



Uniting for Brain Injury Awareness Month

NASHIA Celebrates March Brain Injury Awareness Month

During March, the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) will feature stories about the impact of brain injury on individuals and families, as well as resources and initiatives developed to provide supports and assistance. This week, NASHIA features the story of John -- husband, father, and survivor of brain injury and Virginia's brain injury programs designed to assist individuals like John. Have a story to tell? Send to Susan Vaughn at publicpolicy@nashia.org.



Meet John -- Who Tells His Story of How Brain Injury Changed His Life

“John”, a husband and father of two young children, who one day after work, had a sudden and unexpected stroke that has changed his life. In the early prime of his career, he found himself in a hospital room, unable to walk, talk, read, focus or even eat properly. He was discharged to his home where he became completely reliant on his wife for everything, from medication management to getting to doctor appointments. His children at first were afraid of him because he was in a wheelchair and unable to speak. John struggled with memory, organization, balance, navigating new environments, and numbness in one arm.



John contacted Crossroads to Brain Injury Recovery (CBIR), a program funded by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' Brain Injury Services Coordination (BISC) Unit. Crossroads provided case management and CSS/life skills training. The Community Support Services (CSS) specialist developed memory and organizational strategies for John to be able to pay bills. He learned to cook independently utilizing adaptive kitchen equipment. He obtained a medication manager with alarm reminders and an automatic dispenser which would eliminate dependence on his wife for managing his medications. John worked hard to learn how to access and

utilize public transportation, which gave him the freedom to participate in the community. He even overcame his anxiety of going grocery shopping, and is now able to grocery shop independently for his family. John faithfully attended outpatient physical, occupational, and speech therapies, slowly gaining strength, endurance, and confidence in his abilities.

John now loves being a speaker and sharing his personal story to inspire and motivate others. His goals include returning to work, and specifically working with at-risk youth. Less than a year after working with Crossroads, he successfully ran a marathon. In addition, he is now able again to make a peanut butter sandwich for his children!

John describes his road to recovery in the following way:

"You hear people talk about their road to recovery. We have all been on roads and understand they have twists and turns but they are defined. I think that road is more like entering a forest and every tree was a goal I needed to accomplish. My case manager helped me identify those necessary trees so I could navigate my way through the forest."

Thank you for sharing, John!



The Virginia DARS Offers an Array of Brain Injury Services and Supports

Meet NASHIA members Patti Goodall (far left), Manager for the Brain Injury Services Unit, and Donna Cantrell (r), Federal TBI Program Specialist, both of whom work for the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). The Brain Injury Services Coordination (BISC) Unit, which is housed in DARS, serves as a point of contact for internal and external customers seeking general or agency-specific information about brain injury resources.

BISC manages over \$6 million in programs, contracts, and federal grants involving brain injury services throughout the Commonwealth. The Unit oversees and administers nine state-funded Brain Injury Services (BIS) Programs, the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Trust Fund, the Brain Injury Discretionary Services (BIDS) Fund, and provides staffing for the Virginia Brain Injury Council. The Unit also works collaboratively with DARS' Vocational Rehabilitation Program when serving consumers who have a vocational goal. And, the Unit administers the Federal TBI State Partnership Grant.

The department was designated as the lead agency in 1989 when State lawmakers first appropriated funding to establish resources. The Unit was subsequently established within the department in 1992. Click [here](#) to learn more about Virginia's programs.