

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council (ATAC)
Draft Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2009**

Attending Council Members:

Brenda Wickard, Chair
Elizabeth Flaherty, Vice Chair
Margaret Fields, Ph.D., Secretary
Michael Behrmann, Ph.D.
Tom Dowling
John Eisenberg
Ben Garrett
Tony Gentry, Ph.D. OTR/L
Kelly Lum, OTR/L
Joseph Wallace, Ph.D.
George Scott Higdon (by Phone Conference)
Jason Neal (by Phone Conference)
Joann Willis (by Phone Conference)

Council Members Absent:

Patricia Beattie
Matthew Deans
Senator Yvonne Miller

Others Present:

James A. Rothrock, Commissioner
Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)
Erica Lovelace, Education Services Manager, DRS
Tracy Meador, Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE)

Attendees: Staff:

Kathy Hayfield, Director
Technology and Employment Support Services (TESS), VATS Central
Robert Krollman, VATS Central
Barclay Shepard, VATS Central
Elin Glass, VATS Central
Janice Austin, VATS Central
Joann Ervin, Old Dominion University (ODU), VATS Southeast Regional Site
Susan Asselin, Ed.D., Virginia Tech (VT), VATS Southwest Regional Site
Rick Barrow, Virginia Tech (VT), VATS Southwest Regional Site

Staff Attendee by Phone Conference:

Emily McKeough Fallings, George Mason University, VATS North Regional Site

Call To Order:

Brenda Wickard, Chair, brought the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. All members of the Advisory Council, VATS staff and guests introduced themselves.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Ben Garrett, seconded by John Eisenberg and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2009 ATAC meeting.

Public Comment:

No public comment was offered.

Old Business:

Robert Krollman, VATS, updated the Council on the process for using the electronic format on the VATS web site to offer the public access to a process to provide access to VATS staff/Advisory Council members for the public. Email received in this fashion on the VATS web site are sent directly to Mr. Krollman for him to forward to the appropriate Council member(s).

Use of Electronic Format for Public Comments:

After discussion with Council, it was decided that Mr. Krollman will review the “rules and guidelines for public comment” and have a structured guideline sent to Council members by e-mail prior to the next quarterly meeting for their review. The guidelines for public comment will be added to the web site for the public to use when submitting their comments to Council. John Eisenberg suggested referring to the guidelines for public comments located on the Department of Education’s web site. Michael Behrmann, Ph.D., stated that councils do not respond to public comment at the time it is made. Council comes back and discuss the comments when they meet. Anything that happens after the meeting is public comment for the next meeting.

Council Newsletter Update:

Joseph Wallace, Ph.D., has received some articles for the quarterly Council Newsletter. Once articles are received, it was suggested that articles be forwarded to the Council members first for their reaction and then the comments can be sent out to the names on an electronic mailing list. Dr. Wallace added that the Newsletter may include comments from the ATAC Chair and invite people to add their names to the electronic mailing list.

The Newsletter does not have a tag line at this time and suggestions were made as to a name; such as “Where’s it AT”, “Virginia Assistive Technology Advisory Council Newsletter” and “Between the A and the T”. You may submit suggestions to Dr. Wallace. The tag line name will be chosen by the next meeting.

Dr. Wallace is planning for the Newsletter to come out in about six weeks, prior to the next Council meeting in March. You may send articles to Dr. Wallace. If anyone has anything on “medical equipment reuse”, please submit it to him. Dr. Behrmann suggested maintaining an archive of the Newsletters for reference purposes on the VATS website.

Assistive Technology Director’s Report:

Kathy Hayfield, Director, TESS, reported on VATS' recent activities. An Assistive Technology (AT) Training was held at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) in November. Participation included community partners such as representatives from the Wounded Warrior Program, Central Virginia Training Center, Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH), Vocational Rehabilitation and AgrAbility. ArgAbility is sponsored by Easter Seals of Virginia and works with farmers to keep them employed and active by using AT. Several Council members participated as presenters which helps make the trainings a success and VATS appreciation of their support was noted. The next AT Training is scheduled for April 2010 at WWRC and if any Council member would like to attend the 2 ½ day training, VATS would like to have you participate.

The Model Demonstration Grant (VATNet) ended 9/30/09 and funding will not be continued. VATS changed their direction to follow the available funding. VATS received the Commonwealth Neurological Initiative (CNI) Grant which provides three years of funding. The CNI grant funds will focus on spinal

cord injury, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and veterans with disabilities. With these funds, VATS is able to keep the durable medical equipment recycling program.

VATS has a small grant from the Disability Business and Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) through TransCen, Inc. VATS was one of five states to receive the grant. The DBTAC funds are used to focus on "AT @ Work" which provides training to employers, human resource staff and hiring decision makers. Training for 175 employers and human resource staff took place for the year ending September 30, 2009. VATS will have funding for the next federal fiscal year 10/1/09-9/30/10. VATS has AT kits for Disability Program Navigators and DRS staff to take to the employers and show them equipment and ways to use AT to employ people with disabilities.

VATS held a hands-on demonstration event at the Collaborations Conference in Virginia Beach, held in October. Staff from the DBVI, DDHH, New Well Fund and VATS Regional Sites and VATS Central Office (also included Advisory Council members) were represented at the event. VATS plans to have a demonstration event at the Transition Forum in Roanoke, March 15-17, 2010.

VATS wants to focus on an AT loaner program, such as lending out computer software. Loaners are currently being used with software so clients can practice various software programs and devices before it is purchased for them. VATS would like to look into a partnership with school systems and work with vendors of AT.

At this time the DRS agency is focused on recruiting two AT Specialists (licensed Occupation Therapists who are AT Specialists) to work from the areas of Alexandria and Christiansburg in the Commonwealth. The position description is located on the Commonwealth Career listing and the closing date has been extended to January 14, 2010. A copy of the position announcement is as stated below:

**Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
Therapist III/
Assistive Technology Specialist**

Assistive Technology Specialist

Alexandria: Position # 00847 -Pay Band 5 – Salary Range: \$46,000 - \$83,651

Christiansburg: Position # 01129 – Pay Band 5 – Salary Range: \$40,959 - \$84,062

Closing Date: January 14, 2010

The Field Rehabilitation Services Division is seeking a qualified Therapist III/Assistive Technology Specialist for the Northern Virginia area of the state. In partnership with persons with disabilities and rehabilitation professionals, the Computer Accommodation Services Units in each FRS Region provide comprehensive interdisciplinary technology assessments and customized technology services, which may include special and individualized computer technology, customized rehabilitation engineering and fabrication, and adaptive devices for daily inclusion in society through the use of assistive technology.

Responsibilities: This position will serve as a specialized assistive technology clinician with advanced experience and knowledge in client evaluation and intervention techniques. This person will actively participate in activities that promote quality services to the clients we serve. This person will support the evaluation process and job placement services through assistive technology and work site assessment and intervention. Provides individualized computer assessments, recommends appropriate cost effective hardware and software technologies, researches, tests and implements various assistive technology devices into diversified computer settings in both networked and stand alone environments, may install, configure and upgrade computer systems to maximize employability/independence of persons with disabilities.

Requirements: Ability to incorporate technology into employment plans of persons served and provide consultation on AT through an interdisciplinary team model. Knowledge of principles and practice of occupational therapy techniques. Knowledge of the medical, vocational, and emotional issues impacting

persons with disabilities; interviewing, evaluation, and intervention techniques, methods and tools for occupational therapy intervention; ADA compliance requirements. Ability to communicate effectively and establish and maintain effective working relationships with customers and the professional community, especially able to work collaboratively as part of an interdisciplinary team. Ability to organize and manage multiple and sometimes unrelated responsibilities in a timely manner, to prioritize duties and exercise responsible judgment with minimal supervision. Effective verbal and written communication skills. Knowledge of computer systems/technologies, software and hardware, including compatibility issues as well as comprehensive knowledge of assistive technology. Ability to install computer hardware and software in various environments, including customers' homes and work sites. Working knowledge of Windows based computer software, including special accommodations. Knowledge of Assistive Technology principles and practices required. Bachelor's or Master's degree in Occupational Therapy required. Virginia licensure as an occupational therapist or eligibility for licensure required. Experience working with Assistive Technology as a licensed Occupational Therapist preferred. Previous work or affiliation in a work-oriented rehabilitation environment preferred.

Contact Information: Please visit our Career Center at www.vadrs.org for position information or how to apply for a position. To apply online, please visit <http://jobs.agencies.virginia.gov>. Applications must be submitted through the RMS online system unless the applicant has called in advance to request a reasonable accommodation. To request an accommodation or additional information call 804-726-1919. Minorities and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply. EEO/AA/TTY – Reasonable accommodations upon request. **Closing Date: 5:00 p.m., January 14, 2010**

Commissioner's Comments:

James A. Rothrock, DRS Commissioner, stated that funds opened for all categories to serve any eligible DRS clients that need to come to DRS. Stimulus funds have helped serve clients.

VATS is working with the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) and to mark equipment (using "stickers") to direct users of medical equipment to not throw away equipment when it is no longer needed. WWRC held a new Counselors Training and showed some applications of AT to participants.

WWRC is operating a new program called Life Skills, and has served 200 people to date.

Assistive Technology/Durable Medical Equipment (DME) Recycling in Virginia:

DRS, VATS, awarded the Foundation For Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (F.R.E.E.) a grant award of \$595,000 over the next three years to provide community-based assistive technology reutilization services for persons with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The FREE Foundation, based out of Roanoke, Virginia, is a non-profit agency that has been assisting persons with disabilities acquire gently used rehabilitation equipment for more than ten years. The FREE Foundation's recycling program accepts donations of gently used rehabilitation equipment and distributes this equipment to qualifying individuals with disabilities, primarily those who are uninsured or underinsured. The funding will allow FREE to expand its community-based assistive technology (AT) / durable medical equipment (DME) recycling programs to more effectively serve persons with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, veterans with disabilities and vocational rehabilitation participants. FREE will utilize funds to further develop and expand its operations to serve the following areas: Roanoke, New River Valley, Lynchburg, Northern Shenandoah Valley, Martinsville, Northern Virginia and Richmond. The grant is supported by several funding sources, including the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI), American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and the Assistive Technology Act. Funding will establish the foundation for a centralized, standardized, and formalized network for Virginia reuse programs. Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center will play a vital role in Year 2 of the grant bringing their significant expertise in service delivery to people with spinal cord injury (SCI) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The grant, awarded by VATS, will help establish and build the network's capacity to more fully serve economically disadvantaged persons with SCI and TBI through program expansion, innovation, and outreach in its reuse programs.

With VATS now firmly rooted in the newly formed Technology and Employment Support Services Division (TESS), VATS staff looks forward to working more closely with the vocational rehabilitation program staff and constituents to improve employment outcomes for Virginians with disabilities.

Report on Statewide Transition Meeting Series:

VATS needs to reach out to veterans who do not have support and find ways to get needed equipment to them. VATS will be looking at who will partner with them. Veterans now look at the Veterans Administration for support.

Council discussed various ways to reach individuals who are in need of reused equipment. Some organizations and contacts (Paralyzed Veterans of America, Exceptional Families of Veterans, Disabled American Veterans and the Wounded Warriors Program) were considered for staff to contact to inform veterans about VATS durable medical equipment recycling program. VATS Regional Site staff have also been involved with some contacts relating to veterans to meet their needs and will follow up with contacts to find more ways of reaching veterans and their families. Dr. Behrmann stated that if you focus on the individual and set policies so the veteran is eligible and figure out how to get equipment to the individual, even as loaner equipment, until the Veterans Administration can provide new equipment, veterans will come to us for needed services.

Report from Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE):

Tracy Meador, FREE, Roanoke, VA, informed Council that FREE is planning to expand recycling services in the Richmond area and eventually Hampton. Their Roanoke office is moving to Salem. Their Lynchburg chapter has relocated and has gotten some free space for equipment. Giles County is still looking for volunteers and the Winchester chapter is doing great.

FREE is always looking for volunteers as they have many volunteers with diverse backgrounds, which helped make their foundation a national model. As they expand throughout the Commonwealth, they will need volunteers in new areas of the state.

Report on New Well Fund:

Joseph Wallace, Ph.D., Executive Director of the New Well Fund (NWF), reported that VATS saw the need to help people afford technology and as a result, the Assistive Technology Loan Fund was created. There are now 33 programs using the Virginia model throughout the country. The NWF is a guaranteed, low interest loan program for Virginians with disabilities. Applicants apply for an array of assistive technologies such as accessible vehicles, vehicle modifications, hearing aids, and home modifications. The NWF also provides another category of loans for individuals who want to start a business to work at home; up to \$15,000 at 5% interest rate. The loan can provide funding for supplies needed to run a business. SunTrust Bank can make loans over \$15,000.

The NWF will pay for evaluations and will pay Centers of Independent Living to help applicants complete a loan application. There is no charge to the applicant.

Dr. Wallace showed a 30 second professionally produced film clip to advertise NWF services on television stations. The NWF plans for the commercial to run on stations located in regions around the state as they identify funding to do so. NWF staff have been checking on ways to inform people about their program. Some suggestions offered by Council members were to places where the use of television monitors in hospital waiting rooms were viewed and at the DMAS Statewide Trainings. VATS would like to add the clip to its web site.

Issue Discussion -

Does AT Follow the Student? Transition in Education, Employment, Community:

Erica Lovelace, Educational Services Manager, DRS, was invited to offer introductory comments to help frame the issue for discussion. She works with transition and issues in secondary and post-secondary education. Council members discussed various situations regarding the issue of students having access to equipment owned by the schools after they are away from the school (when at home or if they transfer between school systems, transition to college, employment or community). John Eisenberg stated that it is a very complex problem. There are 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth with all different polices and laws. Mr. Eisenberg stated that he could provide data on the number of students entering school, types of disabilities and statistics.

Kathy Hayfield, VATS, along with other VATS staff, have talked with school counselors at five statewide meetings held in the five week period preceding this meeting. At this time, AT stays with the school system and she stated that vocational rehabilitation needs to be involved. A low cost solution with existing resources needs to be explored for this population of children. John Eisenberg recommended VATS talk to other Tech Acts across the county to find out if they have addressed this issue, what they have done and what we have to do.

Development of a Strategic Vision/Action Steps:

Ben Garrett made a motion that a subcommittee be formed to identify and determine the scope of the issues of how assistive technologies are accessed by the student when supplied by the school system and how the access to the AT is impacted by transition. The motion was seconded by John Eisenberg and passed by unanimous vote. Subcommittee members are John Eisenberg, Erica Lovelace, DRS, and Susan Asselin, Ph.D., Director, VATS SW Regional Site, located at Virginia Tech.

Other items:

VATS will help pay for travel for members who want to attend the vendor event in Norfolk being held Thursday, March 11, 2010, coordinated by VATS Southeast Site, and College Bound held at Virginia Tech in June 2010. Please let VATS staff know if you would like to attend.

VATS is always looking for new Council members and to contact them if you want to suggest someone. There is space on the Council for a family member of someone with TBI, spinal cord injury, veteran or parent of child with a disability.

Next Scheduled ATAC Meeting:

The next ATAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 (10:00am-2:30pm), at the DRS Central Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Mr. Eisenberg, seconded by Dr. Wallace for adjournment. The motion was passed by unanimous vote. The ATAC meeting adjourned at 2:20pm