
 - Physical, cognitive, and emotional support
 - Socialization skills for work and community
 - Volunteering and educational activities

HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL SUPPORTS

Helps brain injury survivors find safe and supportive housing

- Few programs provide residential support directly
- Examples:
 - Virginia Supportive Housing (Richmond) — onsite staff
 - Bridge Line (Charlottesville) — onsite staff
 - Brain Injury Services (Northern Virginia) — in-home support and life skills training through outside agencies

CASE MANAGEMENT

Helps individuals with brain injuries and their families identify needs and create a plan.

- Connects to community resources
- Follows up to ensure services are received
- Can take place in the home or community
- Available for as long as needed

BRAIN INJURY CLUBHOUSE

A supportive program for skill-building and community participation

- Operates 5 days a week
- Focuses on:
 - Skill building
 - Volunteering
 - Vocational exploration
 - Employment Development Services (EDS)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION GO
TO:
[dars.virginia.gov/disability-
programs/brain-injury-
services](https://dars.virginia.gov/disability-programs/brain-injury-services)**



Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)

WWRC is a vocational and educational facility operated under the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), specifically the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS).

- DARS accepts applications from any individual with a disability whose needs match the resources, staff, and structure at the center.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program

- Helps students transition from high school to post-secondary education or training options.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- Prepares clients for employment, higher education, or career development.
- Focuses on building employment skills, occupational skills, and self-sufficiency.

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION

- Assesses a client's interests, strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and functional needs related to employment goals.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT READINESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP)

- Teaches soft skills needed for entry-level jobs.
- Builds awareness of personal interactions, interpersonal skills, personal management, and practical living skills.
- Helps clients live more independently.

REHABILITATION COUNSELING

- Provides guidance and support throughout the client's program.

wwrc.virginia.gov

Personal Assistant Services

WHAT IS PAS?

PAS, sometimes called attendant care, helps people with non-medical daily activities, such as:

- Bathing
- Toileting
- Dressing
- Moving from bed to chair or walking (transferring & ambulation)
- Preparing food and feeding

WHO CAN RECEIVE PAS?

- You must be a Virginia resident
- You must be at least 18 years old
- You must have a serious physical disability or brain injury with functional limitations in performing activities of daily living
- You must also be able to make decisions for yourself. This means you can hire and manage a personal care assistant and handle the paperwork to be their official employer with the IRS.
- You cannot be eligible for comparable services through Medicaid or other programs providing personal care. (You would have to provide proof that you are not eligible).

HOW PAS WORKS

PAS serves as the fiscal agent for the PAS program.

Participation in the PAS program requires an individual to have the ability to self-direct their care: (hire, schedule, train, manage personal assistants).

Act as the Employer of Record with the IRS.

PAS FOR PEOPLE WITH BRAIN INJURY (PAS/BI)

- Requires a consumer-designated representative to help manage attendant care

PURPOSE OF PAS

- Supports people in daily living activities
- Respects the individual's right to choose and provides support as needed

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:

dars.virginia.gov/disability-programs/personal-assistance-services



Centers for Independent Living

WHAT IS A CIL?

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer controlled organizations run by and for people with disabilities. They provide an array of independent living services and advocacy to promote and support leadership, independence, and productivity. Centers work directly with individuals and on behalf of them, advocating in local communities to remove barriers and ensure equality.

CILs provide a variety of independent living services. They are places where people with disabilities can:

- Develop skills for empowerment, independence, and productivity
- Take action and build coalitions
- Advocate for full inclusion and integration in their communities

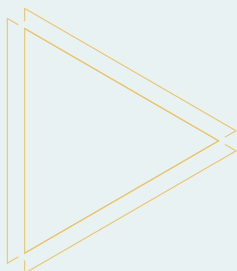
WHERE ARE CILS LOCATED?

Each CIL serves a Virginia planning district.

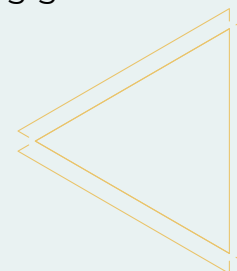
- There are 17 main CILs and 3 satellite CILs currently operating.
- 3 planning districts do not have CILs, and 1 district is only partially served.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILS)

All CILs provide core services to people with significant disabilities (called consumers) to support their independent living goals:



- Information and referral
- Peer counseling
- Independent living skills training
- Individual and systems advocacy
- Transition services



ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR CONSUMERS

CILs also provide other services based on what consumers need, including:

- Assistive technology
- Housing and home modifications
- Vocational support
- Transportation

SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY

CILs also offer services to other people in the community, such as:

- Information and referral
- Disability awareness and education programs
- Technical assistance
- Accessibility surveys and consultation
- Resolving disputes

Essential Resources

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILS)

CILS provide an array of independent living services. They are places of action and coalition where people with disabilities develop skills for empowerment, independence, and productivity and advocate for integration and full inclusion.

For more information, visit: dars.virginia.gov/disability-programs/centers-for-independent-living

PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES (PAS)

Provides assistance with non-medical activities of daily living such as bathing, toileting, dressing, transferring, food preparation, feeding, and ambulation. This program supplements the cost of these assistant services.

For more information, visit: dars.virginia.gov/disability-programs/personal-assistance-services

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA (BIAV)

The Brain Injury Association of Virginia is the primary source of information and personal support for thousands of individuals, families, and professionals living in Virginia whose lives have been touched by a life-altering, often devastating brain injury.

For more information about the services BIAV offers, please visit: biav.net/services

WILSON WORKFORCE AND REHABILITATION CENTER (WWRC)

WWRC is a vocational-educational facility which is operated under the scope and mission of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), specifically the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). They provide various services that prepare persons with disabilities for the work- force.

For More Information about WWRC, please visit: wwrc.virginia.gov

DISABILITY NAVIGATOR

The best way to find disability services in Virginia, including personal assistance, accessible housing, benefits and more.

Disability Navigator web site: disabilitynavigator.org



Learning about your child's legal rights in regard to school is pivotal in advocating for their education. Knowing what options are available, who to contact, and which program is best for your child is key for their success. Here are a few must-known facts when considering the best school option for your child:

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT (IDEIA)

Mandates that the state provide all eligible children with a free and appropriate public education that meets their unique individual needs.

FREE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)

Your child is entitled to an education that is tailored to his or her special needs and a placement that will allow them to make educational progress.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

Placed in the environment in which he or she has the greatest possible opportunity to interact with children who do not have a disability and to participate in the general education curriculum. This is commonly referred to as mainstreaming or inclusion.

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES (EI)

Aimed at minimizing the impact of disabilities on the development of a child. Services for a child may include, but are not limited to, speech and language instruction, occupational therapy, physical therapy, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and psychological evaluation. Services for families may include training to help reinforce the affected child's new skills and counseling to help the family adapt. For Early Intervention Services, if a child is under the age of three, call the local Early Intervention Agency.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education services pick up where early intervention services leave off, at age 3. Your local school district provides these services through their special education department. The focus of special education is different from that of early intervention. For Special Education Services, if a child is three or older, contact the local school district.

What are the Signs of Autism?

WHAT IS AUTISM?

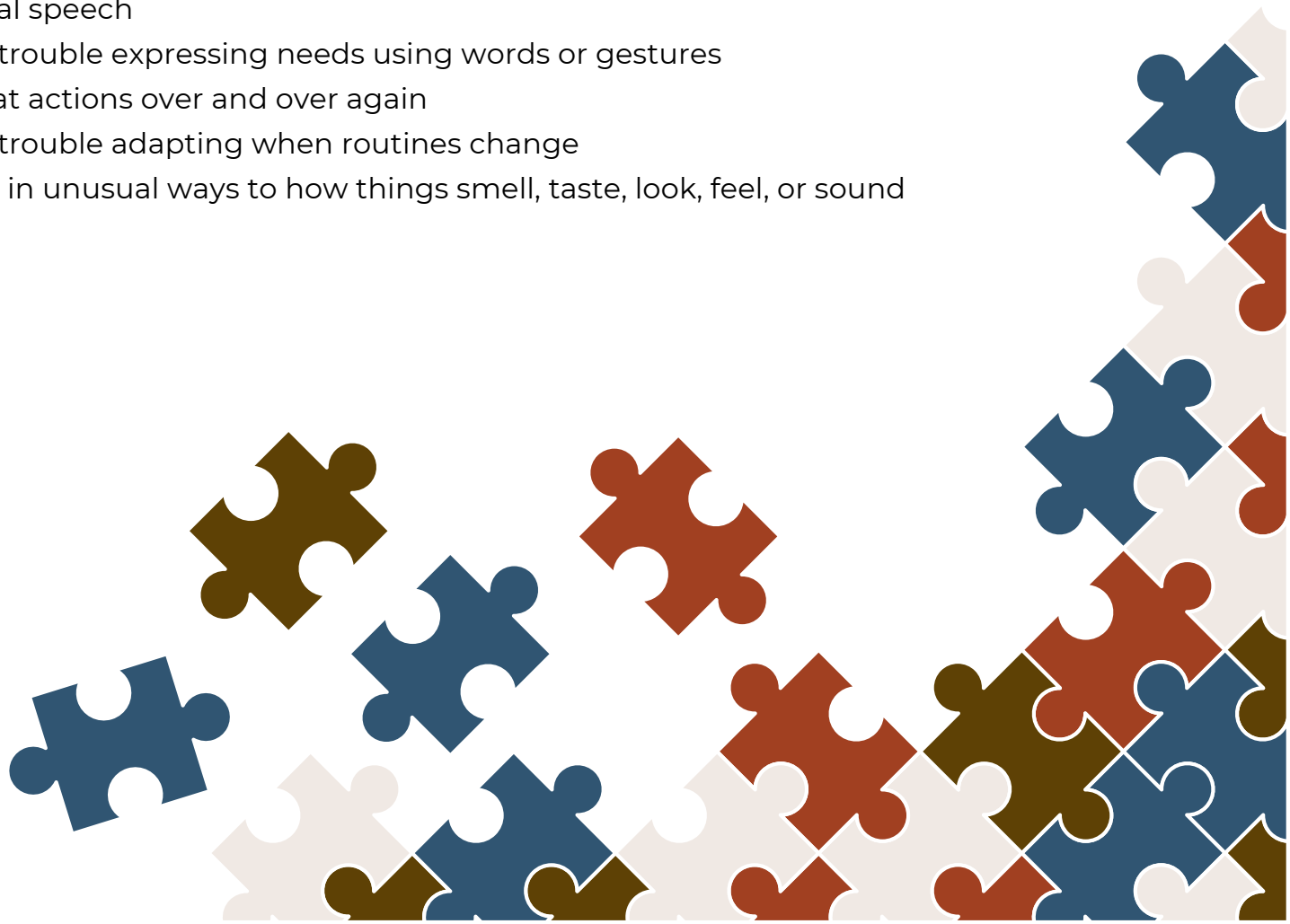
According to the Autism Society, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be defined as, “a lifelong developmental disability that impacts an individual’s ability to communicate, interpret language, and interact with others.”

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

People with ASD often have challenges with social, emotional, and communication skills. They may repeat certain behaviors and prefer routines, avoiding changes in daily activities. Many also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or responding to things.

CHILDREN OR ADULTS WITH ASD MIGHT:

- Not point at objects to show interest (like not pointing at an airplane in the sky)
- Have trouble connecting with others or show little interest in other people
- Avoid eye contact and prefer to be alone
- Have trouble understanding others’ feelings or talking about their own feelings
- Appear unaware when people talk to them, but respond to other sounds
- Repeat words or phrases said by others (echolalia) or use repeated phrases instead of normal speech
- Have trouble expressing needs using words or gestures
- Repeat actions over and over again
- Have trouble adapting when routines change
- React in unusual ways to how things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound



Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP)

The Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families with accessing person-centered and family-centered resources, supports, services and other assistance. The program's primary target population is individuals on the waiting list for Virginia's Developmental Disabilities (DD) Medicaid waivers.

IFSP helps individuals and families by providing:

- Financial assistance,
- Education, Information, and referrals, Family mentoring, and
- Support for community action

MY LIFE, MY COMMUNITY

My Life, My Community is an online tool that helps people with developmental disabilities (DD) and their families answer basic questions about services and supports and where to go to find help.

This website is a one-stop, searchable website to help you find resources in your community. You can use this site to find information about:

- Virginia's waiver options for people with developmental disabilities
- Assistance with finding housing options in your community
- Information about providers who can assist with your service needs
- Connections to support networks of families and individuals with developmental disabilities across Virginia.

APPLYING FOR WAIVERED SERVICES

According to the Virginia Department of Medicaid Assistance Services, parents should keep the following guidelines in mind when applying for Medicaid:

- If determined eligible and a slot is made available to the child, only the child's income is considered: parent income is never considered for Medicaid Waiver eligibility.
- The child's Medicaid eligibility must be reviewed every 12 months.
- The child must have a disability determination performed by Disability Determination Services (Social Security) before age 18.
- The child's level of care must be reviewed annually to ensure he/ she continues to meet functional eligibility to receive waiver services.

There are two types of waivers provided by Virginia Medicaid:

- Developmental Disability Waivers(DD)
- Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus Waiver (CCC+)

Virginia has three waivers that are focused on those individuals that have a diagnosis of developmental disability. The three waivers that provide a continuum of services are:

- Building Independence (BI) for individuals 18 and older
- Family & Individual Support (FIS)
- Community Living(CL)

dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/ifsp

Section 7: Taking Care of a Grandchild

Sometimes grandparents become the main caregivers for their grandchildren. This change can bring both happiness and challenges. It may also feel stressful or confusing at times. Finding the right help—such as financial, legal, medical, or emotional support—can be hard, especially if this is new for you. This guide is here to answer your questions and connect you with services that can help you provide a safe and caring home for your grandchild.

SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

There are many services that can help you care for your grandchild. Think about what kind of help you need. Do you need help getting healthy meals for your grandchild? Do you need help with transportation?

People at your local Area Agency on Aging can explain what services are available in your community. You can find a list of these agencies at the end of this guide.

GETTING STARTED

Each program may have its own rules and steps to follow. When you apply for help, you may need to share some personal information. To make things easier, write down your questions before you contact any organization.

A sample list of questions can be found on page 68. Keep a notebook to write down the answers and any other details you learn so you can look back at them later.



Questions for Service Providers

A typical conversation might start like this:

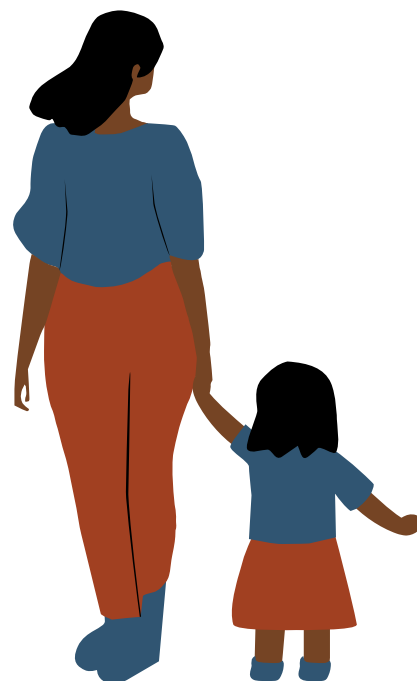
“Hello, I’m looking for information about programs that can help me with my grandchild’s needs, such as [type of help you need — for example, meals or transportation]. Could you please answer a few questions for me or connect me with someone who can?”

When you contact an organization, you can use this list of questions to help guide your conversation:

- What kinds of services do you offer?
- Are there any requirements to qualify for these services?
- How can I get an application?
- If I need help filling out the application, can someone from your organization assist me?
- What documents do you need to verify my identity? (For example: driver’s license, Social Security card, or Virginia ID card.)
- What documents do you need to verify my income? (For example: paycheck stubs, pension forms, or Social Security check stubs.)
- If I don’t have those documents right now, can I give them to you later?
- If I don’t have those documents, can someone from your organization help me get them?
- What documents do you need to verify my grandchild’s identity? (For example: birth certificate, Social Security card, or baptismal certificate.)
- Is there a fee for the services I’m asking about?
- After I complete the application, will I need to schedule an appointment to review it with someone?
 - Be sure to write down the date, time, and name of the person you’ll meet with.

Appointment Tips

If you schedule an appointment, plan to arrive about 15 minutes early to complete any forms they may need. After your meeting, ask what the next steps are and how long it will take to receive a decision.



Important Documents

You will need to gather one or more of these documents before you apply for help with caring for your grandchild.

Do not mail the original documents with your application. Instead, make photocopies and send those with your application. If you have an in-person appointment, bring the original documents with you. Ask the staff member to make copies if they need them, and be sure they give your original documents back to you to keep in a safe place.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

As your grandchild's main caregiver, you can apply for a new Social Security number for your grandchild or request a replacement card if the original has been lost. You can find your local Social Security Administration (SSA) office online at [ssa.gov](https://www.ssa.gov)

Have your own Social Security number ready when you call. As part of the application, you will need to show your grandchild's original or certified birth certificate and other documents that prove their identity. If you are signing the form for your grandchild, you will also need to show proof of your own identity.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A birth certificate is one of the most important documents you'll need to prove your grandchild's identity.

If you don't have the original or a certified copy of your grandchild's birth certificate, you can request a duplicate by mailing a signed request to the Office of Vital Records.

Your request must include:

- Your grandchild's full name
- The full names of both parents, including the mother's maiden name
- The date and place of your grandchild's birth
- Your relationship to the child
- Payment for the birth certificate fee

Contact the Office of Vital Records to find out the current fee amount. You can pay by check or money order made out to the Virginia Department of Health.

Do not send cash, as it will not be accepted.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

TANF gives financial help to children who live with parents, grandparents, or other relatives. Your grandchild may qualify if they are:

- Under 18 years old, or
- 18–19 years old and still in high school or GED classes, finishing before their 19th birthday.

You don't need legal custody to apply, but you must show proof that you are the grandparent and main caregiver.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

You can use the same form for TANF and SNAP. SNAP provides electronic benefits (EBT card) to help buy food.

- Eligibility depends on your income, assets, and household size.

HOW TO APPLY

Get an Application for Benefits from your local Department of Social Services (DSS):

- Call 1-800-552-3431 to have one mailed to you
- Pick one up at your local DSS office

Return the completed form by mail or in person with copies (not originals) of your ID documents.

COMMONLY NEEDED DOCUMENTS

For You (Grandparent):

- Driver's license or Virginia ID
- Social Security card or voter card
- Birth certificate or custody papers (if any)

For Your Grandchild:

- Birth certificate and Social Security card
- Proof of income (if any)
- Parent's birth certificate (to show relationship)

To prove your grandchild lives with you, provide school records or a note from your landlord or neighbor. After you apply, DSS may ask you to come in for an interview. Bring your documents and ask about the next steps and how long it will take to get a decision.

WIC and other Nutritional Assistance

WIC AND OTHER NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

If you need help buying healthy food for your grandchild, you may qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

WIC is run through your local health department and provides free healthy foods and nutrition information for families with children under age five.

You may qualify for WIC if:

- You live in Virginia
- Your income meets program guidelines
- Your grandchild has a medical or nutritional need

WIC can help by providing:

- Free healthy foods
- Support for improving your grandchild's health
- Nutrition advice and answers to your questions

You don't need legal custody to apply, but you may need to show that your grandchild lives with you.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC)

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) helps working people who are raising children by lowering the amount of federal income tax they owe. In some cases, families may even receive money back from the government. To qualify, you must meet certain income limits, which depend on how many children you are raising, and you must file a federal tax return each year.

CLAIMING GRANDCHILDREN AS DEPENDENTS FOR TAX PURPOSES

If your grandchild lives with you for at least half the year, you may be able to claim them as a dependent on your income tax return.

You can also find details about tax credits and deductions in these IRS publications:

- #503 – “Child and Dependent Care Expenses”
- #972 – “Child Tax Credit”

Grandparents who are working and raising grandchildren may also qualify for special tax credits that can lower the amount of taxes they owe. These may include:

- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- The Child Tax Credit
- The Child and Dependent Care Credit

CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE CREDIT

The Child and Dependent Care Credit helps families who pay for child care so they can work or look for work. It lowers the amount of federal income tax you owe but doesn't give refunds if you don't owe taxes. The credit amount depends on your income, number of children, and child care costs.

You may also qualify for the Child Tax Credit, which works the same way. Since grandchildren count as qualified dependents, grandparents may be eligible for both credits.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)

The SSI application process can take several months. However, some children with very serious mental or physical conditions can receive temporary payments right away while their application is being reviewed. These cases are called “presumed disabilities.”

A child may be presumed disabled if they have:

- HIV infection (AIDS)
- Blindness
- Deafness (in some cases)
- Cerebral palsy (in some cases)
- Down syndrome
- Muscular dystrophy (in some cases)
- Significant intellectual disability
- Diabetes with amputation of one foot
- Amputation of two limbs or a leg at the hip

If your grandchild was denied SSI in the past, you may want to reapply, since new rules may now make them eligible.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Children need health insurance just like adults. Contact your insurance company to see if your grandchild can be added to your policy. If not, the company may help you purchase coverage for them. If your grandchild has insurance through someone else or another state, contact that provider for details.

FINANCIAL HELP FOR HEALTHCARE

If your grandchild does not have insurance or Medicaid/FAMIS coverage, you can apply for Medicaid or FAMIS. These programs help pay for medical care, including immunizations and dental care. For more information, contact your local Department of Social Services or call the Virginia FAMIS line at **1-855-242-8282**.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunizations protect your grandchild from serious diseases. Shots should start by two months of age. Even if your grandchild missed early vaccines, they still need them for school, day care, or summer camp.

For more information: [ssa.gov](https://www.ssa.gov)

APPLYING FOR SSI

You can apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at your local Social Security Administration (SSA) office. To find the nearest office, call **1-800-772-1213** or **1-800-325-0778** (TTY for hearing-impaired).

Recorded information is available 24 hours a day, and you can speak with a representative Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (EST). To avoid long wait times, try calling later in the week or during the second half of the month. All calls are confidential. SSA staff can help you complete the application, explain which documents you need, and assist you in getting any missing papers if needed.

LEAD POISONING

Lead-based paint is common in older homes—on walls, floors, plaster, and radiators. Children can get lead poisoning by eating paint chips, breathing paint dust, or coming into contact with lead in soil. Lead poisoning can cause brain damage, blindness, learning problems, developmental delays, and even death.

You can help protect your grandchild by:

- Keeping floors clean and dust-free
- Keeping beds and cribs away from painted windowsills, radiators, or other surfaces your grandchild might chew
- Feeding foods high in calcium and iron and low in fat

If you think your grandchild may have been exposed to lead, get them tested. Their doctor can do a simple test, or contact your local health department. You can also call the Virginia Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at **1-877-668-7987**.

MENTAL HEALTH

Programs are available to support your grandchild's emotional and mental health, as well as your own. Costs may be partially or fully covered by insurance or Medicaid. Some programs charge a set fee, while others use a sliding scale based on your income.

For local programs, contact:

- Your doctor
- Your local Community Services Board (CSB)
- Your Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SUPPORT GROUPS

Many grandparents find support and friendship by joining a grandparents support group. Even if you are able to care for your grandchild on your own, these groups can help you learn parenting tips and get information about programs and services that may benefit both you and your grandchild. There are Grandparents, Parents, and Kinship Care Support Groups throughout Virginia. Your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) can help you find out if a support group is available in your community.

School Enrollment Requirements

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT FOR YOUR GRANDCHILD

As a grandparent, you will need to become familiar with school topics like registration, special education, parent-teacher conferences, and residency requirements. By law, children must start school if they turn five on or before September 30. Your grandchild will attend the public school in your district. Call your local school district office to find out which school your grandchild will attend and whether legal custody is required to register.

REGISTERING YOUR GRANDCHILD

Once you know the school, contact the office to ask about registration.

Requirements may vary, but you will likely need:

- A copy of your grandchild's birth certificate
- Proof of residency
- Immunization and medical records
- Your grandchild's Social Security number (not required but usually preferred)

If your grandchild previously attended school in another district, check with the new school about any additional records you may need.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS AND MEDICAL RECORDS

Children entering kindergarten must have a physical exam from the past 12 months. Contact the doctor for documentation. If your grandchild is older and attended school elsewhere, request that medical and school records be sent to the new school, including immunizations and physical exam documentation.



Other Important Information

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR GRANDCHILD'S SCHOOL

To help your grandchild succeed, let the school staff know about any major changes in the child's life. Moving to live with you, for example, can affect behavior, learning, and concentration. Share any information you think is important with the school office. Also inform your grandchild's teachers and principal if you believe the child's parents might try to remove them from school. School staff are responsible for your grandchild's safety and well-being and can contact you if problems arise. If you have legal custody, you can provide the school with any court orders or other legal information that may affect the child.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

If you think your grandchild needs extra help in school, contact their teacher/ guidance counselor and request tests or evaluations. Schools are legally required to provide support for children with physical, emotional, or mental disabilities. As the primary caregiver, you have the right to request it.

EDUCATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Don't wait for problems to arise—reach out to your grandchild's teacher early. Introduce yourself, visit the school, and stay in regular contact throughout the year. Joining the PTA or volunteering in the classroom are great ways to stay involved. Being active in your grandchild's education helps them do their best in school.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Many school districts offer early intervention programs for children with disabilities or who need extra help. These programs help children reach their full potential. To learn more, contact your grandchild's teacher or school office. If a program is available, the school can provide testing and evaluations for your grandchild.

HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE

Some schools offer programs, tutoring, or homework help lines for students. Contact your grandchild's teacher or school office to find out what support is available in your community.

LEGAL CUSTODY

Legal custody is a court order that allows you to make most decisions for your grandchild and may be required to access certain services. You can request custody through the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in the city or county where the child lives. If your grandchild has lived with you for at least six months, you may ask the local court to grant custody.

If the parents agree, you can go to court together and complete a Uniform Child Custody Form. If a parent's location is unknown, you must complete an Affidavit. Bring the child's birth certificate and Social Security card. An intake worker can help with the forms, which are reviewed by a judge. Once approved, the court sends you a custody order.

If the parents do not agree, you must petition the court. The court will schedule a hearing and notify the parents in writing.

LEGAL HELP AND OPTIONS

Legal custody is not the only option and may not be right for every family. Because situations vary, legal advice is recommended.

In Virginia, legal options for grandparents include legal custody, adoption, guardianship, and special powers of attorney. This guide focuses on legal custody. For information on other options, contact legal resource organizations for guidance.

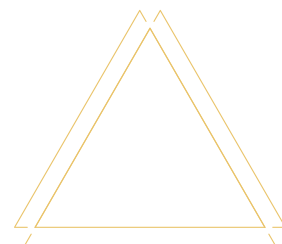
CUSTODY AND THE COURT PROCESS

You usually do not need a lawyer to get custody unless the parents object. If they do and you cannot afford a lawyer, contact your local legal aid office.

The judge decides what is in the child's best interest, generally preferring that children live with their parents when possible. You must explain why your grandchild should live with you. The judge considers the child's physical, emotional, educational, and moral needs and may order a social worker to visit both homes.

Parents must show they can safely care for the child and that prior concerns are resolved. You must show that living with you is in the child's best interest. Keep a written record of events and parental behavior that led you to seek custody and provide it to the court.

If the Department of Social Services (DSS) has custody, you must work with DSS and the child's social worker to obtain custody. Parents may later ask the court to regain custody but must prove significant positive changes.



LEGAL REFERRALS AND ASSISTANCE

If you need legal help, you may be referred to a licensed lawyer in good standing with the Virginia State Bar. You are responsible for contacting the lawyer to schedule an appointment. If a lawyer is not needed, you will be referred to an agency or organization that can assist you. All information you provide is confidential.

The initial lawyer consultation lasts up to 30 minutes and costs \$35, paid at the appointment. This may resolve your issue without further legal action. Any additional fees will be discussed by the lawyer, and there is no obligation beyond the first consultation.

VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY (VLAS)

VLAS is a nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal services to income-eligible residents in parts of Virginia. Services include advice and representation in housing, healthcare, public benefits, education, consumer issues, and family matters.

CHILD SAFETY DURING VISITS

If you are concerned about the child's safety during visits, ask the judge to limit visits or require supervision. If a parent is endangering or harming the child, contact the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-552-7096 (Virginia, 24/7) or (804) 786-8536 outside Virginia.

PARENTS' VISITATION RIGHTS

The judge may allow parental visits if it is in the child's best interest. The custody order outlines visitation rules. If a parent violates the order, file a petition with the court clerk.

Keep records of each visit, including dates, times, and the child's emotional state. Do not interfere with court-approved visits, as this may harm the child and jeopardize your custody rights.

VIRGINIA LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE (VLRS) – CONTACT INFORMATION

- Email: lawyerreferral@vsb.org
- Website: vsb.org/Site/Site/legal-help/vlrs.aspx



SECTION 8:

Caregiver Resources



Area Agency on Aging:

Area Agencies on Aging are local organizations that coordinate and deliver services to support the independence, health, and well-being of older adults and their caregivers.

1. Alexandria Division of Aging & Adult Services

Local: 703-746-5999

City of Alexandria

alexandriava.gov/Aging

2. Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens, Inc.

Toll-free: 800-656-2272

Local: 276-964-4915

Counties of Dickenson, Buchanan, Tazewell & Russell

aasc.org

3. Arlington Agency on Aging

Local: 703-228-1700

County of Arlington

arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/DHS/Aging-Disability

4. Bay Aging, Inc.

Toll-free: 800-493-0238

Local: 804-758-2386

Counties of Westmoreland, Northumberland, Richmond, Lancaster, Essex, Middlesex, Mathews, King & Queen, King William & Gloucester

bayaging.org

5. Central Virginia Alliance for Community Living, Inc.

Local: 434-385-9070

Counties of Amherst, Campbell, & Appomattox; Cities of Bedford & Lynchburg

cvacl.org

6. Crater District Area Agency on Aging

Local: 804-732-7020

Counties of Dinwiddie, Sussex, Greensville, Surry & Prince George; Cities of Petersburg, Hopewell, Emporia & Colonial Heights

cdaaa.org

7. District Three Governmental Cooperative

Toll-free: 800-541-0933

Local: 276-783-8157

Counties of Washington, Smyth, Wythe, Bland, Grayson & Carroll; Cities of Galax & Bristol

district-three.org

Area Agency on Aging:

8. Eastern Shore Area Agency on Aging-Community Action Agency, Inc.

Local: 757-442-9652

Counties of Accomack & Northampton

esaaa-caa.net

9. Encompass Community Supports

Local: 540-825-3100

Counties of Orange, Madison, Culpeper, Rappahannock & Fauquier

encompasscommunitysupports.org

10. Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

Local: 703-324-7948

County of Fairfax; Cities of Fairfax & Falls Church

fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/

11. Healthy Generations Area Agency on Aging

Local: 540-371-3375

Counties of Caroline, Spotsylvania, Stafford & King George; City of Fredericksburg

healthygenerations.org

12. Jefferson Area Board For Aging

Local: 434-817-5222

Counties of Nelson, Albemarle, Louisa, Fluvanna & Greene; City of Charlottesville

jabacares.org

13. Lake Country Area Agency on Aging

Toll-free: 800-252-4464

Local: 434-447-7661

Counties of Halifax, Mecklenburg & Brunswick

lcaaa.org

14. Local Office on Aging, Inc.

Toll-free: 888-355-6222

Local: 540-345-0451

Counties of Roanoke, Craig, Botetourt & Alleghany; Cities of Salem, Roanoke & Covington

loaa.org

15. Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging

Local: 703-777-0257

County of Loudoun

loudoun.gov/1104/Adults-55

Area Agency on Aging:

16. Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc.

Toll-free: 800-252-6362

Local: 276-523-4202

Counties of Lee, Wise & Scott; City of Norton

meoc.org

17. New River Valley Agency on Aging

Toll-free: 866-260-7724

Local: 540-980-7720

Counties of Giles, Floyd, Pulaski & Montgomery; City of Radford

nrvaoo.org

18. Peninsula Agency on Aging, Inc.

Local: 757-873-0541

Counties of James City & York; Cities of Williamsburg, Newport News, Hampton & Poquoson

paainc.org

19. Piedmont Senior Resources Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

Toll-free: 800-995-6918

Local: 434-767-5588

Counties of Nottoway, Prince Edward, Charlotte, Lunenburg, Cumberland, Buckingham & Amelia

psraaa.org

20. Prince William Area Agency on Aging

Local: 703-792-6374

County of Prince William; Cities of Manassas, Manassas Park

pwcva.gov/departments/area-agency-aging

21. Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia

Local: 757-461-9481

Counties of Southampton & Isle of Wight; Cities of Franklin, Suffolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach & Norfolk

ssseva.org

22. Seniors First, The Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

Local: 540-635-7141

Counties of Page, Shenandoah, Warren, Clarke & Frederick; City of Winchester

seniorsfirst.info

23. Southern Area Agency on Aging

Toll-free: 800-468-4571

Local: 276-632-6442

Counties of Patrick Henry, Franklin & Pittsylvania; Cities of Martinsville & Danville
southernaaa.org

24. The Span Center

Toll-free: 800-989-2286

Local: 804-343-3000

Counties of Charles City, Henrico, Goochland, Powhatan, Chesterfield, Hanover & New Kent; City of Richmond
spancenter.org

25. Valley Program for Aging Services, Inc.

Toll-free: 800-868-8727

Local: 540-949-7141

Counties of Rockingham, Rockbridge, Augusta, Highland & Bath; Cities of Buena Vista, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro & Harrisonburg
vpas.info

Centers For Independent Living (CIL):

The association promotes the professional development, improvement, and expansion of community-based, consumer-controlled CILs, and promotes community education throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Access Independence, Inc.

Phone: (540) 662-4452

Website: accessindependence.org.

Email: askai@accessindependence.org

Appalachian Independence Center

Phone: (276) 628-2979

Website: aicadvocates.org.

Email: aicinfo@aicadvocates.org

Blue Ridge Independent Living Center

Phone: (540) 342-1231

Website: brilc.org.

Email: brilc@brilc.org

Clinch Independent Living Services

Phone: (276) 935-6088

Website: cilsonline.org.

Email: cils@clinchindependent.org

disAbility Resource Center

Phone: (540) 373-2559

Website: cildrc.org.

Email: drc@cildrc.org

Disability Rights & Resource Center

Phone: (540) 482-0752

Website: drrcva.org.

Email: info@drrcva.org

Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living

Phone: (757) 414-0100

Website: vaescil.org.

Email: info@vaescil.org

Endependence Center, Inc.

Phone: (757) 461-8007

Website: endependence.org.

Email: ecinorf@endependence.org

Endependence Center of Northern Virginia

Phone: (703) 525-3268

Website: ecnv.org.

Email: info@ecnv.org

Independence Empowerment Center

Phone: (703) 257-5400

Website: (Facebook page only)

Email: info@ieccil.org

Independence Resource Center

Phone: (434) 971-9629

Website: charlottesvilleirc.org.

Email: (no main email listed)

Junction Center for Independent Living

Phone: (276) 524-4081

Website: junctioncenter.org.

Email: jcil1@junctioncenter.org

Lynchburg Area Center for Independent Living

Phone: (434) 528-4971

Website: LACIL.org.

Email: LACIL@lacil.org

New River Valley Disability Resource Center (NRV DRC)

Phone: (540) 266-1435

Website: nrvdrc.org.

Email: info@nrvdrc.org

Peninsula Center for Independent Living

Phone: (757) 827-0275

Website: hvacil.org.

Email: iepcil@hvacil.org

Resources for Independent Living, Inc.

Phone: (804) 353-6503

Website: ril-va.org.

Email: info@RIL-VA.org

Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL)

Phone: (540) 433-6513

Website: govail.org.

Email: VAIL@govail.org

Driving Resources:

Driving resources often refer to information and services that help older adults maintain safe mobility—whether by continuing to drive safely or transitioning to other transportation options.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Main portal for driver licensing, vehicle registration, permits, and online DMV services.
dmv.virginia.gov

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) – Driver Safety

Offers safety tips, driving laws, and road safety information for Virginia motorists.
vdot.virginia.gov/travel-traffic/driver-safety

Virginia GrandDriver

A public-education campaign in Virginia designed to help older drivers and their families stay safe and mobile by offering resources on how aging affects driving skills and how to plan for safe mobility.
granddriver.net

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)

Oversees aging, disability services, vocational rehabilitation, long-term care ombudsman, adult protective services, and community living.

Website: dars.virginia.gov

Email: dars@dars.virginia.gov

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

Provides education, training, and employment services to Virginians who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.

Website: vaboard.org/dbvi

Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH)

Provides resources, advocacy, and communication assistance (like relay and captioning services) for Virginians who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.

Website: vddhh.virginia.gov

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)

Manages Virginia's public mental health, developmental disability, and substance use services system, including state hospitals and community service boards.

Website: dbhds.virginia.gov

Email: jae.benz@dbhds.virginia.gov

Department of Health (VDH)

Promotes public health through disease prevention, environmental health protection, emergency preparedness, and local health departments across Virginia.

Website: vdh.virginia.gov

Department of Health Professions (DHP)

Licenses and regulates Virginia's health care professionals and enforces professional standards to ensure public safety.

Website: dhp.virginia.gov

Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)

Administers Virginia's Medicaid and FAMIS programs, providing health coverage for eligible low-income individuals and families.

Website: dmas.virginia.gov

Department of Social Services (VDSS)

Provides assistance to families and individuals through programs like child welfare, SNAP, TANF, foster care, and adoption services.

Website: dss.virginia.gov

Email: citizen.services@dss.virginia.gov

Community Service Boards:

Focuses on community-based supports for individuals with behavioral health and developmental disability service needs

Alexandria Community Services Board

Counties Served: City of Alexandria

Website: alexandriava.gov/DCHS

Alleghany Highlands Community Services Board

Counties Served: Alleghany County, Covington, Clifton Forge, Iron Gate

Website: ahcsb.org

Arlington County CSB

Counties Served: Arlington County

Website: arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Health

Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare

Counties Served: Botetourt County, Craig County, Roanoke County, Roanoke City, Salem

Website: brbh.org

Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare

Counties Served: City of Chesapeake

Website: cityofchesapeake.net/1284/Chesapeake-Integrated-Behavioral-Healthc

Chesterfield Community Services Board

Counties Served: Chesterfield County

Website: chesterfield.gov/878/Mental-Health-Support-Services

Colonial Behavioral Health

Counties Served: James City County, York County, Poquoson, Williamsburg

Website: colonialbh.org

Crossroads Community Services Board

Counties Served: Amelia County, Buckingham County, Charlotte County, Cumberland County, Lunenburg County, Nottoway County, Prince Edward County

Website: crossroadscsb.org

Cumberland Mountain Community Services Board

Counties Served: Buchanan County, Russell County, Tazewell County

Website: cmcsb.com

Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services

Counties Served: Pittsylvania County, City of Danville

Website: dpcs.org

Dickenson County Behavioral Health Services

Counties Served: Dickenson County

Website: dcbhs.com

Community Service Boards:

Eastern Shore Community Services Board

Counties Served: Accomack County, Northampton County

Website: escsb.org

Encompass Community Supports

Counties Served: Culpeper County, Fauquier County, Madison County, Orange County, Rappahannock County

Website: encompasscommunitysupports.org

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

Counties Served: Fairfax County, City of Falls Church, City of Fairfax

Website: fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board

Greater Reach Community Services Board

Counties Served: Dinwiddie County, Greensville County, Prince George County, Surry County, Sussex County, Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell, Petersburg

Website: grcsb.org

Goochland-Powhatan Community Services Board

Counties Served: Goochland County, Powhatan County

Website: gpscb.org

Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board

Counties Served: City of Hampton, City of Newport News

Website: hnnscsb.org

Hanover County Community Services Board

Counties Served: Hanover County

Website: hanovercounty.gov/358/Community-Services-Board

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board

Counties Served: Rockingham County, City of Harrisonburg

Website: hrscsb.org

Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services

Counties Served: Henrico County, New Kent County, Charles City County

Website: henrico.us/mhds

Planning District One Behavioral Health Services

Counties Served: Lee County, Scott County, Wise County, City of Norton

Website: pd1bhs.org

Community Service Boards:

Highlands Community Services Board

Counties Served: Washington County, City of Bristol

Website: highlandscsb.org

Horizon Behavioral Health

Counties Served: Amherst County, Appomattox County, Bedford County, Campbell County, City of Lynchburg

Website: horizonbh.org

Loudoun County Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Developmental Services

Counties Served: Loudoun County

Website: loudoun.gov/index.aspx?NID=121

Middle Peninsula–Northern Neck Behavioral Health

Counties Served: Essex County, Gloucester County, King & Queen County, King William County, Lancaster County, Mathews County, Middlesex County, Northumberland County, Richmond County, Westmoreland County

Website: mpnnscsb.org

Mount Rogers Community Services

Counties Served: Bland County, Carroll County, Grayson County, Smyth County, Wythe County, City of Galax

Website: mountrogers.org

New River Valley Community Services

Counties Served: Floyd County, Giles County, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, City of Radford

Website: nrvc.org

Norfolk Community Services Board

Counties Served: City of Norfolk

Website: norfolk.gov/index.aspx?NID=996

Northwestern Community Services Board

Counties Served: Clarke County, Frederick County, Page County, Shenandoah County, Warren County, City of Winchester

Website: nwcsb.com

Piedmont Community Services Board

Counties Served: Franklin County, Henry County, Patrick County, City of Martinsville

Website: piedmontcsb.org

Community Service Boards:

Planning District One Behavioral Health Services

Counties Served: Lee County, Scott County, Wise County, City of Norton

Website: pd1bhs.org

Portsmouth Behavioral Healthcare Services

Counties Served: City of Portsmouth

Website: portsmouthva.gov/149/Behavioral-Healthcare

Prince William County Community Services Board

Counties Served: Prince William County, City of Manassas Park, City of Manassas

Website: pwcva.gov/departments/community-services

Rappahannock Area Community Services Board

Counties Served: Caroline County, King George County, Spotsylvania County, City of Fredericksburg, Stafford County

Website: rappahannockareacsb.org

Region Ten Community Services Board

Counties Served: Albemarle County, Fluvanna County, Greene County, Louisa County, Nelson County, City of Charlottesville

Website: regionten.org

Richmond Behavioral Health Authority

Counties Served: City of Richmond

Website: rbha.org

Rockbridge Area Community Services Board

Counties Served: Bath County, Rockbridge County, City of Buena Vista, City of Lexington

Website: racsb.org

Southside Behavioral Health

Counties Served: Brunswick County, Halifax County, Mecklenburg County

Website: southsidebh.org

Valley Community Services Board

Counties Served: Augusta County, Highland County, City of Staunton, City of Waynesboro

Website: myvalleycsb.org

Virginia Beach Human Services

Counties Served: City of Virginia Beach

Website: hs.virginiabeach.gov

Western Tidewater Community Services Board

Counties Served: Isle of Wight County, Southampton County, City of Franklin, City of Suffolk

Website: wtcsb.org

Aging Resources

FDA Generic Drug Facts

Explains that generic drugs meet the same safety and efficacy standards as brand-name drugs.

[fda.gov/generic-drug-facts](https://www.fda.gov/generic-drug-facts)

AARP Prescription Discounts

Offers a free discount card for savings on FDA-approved medications at pharmacies nationwide.

aarp.org/rx-discounts

Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP)

Offers free, unbiased, and confidential counseling to Virginia residents with Medicare, assisting with enrollment, plan comparisons, and understanding benefits.

vda.virginia.gov/vicap.htm

Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

Advocates for residents' rights in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home-based care.

dars.virginia.gov/aging/ombudsman

Hospice of Virginia

A service-driven hospice care provider focused on patient care and customer service.

hospiceofvirginia.com

Senior Cool Care

A seasonal initiative providing free air conditioners and fans to low-income seniors (60+) in Virginia to help them stay cool during summer months.

dars.virginia.gov/aging/home-community/senior-cool-care

Aging Together

Aging Together through partnerships connects people to communities and resources to improve quality of life as we age.

agingtogether.org

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

Reliable federal information on aging, caregiving, and dementia care.

nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving

Eldercare Locator (U.S. Administration for Community Living)

Connects users to local aging and caregiving services nationwide.

eldercare.acl.gov

Internet Resources:

American Geriatrics Society (AGS)

Organization of geriatrics healthcare professionals promoting health, independence, and quality of life for older people.

americangeriatrics.org

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

Provides tools, advocacy, and resources to help older adults live securely and independently.

ncoa.org

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

Conducts and supports research on aging and age-related diseases.

nia.nih.gov

AARP Virginia

Offers resources, advocacy, and programs to support older Virginians.

states.aarp.org/virginia

Dementia Capable Virginia

Provides resources and training for supporting individuals with dementia.

dars.virginia.gov/aging/dementia-capable-virginia

Alzheimer's Association

Offers support, education, and advocacy for people with Alzheimer's and their families.

alz.org/cwva

VCU Health Geriatric Psychiatry

Provides specialized care for older adults with cognitive disorders, including early-stage dementia and Alzheimer's disease, through a multidisciplinary team approach.

vcuhealth.org/services/psychiatry/our-services/outpatient-services/geriatric-psychiatry

Brain Injury Resources

Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV)

Offers statewide resources, support, and advocacy for individuals affected by brain injury.

biav.net

Brain Injury Services (BIS)

Provides free services including case management and support groups in Northern Virginia.

braininjurysvcs.org

Brain Injury Solutions

Offers case management, support groups, and community programs in Southwest Virginia.

bisolutions.org

Brain Injury Connections of the Shenandoah Valley

Provides free case management and support groups in the Shenandoah Valley region.
bicsv.org

Community Brain Injury Services

Specializes in recovery for individuals with traumatic brain injury in the Richmond and Hampton Roads areas.
communitybraininjury.org

National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury

Provides assessment tools, intervention programs, and training for professionals and families.
tbi.vcu.edu

Caregiving Resources

AARP Family Caregiving

Provides articles, checklists, and local resources for caregivers.
aarp.org/caregiving

Caregiver Action Network (CAN)

Offers education, peer support, and advocacy for family caregivers.
caregiveraction.org

Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA)

Comprehensive information on caregiver health, programs, and policy updates.
caregiver.org

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers

Focuses on advocacy, research, and caregiver well-being programs.
rosalynncarter.org

Autism Society

The oldest and largest grassroots autism organization, providing advocacy, education, and support for individuals with autism and their families.
autismsociety.org

Individual and Family Support Program

The program assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families with accessing person-centered and family-centered resources, supports, services and other assistance.
dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/ifsp

Disability Navigator

A way to find disability Services in Virginia, including Personal Assistance, accessible housing, benefits and more.
disabilitynavigator.org

Internet Resources:

HelpGuide – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Provides practical tips on managing emotions, creating a stable environment, and fostering open communication with grandchildren.

helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/grandparents-raising-grandchildren.htm

National Council on Aging (NCOA) – Grand Connections Program

Provides a seven-session workshop series to support grandparents raising grandchildren under five, focusing on child development and caregiving strategies.

ncoa.org/article/how-to-help-grandparents-that-are-caring-for-grandkids

Federal Agencies

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The U.S. government agency responsible for tax collection, enforcement, and administration of the Internal Revenue Code.

irs.gov

Medicare

A federal health insurance program for individuals aged 65 or older and certain younger individuals with disabilities.

medicare.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The nation's leading science-based, data-driven service organization that protects public health by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.

cdc.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Protects the health of all Americans and provides essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves.

hhs.gov

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Administers the nation's social insurance program, including retirement, disability, and survivors' benefits.

ssa.gov

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Provides vital services to America's veterans, including health care, benefits, and memorial services.

va.gov

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)

Provides long-term care insurance for federal employees, retirees, and their families.

opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/long-term-care

Internet Resources:

Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Federal law to make health insurance more affordable and expand access to care.
healthcare.gov

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

Protects the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death associated with consumer products.
cpsc.gov

General Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Provides 24/7 free, confidential support for people in distress.
988lifeline.org

VirginiaNavigator

Statewide resource database for aging, disability, and caregiving services. Websites include DisabilityNavigator, SeniorNavigator, VeteransNavigator, and more!
virginiannavigator.org

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Group of individuals and organizations believe that ALL people have the right to a life free of sexual and domestic violence.
vsdvalliance.org

Virginia Hotlines and Crisis Numbers

If in immediate danger, call 911
 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline call 988
 Child Abuse Prevention: 1-800-422-4453
 Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-383-8238

National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC)

Organization of state insurance regulators that sets standards and protects consumers.
naic.org

Virginia Legal Aid

Provides free civil legal services to low-income Virginians in central and southwestern regions.
vlas.org

Virginia Legal Aid Society

Advocates for low-income Virginians through policy reform, education, and systemic litigation.
vlas.org

Virginia Poverty Law Center

A statewide resource linking Virginians to free legal information, services, and eligibility tools.
vplc.org

Internet Resources:

State Agencies

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)

Oversees mental health services and provides resources across Virginia.

dbhds.virginia.gov

Medicaid (Virginia)

Provides health coverage for low-income individuals and families in Virginia.

coverva.org

Brain Injury Services Unit (BISU)

Funds brain injury programs across Virginia offering case management and day programming.

dars.virginia.gov/cbs/biscis.htm

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

Coordinates statewide emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, working with local, state, and federal agencies.

vaemergency.gov

Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Emergency Preparedness

Focuses on public health emergency preparedness, including responses to bioterrorism, infectious disease outbreaks, and other public health emergencies.

vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-preparedness

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO OLDER VIRGINIANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, OR TO LEARN HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA), CONTACT THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

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DARS | VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
DIVISION FOR AGING SERVICES

CONTACT US:

DARS.VIRGINIA.GOV

DARS@DARS.VIRGINIA.GOV

(804) 662-7000