

**Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

SRC Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Friday, August 14, 2026

9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

DBVI Main Conference Room

[Zoom Link to Join Virtually](#)

Meeting ID: 161 015 2387

Passcode: 004236

Or Telephone: 646-828-7666

9:30 a.m. **Member Networking – OPTIONAL**

10:00 a.m. **Welcome and Call to Order – *Christine Appert***

1. Roll Call
2. Adoption of Agenda – *Action Item*
3. Approval of May 8, 2026, Meeting Minutes – *Action Item*

10:10 a.m. **Public Comment**

10:15 a.m. **Commissioner Report – *Dr. Rick Mitchell***

10:25 a.m. **Deputy Commissioner's Report – *Kathy Malone***

10:35 a.m. **VR Program Update – *Megan Hall***

10:50 a.m. **Old and New Business – *Christine Appert***

1. Annual Report Review Committee – *Action Item*
2. Nominating Committee – *Action Item*
3. Term Expiration Reminders ending 9/29/26
 - Christine Appert- reappplied
 - Jeffrey Sluss- reappplied
 - John Leopold- plans to reapply
 - LaSonya Jackson- not planning to reapply
 - Rebecca Ceja
 - Susan Bowmaster
4. Current vacant seats
 - Community Rehabilitation Program

- Disability Advocacy Group
 - Parent/Guardian with Disability
 - Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Representative
5. Update on Combined State Plan Updates and Approval Process
 6. Third Quota Data Review Process

11:30 a.m. **Break/ Working Lunch pick-up**

11:45 a.m. **VR Presentation**

12:15 p.m. **SRC Member Updates**

1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

**Department for Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Agency VR Report
August 14, 2026**

**Deputy Commissioner's Report-
Kathy Malone**

Regional Office Updates

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Recruiting for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (on hold), Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Norfolk	Fully Staffed
Richmond	Fully Staffed
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Recruiting for wage ASL interpreter, Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Headquarters	Recruiting for Facilities Procurement Buyer (Wage), Fiscal Assistant
Business Relations	Fully Staffed
VRCBVI	Recruiting for an Orientation and Mobility Specialist
LRC	Recruiting for a Fiscal Operations Manager for Accessibility Services

State Plan Goals

DBVI, with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed six goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs for this state plan cycle. The six goals are listed below, and updates are included in this report.

1. Engage and collaborate with WIOA core partners to coordinate business service efforts to include the blind and visually impaired labor market.
2. Provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to students with disabilities, youth in transition, and adults resulting in the attainment of industry recognized credentials to obtain competitive integrated employment.
3. Conduct outreach efforts to Local Education Agencies and other Community Partners to assist in increasing the number of students with

disabilities participating in and benefiting from DBVI offered Pre-Employment Transition programs.

4. Continue to expand the utilization of Supported Employment and Customized Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
5. Achieving agency annual performance goals and establishing base lines for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.
6. Increase collaboration with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to provide comprehensive wrap around services to address the needs of individuals who have dual diagnoses.

State Goal Updates

1. As the next step in the Combined State Plan process, the Rehabilitation Services Administration reviewed the draft DBVI portion of the Combined State Plan and offered suggestions for revisions. DBVI VR Leadership successfully addressed the revision suggestions. DBVI was informed in late July that the DBVI portion of the plan was submitted and approved as written.
2. During this most recent quarter, DBVI received quarter three (Q3) statistics for Federal Program Year 2025. DBVI is excited to share the following:
 - a. DBVI served 1,045 participants, including 85 new applicants.
 - b. Ages 25 to 44 continued to be the largest age group served in the quarter.
 - c. Job Search Assistance led the career services category and Rehabilitation Technology continued to lead all other services categories besides Vocational Counseling and Guidance (provided to everyone the agency works with).
 - d. The number of participants being served under the category of supported employment grew slightly from 23 participants to 25 participants compared to the previous quarter.
 - e. The top 10 careers entered for the quarter include
 - i. Office and Administrative Support
 - ii. Customer Service

- iii. Food Prep and Servers
 - iv. Material Moving
 - v. Management Analyst
 - vi. Computer and Information Systems Analyst
 - vii. Massage Therapist
 - viii. Architect and Civil Drafters
 - ix. Social and Community Service Manager
 - x. Market Research Analyst and Marketing Specialist
3. Outreach across the agency has continued at a fast pace. Employees have been attending conferences, training, Teachers for the Vision Impaired gatherings, and Community Partner Meetings to continue to educate Virginians about the services the agency offers for individuals' birth through the entire life span.
4. In the past quarter, there continued to be an emphasis on identifying individuals who could benefit from Supported Employment and Customized Employment. The Agency will continue to identify participants to continue increasing the use of these critical services.
5. DBVI has continued to work closely with our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners and Virginia Works to engage in a comprehensive collaborative plan to align all workforce partners, reduce duplication of workforce services as appropriate, and develop a more streamlined approach to workforce services throughout the Commonwealth.
6. DBVI has continued to partner with our sister agency DARS to align policies surrounding the development of services for individuals who receive services from both agencies simultaneously. A DBVI and DARS leadership workgroup developed a survey regarding staff's clarity regarding the development of a team approach to serving dual cases. Based on the survey findings, the leadership workgroup has developed a training outline geared not only towards increased collaborative communication but also on reviewing real world examples of typical cases dually served as well as complex case scenarios to provide staff with more concrete information regarding what is meant by the term "lead agency", alignment in vocational goals, review of agency policy differences, etc. the group anticipates that a dual training of DBVI and DARS VR staff will be held after the first of the year.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administration Updates- **Megan Hall**

- In anticipation of changes as a result of the national VR program's relocation from the federal Department of Education to the Federal Health and Human Services agency as well as substantial updates to the Uniform Guidance which drives the VR program nationwide, VR leadership has engaged in a series of trainings offered for agency directors to understand the possible implications of changes, key factors to review in preparation for updated practices and already implemented changes at the federal level. VR leadership will engage with other state agencies to develop best practices in adhering to the new guidance and processes.
- DBVI's Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives and DBVI's CVS skills lab instructor have continued cohort recruitment for training that will resume in September. The lab continues to be a very popular option for entry into the field of remote customer service which has resulted in a waitlist for entry into the training.
- DBVI has continued to make strides in the review of the AWARE case management system to increase efficiency in case management, mitigate risk by updating security parameters based on the principle of least required access, and implement changes that the Rehabilitation Services Administration rolled out at the end of June as that 2025 program year came to an end DBVI adopted the use of the AWARE case management system in 2008 and with the opportunity for DBVI to work directly with system developers, DBVI engaged in a more comprehensive system review to ensure available tools and resources that could benefit case managers in the course of their work, were understood and evaluated for effectiveness and appropriateness for current DBVI staff.

Business Relations Unit Updates-

Cindy Roberts, Thea Picquette, Karen Kahn, Gary Joyce, Tina Hawley-Blount

- DBVI hosted executive leadership from CVS/Caremark on campus May 13 and 14. Commissioner Mitchell provided opening remarks and Stacey Butler, CVS Workforce Initiatives and Cindy Roberts, Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives provided an overview of how the CVS Career Skills Lab was formed as well as the build out, curriculum

development, national certifications etc. Guests were involved with an afternoon immersion opportunity with DBVI regional office staff, complete with Orientation and Mobility Training, Rehab Teaching and IT/AT Technology and Windmills Disability Awareness training.

- DBVI' Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives and DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ms. LaSonya Jackson participated in a nationwide panel presentation along with Carl Peterson and Karla Jessen, Washington State Services for the Blind (DSB). The training hosted by NCASB titled "Fast Track to Employment", highlighted the successful collaboration between business development teams and vocational rehabilitation counselors that leads to successful outcomes. Facilitated by Michael MacKillop, the panel focused on the concept of the dual customer approach, which identifies both the business and people with disabilities receiving VR services as customers of the same process. Counselors from both agencies shared success stories that highlighted the increased outcomes of competitive integrated employment when the dual customer approach is taken. The team received complimentary emails from those participating in the training as well as NCSAB.
- The DBVI Business Relations Team met with Lindsey Hanson, Employment Manager, with Minnesota Blind Services to discuss DBVI's business relations team development and best practices. The introduction was made by VR Director Hall. Ms. Roberts provided an overview of the staffing process, career ready guide, Steer your Career, Elevate your Career, Coffee and Collaborations, Career Connections and paid work-based learning. She has requested our curriculum for Steer Your Career (SYC) and our career ready guide. Ms. Hanson was invited to join the team for upcoming sessions of SYC so that she could have a firsthand understanding of the cadence of the SYC sessions and the engagement of the individuals that receive VR services.

Student Team Updates-

Tish Harris, Caroline Rammacher, Becky Keller and William Sutton

- Cyber Space was a hit! Twenty-two students and 7 mentors worked alongside instructors Dr. Gardner from Enterprise KC, Dr. Tom Trevethan and Jim Boardman from Palo Alto Networks, and our own student turned instructor Kaleb Calhoun. Our classroom was moved to the Rec Room by Good Run Research due to our filled cohort needing additional space and the fact that we took the internet down on campus twice last summer!

The program emphasizes not only technology and learning fundamentals of cyber but also the power skills that will help students be successful in obtaining employment. On Monday and Tuesday, students downloaded an operating system, learned command lines, hacked emails with John the Ripper, learned HTML and coded their own websites. On Wednesday and Thursday, students worked on the same million-dollar firewall that Palo Alto Networks uses to secure the cloud for 96 of Forbes Top 100 businesses. This year a layer of AI was added to the firewall break for a second competition. On Friday, students showed the highlights of their work for the week to parents and invited guests.

Students had informational interviews throughout the week to learn about the various roles in cyber security. These interviews included a threat hunter, Senior Engineer in northern VA, Senior Engineer and Problem Solver for Capital One, Sales and Liaison for Palo Alto Networks, Chief Information Officer for DBVI and DARS, North American leads for Cyber Security Academy, and VRCBVI's very own technology professionals.

Evenings were full of activities that emphasized teamwork, communication, and problem solving. Channel 6 news came to the classroom and filmed, and our students and the Cyber Space program not only aired in Richmond, but also in news outlets around the state. Our segment even made it to California news!

- Launching Point at James Madison University was a HUGE success! 28 students and eleven mentors gathered for DBVI's college immersion eight days program from July 19th to 26th. Students lived in a freshman dorm, used both dining halls across campus, used the transit system 13 times, and had two actual classes that are given to Freshman attending classes for the first time. Students toured the Rose Library and learned about the wealth of resources available there, toured the JMU football stadium, and UREC where every single participant tried rock climbing!

Students learned how to create the best college admission essays, what admissions departments look for regarding previous volunteer and work experiences, and what they don't typically focus on during the application review process. Student services reviewed the accommodations process, and Career services spoke to students about how college campuses have services to help students create a resume, apply for the job of their dreams, and begin their career. A strong emphasis was put on personal commercials, disclosing disability, and networking.

Students spoke with multiple professors and department heads including the School of Media Arts and Design, the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts,

Integrated Science and Technology, and the College of Business Sports Recreation and Hospitality programs. DBVI was excited to receive emails from all of the presenters applauding the students for their questions and attentive behavior and thanking us for coming!

On the Saturday of the JMU program, five students along with Gary Joyce and Becky Keller who facilitated the EDGE entrepreneurship program in the Spring, showed their business ideas at the Founders Market for students and parents to see their ideas in action. Several of the students not only developed their ideas into a business, but many of the students also brought items available for sale as a first launch of their business concept. Although some students had never had the opportunity to speak with others in a large group setting, all of the students rose to the occasion and proudly spoke about the process they completed to take their business ideas to reality.

DBVI's bi-annual Recognition and Honors Night took place on Saturday evening. JMU's Associate Vice President, Art Dean, opened the night with a welcome and reflection on the fifth year of partnership in support of the college immersion program, and Commissioner Mitchell spoke with . Our first awards parents and students to kick off the ceremony. DBVI recognized Launching Point completers and mentors, EDGE program completers, and recognized students with awards for excellence and commitment to moving towards post-secondary opportunities. One of DBVI's students participated in 17 student team led programs in 22 months, which is the highest to date.

In total, 24 students had taken nine or more student team programs in the past 22 months, showing a commitment to growth and excellence. The agency honored mentors for paying it forward. Mentors took the mic to explain Attitude of Gratitude and handed out thank you that they compiled themselves with student signatures.

The night ended with DBVI's Champions awards, awarding both students and partners who have made a significant effort to move DBVI forward. The agency received several emails from partners who have worked with students in the past who shared that they recognized the transformations and growth of the students as they have engaged in student programming over the past few years.

- WHSV News Channel 3 came to Massanutten Resort to interview two of DBVI's former student program attendees that are completing summer internships while living independently at Massanutten Resort. Massanutten's Director of Sales was also interviewed and gave a glowing review of the students' performance. DBVI is hopeful that as these segments are viewed and shared, public

awareness of the incredible talent and dedication of the individuals we serve shines through and moves the needle forward to providing more employment opportunities for all.

Virginia Rehabilitation for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)-

Melody Roane

- The VRCBVI adult program concluded for the summer on June 18th with two recognitions of students who finished their training programs. The students were very positive about what they learned and are committed to continuing to use their skills of blindness while building upon the confidence that they achieved during their training.
- During the week of June 22nd, mentors and staff are participating in various in-services and activities such as CPR training, Microsoft Teams training, reviewing student applications including medical information and IEP's, training on how to work effectively with students who have autism, DIY activities, sexual harassment and abuse prevention training, Know Before technology trainings, high ropes course familiarization, etc. All of these activities were in preparation for the LIFE Program that began on Sunday, July 12th.
- During the short period between the adult students leaving campus and the LIFE program beginning, VRCBVI staff had the opportunity to visit Field offices and spend time with colleagues and individuals receiving DBVI services. Based on the feedback from staff who participated in these visits, the experiences were positive and helpful. Any time Field staff and VRCBVI staff can collaborate, it is a win/win situation for everyone involved, particularly the individuals who are blind or vision impaired receiving DBVI services.
- As of the week of August 3rd, the two Thrive 55+ Programs scheduled to take place in August were officially full of twenty-eight participants each. VRCBVI has begun a wait list for referrals to the programs. Rehab Teachers and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have done an outstanding job in referring individuals who are 55+ to this program. The two Thrive 55+ weeklong programs held towards the end of August allow individuals who are new to vision loss, accompanied by a trusted member from their support network, an opportunity to learn what is possible after vision loss, the importance of independence in the community and in their homes, and an understanding that the opportunities to thrive don't end with a diagnosis, but rather offer an opportunity to try things in a new way.

- The Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered (LIFE) student program wrapped up on August 7th with an awards ceremony that provided an opportunity for the 14 student attendees to showcase the skills and the confidence that they learned within a few short weeks.

A majority of students participated in a two-week Work-Based Learning Experience while also attending skills of blindness classes where they increased their independence, learned problem-solving strategies, and improved their advocacy skills.

Students participated in confidence building opportunities such as whitewater rafting on the James River, completing a high ropes course, learning and practicing their skills of blindness by participating in comedy improv sessions, independently attending an audio described movie at a local theater, successfully learned grilling and cooking skills, drivers education, blind soccer and a dinner and dance all while creating a sense of community with new friends to add to their support networks. Students learned that blindness does not have to hold them back from setting and achieving goals.

In a unique opportunity, VRCBVI Program Recruitment and Outreach Specialist Lloyd Dunnivant and LIFE student Charlotte Sterling attended the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Accessible Transportation workshop that was held on Wednesday July 29th. Ms. Sterling will serve as staff assistant to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation statewide transit manager and will have an opportunity to share her experiences and effect updates and changes that will benefit all. Congratulations Charlotte!