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#### **ABSTRACT**

The project "Together We Can" is described in this final report as a program to provide training and technical assistance to improve the quality of life for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with deaf-blindness in Virginia. The plan for the project included services based on recommended effective practices in the areas of early identification, early intervention, education, transition, vocational services, and related services. The project conducted the following activities: promotion of program awareness and advertisement of service availability; creation of an interagency advisory council; provision of inservice training, technical assistance, and workshops concerning exemplary practices for children with deaf-blindness; promotion of inclusion of children with deaf-blindness in schools and in the community; facilitation of parental involvement in their children's education; development and dissemination of project information; and maintenance of an annual census of Virginia's children with deaf-blindness. The program stressed collaboration of state agencies, family/consumer groups, nonprofits, colleges and universities, and professional organizations. The report discusses project challenges and their resolution, evaluation findings, and the project's impact. Appendices include a list of project milestones and maps of Virginia. (CR)

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#### **FINAL REPORT**

# TOGETHER WE CAN: The Virginia Project for the Integration of Children with Deaf-Blindness

CFDA 84, 025A

October 1, 1992 - September 30, 1995

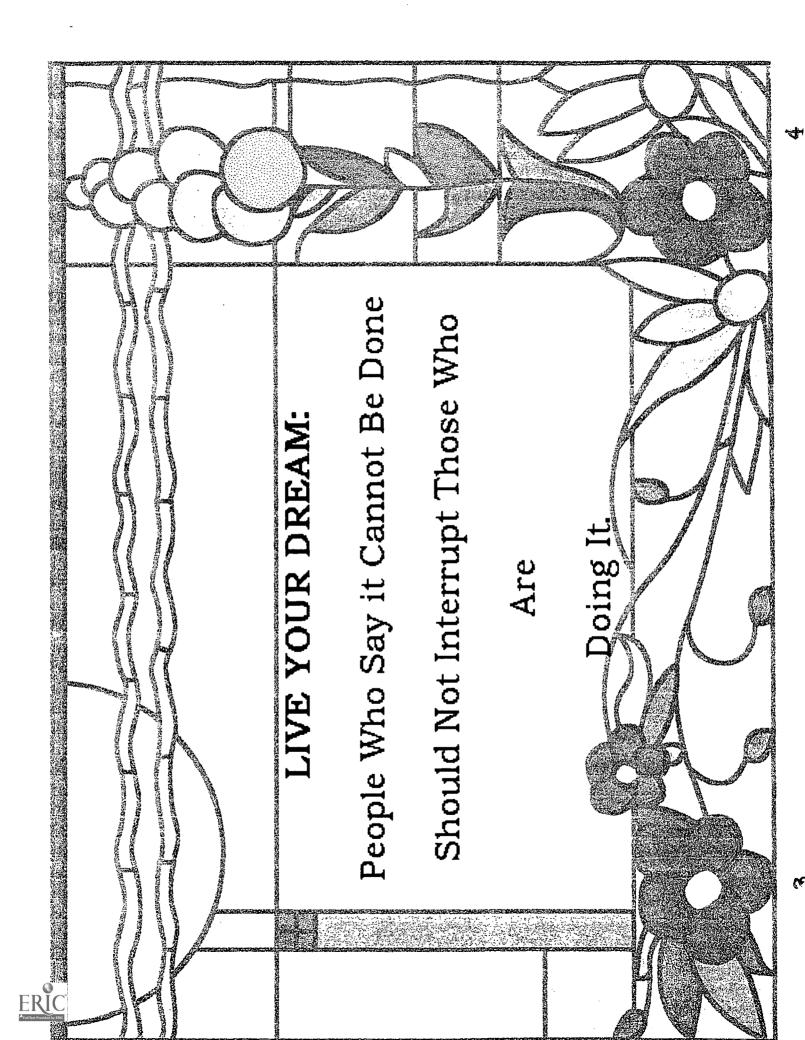
#### Submitted by:

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#### II. ABSTRACT

TOGETHER WE CAN: The Virginia Project for the Integration of Children With Deaf-Blindness, was funded under Services for Children with Deaf-Blindness (CFDA 84.025A, Part C - 307.11) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, for a three year period (10/92-9/95).

The original title of the grant was STEP FAST Project to Integrated Education of Children with Deaf-Blindness, and the award was made to George Mason University, in collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The transfer of the grant to Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities, the university affiliated program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and subsequent name change occurred in June of 1993.

The overall goal of the TOGETHER WE CAN Project was to provide statewide training and technical assistance to all Virginia children and youth with deaf-blindness, birth through 21 years, their families and service providers. Throughout the three years the number of infants, toddlers, children, and youth on the Virginia State Census of Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness grew from around 200 to 290. These children are scattered throughout Virginia's 135 school divisions receiving services in a variety of educational environments such as local public schools, general education classrooms, resource rooms, state schools for the deaf and blind, regional programs, training centers, day care, and out-of-state residential programs.

The plan for this project included services based upon recommended effective practices in the areas of:

- early identification
- early intervention
- education
- transition
- vocational services
- related services

The focus in these areas was on (a) encouraging collaboration between families and their service providers; (b) facilitating family involvement in deciding, recommending, and developing needed services; (c) collaborating with local, state, and national agencies and organizations: (d) promoting inclusive, age-appropriate placements; and (e) providing knowledge regarding the unique needs of children with deaf-blindness.



Two other components of this grant dealt with procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of services supported through this project and maintaining the State Census.

Highlights of this project included:

- two Together We Can Summer Institutes, with 80 participants ('94 & '95)
- Family Weekend ('94)
- lectures to university students in occupational therapy, early childhood special education, general education, interdisciplinary related services, and severe disabilities
- transition of a student with deaf-blindness from a regional residential facility to a home school
- development of an inclusive education placement at a neighborhood school for a student with deaf-blindness
- · monthly articles for a newsletter
- development of a strong, involved, interagency Advisory Council that met six times in two years
- collaboration with multiple state agencies and organizations in the delivery of training regarding effective practices for educating children with deaf-blindness
- facilitation of MAPs and PATH for families

The TOGETHER WE CAN Project enjoyed the support of families, advocacy organizations, service providers, and agencies across Virginia. The Project's success was based upon this support and collaboration.

"When you dream alone it is only a dream, but when you dream together it is the beginning of reality."

~Don Helder Camera



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#### IV. PURPOSE, GOALS. & OBJECTIVES

#### A. Purpose

The purpose of the TOGETHER WE CAN Project (TWC) was to provide training and technical assistance to improve the quality of life for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with deaf-blindness in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This project collaborated with local service providers and families to implement exemplary practices to improve the abilities of and opportunities for children with deaf-blindness to live, go to school, play, work and have friends in their own schools and communities.

TWC was designed to support learners with deaf-blindness being educated in their local schools, and all the goals and objectives centered on this purpose. While the majority of the children on the State Census are not in typical classrooms, this specific purpose was always the vision, mission, and desired outcome. Exemplary practices leading to this desired outcome were addressed through the development of child-centered individual education programs (IEPs) and individual family service plans (IFSPs).

Training and technical assistance provided were based upon needs assessments and priorities established by the families of children with deaf-blindness, the TWC Advisory Council, local education agencies (LEAs), the State Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), the State Plan for Part B of the IDEA, the Interagency Coordinating Council for Part H Planning, Project Unite (State Transition Systems Change Project), and a needs assessment survey conducted in the Commonwealth in 1992 for consultants and administrators of learners with deaf-blindness.

#### **B. Project Goals and Objectives**

The goals of TOGETHER WE CAN were to provide statewide technical assistance and training regarding exemplary services for children with deaf-blindness; and to update and maintain the existing State Census. The major objectives were:

- to promote awareness of TWC and advertise availability of project services; creating an interagency advisory council with representatives from education, health, mental health, social services, families of children with deaf-blindness and persons with deaf-blindness
- to provide inservice training, technical assistance, and workshops for parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals that promote the use of exemplary practices for children with deaf-blindness
- to promote the inclusion of children with deaf-blindness in schools and in the community
- to facilitate parental involvement in the education of their children with deaf-blindness



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- to develop and disseminate information from the project on community, state, and national levels
- to maintain and report annually a census of Virginia's children with deaf-blindness

(see Appendix A for Project Milestones)

#### V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The philosophy, content, and conceptual framework of TWC's approach to providing the needed technical assistance for meeting the goals and objectives is based on the following tenets:

- 1. Collaboration is of key importance.
- 2. Inclusion and integration facilitate learning.
- 3. Specific specialized supports are needed by children with deafblindness (in at least the areas of curriculum development, Braille, sign language, interpreters/intervenors, and socialization).
- 4. Listening to and involving families is essential.
- 5. Early diagnosis and intervention must become priorities.
- 6. Transition planing must be included in IEPs by age 14.
- 7. Innovative approaches to planning assists families and providers (using tools like MAPs and PATH).
- 8. Quality of Life is possible for children with deaf-blindness.
- 9. Some children benefit from positive behavioral support planning.

# VI. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS/OUTCOMES & CONTRIBUTION TO ADDRESSING NEEDS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

#### Collaboration

In the process of accomplishing the activities of the TWC project, TWC established collaborative relationships with a wide range of state agencies, family/consumer groups, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, and professional organizations. Effective lines of coordination between TWC and other relevant agencies were crucial to the success of this project, and, more importantly, crucial for successfully meeting the dreams of children with deaf-blindness.

In addition to the above agencies and groups, TWC's location at the Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities (VIDD) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) provided university coordination opportunities with:

School of Education at VCU

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Centers Severe Disability Technical Assistance Centers Schools of Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy

TWC developed a close working relationship with Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped (VDVH) and their regional office staff. TWC



conducts Advisory Council meetings at the VDVH main office in Richmond, and coordinates tracking children on the census with VDVH. Additionally, the association with VIDD allowed TWC the opportunity to coordinate with other federal and state funded projects which impact children with deaf-blindness, such as the Positive Behavior Supports Project, the Training Initiative for Person Centered-Planning, and the Personnel Preparation Project. VIDD facilitated opportunities for TWC to coordinate activities and technical assistance with PEATC (the parentadvocacy center in Virginia), and Project UNITE (the state transition project). TWC is proud of the collaboration established with the Department of Education and the Department of DMHMRSAS (Part H System). Both agencies have representatives that are actively involved in the advisory council, and meet additionally with project staff to discuss support and direction for the project. CUSP personnel have met with the TWC staff to discuss the design of the summer institute; and the technical assistance TWC provided to the Hampton School for the Deaf and Blind followed the training needs listed in the state plan.

Nationally, TWC developed positive relationships with TRACES, HKNC / TAC, and the AFB project in deaf-blindness. Workshops, training, and technical assistance were provided nationally at TASH, and for deaf-blind projects in Texas, North Carolina, Maryland, and New Jersey.

#### Objective Accomplishments

# Objective 1: To promote awareness of TOGETHER WE CAN and advertise availability of project services; create interagency Advisory Council

- A brochure and three page information packet was developed in August, 1993.
- Descriptions of the project were advertised in different newsletters around the state.
- Advisory Council formed in September, 1993. Met 7 times during two year period.

Brochures and information packets were distributed at each Advisory Council meeting, every school and program visited, and each workshop, and training site. At the first Advisory Council meeting, parents of children with deaf-blindness presented information about themselves, their families and their child using an adapted MAPs format. One council member from the state department said "I've worked on other state level committees with that mom and never knew anything about her family!" The TWC Advisory Council remains committed to a family-centered approach.



Objective 2: To provide inservice training, technical assistance, and workshops for parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals that promote the use of exemplary practices for children with deafblindness.

- Thirty-two on-site consultations were conducted, and long term technical assistance sites were supported in seven schools. In addition, staff presented an overview of deaf-blindness for three graduate classes at VCU and co-taught three graduate level classes on "Educating Children With Multiple Disabilities". This class had a special emphasis on sensory impairments. TWC had poster sessions and workshops at the state vision conferences. Home visits began and staff provided workshops for parent support groups on a consistent basis, including Tidewater Association for Hearing Impaired Children (TAHIC). Ten families requested support for IEPs and IFSPs.
- Two summer institutes ('94, '95) were held for a total of 80 participants. Participants included parents, VDVH staff, paraprofessionals, administrators, regular and special education teachers and related services personnel. These individuals were then contact people for TWC back in their regions of the commonwealth. TRACES collaborated with TWC in sponsoring both institutes.
- Helen Keller Technical Assistance Center provided support for looking at transition issues; they presented to our Advisory Council three times.
- Ski Hi Institute did a six day training for early childhood service providers in the commonwealth sponsored by TWC in collaboration with Virginia's early childhood technical assistance centers.
- TWC staff attended a collaborative training on teaming with the Maryland project and DC project staff.

#### Objective 3: To promote the integration of children with deafblindness in schools and in the community.

- All technical assistance activities focused on promoting the inclusion of students with deaf-blindness in school and community activities.
- Workshops were held on circle of friends activities, MAPs, IEPs, IFSPs, and Positive Behavior Supports (PBS). TWC presented at the On Common Ground conference, a state inclusion conference.
- The project director wrote a monthly column for the Four Runner Newsletter on Inclusion: ABC's of Education (acceptance, belonging and community) from September '93-September, 1995. This newsletter reaches approximately 2,000 educators and parents around the commonwealth.



## Objective #4: To facilitate parental involvement in the education of their children with deaf-blindness.

- Due to questions surrounding the confidentiality issues of the state census, contacting parents was difficult when the project began. Currently there are only twelve families that are in consistent contact with the project. A parent on the Advisory Council just started working as a consultant to families and will be the Family Specialist for the new funding cycle.
- Families are involved in planning the direction of the grant and were instrumental in developing goals an objectives for the new proposal.
- A family weekend was held for 6 families in August of '94.

## Objective #5: Top develop and disseminate information from the project on community, state, and national levels.

- The brochure and information packet were distributed around the state and at TASH. The project director addressed the special education director regional representatives at the request of the Sate Director of Special Education and regional coordinators met with the special education directors in their areas.
- Project staff attended each project directors meeting in DC, and presented at the regional TRACES meeting in Georgia.
- A TWC resource library was established with the emphasis on materials regarding understanding deaf-blindness, families, early intervention, and exemplary practices in education (inclusion, IEPs, communication, transition, PBS, socialization). DB Link helped with the quality of resources as well as other deaf-blind projects and consultants. These resources are available for check out by families and service providers.

## Objective #6: To maintain and report annually a census of Virginia's children with deaf-blindness.

(See Challenges for problems associated with the census)

- The '95 Census for the Commonwealth of Virginia was completed on File Pro as of March, 1996 (during no-cost extension time). Support for this data collection came from TRACES, and the regional offices of VDVH in Virginia.
- Articles were placed in newsletters regarding census collection to encourage people to report.



Objective #7: To develop and implement a plan for evaluation that includes an assessment of the impact of the project on families and professionals.

- An adapted MAPs format was used at the first Advisory Council and the last Advisory Council to gather information on the impact of the project. At the last Advisory Council meeting a PATH was facilitated to discuss future directions.
- Service providers, families, project staff and the Advisory Council all felt the project surpassed the initial goals and objectives of the project, but needed more work in locating infants from birth to 3 and contacting more families on the census to offer project support.

#### VII. CHALLENGES AND RESOLUTIONS

#### Challenge #1

When this project was initially funded, the award was made to George Mason University (GMU), in collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (TECH). The Project Director was Dr. Julie Jones, who was located at GMU. Regional project directors and coordinators were located at VCU and TECH. These coordinators were on the grant one day a week: the regional directors several hours a month. By February of 1993 Dr. Jones had left the project and the grant was in the process of transitioning to VCU. Dr. Fred Orelove would act as the new Project Director at a 10% effort and a full time coordinator, located at VCU, would be hired.

The new coordinator was hired in June of 1993, eight months after the start date of October 1, 1992. Very little grant work was completed during this time period. GMU decided to discontinue it's participation in the project, and the coordinator at TECH would work 2 days a week in the southwest part of the state. A request for revisions in the project name, goals, and budget was submitted. TOGETHER WE CAN: The Virginia Project for the Integration of Children With Deaf-Blindness was officially in business.

The other challenge was in completing the activities within a little over two years instead of three. With two carry-over budgets and a no-cost extension of 180 days this was finally accomplished.

#### Challenge #2

The second project hurdle involved the census. While there appeared to be around 200 names, there was not a data base system provided when the grant moved to VCU. A new system and form was initiated and the census reported during the no cost extension period (March, '96)



indicated 319 children, recorded on File Pro and sent to TRACES in Oregon.

The other census challenge involves an unwillingness on the part of our current leadership in the Department of Education to provide encouragement to school divisions to help gather the information. This problem was addressed, in part, by eliciting the help and collaboration of the Virginia Department of Visually Handicapped (VDVH). They are also required to do an annual census and the TWC contacts in each VDVH region collaborated with TWC to gather the information.

#### VIII. EVALUATION FINDINGS

- 1. Due to the size of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the number of children on the census, there needs to be more than one full time person on the grant, also located at VCU to promote collaboration.
- 2. Utilizing the education consultants at the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped (VDVH) as project contacts and consultants is imperative for the success of the project.
- 3. Many of the census forms did not have family information making it impossible to contact families.
- 4. 95% of the children on the census are listed under another handicapping condition for the state child count (i.e. multiple disabilities, severe disabilities).
- 5. A Family Specialist would be an extremely valuable project position.
- 6. The Advisory Council must meet a minimum of three times a year.
- 7. Regional family meetings are more beneficial than one in Richmond.
- 8. Collaboration with other projects and location at Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities (VIDD) is crucial for success.

#### IX. PROJECT IMPACT

#### A. Products

- 1. Brochure
- 2. Information Sheets
- 3. Census Forms
- 4. Resource Materials List
- 5. Technical Assistance Forms

#### **B. Dissemination Activities**

- 1. Lending Library
- 2. Brochures sent out to schools, VDVH, agencies, PEATC (parent information center), early intervention and early childhood providers and families
- 3. Advertised in newsletters for VIDD, PEATC, and technical assistance centers



4. Presented at state and local conferences, TASH, and Strategies for Inclusive Education (in Denver)

#### C. Publications

- 1. Malatchi, A., ABC's of Education in the Four Runner monthly newsletter.
- 2. Malatchi, A., Monograph, "Celebrating Diversity: Books, Books, Books!"
- 3. Orelove & Malatchi (1996), <u>Curriculum & Instruction</u> in Orlove & Sobsey (eds.) *Educating Children With Multiple Disabilities*, third edition, Brookes Publishing CO.
- 4. Malatchi, A., (in press) <u>Family Partnerships</u>, <u>Belonging</u>, <u>& Diversity</u>, in Power deFur & Orelove (eds.), *Inclusive Education for Children With Disabilities*, Aspen Publications

#### D. Implications of Findings on the Field

TOGETHER WE CAN: The Virginia Project for Integrating Children With Deaf-Blindness impacted children with deaf-blindness, their families and service providers in and outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Accomplishing the objectives of the grant and collaboration and cooperation with other projects and agencies also resulted in positively impacting children with other significant disabilities, their families, and service providers.

#### X. WHERE FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND

Additional information on TOGETHER WE CAN can be found through ERIC and by contacting Anne H. Malatchi, project director.

#### XI. ASSURANCE STATEMENT: REPORT SENT TO ERIC

The Final Report of TOGETHER WE CAN PROJECT: The Virginia Project For Integrating Children With Deaf-Blindness, 1992 - 1995 has been sent to ERIC.



#### APPENDIX A

**PROJECT MILESTONES** 



# **20**

# TOGETHER WE CAN

# PROJECT ACTIVITIES

	Timeline 18	Objective	Obj. 1: To promote awareness of TOGETHER WE CAN and advertise availability of project services.	developing brochure	<ul> <li>developing information packet</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>developing needs assessment and referral form.</li> </ul>	Obj. 2: To provide inservice training, technical assistance and workshops for parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals that promote the use of exemplary practices for children with deaf-blindness.	collecting needs     assessment data	developing and implementing training plans	<ul> <li>providing on-site visitations and workshops</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>conducting Summer Institutes</li> </ul>	
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	nitting articles to local statewide professional eletters				>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
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developing a resource library	oloping a resource					>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>

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		Objective												
	•	spotlights focusing on family isssues								>	>		>	
*	•	recruiting parents as Advisory Council members				>	>		·		^			
>	•	providing training, workshops, on-site and telephone consultation					>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
St. (C, C, C)	•	facilitating a parent network support system					>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
	Obj. 5 dissen projec nation	: To develop and ninate information from the ton community, state, and al levels.												
lual		on-going collaboration with TRACES, PEATC, DOE, VDVH, VDDHH, HKNCTAC, Part H programs and other local, state and national agencies and organizations				>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
prement of project  ure and information  graticles for etters  ng at state level  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V  V	•	visitations to programs serving students with dual sensory impairments				>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
	•	development of project brochure and information flyers				>	>				>			
<b>&gt;</b>	•	writing articles for newsletters				>	>	>	>	> .	>	>	>	>
education meetings	•	speaking at state level education meetings				>				>		_		>

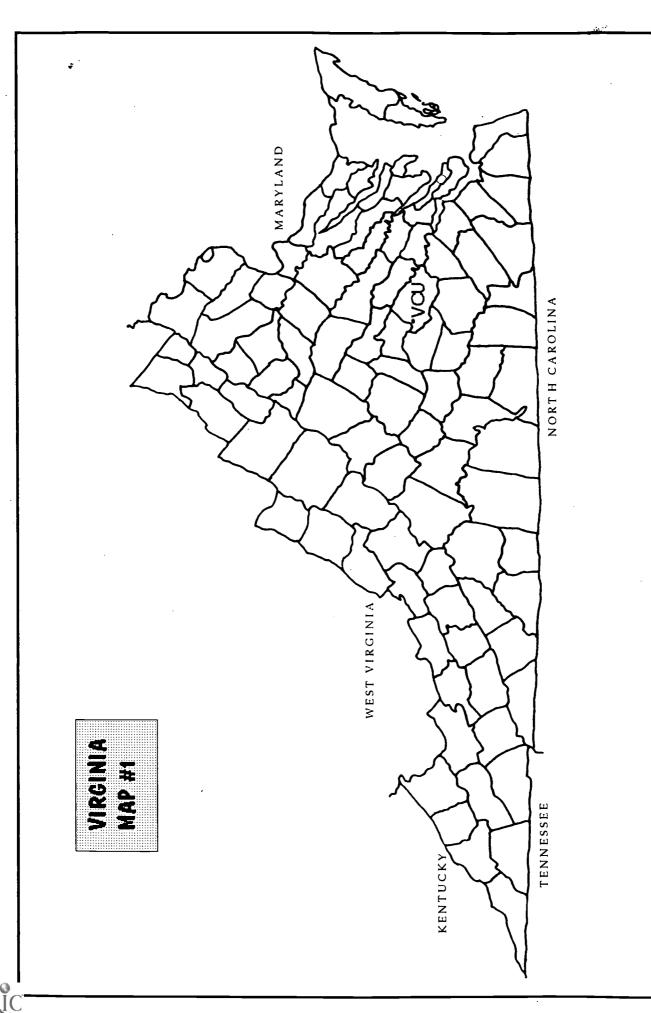
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Objective										·		
<ul> <li>presenting at conferences at the local, state, and national levels</li> </ul>									_			
<ul> <li>attending Project Director's and TRACES Regional meetings</li> </ul>					^	>			>	>	·	
<ul> <li>facilitating minimum of three Advisory Council meetings per year</li> </ul>				>	^	^		>	>	>		>
Obj. 6: To maintain and report annually a census of Virginia's children with deaf-blindness.												ş.
<ul> <li>informing local education agencies, part H and other state operated programs about students with dual sensory impairments</li> </ul>				>	>	>	<b>&gt;</b>	>	>	>	>	>
collection data from those programs					>				>			·
<ul> <li>reporting the data to the U.S. Government and TRACES</li> </ul>				^		>				>		
<ul> <li>maintaining a computerized tracking system of children with dual sensory impairments.</li> </ul>					>	>	>	>	>	>	>	>
Obj. 7: To develop and implement a plan for evaluation that includes an assessment of the impact of the project on families and professionals.												

R												
SIC.		YEAR	ONE			YEAR	YEAR TWO			YEAR .	YEAR THREE	
Timeline	1st Otr	2nd Otr	3rd Otr	4th Otr	1st Otr	2nd Otr	3rd Otr	4th Otr	1st Otr	2nd Otr	3rd Otr	4th Otr
Objective												
<ul> <li>collection from parents, professionals, and Advisory Council members regarding efficacy of project services</li> </ul>				>				>				>
ACTION PLAN process with parents				>				>				>
<ul> <li>completed evaluation forms from technical assistance activities.</li> </ul>				>	>	^	>	·	>	>	>	>

APPENDIX B

MAPS OF VIRGINIA





NORTH CAROLINA

- Indicates current sites selected for long-term technical assistance
  - (1) Indicates Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind at Staunton, VA.
    - (2) Indicates Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind at Hampton, VA.

#### APPENDIX C

**NO-COST EXTENSION NOTIFICATION** 





## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

GRANTS AND CONTRACTS SERVICE

#### **GRANT AWARD NOTIFICATION**

•	GRANT AWARD	NO	TIFICATION	
1	RECIPIENT NAME  VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  BOX 980568 MCV STATION (ORELOVE)  RICHMOND, VA 23298	4	AWARD INFORMATION  PR/AWARD NUMBER  ACTION NUMBER  ACTION TYPE  AWARD TYPE	HO25A3O5OO-94 O6 ADMINISTRATIVE DISCRETIONARY
2	PROJECT TITLE  STATE/MULTI-STATE PROJECTS FOR CHILDREN W/DEAF- BLINONESS: TOGETHER WE CAN - THE VIRGINIA PROGRAM FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN W/DEAF-BLINDNESS		AWARD PERIODS  BUDGET PERIOD  PROJECT PERIOD  AUTHORIZED FUNDING	10/01/94 - 0 <b>3/3</b> 1/96 10/01/93 - 03/31/96
3	PROJECT STAFF  RECIPIENT PROJECT DIRECTOR  FRED P ORELOVE 804-225-3908	6	CARRY OVER BUDGET PERIOD PROJECT PERIOD RECIPIENT COST SHARE	45,433 237,093 438,641 \$26,509
	EDUCATION PROGRAM STAFF  CHARLES FREEMAN 202-205-8165  EDUCATION GRANTS STAFF  NETASHA PHILLIPS 202-708-5203	7		ION  ED PMS 1-546001758-A1 EDGAR, AS APPLICABLE 34 CFR 307
8	LEGISLATIVE & FISCAL DATA  AUTHORITY: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCA PROGRAM TITLE: STATE/MULTI-STATE	TION (	ACT CFDA 84.025A	
9	TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF AWARO  THE AMOUNT OF UNOBLIGATED FUNDS FROM THE PREVIOUS BUIS SHOWN AS AUTHORIZED CARRY-OVER IN BLOCK 6. CARRY-AUTHORIZED FOR THE CURRENT BUDGET PERIOD. GRANTS OF WHICH EXCEEDS THE AUTHORIZED CARRY-OVER.  THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANTS STAFF MEMBER FOR BLOCK 3.  THE BUDGET PERIOD FOR THIS PROJECT IS CHANGED TO THE BY THIS ACTION.  THE PROJECT PERIOD FOR THIS PROJECT IS CHANGED TO THE PROVIDED BY THIS ACTION.	Y OVER FFICER THIS	FUNDS MUST BE USED BEFORE APPROVAL IS REQUIRED FOR I  PROJECT IS CHANGED TO THE  S IN BLOCK 5. NO ADDITION	THE FUNDS JSING ANY AMOUNT PERSON NAMED IN AL FUNDS ARE PROVIDED

(Signed) Sonja T. Turner

MAR 3 | 1995

GRANTS OFFICER

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DATE



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