

Purpose of Priorities

The Council's priorities serve several purposes.

- They are a list of what is important to Council as a whole.
- They drive the Council's work and focus over the next fiscal year.
- They are shared with DARS to make DARS aware of Council's interest in these issues.
- They may help inform the Brain Injury State Plan and/or recommendations for the dissemination of new funds.

While the Council's priorities are not a list of recommendations for DARS or a "to-do" list for DARS, the Council may include suggestions for DARS to consider.

Another valuable purpose of Council's priorities is that they inform the individuals, advocates, and state agency representatives on Council. Council members can then take the priorities back to their networks and agencies to inform them and help build partners in building support for what's important for people living with brain injury, their families, and the service network.

2025 Recommended Priorities

These recommendations include the five top areas identified through the survey of Council members and an ongoing priority carried over from previous years.

1. Increase Council understanding of the availability of behavioral health services for people living with brain injury.

In addressing this priority, the following actions are recommended:

- Ask DARS staff to provide an overview of the screening initiative for brain injury in Community Services Boards funded through the federal grant and to share updates on the progress and outcomes.
- Invite a representative from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to share with Council members the mandates of the Community Services Boards and eligibility for services and to learn more about the number of people with brain injury in state hospitals.
- Ask the state-funded brain injury providers to share information about how they connect the people they support with behavioral health services.
- Identify the availability of trauma informed and brain injury informed behavioral health services among private practitioners (those outside the Community Services Board system).

2. Bring awareness to the benefits of and barriers to Cognitive Rehabilitation for people living with brain injury.

In addressing this priority, the following actions are recommended:

- Council members need to have a shared understanding of cognitive rehabilitation including how it is provided, the outcomes of the service, and where it is available in Virginia.
- Council should ask brain injury advocates to research the benefits of an advocacy campaign to increase access to cognitive rehabilitation in Virginia, including a mandate that it be covered by private insurance.

3. Learn more about the needs and current services for youth living with brain injuries.

As a starting point, Council requests that current Council members who work with youth and a pediatric Case Manager identified by the DARS brain injury services staff work together to increase Council members knowledge and understanding of this issue in 2025.

4. Increased Neurobehavioral Services and/or Medicaid Waiver funding for services for people living with brain injury.

Council members as individual advocates, the advocacy network through Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) and the Alliance, and DARS should support and continue to request a brain injury waiver.

5. Support the Housing Workgroup Recommendations

The Council's Housing Workgroup has been meeting for two years and will be sharing the results of their work and recommendations. The Committee feels strongly that these recommendations should be supported by Council and that housing remain an ongoing priority.