



COMMONWEALTH *autism* SERVICE
leading the way

Autism Virginia 2010: State of the State

CAS 9th Annual Autism Conference
March 11, 2010

John A. Toscano, MSW, MBA - President & CEO



AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Triad of Impairments

1. Communication
2. Social Interaction
3. Behavioral

Spectrum Disorder



The State of the State: Some Factors

- New central state (public sector) "home" for autism, i.e., DD agency – DBHDS – 7/1/09
- Historical lack of central responsibility and coordination of policy and services across the lifespan for a person with autism
- Virginia "model" for strong local control, i.e. Commonwealth vs. State



State of the State: Additional Factors

- Strong interest, energy, need and expertise exists throughout the state
- Prevalence rate – 1:110 has created strong demand/pressure
- Examples of quality programming exist in the state
- A number of coordinating initiatives already underway in the state
- Autism is "on the radar screen", locally, statewide and nationally like never before



Components of a System

- Lifespan services
 - ✓ Awareness training
 - ✓ Early identification
 - ✓ Early and intensive intervention
 - ✓ Best practice school based services
 - ✓ Transition services
 - ✓ Further education, training, etc.
 - ✓ Residential service options
 - ✓ Health care services for aging population



System Characteristics Needed

- Seamless service network across both the lifespan and the Commonwealth
- Adequate capacity to accommodate all system recipients across the lifespan and the Commonwealth
- Adequate competence to provide appropriate services



Policy Initiatives

- Public:
 - ✓ Shift to DD Service System and "home for autism" at DBHDS
 - ✓ J-LARC Autism Study
 - ✓ Increasing Legislative interest
 - ✓ Autism Initiatives at State Agencies (VDOE, DRS, etc.)
 - ✓ State Universities (UVA, VT, UMW, JMU, GM, VCU)



System Building Approaches

Bases of Power:

- ✓ Legal authority
- ✓ Mandate (legal and otherwise)
- ✓ Consumer power
- ✓ Political influence

Styles:

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Influence
- ✓ Catalyst
- ✓ Partnership



System Building Approaches

- Micro system needs:
 - ✓ Person with autism
 - ✓ Family
- Mezzo system needs:
 - ✓ Service providers
 - ✓ Both individuals and organizations
- Macro system needs:
 - ✓ State systems
 - ✓ Academic, service and government



The Political Economy

- Economic downturn
- VA deficit = \$4.2B
- New Governor
- New Cabinet
- New Commissioners
- New GA members



Next Steps

- On-going state/private collaboration
- Educating all new state officials, i.e. state departments, legislators, executive branch
- Continue advocacy
- Develop & highlight - Models of Excellence
- Pray for an quickened economic recovery ☺



THANK YOU!!

• Commonwealth Autism Service
2201 W. Broad Street – Suite 107
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 355-0300
www.autismva.org

- Q & A...


