

## **Lifespan Respite Funding Comes to Virginia**

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The Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA) recently received funding through the U.S. Administration on Aging Lifespan Respite Care Program. The VDA program, which is federally funded for three years, will engage in activities to enhance respite and caregiver services throughout Virginia. The Commonwealth's strong statewide caregiver alliance, the Virginia Caregiver Coalition (VCC), will be instrumental to this program. SGS member Christy Jensen is in her second year as chair of VCC.

Respite, as defined by the Lifespan Respite Act of 2006, is "planned or emergency care provided to a child or adult with special needs in order to provide temporary relief to the family caregiver" (Lifespan Respite Care Act definition PI109-442). Respite may be provided in a variety of settings, including the family home, adult day centers, respite centers, or residential care facilities.

Virginia's Lifespan Respite Care Program calls for the following:

1. Build an integrated and sustainable lifespan respite infrastructure, with VCC at its core; strengthen the intellectual disability and developmental disability voice, embed it in the Code of Virginia, and integrate it into Virginia's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) network.
2. Help caregivers gain information about and access to respite care services; expand the ADRC database with respite services for families of children with disabilities; and develop a web-based "Family Caregiver Solution Center."
3. Train and recruit respite workers/volunteers with a statewide campaign, educational webinars and trainings.
4. Develop and secure funding for an Emergency Family Respite Care Voucher Program for caregivers unable to afford respite care in an emergency or crisis.

The program should increase respite care listings on the state's VirginiaNavigator website ([www.virginiannavigator.org](http://www.virginiannavigator.org)), the Commonwealth's family of websites providing connection to services; referrals by ADRC partners; caregiver knowledge and preparedness to use respite services; and volunteer preparedness to provide respite services.

Other southern states which have received Lifespan Respite Funding include North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas.

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*For further information about Virginia's Lifespan Respite Care Program, please contact Ellen Nau at the Virginia Department for the Aging at 804-662-9340 or [Ellen.Nau@vda.virginia.gov](mailto:Ellen.Nau@vda.virginia.gov)*