



UPWARDLY MOBILE



NEW HOUSING RESOURCES AND EVICTION PROTECTIONS

Governor Ralph Northam recently shared new resources to protect Virginians from eviction and support individuals who have lost their job or income due to COVID-19.

These tools include StayHomeVirginia.com, a new website to help Virginians navigate housing programs, services, and resources. The website offers guidance on working with landlords, financial institutions, and other organizations to use eviction and foreclosure protections during this health crisis. Resources include relief for private mortgage holders, multifamily complexes, and tenants affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This public health crisis has created unprecedented housing challenges, regardless of whether you rent or own a home,” said Governor Northam. “Right now, many Virginians are struggling to make next month’s rent or mortgage payments amid a loss in wages due to the pandemic. These resources will help Virginians get the information they need to make decisions, and ensure they have access to a safe, stable, and affordable place to live.”

The new tools were developed in partnership with the Virginia Housing Development Authority, the Commonwealth’s housing financing agency. Virginia Housing has also committed \$12 million to help non-profit housing organizations continue operations and deliver services during the COVID-19 emergency and recovery. This funding will support more than 200 non-profit housing entities across all regions of the Commonwealth. The Northam administration has also worked with Virginia Housing to provide a three-month mortgage deferral for those experiencing economic hardship. Landlords who have had their Virginia Housing-backed mortgage deferred must pass this deferral on to their tenants.

Governor Northam also signed two important bills approved by the General Assembly during the reconvened session on April 22 that included his proposed amendments to provide relief to tenants and mortgage holders.

Capping late fees on rent. House Bill 1420 caps late fees at 10 percent of the periodic rent or 10 percent of the remaining balance due, whichever is lesser. This new law will help prevent cascading late fees, allow charges only on the amount due, and set a maximum late fee percentage for the first time in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Protecting tenants from eviction during emergencies. House Bill 340 delays rental evictions or mortgage foreclosures for individuals who are not currently covered under the protections offered through the federal CARES Act or state and local protections. Under this new law, a tenant may receive a 60-day continuance of an eviction proceeding from a court if they appear in court and provide written evidence that they are not receiving payments or wages due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor. Additionally, homeowners or landlords that rent one, four, or multifamily units in the Commonwealth can pause a foreclosure proceeding for 30 days if the individual provides their lender with written evidence showing a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



DMAS INFORMATION FOR CONSUMER

The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) has received approval from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) regarding the states Appendix K application. This approval will temporarily allow parents of minor aged children and spouses to be hired as an attendant during this COVID-19 emergency. The effective date for this allowance is 04/20/2020. Once the COVID-19 emergency ends, the parent or spouse will no longer be able to continue as a paid attendant. The fiscal agents (CDCN, PPL, and Aces\$) will have the responsibility for identifying and removing these attendants from their systems.

Parents or spouses who want to become a paid attendant will go through the same hiring process and must meet the same requirements as other hired attendants. Please visit your Fiscal Agents website for attendant hiring packets and instructions or reach out to customer service.

If a parent or spouse **is currently in the role as Employer of Record** and they want to become a paid attendant, then another individual will need to become the Employer of Record, as paid attendants cannot also be the Employer of Record. If you choose to make this change, please reach out to your Service Facilitator for assistance in this process and for information regarding the responsibilities of becoming an Employer of Record.

Some matters to consider during this temporary change:

- Respite - For respite services to be part of the Plan of Care (POC), there must be an Unpaid Primary Caregiver. If the current unpaid primary caregiver becomes the attendant, then another unpaid primary caregiver will need to be identified and established in the plan of care.
- Unemployment Benefits - If a parent or spouse was working somewhere else before COVID-19 and is now eligible for unemployment benefits, then **becoming** a Consumer Directed (CD) employee may impact your benefits. Please reach out to the Virginia Employment Commission for answers as to how this may affect any benefits.
- If you receive any other type of benefits which could be impacted by becoming an employee, please reach out to that benefits plan to ask questions.
- If an Employer of Record (EOR) decides to lay off an existing employee, the EOR will need to complete a discontinuation of employment form with the fiscal agent (CDCN, PPL, or Aces\$). This will allow the employee to apply for unemployment benefits if they so desire.
- Parents and Spouses will only be allowed to be paid for personal care attendant hours, NOT respite care hours.

These are exceptional circumstances and as we learn of updates and changes, we will do our best to let you know. Please stand with us during this emergency. If you have any questions, please reach out to your Service Facilitator at Blue Ridge Independent Living Center. Our main office number is 540-342-1231 or VA Relay 711.

THE HOUSING SEARCH SITE

Virginiahousingsearch.com

Find a place to live: Search up-to-date listings of rental housing. Find housing according to your specific needs. Interactive map, tools and photos. Assistance available by toll-free phone and fax, mail and email.

List rental housing for free: Detailed listings let you advertise amenities and neighborhood features. Add up to 10 photos. Toll-free, bilingual call center helps you manage and helps tenants find listings. Easily cut and post your listings for use in other online classified services.

For more information contact Virginia Housing Development Authority (877) 428-8844, or virginiahousingsearch.com



2018 - 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

At this time of year we take a look back at all that we've been able to accomplish during the past fiscal year. Every year we are required to submit a report to federal and state government to let them know how we used the funds we received. We recently completed our reports and wanted to share some information with you. This information covers October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019.

Last year we assisted **319** individuals with disabilities. The majority of the individuals we assisted (**144**) were **65 and older**. Six (**6**) were **under the age of 5**, forty-eight (**48**) were **between 5-19**, thirteen (**13**) were **between 20-24**, and one hundred eight (**108**) were **between the ages of 25 and 59**. One hundred seventy-one (**171**) were female and one hundred forty-eight (**148**) were male. Eighty-six (**86**) were **black or African American**, two hundred eleven (**211**) were **white**, and twenty-two (**22**) were **American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, two or more races or Hispanic**.

We assisted consumers to establish **363** independent living goals in areas such as self-advocacy/self-empowerment, communication, mobility/transportation, community services, education, vocational, self-care, and personal resource management. As of the end of September, **177** of the goals had been met.

In addition, we assisted one (**1**) individuals to successfully relocate from nursing homes or other institutions to community-based living. Thirteen (**13**) individuals did not enter a nursing or other institution because of the independent living services we provided. We spent **290** hours doing **out-reach** and **315** hours doing **community and systems advocacy**. We provided **434** hours of **community education/integration** services and spent **1114** hours providing **information and referral**. We also spent **323** hours **collaborating and networking** with other agencies on your behalf, and another **718** hours providing **technical assistance**. We also provided CCC+ Service Facilitation to a number of individuals.

Our operating budget of **\$755,776** covered the cost of normal operating expenses like rent, utilities, office supplies, newsletter printing and mailing, and it also paid for the salaries and fringe benefits for our 12 staff. Through grants we received, we spent **\$83,888** to provide direct services to consumers for home modifications such as railings, ramps, grab bars, etc.

The independent living movement is all about individuals with disabilities understanding they have the same rights as individuals without disabilities. It is all about being a part of the movement to make sure this is the case. BRILC staff work very hard on your behalf however, there are only few of us. We need each of **you** to do your part to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access and choices. We need **you** to attend hearings and public meetings to make your voice heard. We need **you** to contact your government officials to let them know what is important to you. We're here to work with **you!** Let us know what we can do to assist you.



BRILC YOUTH TRANSITION PROGRAM

We are currently looking for youth with disabilities between the ages of 17-24 who had an IEP and have completed high school. We will assist youth with transition from high school to college and/or employment by providing peer mentorship, goal planning, and providing a youth group support meeting. Please contact Shay Ruff, Youth Transition Coordinator, at (540) 342-1231 or VA Relay 711, or email: sruff@brilc.org for more information.



COPING WITH STRESS

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Find ways you and your family can reduce stress. Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include: Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

- Children and teens.
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders.

People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use.

Take care of yourself and your community. Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Ways to cope with stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body.
 - ◊ Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
 - ◊ Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - ◊ Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep.
 - ◊ Avoid alcohol and drugs.
 - ◊ Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Need help? Know someone who does? If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others:

- Call 911.
- Visit the Disaster Distress Helpline , call 1-800-985-5990, or text Talk With Us to 66746.
- Visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224.



ONE OF OUR CONSUMERS SHARES HER STORY

As most of us are staying indoors primarily during the COVID-19 pandemic threat and practicing social-distancing, one of our consumers shares. The highs and lows Redell shares provides information about services that you may consider valuable for you. As early as the year 2008, a gradual loss of activities began. A diagnosis of optic nerve damage and vision loss affecting both eyes – glaucoma. The outcome of this diagnosis after a long process of medical findings by numerous professionals was painful and difficult to adapt to at the very least.

Speeding forward, Redell states that she is grateful for her son, Curtis. He is her personal care attendant. He provides for her activities of daily living as well as meal preparation, cleaning the kitchen, making/changing the bed, laundry, mobility assistance, etc. Her mom, Olive, manages the services for Curtis to be paid.

The family recently experienced the death of Paul Wright, Curtis' father. Mr. Wright, 78, is among Virginia's latest victims of COVID-19. He died March 30, 2020, at Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond where he had been in intensive care. He was one of Greyhound's longest serving employees after 48 years. Hearts are broken understandably and grief is ongoing.

During her lifetime, Redell's list of jobs included seamstress, environmental services, substitute teacher, private one-on-one, on-call nurse aide with suicide victims, and road crossing guard just to name a few. At age 12, she worked in a field of cotton in a neighboring area of Jackson, N.C. Redell said, "we worked hard by day but we had breaks, good food on the table from the garden, and a good night of sleep." She mostly worked with girls as the boys usually worked as share croppers.

The hobby she most loves and misses the most is SEWING. She talked of fond memories staying up most of the night, sewing and drinking percolated coffee. It smells good just thinking about it!

Redell loves singing in the church choir of a local Baptist church only two blocks away. As she said, "I could walk to the church if I could see". A favorite gospel hymn to sing is "Ride Out the Storm". The message of the song is, "trust in the Lord." This is Redell's favorite scripture from the bible Psalm 23. Redell loves to recite it when in a valley, down low.

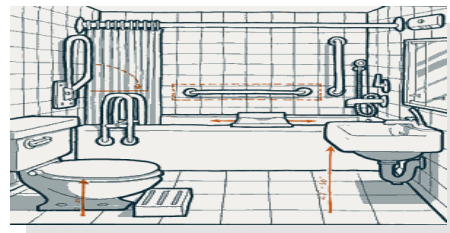
Final notes from Redell: she thanks BRILC for the services provided as well as all of the men and women working to get us through this storm. She shared that her mom is 94 years young. BRILC staff are very thankful for Redell sharing with her reasons for why she loves living and all of her many memories.

Redell is definitely "queen of her castle." We also thank Curtis for keeping her healthy and strong.

HAVE A DISABILITY? NEED HOME MODIFICATIONS?

Are you a person with a disability? Would a home modification help you to remain independent in your home? BRILC might be able to assist you.

Want to learn more about this program? Contact us at (540)342-1231 or VA Relay 711.



COME JOIN US!!!

BRILC has a support group for all people with disabilities. Both men and women of all ages are invited to join us on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 1 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. We discuss issues or concerns that you might have, socialize, play games, and have outings to restaurants, picnics, movies, and more. The group is run by the members. We hope you'll join at the next meeting. If you have any questions, contact Jon Weems at (540)-342-1231 or VA Relay 711.



NEED/HAVE EQUIPMENT

BRILC receives many calls from individuals who need equipment but do not have the resources to buy it. BRILC accepts donations of medical equipment that is in good repair and usable, adult briefs, commode chairs, rolling walkers, and transfer benches, shower chairs, walkers, and wheelchairs. If you have such equipment, please call BRILC at (540)-342-1231 or VA Relay 711. All individuals donating items will receive an acknowledgement letter that can be used for tax purposes. Thank you!



For Your Contribution to BRILC

Lonnie Gill, Charlie Harlow, Angela McGadden



“The point in history at which we stand is full of promise and danger. The world will either move forward toward unity and widely shared prosperity—or it will move apart.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

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