

**State Rehabilitation Council  
Meeting Minutes  
January 23, 2012**

A meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on January 23, 2012 at the Department of Rehabilitative Services Headquarters in Henrico, Virginia.

**Members Present:** Sandra Cook, Charles Downs, Karen Gregory-Williams, Cheryl Johnson, Sarah Liddle, Ellen McIlhenny, and James Rothrock

**Members Absent:** Matthew Deans, Toney Lineberry

**Others Present:** Jim Taylor, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) SRC Representative; Alan Gernhardt, Staff Attorney, Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council; Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Scott Fraley, Vocational Rehabilitation Quality Assurance Analyst; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support; Rick Sizemore, WWRC Director; AJ Hostetler, Public Relations Director; Kathy Hayfield, FRS Director, and Ernie Steidle, Chief Operating Officer.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am.

**Approval of Minutes:** With no changes required, the minutes of the November 15, 2011 meeting were approved as written; the addendum to the minutes includes the submitted SRC Roundtable Reports.

**Matters of Public comment:** There were no comments for the public.

### **Chairperson's Report**

The dates of the November SRC Retreat and Meeting will be changed to November 13 and 14, 2012, in order not to conflict with the November 12th State Holiday.

Ms. Cook previously shared the letter she sent to Governor McDonnell, on behalf of the SRC, and the reply from Secretary Hazel, regarding the proposed legislation to create a new agency to include the Departments of Rehabilitative Services, Aging, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the adult services and adult protective services units of the Department of Social Services.

Ms. Cook will prepare a letter on behalf of the SRC to Lynnae Rutledge, former Commissioner for the Rehabilitation Services Administration, extending well wishes to her on her recent retirement.

Ms. Cook contacted the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office about pending appointments to the SRC and was told that appointments could be announced by January 23, 2011. Ms. Cook will follow up to inquire about the status.

### **Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Rothrock visited Toney Lineberry who recently had surgery. Mr. Lineberry shared his regrets for having to miss the SRC meetings.

The Commissioner reviewed a power point presentation that he will present to the Senate Finance Health and Human Resources Subcommittee on DRS programs and funding. Ms. Tyson will forward a copy of the presentation to members by email.

The Governor's budget contains additional funding for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. The "caboose" bill has about \$2 million for the current State Fiscal Year. The next biennial budget contains \$6.4 million. If approved, these funds will help address the VR waiting list and help with the State Match situation. On behalf of the SRC, Sandra Cook will send letters to Delegate Riley E. Ingram, Chair of House Appropriations Health and Human Resources Subcommittee, and Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Chair of Senate Finance Health and Human Resources Subcommittee, thanking them for their consideration of these funds.

Members of the General Assembly have offered budget amendments and budget language regarding services for Virginians with disabilities. There is proposed funding for brain injury services, personal assistance services, community rehabilitation case management, employment supports, and Centers for Independent Living. Senator Hanger has offered a language amendment to support the *Employment First* initiative in Virginia.

Senator Hanger has introduced a bill (SB523) that would allow Employment Services Organizations to become a vendor under the current SWAM (small, women and minority owned business) program.

On November 14, 2011 the Governor's Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring released their recommendations. One of the recommendations is to create a new agency that would consist of DRS, the Departments for and Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the adult services and adult protective services units of the Department of Social Services. Legislation on the creation of the new agency is being drafted for the 2012 General Assembly Session. If passed, the legislation regarding DRS, VDA and DDHH would be effective July 1, 2012. The piece on adult services and adult protective services would have a delayed enactment date of July 1, 2013. The creation of the new agency will not affect the funding streams of the various involved programs and the SRC will continue to fulfill its duties as contained in the Rehabilitation Act.

### **Working Lunch: Information SRC Educational Program: Public Meeting Provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act**

Alan Gernhardt, Staff Attorney, Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council, gave a presentation on the public meeting provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

**Council Roundtable Reports:** Written reports will be submitted to Barbara Tyson to include with the meeting minutes.

Ellen McIlhenny has agreed to continue to represent the SRC at the DBVI SRC meetings and stated that the DBVI SRC also is experiencing problems with member appointments.

## **DRS Program Reports**

**Budget:** Ernie Steidle reported on the status of the budget for State Fiscal Year 2012 and provided members with a detailed budget breakdown.

**WWRC:** Rick Sizemore provided an update on WWRC's performance measures, renovations to Barnett Hall and other buildings at WWRC, the activities of the WWRC Foundation, and the Virginia Wounded Warrior pilot. Mr. Sizemore has been elected President of the Consortium of Public Rehabilitation Centers.

**FRS:** Kathy Hayfield advised the Council that DRS has begun to serve most significantly disabled consumers on the waiting list. While the waiting list still stands at approximately 4,000, about 750 consumers have come off the list to be served. Ms. Hayfield reviewed the data on the Commissioner's Scorecard as of January 8, 2012, which was sent to the members with the agenda. Ms. Cook inquired about the lower average hourly wages and competitive employment rate in some of the Field Offices and Ms. Hayfield responded that the Regional Director is aware of the situation and is working with the Field Offices to improve their performance.

The Department has applied for a \$50,000 grant from the University of Massachusetts at Boston to support our efforts to more effectively utilize data and build a culture that supports data-driven actions to enhance employment outcomes for our consumers. Barbara Burkett, Lead Analyst, will have the lead on this grant if it is accepted.

Project SEARCH continues in its development and the department hopes that additional sites will be developed. Mr. Downs stated that there is a desire to have a site up in his area, but there are no resources for a teacher for the program.

The Employment Services Organizations Report Card, recommended by the SRC last year, is still in its developmental stage. Ms. Hayfield will provide more information at the next SRC meeting.

## **Committee Reports**

**Internal Affairs:** Mr. Downs agreed to provide the report in Mr. Deans' absence.

Ms. Smith commented on the draft legislation sent to the SRC last Friday that would create a new agency consisting of DRS, DDHH, VDA and the adult services and adult protective services units of DSS. During New Business, the SRC will discuss their Code provision.

Scott Fraley presented an overview of the Federal Fidelity Bonding program. This program provides bonds to employers for individuals with criminal background histories to assist them in becoming employed.

Mr. Fraley reviewed two proposed VR policy changes. The Committee supports the proposed change to increase the scheduling timeframe for a VR administrative hearing from 45 to 60 days. The 60 day timeframe is contained in the Federal and State VR regulations. The Committee also supports the proposed change to remove the requirement that VR counselors notify clients of their appeal rights “when the consumer and counselor cannot reach a mutually acceptable decision regarding the consumer’s vocational rehabilitation”, as this policy is not required in the Federal or State VR regulations and is vague and confusing in its application. The Committee recommended that the policy requiring appeal notification to be given during the annual review of the Individualized Plan for Employment be retained.

Ms. Smith discussed the need for an additional VR administrative hearing officer. Currently, there are two hearing officers. If one were to resign, the agency would not be in compliance with Federal VR regulations. Accordingly, an Invitation for Bid will be issued to add one or two more hearing officers. Charlie Downs and Sandra Cook agreed to review the current Invitation for Bid and serve on the committee to review the bids.

**External Affairs:** Ms. Gregory-Williams, Committee Chair, provided the report.

AJ Hostetler, Public Relations Manager, shared a copy of the 2011 SRC Annual Report. The theme of the report is *Path to Transitions* and presents information and success stories of youth in transition. The Report has been posted on the SRC website. Council members will send a copy of the Report to their respective members of the General Assembly. Sandra Cook will send a copy to all General Assembly members. Ms. Smith will inquire whether the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities will send the Report out to their list serve and will ask the Business Development Managers about additional ways to distribute the Report.

Nominations for the Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Awards will be due on March 1, 2012. Ms. Smith will send an email to offices notifying them of the Award and the nomination deadline. The Committee will review the nominations at the next meeting.

Ms. Cook gave an update on member appointments. Ms. Smith mentioned that guidance had been received from RSA that the Governor must appoint the VR director (Commissioner) to the SRC.

**Unfinished Business:** Ms. Gregory-Williams expressed her willingness to become involved in the Return on Investment initiative. Ms. Smith will find out specifically what the needs are.

**New Business:** Sarah Liddle announced that there will be an Independent Living Conference to be held in Richmond on May 1-3, 2012. The SRC agreed that it would like to have an exhibit table at the Conference along with the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired State Rehabilitation Council. Ms. Liddle will report at the next meeting and Cheryl Johnson will assist.

The Council was briefed on the statement of their duties as contained in the *Code of Virginia* and agreed that their duties should be stated as those contained in the Rehabilitation Act. As the new

agency proposed by the Government Reform initiative will have numerous boards and councils, this will ensure less confusion about the role and responsibilities of the SRC.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

### **ATTACHMENT: ROUNDTABLE REPORTS**

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired SRC Report  
Submitted by Ellen McIlhenny  
Meeting Date: December 10, 2011  
Melanie Brunson Conducted the Meeting as the New Chairperson.**

#### **Commissioner's Report by Ray Hopkins**

Budgetary issues loom as we await the release of the Governor's proposal for the upcoming year. DBVI submitted, as requested, scenarios to the Governor for 2%, 4% and 5% reductions for consideration. Commissioner Hopkins had previously requested an increase for VR and independent living services.

Commissioner Hopkins and Commissioner Rothrock have not reached an agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding between DBVI and DRS.

Rick Holley inquired about the Governor's plans to use surpluses for transportation. Commissioner Hopkins explained that a higher percent was legally mandated to go toward transportation.

Claudie Grant inquired about talk of the DBVI being merged with DRS. Though the Commission on Government Reform did propose that certain agencies be combined with DRS, the Commissioner was not aware of any discussions regarding merging DBVI. One distinguishing factor is that DBVI provides direct VR services to clients.

#### **Business Enterprise Program (the Randolph –Sheppard vending facility) Update**

Business Enterprise Program Manager, David Kennedy, retired on September 1, 2011. His chosen replacement, Rich Sorey, decided to take a position with the Mississippi DRS. Commissioner Hopkins has been managing the program in the interim. Two contracts at Army Installations will soon be up for bid. This could prove to be difficult as there have been recent challenges to the Code of Virginia which grants priority to the blind to operate vending facilities in public buildings. The Governor's Task Force on Mandates on Localities has recommended striking this provision from the Code. Written comments have been submitted by DBVI.

Construction on the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired is expected to be completed soon and we will be in the building by February 2012. The Grand Reopening/Open House is planned for April 18, 2012.

#### **SRC Appointments**

Appointment and reappointments have not been made thus far. Resumes for seven representatives have been submitted.

**Regional Office:** Bob Burton gave an update on current hiring and recruiting efforts. The Quarterly Standards and Indicators report was presented. Successful closures in the program have increase by 23% YTY.

**Comprehensive Needs Assessment:** Update given by Susan Payne. Entering third year of use.

**Outcomes for FY2011:** Assisted 176 in accomplishing goals. Average hourly wage was \$15.37; average age was 46; and average hours worked was 29. Five public meetings were held.

**Discussion of Action Items:**

Annual Report was presented and approved  
Michael Davis was elected as Vice-Chair for 2012  
SRC will have a Retreat/Meeting on March 2-3, 2012  
2012 Annual Report and State Plan workgroups were formed.

Marguerite Bardone recommended that the SRC become more educated about VR Counselors. Melanie Brunson suggested that a counselor be invited to the next meeting to elaborate on their day-to-day experiences.

Jim Taylor volunteered to attend the January DRS SRC meeting.

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council SRC Report  
Submitted by Matthew Deans  
Meeting Date: September 15, 2011**

**Report on AT Training and AATT Grant**

Robert Krollman reported that the DRS Assistive Technology (AT) trainings are being modified. The Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) staff is leading a curriculum review process that should insure that subsequent trainings offer current correct and relevant information on assistive technology to agency staff and select community partners. Past trainings were well received and future trainings will also feature hand-held technology and a renewed focus on employment outcomes.

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services is one of five states that received approval as a host site for the Agricultural Assistive Technology Training (AATT) Project sponsored by NIDRR. This grant will sponsor a one and one half day workshop designed to provide VR professionals with an increased cultural competency and preparedness to improve employment outcomes for farmers and agricultural workers with disabilities to further the agricultural worker's current work status in a safe, effective and productive manner.

VATS, with Stand Up, Inc. in Lynchburg, an Employment Services Organization, will test the effectiveness of hand-held technology in the workplace for consumers with mental health disabilities.

### **Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) AT Update**

Kelly Lum provided an update of WWRC activities. The Therapy Department is working with Autism clients through the *Autism Speaks* grant. They have been doing evaluations, recommendations, and providing the use of technology. This grant will continue through the end of the current calendar year.

### **AT Director's Update**

Kathy Hayfield, Director, Field Rehabilitation Services and Support Team, provided an agency update. Focus on training next year will be on aging and employment and the use of assistive technology to improve outcomes. Ms Hayfield stated the need for people to be seen and speak out at the General Assembly to support the Department of Education on "AT Follows the Student" which would allow AT equipment to be purchased by family and/or other organizations when students exit the school system.

### **New Well Fund**

Joseph Wallace, Ph.D., provided an update on the New Well Fund (NWF). The NWF is pursuing the reestablishment of the Consumer Service Fund. The NWF has a \$50,000 grant from the Richmond Eye & Ear Foundation Fund to provide funding for people in the Richmond and surrounding area who are affected by hearing and vision loss. Last year the NWF approved 120 loans for people with disabilities out of 250 applications received.

### **Commissioner's Update**

The Commissioner asked the group to forward to him any stories or incidents where a person with a disability was compromised as a result of any recent natural disasters. Commissioner Rothrock will report any finding to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

A new website (Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities, [www.vadrs.org/vblc](http://www.vadrs.org/vblc)) is available which will list resources for people to use in developing "livable communities" in Virginia. It will list promising and best practices and offer several programmatic models.

### **Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE Foundation)**

Sonja Schaible, Executive Director, FREE Foundation, provided an update on their chapters in Virginia. The FREE Foundation is part of the Virginia Reuse Network (VRN). The VRN is administered by VATS. FREE and the VRN are seeking state funding to continue the FREE Foundation program. *A motion was made by Dr. Wallace to provide a letter from the Council to support the Foundation for Rehabilitation for Equipment and Endowment's efforts in getting funding from the Governor's Office and the General Assembly to support reuse programs statewide. The motion was seconded by Matthew Deans and passed by unanimous vote.*

### **Next ATAC Meeting**

The next ATAC Meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, January 12, 2012**, 10:00am- 2:30pm at the DRS Central Office in Richmond, VA. VATS will supply a funding update and this will be a planning meeting and will develop ad hoc task committees to facilitate development of goals that will direct future VATS activities.