



Annual State Progress Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 2006

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Lt. Governor Michael Steele
Secretary Kristen Cox

*“Empowering individuals with disabilities to
achieve their personal and professional goals
in the communities where they live.”*

ANNUAL STATE PROGRESS ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Four years ago, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. promised to infuse Maryland's government with a committed focus on making Maryland better for people with disabilities. His attention to the myriad of issues facing people with disabilities was elevated to among the highest priorities within State government. With the creation of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, the first such cabinet-level department in the nation, Governor Ehrlich has made it possible for the disability community to have a full seat at the table. Under the leadership of Secretary Kristen Cox, and in partnership with Maryland's disability community, the Department of Disabilities is actively unifying the disparate visions across State agencies to deliver services in the most integrated setting possible.

Mission: The mission of the Department is to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve their personal and professional goals in the community where they live.

Vision: The Department envisions Maryland as a state where people with disabilities are provided with the right supports, training and opportunities so that they may live independent, productive and full lives in the communities where they live, work, play, learn, and prosper.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Maryland Commission on Disabilities reach deep into the stakeholder community on an on-going basis. Through formal and informal outreach and listening sessions, these two entities are constantly in dialogue with the people most affected by services provided by State government. It is this collaborative partnership that guides the development of the State Disabilities Plan and its annual revisions. Marylanders can view this blueprint for services at any time to see what's going on in Maryland's state departments regarding disability services on the Department of Disabilities website at www.mdod.maryland.gov.

The plan unifies planning efforts across government, highlighting current work, past accomplishments and future endeavors. It holds government accountable by measuring progress and it identifies barriers to greater achievement.

It is intended that other state departments planning efforts are consistent and not divergent. The Department of Disabilities' policy and constituent services teams routinely interface with representatives from all branches of government to assure a focused approach that is in keeping with what people with disabilities say they want. Through this extensive dialogue and assessment, priorities emerge allowing the Ehrlich Administration to focus funding where it is most needed, where it is known what works, and where new ideas can be tried. During the last four years, the funding for State disability programs was increased by over **\$1 billion** – that's about 20 percent of the total increased funding for the entire State budget.

In this fashion, partnerships among people with disabilities, community advocates, and governmental representatives are strengthened. It is through these partnerships that Maryland forges ahead; and, while there is still much work to do, accomplishments are significant. Select highlights appear on the following pages.

Maryland's policies, budget, and programs reflect a deep commitment to empowering people with disabilities. Innovation, bold action, and committed follow-through are essential to maintaining the progressive course charted in the State Disabilities Plan. The initial progress outlined identifies a firm foundation for advancing the disability agenda in Maryland. Future successes will occur as a result of this foundation – the creation of the Department of Disabilities, the State Disabilities Plan, the unprecedented funding levels to disability programs based on data, and the State's strong commitment to move this agenda forward.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

“People with disabilities will live in the mainstream of community receiving whatever supports are necessary and desired to prevent institutionalization.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Expanded community supports for all people with disabilities including new initiatives for people with traumatic brain injury, learning disabilities, substance addiction, children with psychiatric disabilities, mental illness, and developmental disabilities.
- Expanded Maryland’s community waivers for people with disabilities and older adults.
- Increased funding for State disability programs of over **\$1 billion** in the last four years resulting in thousands of additional people being served.
- Developed quality of life results (outcomes), indicators, and a standard definition of self directed services and gathered consumer input through a statewide survey through the Quality and Self-Directed Services workgroup.
- Established baseline data to measure Maryland’s Olmstead progress with regard to assessment, diversion, and transition efforts to the least restrictive environment.
- Assessed residents of State Residential Centers to determine whether or not they are receiving supports in the most integrated setting – identified needed supports, services, and technology.
- Increased compensation paid to direct support staff and personal care workers – for some the first increase in almost two decades.
- Convened conferences geared toward social workers and nurses to discuss community options for discharge planning for people with disabilities in nursing homes.
- Established the Traumatic Brain Injury and Personal Assistance Services Advisory Committees to advise the Ehrlich Administration.
- Submitted proposals for federal grants to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and U. S. Administration on Aging to integrate planning efforts regarding long-term care for people with disabilities of all ages.
- Established a committee of consumers with traumatic brain injury and family members and identified preliminary data on traumatic brain injury.

FUTURE DIRECTION: STRENGTHENING MARYLAND’S OLMSTEAD PLAN

Maryland will continue to allocate funding to assist individuals who desire to do so, to move to the community. In addition to the over 1500 people who will move off community waiting lists during the current year, future budgets will include funding to continue this effort.

The principles of the Olmstead decision are infused throughout the State Disabilities Plan. Maryland’s Olmstead Plan is not a single action but requires multiple strategies of identifying people that express a preference to leave a restrictive setting, increasing community capacity to ensure community support services, evaluating efforts and effects on an individual’s quality of life, and addressing the lack of affordable and accessible housing.

Recognizing that current strategies to reach and inform individuals in institutions have not been as effective as planned, focus is directed to enhance options counseling and other supports to families.

Future initiatives will include:

- Strengthening emphasis on the implementation of Maryland’s Olmstead Plan.
- Enhancing options counseling and other supports to families and individuals to assure that services are received in the most integrated setting possible. While Maryland has implemented a policy of “*If someone says they want out, they get out,*” it is recognized that not everyone is able to make this assertion without assistance in understanding the array of options available to them in the community. Outreach efforts will be enhanced and expanded through options counseling, peer to peer mentoring, and other initiatives supporting individual choice.
- Committing to a stakeholder strategic planning process to improve long-term care for people of all ages who need those services. The new system envisions a quality-driven, long-term care system that honors an individual’s desire to leave restrictive care settings, reduces fragmentation that individuals encounter, facilitates self-direction, and increases fiscal accountability to the taxpayers of Maryland. Maryland has applied for two Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) grants in long term care transformation and will apply for the Money Follows the Individual grant to assist in these efforts.
- Measuring success using quality of life indicators in addition to traditional performance measures.
- Continuing to focus on workforce development in community programs.
- Developing evidence-based standards of training for personal assistance providers.
- Developing standards for local registry/referral systems, including functional specifications, and associated costs to assist people with disabilities in hiring personal attendants.
- Continuing focus on increased compensation paid to the direct support workforce.
- Expanding the Bridge Subsidy Program to assist people with disabilities to access housing.

HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

“People with disabilities will have a high quality and coordinated healthcare system that offers easy and timely access to medical care and a variety of consumer choices within the full range of primary, specialty, acute and long-term health care services including behavioral health.”

Employment of people with disabilities has been one of this Administration’s highest priorities. After years of effort, the Governor fully funded the Medicaid Buy-In to allow qualified individuals with disabilities who are working to retain health insurance, thereby removing one of the biggest barriers to employment.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Collaborated with advocates, people with disabilities, and legislators to create and fully fund a Medicaid Buy-In (the Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program) which allows qualified individuals with disabilities who are working to retain health insurance, removing one of the biggest barriers to employment.
- Increased compensation to staff providing direct support, nursing, and personal assistance – in some cases, the first increase in nearly 20 years.
- Secured a \$13.5 million federal Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Piloted Maryland’s first mental health Consumer Quality Team to measure consumer satisfaction in State psychiatric hospitals and community programs.
- Funded one of the first in the nation demonstration programs for self-directed mental health care, understanding its significance in some individuals’ recovery.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE IMPROVING HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Future efforts will include integrating the Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program into Maryland’s State Medicaid Plan - securing health insurance for people with disabilities.

Future initiatives will include:

- Expanding the work of the Mental Health Consumer Quality Team creating greater opportunities for peer to peer mentoring.
- Expanding self direction opportunities in mental health recovery programs.
- Establishing protocol designed to protect individual rights and eliminate the incidence of abuse, neglect, seclusion, restraint, or other negative treatment of people with disabilities in the health care system.
- Developing strategies to mitigate the over-utilization of hospital emergency departments by people with mental illness - including assessing the expansion of the community crisis response system through efforts with the mental health transformation working group.

TRANSPORTATION

“People with disabilities will use an array of transportation options to access the same destinations enjoyed by their non-disabled peers”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Inherited one of the worst para-transit systems in the country in 2003 and made it one of the top in the nation in 2006.
- Achieved a routine on-time performance in para-transit above 90% (up from 70% four years ago).
- Infused a philosophy of *“Nothing about me, without me”* by routinely involving people with disabilities in problem solving - resulting in a 30% increase in consumer satisfaction in the para-transit system.
- Improved training of personnel by hiring people with disabilities to provide the training to drivers, managers, call-center personnel and others.
- Infused upgraded communications technology throughout the system resulting in greater efficiencies and customer satisfaction.
- Provided an unprecedented increase in funding to bring the Maryland Transit Administration’s (MTA) operations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards – 100% of vehicles and ticket machines are accessible.
- Accessible ticket machines at Metro and MARC stations are quality tested by individuals with disabilities.
- Created a critically acclaimed Taxi Access Program which provides over one thousand rides every day through private contracts with seventeen Maryland companies.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

Maryland’s para-transit performance went from being one of the worst in the country to one of the best. Consumer satisfaction is greatly improved; however, there is still much to be done. In addition to continuing improvements at the Maryland Transit Administration,

Future initiatives will include:

- Expanding and enhancing travel training options available, providing a travel training system statewide that extends to school systems and to people whose driving is restricted for medical reasons.
- Assessing potential revisions to certification of people with disabilities for para-transit services including standards, frequency of re-certification, functional assessment criteria, and education of the general public and physicians of prospective changes.
- Conducting a national assessment of human services transportation coordination systems and developing a strategic plan to improve Maryland’s.
- Making driver education accessible to people who are deaf.
- Improving transportation options for people with disabilities who rely on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) for transportation.

EMPLOYMENT

“People with disabilities will have a variety of meaningful employment and training opportunities, the incentive to work, and choose and control individualized services that support their diverse careers in integrated settings.”

Maryland is currently collecting baseline employment data for people with disabilities that will be measured against unemployment insurance claims. By measuring the success of training efforts, duration of employment, and competitive job placement, data will direct changes or modifications to programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Collaborated with people with disabilities, advocates, and legislators to create and fully fund a Medicaid Buy-In (the Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program) which allows qualified individuals with disabilities who are working to retain health insurance, removing one of the biggest barriers to employment.
- Created the Office for Blindness and Vision Services at the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) assuring employment training for blind and visually impaired tailored to their unique needs.
- Expanded the Attendant Care Program that assists adults with disabilities with going to work or school.
- Created a re-employment initiative for individuals with traumatic brain injury to return to work.
- Continued support for the Quest Internship Program, which offers individuals with disabilities opportunities to work in state government.
- Assured that Maryland’s One-Stops providing employment services are accessible to individuals with disabilities through assistive technology.
- Streamlined access for individuals with disabilities who are both Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) eligible.
- Doubled the capacity of supported employment. For consumers with mental illness, new funds provided in July enabled the Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) to increase rates for *Evidence Based Practice* credentialed providers.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Future initiatives will include:

- Piloting a customized employment demonstration in state government.
- Increasing the number of people with disabilities receiving supported employment and transitioning youth services.
- Implementing a Special Options Eligible Program to facilitate greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities within the State workforce.
- Increasing the number of people served under *Order of Selection* for rehabilitation services at Division of Rehabilitation Services.

HOUSING

“People with disabilities will have a full array of housing options similar to their non-disabled peers.”

Nationally, the lack of affordable and accessible housing is the greatest barrier people face when transitioning from an institution to one’s community. Recognizing this, the Department of Disabilities added a housing policy specialist this year. Additional emphasis on developing housing capacity will be found in the 2007 State Disabilities Plan.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Established the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program, a pilot rental subsidy program that will help people with disabilities transition from institutions to their communities while awaiting more permanent housing supports.
- Hired a housing coordinator responsible for being the single point of entry to coordinate efforts among State agencies serving Medicaid consumers and overseeing the development of a housing registry.
- Introduced legislation to modify the Department of Housing and Community Development’s (DHCD) Partnership Rental Housing Program for Individuals with Disabilities to streamline the existing requirements, including local governments’ required contributions and participation. This will enable the Program to fund the development of housing units for individuals with disabilities or special needs that are located within larger rental communities owned by the private sector.
- Continued to provide private builders with incentives for developing accessible and affordable housing within local communities.
- Piloted a low-cost wheelchair ramp construction project to serve residents with low incomes in Wicomico County and initiated the development of a similar program in Baltimore City.
- Updated and widely distributed the Maryland Housing Modification Resource Guide to individuals with disabilities who need to modify their homes for accessibility.
- Compiled a Guide for Homeownership for individuals with disabilities that promote the creative use of all available affordable housing programs to expand homeownership.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS

Maryland will work to ensure that safe, decent, affordable and accessible housing opportunities are available to people with disabilities, including those exiting institutions.

Future initiatives will include:

- Creating an online searchable affordable rental housing database that will have the capacity to list available accessible rental units on the Department of Housing and Community Development’s website.
- Expanding the Bridge Subsidy Program over the next three years.

- Assessing the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program for consumer satisfaction, quality of life outcomes, challenges and successes to facilitate success in an Olmstead Plan.
- Examining the feasibility of linking the Low Income Housing Tax Credit units that are held and marketed specifically for individuals with disabilities to the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program.
- Restructuring the Department of Housing and Community Development’s (DHCD) Homeownership for Individuals with Disabilities Program to use the existing Maryland Mortgage Program and other single family programs so that more individuals can be served in a competitive private housing market; giving greater opportunities for home ownership by people with disabilities.
- Promoting universal design in publicly funded housing as well as the private sector.
- Exploring the provision of incentives to private builders for developing accessible and affordable housing within local communities.
- Examining whether or not Individual Development Accounts and financial counseling could enhance the likelihood of an individual being able to afford to own or rent. Data reveal that people leaving nursing homes are sometimes in need of strategies to build or improve their credit ratings and increase asset development.

FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

“Maryland caregivers, children with disabilities, and their families will experience equal access to an integrated support system that is self-directed, responsive, flexible, and available.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Created an Ombudsman Protocol and a mechanism to establish mediation between parents and providers of day care to address disagreements and concerns regarding inclusion of children with disabilities in typical settings with their non-disabled peers.
- Developed training curricula for families of children with disabilities to foster the growth of family support organizations throughout Maryland and on wraparound plans for use by staff within Children’s Cabinet agencies and Local Management Boards.
- Signed an executive order addressing the need of parents relinquishing custody of a child in order to receive state services.
- Expanded an early childhood mental health consultation model to address developmental, behavioral and mental health needs at the earliest stages.
- Improved mental health assessments for children in Department of Juvenile Services care.
- Created single points of access to services for families in every jurisdiction.
- Piloted a Family Navigator Network for children who require services from multiple State agencies.
- Expanded comprehensive programs providing a community-based service network for high-risk children.
- Created flexible funds for Local Coordinating Councils to purchase services for children with intensive needs not in the care or custody of State agencies.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Future initiatives will include:

- Developing a seamless service system for families with children who have disabilities or are otherwise at risk in collaboration with the Governor’s Office on Children.
- Implementing a plan for a statewide tiered approach to training child care providers on supporting children with disabilities in child care settings.
- Creating a user-friendly website for parents and professionals that provides in-depth information about the disability coverage features of available insurance plans.
- Developing a transition-aged youth plan in partnership with the Annie Casey Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment to ensure that all children are ready for life.
- Developing indicators or measurements to assess the progress of children with disabilities towards the achievement of the Well-Being Results (i.e. Babies Born Healthy, Healthy Children, Entering School Ready to Learn, Successful in School, Completing School, Safe in their Homes and Communities, Stable and Economically Independent Families, Communities that Support Family Life).
- Creating a resource map of respite care services across the State to assess the gaps in community supports for children and families that are consumer directed, family friendly, and flexible for both individuals and providers.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

“People with disabilities will be prepared for any natural or man-made disaster or emergency, and emergency personnel, employers, and others will be prepared to deal with all major issues related to individuals with disabilities during any disaster or emergency.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Conducted numerous regional conferences on emergency preparedness with and for individuals with disabilities.
- Facilitated jurisdictional planning groups throughout the State which include people with disabilities, local emergency responders, provider and advocacy organizations, and local government agencies.
- Facilitated training with agencies supporting people with disabilities to develop plans and implement strategies for evacuation and sheltering in place.
- Conducted outreach efforts with non-English speaking groups to assist them in preparing for emergencies.
- Developed an emergency plan for State employees in a Baltimore location in collaboration with the local jurisdiction emergency planners.

FUTURE DIRECTION: CONTINUE PREPARING ALL CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES TO SURVIVE AN EMERGENCY

Future initiatives will include:

- Developing appropriate and consistent sheltering-in-place, evacuation planning, and training programs for employees and visitors who work in, or visit buildings, occupied by State agencies.
- Adopting consistent standards of accessibility and inventory management (e.g. equipment and supplies) for public and private shelters as they relate to serving people with disabilities and other special needs.
- Providing people with disabilities and their families with information as to what is available at their local shelters in case of an emergency.
- Assessing the gaps in shelter accessibility and inventory.
- Continuing to assess specifications for an accessible communications system for emergency notification to ensure that all individuals with disabilities will be able to receive timely voice and text notification in the event of an emergency.

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNITIES

“People with disabilities will enjoy services and jobs that are universally accessible.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Secured \$2.6 million in federal funding to expand the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program, guaranteeing the solvency of the program to at least the year 2020. This program provides people with low interest loans underwritten by the State to purchase assistive technology or home modifications.
- Put in place mechanisms to assure non-visual access to State government websites to make information accessible for people with disabilities.
- Expanded the number of participating vendors providing discounts on products through the Maryland Assistive Technology Co-op to provide affordable technology that is available to people with disabilities.
- Continued to fund modifications to State owned property to assure accessibility. Maryland received an award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recognizing the State as having one of the highest accessibility rates in the nation.

FUTURE DIRECTION: EDUCATING ALL CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Future initiatives will include:

- Providing evaluation and technical assistance to State agencies to ensure their web sites have no visual access barriers. While this is a multi-year process, it is hoped that within the next four years all sites will be fully accessible.
- Ensuring compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act for Maryland.
- Enhancing the State’s Information and Referral capacity to provide the tools people with disabilities need to discover, select, secure funding for, acquire and effectively operate assistive technology.
- Enhancing the State’s capacity to assist individuals to obtain assessments, try out devices, secure funding and discounts, select vendors, and receive training for accessible technology.
- Implementing a durable medical equipment recycling program to assist individuals who are not eligible for Medical Assistance, but who still have a need for durable medical equipment at reduced cost.

EDUCATION

“Youth with disabilities will receive a free, high-quality public education in their neighborhood schools. They will emerge prepared and able to access employment or higher education.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Increased scores of students receiving special education on Maryland School Proficiency Assessments.
- Increased the graduation rate with a diploma for Maryland’s students in special education.
- Fully funded transitioning youth with developmental disabilities exiting the special education system.
- Fully funded the Cade formula for community colleges to assist them in supporting larger numbers of students with and without disabilities.
- Fully funded the Thornton Commission, stewarding \$1.4 billion in new funding to local school jurisdictions to guarantee that all students, with and without disabilities, have access to a free, high quality public education, including special education.
- Created Maryland’s first effort focused exclusively on community college students with learning disabilities.
- Increased funding for Infants and Toddlers.
- Continued recognition of distinguished youth with disabilities in Maryland high schools.
- Passed first in the nation legislation allowing students with disabilities to retain family health insurance coverage while attending college.

FUTURE DIRECTION: EDUCATING ALL CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Future initiatives will include:

- Including Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data for students ages 6 -21 in local school system report cards.
- Continuing to increase the number of school age students with disabilities, ages 6-21, in general education settings.
- Continuing to decrease the number of students ages 6-21, in separate class settings or removed from general education.
- Increasing the diploma graduation rate for Maryland’s students in special education to 83.2% (typical peers have a graduation rate of 85.6%).
- Providing local jurisdictions with suggested policy and guidelines to assist them in ensuring that students with disabilities who want to compete in high school athletics will be able to do so alongside their non-disabled peers.
- Reviewing national trends about integrated teaching curricula in the university setting to foster greater numbers of regular education teachers trained to teach children in an inclusive instead of a restrictive environment.