



UPWARDLY MOBILE



BE READY WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

Get Informed

- Know what disasters could affect your area, which could call for an evacuation and when to shelter in place.
- Keep a NOAA weather Radio tuned to your local emergency station and monitor TV and radio. Follow mobile alerts and warnings about severe weather in your area.
- Download the FEMA app and get weather alerts from the National weather Service for up to five different locations anywhere in the United States.

Make A Plan

How might a disaster affect you? Could you make it on your own for at least three days? After a disaster you may not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore. It's crucial to plan for your regular needs and to know what you would do if they become limited or unavailable.

Additional planning steps should include:

- Your locality may have a Special Needs Registry to ensure the needs of people with disabilities are met during an emergency. Contact your local authorities for information. Create a support network. Keep a contact list in a watertight container in your emergency kit.
- Be ready to explain to first responders that you need to evacuate and choose to go to a shelter with your family, service animal, caregiver, personal assistant and your assistive technology devices and supplies.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic. Work with local services, public transportation or paratransit to identify your local or private accessible transportation options.
- Inform your support network where you keep your emergency supplies. You may want to consider giving one member a key to your house or apartment.
- Contact your city or county government's emergency management agency or office. Many local offices keep lists of people with disabilities so they can be helped quickly in a sudden emergency.
- If you are dependent on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment know the location and availability of more than one facility.
- If you use medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your doctor or health care provider about how you can prepare for its use during a power outage.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets.
- If you have a communication disability make sure your emergency information says the best way to communicate with you.
- If you use an augmentative communications device or other assistive technologies, plan how you will evacuate with the devices or how you will replace equipment if lost or destroyed. Keep model numbers and note where the equipment came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.).
- Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases, pictures or pictograms.
- Keep Braille/text communication cards, if used, for two-way communication.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [online tool](#) helps people locate and access their electronic health records from a variety of sources.
- Plan for children with disabilities and people who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.

Get your Benefits Electronically

A disaster can disrupt mail service for days or weeks. If you depend on Social Security or other regular benefits, switching to electronic payments is a simple, significant way to protect yourself financially before disaster strikes. It also eliminates the risk of stolen checks. The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:

- Direct deposit to a checking or savings account. If you get federal benefits you can sign up by calling 800-333-1795 or [sign up online](#).
- The **Direct Express**® prepaid debit card is designed as a safe and easy alternative to paper checks. Call toll-free at 877-212-9991 or [sign up online](#).

Build a Kit

In addition to having your basic survival supplies, an emergency kit should have items to meet your individual needs in various emergencies. Consider the items you use on a daily basis and which ones you may need to add to your kit.

Tips for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- A weather radio (with text display and a flashing alert)
- Extra hearing-aid batteries
- A TTY
- Pen and paper (in case you have to communicate with someone who does not know sign language)



Tips for People who are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Mark emergency supplies with Braille labels or large print. Keep a list of your emergency supplies and where you bought them on a portable flash drive or make an audio file that is kept in a safe place where you can access it.
- Keep a Braille or deaf-blind communications device as part of your emergency supply kit.

Tips for People with Speech Disability

- If you use an augmentative communications device or other assistive technologies plan how you will evacuate with the devices or how you will replace equipment if it is lost or destroyed. Keep model information and note where the equipment came from (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.).
- Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or pictogram.

Tips for People with a Mobility Disability

- If you use a power wheelchair have a lightweight manual chair available as a backup if possible. Know the size and weight of your wheelchair in addition to whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.
- Show others how to operate your wheelchair.
- Purchase an extra battery for a power wheelchair or other battery-operated medical or assistive technology devices. If you can't purchase an extra battery, find out what agencies, organizations or local charitable groups can help you buy one. Keep extra batteries on a trickle charger at all times.
- Consider keeping a patch kit or can of sealant for flat tires and/or extra inner tube if wheelchair or scooter is not puncture proof.
- Keep an extra mobility device such as a cane or walker if you use one.
- If you use a seat cushion to protect your skin or maintain your balance and you must evacuate without your wheelchair, take your cushion with you.

Tips for Individuals Who May Need Behavior Support

- Plan for children with disabilities and people who may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), who may have difficulty in unfamiliar or chaotic environments.

This may include

- Handheld electronic devices (loaded with movies and games).

- Spare Chargers
- Sheets and twine or a small pop up tent (to decrease visual stimulation in a busy room or to provide instant privacy)
- Headphones (to decrease auditory distractions)
- Comfort snacks
- Toys (to meet needs for stimulation)

Additional Items

- At least a week-long supply of prescription medicines
- A list of all medications, dosage and any allergies
- Extra eyeglasses
- Extra hearing-aid batteries
- Extra wheelchair batteries (or a manual wheelchair if possible)
- Oxygen
- A list of the style and serial number of medical devices (include special instructions for operating your equipment if needed)
- Copies of medical insurance and Medicare cards
- Contact information for doctors, relatives or friends who should be notified if you are hurt
- Ice for refrigerating medications
- Sensory items, such as fidget spinners, earplugs, etc.
- A Medical Alert System, which can alert others of a medical emergency through a landline or cell service
- Pet food, extra water, collar with ID tag, medical records and other supplies for your service animal



AMPUTEE & LIMB DIFFERENCE SUPPORT NETWORK

ALL amputations result in limb difference but not all limb differences are from amputation. When people are born with absent or partial limbs, it is referred to as congenital limb deficiency.

The Amputee & Limb Difference Support Network (ALDSN) is a support group for adults with all forms of limb difference. These differences can be congenital in origin or resulting from amputation. Amputations often stem from accidents or illness and are sometimes performed to preserve one's life.

The ALDSN will provide an opportunity for adults with all forms of limb difference to come together in a safe space to discuss their challenges, share success stories and provide moral support. Topics like phantom pain management techniques, residual limb care and prosthetic options will also be discussed.

The ALDSN meets bi-weekly, on Mondays, from 1pm to 2:30pm. Dates may fluctuate due to consumer availability and changes in office hours. Please call for specifics. We currently have 5 individuals on the roster with room for plenty more. Caregivers and members of patient's support networks are encouraged to attend as well.

We hope to see you soon!

If you know of someone who may have interest in joining the ALDSN, please have them contact Marc Davis @ 540-342-1231 x106 or VA Relay 711 or send an email to mdavis@brilc.org.



Blue Ridge
Independent
Living Center

CONSUMER SATISFACTION

Your agency recently did some handicap renovations to our bathroom and installed a ramp for us. We just wanted to let you know that Mr. Welch and his staff did a wonderful job in making our bathroom and home more accessible for my husband. Everyone was extremely courteous and showed a lot of concern in making sure that the work was done properly.

We are extremely grateful and wanted to let you know. We would appreciate it if you would pass our sincere gratitude on to Mr. Welch and his associates.

Thank you again to Blue Ridge Independent Living and its programs and staff.



Very Happy Consumer

HOW \$4 CAN PROTECT YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

With doors and windows shut tight against the cold, levels of cancer-causing radon gas can build up in homes during the winter months, posing a health risk to Virginians. You can't see, smell or taste radon, but as cold weather has us spending more time indoors, now is the time to test or retest your home for radon.

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among non-smokers, claiming about 21,000 American lives each year. Breathing air with radon can increase your risk of getting lung cancer. Smoking increases the risk of the cancer-causing effects from radon exposure even more.

- **What is radon?** Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from rocks and dirt in the ground and escapes into the air everywhere. Radon is normally reduced to very low levels in outdoor air, but in certain circumstances it can reach much higher concentrations indoors.
- **Who is at risk?** Radon exposure doesn't cause immediate symptoms, so it is very easy for people to be unaware that they are being exposed inside their homes. Current and former smokers are much more vulnerable to radon exposure than people who have never smoked.

Because radon is colorless, odorless gas that cannot be detected with your senses, testing the indoor air is the only way to know if you have high radon levels in your home.

Nearly half of all homes in Southwestern Virginia are vulnerable to high levels of radon. In fact, VDH (Virginia Department of Health) has found high levels of radon in homes in every Virginia county. Homes in the same neighborhood can have different levels of radon indoors, so the U.S. Surgeon General encourages every household to have their home tested regardless of geographic location or type of foundation of your home.

Why are colder weather months preferred for testing for radon? How can I obtain \$4 radon home test kits from VDH? Visit VDHRadon.org to learn more, or www.CDC/radon.



2023 - 2024 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, 2023 through September 30, 2024.

Last year we assisted **266** individuals with disabilities. The majority of the individuals we assisted (**153**) were **65 and older**. Seven (**7**) were **between 5-19**, four (**4**) were **between 20-24**, and one hundred and two (**102**) were **between the ages of 25 and 59**. One hundred thirty - seven (**137**) were female and one hundred twenty-nine (**129**) were male. Ninety-nine (**99**) were **black or African American**, two hundred fifty (**150**) were **white**, and seventeen (**17**) were **American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, two or more races or Hispanic**.

We assisted consumers to establish **393** 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, **311** of the goals had been met.

In addition, we assisted two (**2**) individuals to successfully relocate from nursing homes or other institutions to community-based living. Eighty-two (**82**) individuals did not enter a nursing or other institution because of the independent living services we provided. We spent **248** hours doing **outreach** and **690** hours doing **community and systems advocacy**. We provided **590** hours of **community education/integration** services and spent **132** hours providing **information and referral**. We also spent **2,097** hours **collaborating and networking** with other agencies on your behalf, and another **208** hours providing **technical assistance**. We also provided CCC+ Service Facilitation to a number of individuals.

Our operating budget of **\$831,404** 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 **\$19,056** 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 a 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.



WE'RE MEETING IN PERSON!!!

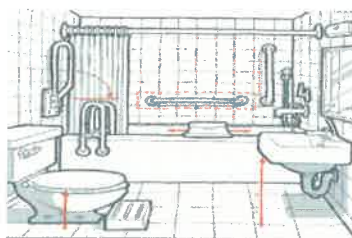
BRILC has a support group for all people with disabilities. Both men and women of all ages are invited to join us on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 1 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. We discuss issues or concerns that you might have, socialize and play games. The group is run by the members. We hope you'll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



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.



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 transitioning from high school to college and/or employment by providing peer mentorship, goal planning, and providing a youth group support meeting. Please contact us, or email at BRILC at brilc.org or at 540 342-1231 or VA Relay 711 for more information.



Thank You!

For Your Contribution to BRILC

Nancy Griggs, Tracy Gross, Charles Harlow, Kroger's, J. Spencer and Joy Frantz Donor Advised Fund of Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia

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MOBI-CHAIR

BRILC is fortunate to have a Mobi-Chair for your use. The Mobi-Chair is a floating beach wheelchair. Families interested in using the chair should contact BRILC at 540-342-1231 or Virginia Relay 711 for further information, eligibility and availability. It is important to note that although the Mobi-Chair floats, it is not a boat. The sitting position is stable and users should not slip out under normal conditions of use. However, for safety reasons, a life jacket is still required for non-swimmers (and may be required by law), and the chair is not intended for areas with currents or strong waves.



DESKTOP COMPUTERS AVAILABLE

We have refurbished desktop computers. If you're interested in getting a desktop computer, call Avis at 540-342-1231 or VA Relay 711. They are available for \$25.



FROM ONE OF OUR CONSUMERS

“More positive existence. I have formed a circle of support with the group I attend.”



BRILC CHARITY LIST

Like to shop at Amazon? While you are there visit our wish list on Amazon.com on the link below: <https://a.co/gzoiCAp>



“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Maya Angelou

Upcoming Recognitions March thru May

March is recognized as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, highlighting disabilities like Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Learning Disorders, and Hearing or Vision Impairments.

April is recognized as Autism Acceptance Month, Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month, Parkinson's Awareness Month, Sarcoidosis Awareness Month, Paralyzed Veterans Across America Month, and International Guide Dog Day.

May is recognized as ALS Awareness Month, Apraxia Awareness Month, Allergy/Asthma Awareness Month, Better Speech and Hearing Month, and Bladder Cancer Awareness Month.