

**Family Support & Advocacy Committee Update**  
**March 13, 2002**

**Committee:**

- Sabrina Alston has resigned as Secretary of the FS&A Committee.
- Karen Durst was introduced at the last FS&A meeting as our Part C Office liaison.
- Shirley Ricks has been asked to come back and present further information on the updated stipend policy and the VICC membership issue.

**Membership:**

- Calling Cards will be issued at the March FS&A meeting.
- Pam Johnson met with ITC of VA staff in January to discuss VICC appointments. The Membership Subcommittee will continue to work with the ITC of VA office in getting families appointed to the VICC.
- The FS&A Orientation Guide for new members has been updated to include new policies on stipends and calling cards. Please contact Dana Yarbrough, parent co-chair, for a copy.

**Conference Committee:**

- The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Families are Special, Too! Conference was held in Richmond on February 22 and 23, 2002. The theme was Creating Community: Connecting the Community Dots. National speakers provided inspirational keynotes and workshops about connecting your child with a disability with your community and raising your children to be self-determined. Other workshop topics included school inclusion curriculum, parent-provider partnerships, EI in natural environments, transitions your family will face in 3 years, faith-based supports, assistive technology, resources, and how to get your children involved with peers and in community programs). 110 parents, providers and children attended.
- The FS&A Respite Tool Kit will be presented to the VICC at the March meeting. The tool kit will be given to each of the 40 councils and will contain a respite binder and 10 training packets of respite materials for families and providers. VICC chairs and ITCofVA staff will also receive copies.

**Publications:**

- Work continues on publishing the monthly *Family Matters Newsletter* currently available on the ITC of VA website. As always, submission of family stories and articles are encouraged.
- The "Beginning with Families" publication has been translated into Spanish. We anticipate a final copy to be presented at the March meeting.
- Shelly Walker, Family Support Coordinator with the New River Valley ICC, is coordinating the efforts to gather information from medical facilities in Virginia and neighboring states. A specialty hospital guide will be published in the summer of 2002. The guide will include information such as directions, visitor rules, accommodations, parking, typical meal rates, social worker contact information, etc. in an effort to decrease families stress when traveling to a specialty hospital for the first time.

*Submitted by Dana Yarbrough, Co-Chair*