

**VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED  
Quarterly Meeting**

**Draft Minutes**

**February 9, 2024**

**397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227**

**SRC Members in Attendance**

**Beth Sellers**, Harrisonburg, Parent/Guardian of a Person with a Disability  
**Rebecca Ceja**, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education  
**Christine Appert**, Charlottesville, Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services  
**Heidi Lawyer**, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)  
**Mark Roane**, Richmond, Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services  
**Rachael Rounds**, Midlothian, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program  
**Milford Stern**, Roanoke, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor  
**Leelynn Untalan Brady**, Suffolk, Representative of Statewide Independent Living Council  
**Beth Klein**, Stafford, Representative of the Virginia Disability Law Center of Virginia (dLCV)  
**David Andrews**, Hampton, Representative of a Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services  
**LaSonya Jackson**, Crozet, Representative of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor  
**Chanthen Nene**, Manassas, Representative of an Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services  
**Susan Bowmaster**, Annadale, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group  
**Francisco Semiao**, Fairfax, Workforce Council Representative  
**Gerald Meredith**, South Chesterfield, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group

**DBVI Staff Present**

**Rick Mitchell**, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member  
**Pam Cato**, Deputy Commissioner for Services  
**Megan Hall**, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services  
**Ashley West**, Executive Assistant to Deputy Commissioners – Recorder of Minutes

**ASL Interpreters**

**Elaine Hernandez**  
**Carrie Humphrey**

**Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions**

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

**Adoption of Agenda**

Ms. Appert moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Mr. Nene seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

**Adoption of December 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lawyer moved to adopt the December 2023 SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended, Mr. Nene seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Rick Mitchell**

Written report provided via VR Agency Report. Additional comments are as follows:

DBVI has a GovDelivery service for newsletters. This is a great way to keep in contact with and keep abreast of what is going on at DBVI. To sign up, go to [dbvi.virginia.gov](http://dbvi.virginia.gov)

The Library and Resource Center (LRC) is in the process of renovation construction. LRC staff have moved out of the LRC building and are now located at an off-site building. Construction is anticipated to start in early fall and is expected to be completed in the later part of 2025. Virginia Industries for the Blind, Charlottesville manufacturing is in the process of renovation as well.

Pam Cato, Deputy Commissioner for Services for DBVI will be leaving the agency as of February 23, 2024. DBVI is currently conducting a national search to fill Pam's position.

**Deputy Commissioner's Report and VR Program Report – Pam Cato**

Written report provided via VR Agency Report. Additional comments are as follows:

Currently, Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) has one vacancy for an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. DBVI has had a successful recruitment for two open access technology positions.

The Roanoke Regional Office has a part time rehabilitation teacher Dennis Helms, while recruitment for a full-time rehabilitation teacher is ongoing.

The Richmond Regional Office is recruiting for a full time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor due to Issac Crisp being promoted to a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist.

The Norfolk Regional Office has filled their full time Orientation and Mobility position as a result of an internal transfer; therefore, an Education Services Coordinator position is vacant in the Norfolk Office. A fourth Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor position has been established and added to the Norfolk Office. Currently, DBVI taking applications for VR Counselor positions in Norfolk and Richmond jointly and seeing where applicants live to have a successful recruit for Norfolk and Richmond positions.

**VR Program Update – Megan Hall**

Written report provided via VR Agency Report. Additional comments are as follows:

Careers in Action – Careers in Sports Recreation event took place February 2-4, 2024, at Massanutten Ski Resort. Ten students and their parents along with DBVI staff, were able to talk to Human Resources at the resort about interview Do's and Don'ts as well as retirement plans and perks of working at Massanutten. Ten students learned to adaptive ski, with a one-on-one guide instructor for 4 hours each day. By the second day most of the students were skiing independently and making ski runs by themselves. Ms. Hall read a follow up email from a student who is a sports recreation major in college, written to Massanutten HR Director who spoke at the event. This email exchange demonstrated the power of these programs and opportunities through the VR program.

Beginning on February 20<sup>th</sup> – March 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm, DBVI will be holding a Career Exploration Using Social Media Marketing Event. These six-week all virtual courses will focus on Social Media Careers and Networking, effective communication skills and Social Media platform strategies and accessibility.

## **Old and New Business**

### **Introduction of New SRC Members**

Due to new SRC appointments, all members of the SRC introduced themselves and identified what seat they were filling on the board.

### **Governor's Budget**

No new legislation for this year as far as budget changes.

### **NCSRC/CSAVR/NCSAB Opportunity**

The National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) / Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) / National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) will be having their spring conference in Bethesda, MD, on April 6-10, 2024. Currently, there is an opportunity for 1-2 members of the SRC to attend this conference with DBVI. This is a great opportunity to see how the other State Rehabilitation Councils work and would be a good learning opportunity to share with others at upcoming SRC meetings.

### **Review Draft Combined State Plan**

This combined state plan is for 2024-2027. The VR portion of this plan was changed to align better with the program's goals. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) will put together this state plan and all other WIOA Title partners plans will be assembled together to be sent out for public comment. Once public comment has gone out and if any recommendations were made, the plan will be adjusted accordingly. The Virginia Workforce Development will meet on March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> to approve this plan, and this plan will be sent to the Federal Government by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Lawyer moved to adopt DBVI's portion of the state plan as written; Mr. Nene seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

### **Upcoming Events**

The Department of Labor and Industry will be holding a Safety and Health Conference, June 10, 2024, and June 13, 2024, at The Founders Inn in Virginia Beach.

DBVI will be partnering with the James Madison University (JMU) for JMU Launching Point and the culmination of the EDGE Entrepreneurial event in July at the Gilliam Center for Entrepreneurship. This program teaches students about business plans and how to cultivate business and business relationships. Students will also be able to participate in the Founders Market at JMU during this event where students will show their business models and any inventory that they have on hand.

DBVI will be holding an All Staff Meeting on May 9 – 10, 2024, on the DBVI Azalea Campus.

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center will hold a Youth Empowerment Training, September 9, 2024, at Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg, VA. This event will be comprised of different sessions for parents and students to work on independence, empowerment and making their own decisions. This event will be open to 25 students, with exhibitors from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation, The Department of Education and DBVI.

PEATC is running four online self-paced training courses this month, Early Childhood Academy,

Transition University, Building Strong Parent Advocates, and IEPU University. The Richmond Chapter of the Blind Veterans Association will be hosting an event at Hunter Holmes McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center on March 28, 2024.

**Program Directors Round Table**

Donna Cox, Director of Education and Library Services, Domonique Lawless, Director for Low Vision and Orientation and Mobility Services, Daniel Aunspach, Director of Rehabilitation Technology Services and David Fuller, Director of Rehabilitation Teaching and Independent Living Services gave an overview of their programs to the SRC.

**New Member Orientation**

Ms. Hall gave a brief overview of new member orientation that will be given this year.

**Adjourn**

Ms. Lawyer moved to end the meeting. Ms. Appert seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Next SRC Quarterly Meeting**

May 17, 2024