

Considering a Move to Virginia for People with Developmental Disabilities

The Arc of Northern Virginia is often contacted by people considering a move to Virginia or new to the area from other parts of the country. There are lots of things to consider and understand as you think about a move like this. First, Virginia has long waiting lists for a lot of services and supports for people with developmental disabilities, and those supports may not necessarily move with you. This handout will review some good ways to get a sense of how a move will impact your family.

Things to Consider

Virginia tends to rank very low, in comparison with other states, in terms of funding for and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. The Northern Virginia area (i.e. Arlington County, Fairfax County, Alexandria City, Fairfax City, City of Falls Church) sometimes have supplemental local funding options to support people, but they are designed to be limited lifelines, not comprehensive services. This area of the state is also the most expensive, so the cost of living will be notably higher.

United Cerebral Palsy publishes an annual state by state ranking called the “Case for Inclusion” which is a good, fast look at how state services compare to each other. You can find that report at <https://caseforinclusion.org/>. The University of Colorado also does an in-depth report called “State of the States in Developmental Disabilities” that you can find here <https://stateofthestates.ku.edu/>.

What Supports May Move with You

If you receive monthly **income from Social Security**, that should move with you. You must contact the Social Security office in your new home immediately to notify them of your change in address, update any leases or other paperwork they have on file relating to your home or cost of living, and update them on your job status.

If you have a **federal housing voucher**, like a Housing Choice Voucher, it may move with you if the housing authority in your new area agrees to accept your voucher. You should contact them ahead of your move to ensure your voucher can come with you, and ask them about deadlines for submitting information on the new home you’ll have in Virginia. To find your new local PHA, visit <https://affordablehousingonline.com/public-housing-waiting-lists/Virginia>.

If you currently have an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**, it will be effective in your new school district until you meet as an IEP Team and develop and sign a new plan. However, the support services available and team at the new school may be different and may not implement the plan exactly as the old school did. Services in your old IEP are not guaranteed once the new IEP is signed, so ensure the new IEP reflects all of the needs of the student.

Special Needs Trust or ABLE Accounts can move with you from state to state. Ensure you still have a contact person with your account who can work with you on meeting your needs in the new state and that your contact information is updated. You may choose to move the money to an account with a group based near your new home if you find the option to visit in-person is important for you.

What Will Not Move with You

If you have **Medicaid**, you may be able to get Medicaid in Virginia, but you must reapply and applications take 45 calendar days to process. Each state has a different application process and Virginia has strict financial eligibility criteria for adults and children. Virginia's Medicaid operates under a managed care system, and you must select a managed care plan in most cases. You can apply for Virginia Medicaid online at <http://commonhelp.virginia.gov/> or at the hotline on the site.

Though every state has a **Medicaid Waiver** system, Medicaid Waivers vary widely from state to state and Waivers do not move from state to state. If you move to Virginia and, as a result of a developmental disability, you will need ongoing supports in your home, on the job site, in a meaningful day support program, with respite, or other long-term services, you will need to look at getting on the waiting list for the Waivers in Virginia. The Waivers specifically for the DD population have a waiting list of over 14,000 people and many people on the list wait a very long time for services, some more than decades. If you received any services (e.g. respite) as a result of being on the waiting list for a Waiver in your old home state, they will not continue in Virginia. You can learn more about the Waiver system, including how to apply, at [youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA](https://www.youtube.com/user/VideosatTheArcofNoVA)

If you receive **state job supports** through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you will need to meet with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative services to get on the waiting list for job supports. Waiting times can vary from a few months to a few years. Job supports are generally not ongoing and in many cases, do not compare to the depth and breadth of supports in other states. Visit the DARS website for more at <https://vadars.org/>.

If you received any **local support services or funding**, they will not move with you. As mentioned above, Northern Virginia areas (i.e. Arlington County, Fairfax County, Alexandria City, Fairfax City, City of Falls Church) sometimes have supplemental local funding options to support people. This support is usually in the form of job supports and/or meaningful day opportunities for people who are over 22 years old and no longer IEP eligible. These services are not guaranteed.

Private therapies will need to be reauthorized and you will need to find new service providers, unless your previous provider also operates in Northern Virginia and will work with the insurance plan you will use in Virginia.

Other Options to Consider

Because of the challenges associated with a state to state move, many people opt to stay where they are presently instead of upending services. Some people opt to move to Maryland, especially Montgomery County, where supports tend to be more robust than they are in Virginia, waiting lists are shorter, and many DC-area workers have commutes equivalent to what they would have living in Northern Virginia. Some families opt to move to the District of Columbia where there is no waiting list for Waiver services, though some people find services to be less robust than desired.

More Information

To learn more about service options across a lifespan in Northern Virginia, visit The Arc of Northern Virginia's Transition POINTS website at <https://thearcofnova.org/programs/transition/> where you'll find guidebooks and toolkits for people with DD at any stage of life.