
DBVI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
Quarterly Meeting
MINUTES
March 11, 2022, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227

SRC Members in Attendance

Christine Appert, Chair, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Alexa Bowe, Newport News, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Irene Conlin, Virginia Beach, Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself
Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member
Edna Johnson, Alexandria, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Heidi Lawyer, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)
Liang Liao, Richmond, DBVI, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Joliefawn Liddell, Richmond, Representative of the Client Assistance Program
Ricardo Lizama, Arlington, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Marianne Moore, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education
Chanthen Nene, Manassas, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Mark Roane, Vice-Chair, Richmond, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Rachael Rounds, Midlothian, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program
Milford Stern, Roanoke, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor

SRC Member in Attendance Via Zoom from Madison County, VA, due to medical condition.

Annette Hyde, Radiant, Representative of the Workforce Council

SRC Members Not Able to Attend

Julie Akers, Radford, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Leelynn Untalan Brady, Suffolk, Representative of Statewide Independent Living Council
Prem Jadhvani, Leesburg, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor

DBVI Staff Present

Pam Cato, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
Deborah Collard, Program Analyst
Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant for Services – Recorder of Minutes
Richard Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services

ASL Interpreters

Ivy Brothers
Katherine Malady

Public
None

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

Chair Conlin called the meeting to order. A roundtable of introductions took place. Quorum was met.

Adoption of Agenda

Mark Roane moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Christine Appert seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of December 2021 Meeting Minutes

Milford Stern moved to adopt the December 3, 2021, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as presented. Chanthan Nene seconded the motion, Heidi Lawyer abstained, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Ray Hopkins

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Commissioner Hopkins welcomed the Council and invited new members to tour the newly renovated Headquarters building and campus. Renovations on the Library and Resource Center have begun. He envisions the space being something like a conference center, so the Agency can more efficiently host meetings, not just for DBVI, but for other organizations that support the blind and other disability organizations, making the space the hub of activity for people with vision impairment in Central Virginia, connecting with other community organizations. The Commissioner shared that funding from the American Rescue Plan Act will be utilized to expand and modernize the campus, including upgrading ventilation systems. The Agency also received funding to construct an outdoor classroom and pavilion space on the campus, as well as funding to renovate the Charlottesville VIB plant.

John Littel is the new Secretary of Health and Human Resources for Virginia. Commissioner Hopkins discussed the proposed budget. There is some funding for the Agency to hire campus Security. The General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn March 12. The RSA is still without a Commissioner. Virginia Enterprises for the Blind (VEB) had applied for solicitation for full food serve at Ft. Lee. VEB had a contract, lost it, and is now competing for it again. VEB is going to arbitration, because it believes proper procedure was not followed regarding bidding rules.

The Commissioner was reappointed by Governor Youngkin. Commissioner Hopkins has consented to serve for 60-90 days from beginning of the new administration before retiring. No transition plans have been announced as far as the Agency's future leadership.

The Commissioner discussed the March 21-22 DBVI Summit which will include discussions on what the Agency has done, is doing and the challenges and opportunities for the future. The Agency celebrates its 100th year anniversary March 22.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Dr. Rick Mitchell

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Field staff are back to providing in-person training and services across the Commonwealth. The Agency continues to use some programs and technology that was put in place during the pandemic as

it has proven beneficial. There are currently several vacancies in the Services Division, and recruitment has been challenging. There have been several retirees. Summer programs will once again commence.

VR Program Update – Pam Cato

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Ms. Cato reported on many planned summer programs which will include the Leap into Linux academy with a focus on cybersecurity, and a new program called Blind Design, in partnership with Virginia Tech (VT), will take place in April. Students will work with VT faculty and students in their engineering department to design a building that incorporates accessibility. The JMU Success program is another new and innovative program that will be offered to students in July. Informational programming for the Success! program will be hosted by Executive Coaches David DeNotaris and Eileen Rivera-Ley, and will incorporate a new Orienteering activity, challenges at the UREC Center rock climbing wall and low ropes courses, career exploration at the University in a variety of degree programs, info sessions with Career Services, a trip to the Arboretum, practicing advocacy skills to discuss and disclose disability, and leadership.

Ms. Lawyer reported on PEATC's Transition University, a free five-week self-paced online course. The goal is to share information on transition services and to help make the transition from school services to the adult services less confusing. Ms. Lawyer will share information regarding this course.

Ms. Bowe would like to look into volunteer opportunities with DBVI and feels there are opportunities for people who might want to get involved in disabilities. Ms. Cato will discuss further with Ms. Bowe

Old and New Business

Customer Satisfaction Survey/

Common Performance Measures – Deborah Collard

Ms. Collard shared that the Agency recently updated the VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey with the goal of increasing response rate. Recommendations from the SRC in 2020 were incorporated in the survey questions, along with feedback from staff. When clients receive a closure letter they now receive a paper copy of the survey along with the digital survey which is followed up with an email and phone call. The survey response rate has increased from 8% to 30%.

Ms. Collard reviewed the satisfaction results. She explained the net promoter score, which is a metric used in customer experience programs, which is at a 40% response rate now compared to 30% last year. The Commissioner recommended that some focus be applied to how individuals may interpret the survey questions. Council members are invited to contact Ms. Collard and Ms. Cato for additional information.

Hearing Officer Bids – 2 Volunteers Needed

Ms. Cato explained the necessity of Hearing Officers to the Council and that DBVI and DARS share Hearing Officers in hearing grievances. It is the responsibility of the SRC Council along with DARS to select and approve Hearing Officers. A volunteer from the SRC Council is needed to review bids and make a selection which will most likely be in July of 2022. Rachael Rounds, Chanthen Nene and Alexa Bowe volunteered.

CSAVR & NCSAB

Ms. Cato reminded the Council of the upcoming CSAVR and NCSAB virtual conferences. Those interested in participating in the CSAVR should let Maggie Mills know by March 18.

Representative Roundtable

The Representative Roundtable will resume at the June 2022 Quarterly SRC Meeting. Council members who represent organizations or state agencies will be asked to share a quick highlight regarding their respective organizations.

Next SRC Quarterly Mtg – June 10, 2022.

Working Lunch

Commissioner Hopkins shared information about his life and career prior to working with DBVI, his time with the Agency, his hopes for the direction of DBVI and his future plans.

Adjournment

Mr. Nene motioned to end the meeting. All were in favor.