

FINAL APPROVED MINUTES

Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Members Attending

Scot Higdon, Chair
John Eisenberg, Vice Chair
Dr. Peggy Fields, Secretary
Pat Beattie (Audio conference)
Dr. Michael Behrmann
Tom Dowling
Elizabeth Flaherty
Ben Garrett
Kelly Lum
Senator Yvonne Miller
Jason Neal
Sam Simon
Dr. Joey Wallace
Brenda Wickard

Members Absent

Dr. Tony Gentry
Joann Willis

Guests

James Rothrock, Commissioner, Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)
Dr. Joseph Ashley, DRS
Melissa Farrar, Winchester, VA

Staff

Kathy Hayfield, VATS
Bob Krollman, VATS
Barclay Shepard, VATS
Elin Glass, VATS
Janice Austin, VATS
Emily McKeough Fallings, VATS North Regional Site

Presenters

VATS staff (Kathy Hayfield, Bob Krollman and Barclay Shepard)

Video or Audio Conference

Patricia Beattie participated in this meeting by audio conferencing.

Welcome and Introduction of New Members

Scott Higdon, Chair, brought the meeting to order and welcomed everyone, including new members and Senator Yvonne Miller. Mr. Higdon recognized new members presented: Dr. Behrmann, Ms. Lum, Mr. Neal, and Dr. Wallace

Introductions

All members of the Advisory Council and VATS staff introduced themselves.

Approval of 10/15/08 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the October 15, 2008 Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting were approved as submitted..

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Old Business

No old business was brought forward.

Review of Hiring Process

Bob Krollman informed the Council that DRS had been working on filling the vacant position in VATS and Kathy Hayfield was selected as the Assistive Technology (AT) Resource Manager. Also, Scott Higdon and John Eisenberg have new positions. Scott Higdon will be transitioning to a new position at the White House in Washington, DC. John Eisenberg has a new position at the Department of Education. This position will focus on children with low incidence disabilities. Mr. Eisenberg will be overseeing State initiatives for assistive technology for moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, sensory impairments, consolidation of two schools for deaf and blind, and AIMVA.

Discussion on Diversifying the Advisory Council

Bob Krollman, VATS AT Specialist Senior, made a presentation to the Council regarding the diversification of the membership of the Assistive Technology Advisory Council in response to the direction of the DRS Commissioner at the previous VATS Advisory Council meeting and as part of the process of the development of the 2009-2011 State Plan. It was noted that each state is required to submit a plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in order to receive funding. This process and planning document insures that all states are in compliance with the federal AT Act.

The presentation consisted of a historical overview, federal requirements of structure and composition and the steps undertaken by VATS staff to insure that the Advisory Council meets the requirements of the federal Tech Act.

A discussion question was posed to the Council as follows: There are opportunities to improve collaboration between VATS and other organizations. How can we establish a mechanism to insure that members of this Advisory Council take advantage of opportunities of this nature? A great deal of discussion took place and general suggestions were offered to the group including maximizing communication to keep all members informed of VATS and Council members activities as they can be inter-related. Members may e-mail Mr. Krollman with suggestions.

Mr. Krollman will keep sending a VATS quarterly Update and consider providing a monthly newsletter. Mr. Krollman suggested polling members for ideas for diversity prior to the next meeting.

Kathy Hayfield added that the Council has six new members and is seeking additional members. Council members were invited to inform VATS of any persons that can be suggested for consideration. Representation from Veteran groups, spinal cord injury and aging populations are areas of interest. VATS staff will develop a list of potential members of the Council for submission to Commissioner Rothrock for his consideration.

Review of Data Collection Report and Process

Kathy Hayfield reported that VATS collects data on all individuals served in the areas of Device Reutilization, Device Loans, and Device Demonstrations and additionally track individuals who receive Training, Technical Assistance, Public Awareness and Information and Referral through our programs. VATS submitted its Annual Report to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on December 29, 2008. This report delineates the services provided under Virginia's federally funded Assistive Technology Act program during Federal Fiscal Year 2008. For example, 2,645 people received reused assistive technology/durable medical equipment valued at \$1,291,706. Six-hundred ninety-four (694) people received training related to assistive technology, with over half of those in the area of school to work transition. Over 10,000 people were reached through VATS' public awareness activities and 675 people accessed Information and Referral services related to accessing assistive technology. The full report is available for review by the Council upon request.

Since January 2009, VATS has coordinated two web conferencing meetings with VATS regional sites in an effort to review the progress the recently developed web-based data collection system. This data collection tool was designed by VATS-North in late 2008 to meet and exceed compliance with annual federal reporting requirements for Virginia's Assistive Technology programs. During these conference calls, VATS regional sites and central office staff discussed the data collection process, viewed the web-based data collection tool, and verified data uploaded into the system for accuracy.

Strategic Planning Process and State Plan

Kathy Hayfield, AT Manager, made a presentation to the Council regarding submission of the 2009-2011 State Plan. She stated that each state is required to submit a plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in order to receive funding. RSA developed a new state plan format to replace the one that expired at the end of FY 2008. This new online process is essentially a structured instrument to assure that states are in compliance with the federal AT Act. The State Plan was submitted to RSA on time, January 23, 2009.

Ms. Hayfield explained that dollars received by each state under the AT Act must be spent in very specific ways. VATS was required to delineate how it would spend the \$458,000 annual AT Act grant through this state plan process. She explained that funding from the AT Act is divided into two categories, State Level activities and State leadership Activities.

State Level activities - at least 60 percent of the funds received by each state AT program must support the following activities: Device reutilization programs (AT recycling programs), Device loan programs and Device demonstration programs. Ms. Hayfield explained that Virginia has a strong Device Reuse program called VATNet. VATS will build its device loan and device demonstration capacity over the next three years to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology. Programs will be expanded in the regional sites and developed at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and within the Field Rehabilitation Services Division of the department of Rehabilitative Services. These programs will work collaboratively with VATS.

State Leadership Activities - a maximum of 40% of the federal allocation may be spent on Training & Technical assistance, Public awareness activities and Coordination & Collaboration. Of this 40%, 5% must be directed toward transition assistance (School or Community). The AT Plan outlined goals to increase training and technical assistance to:

- AT for Veterans with disabilities
- AT for Aging populations
- Medicaid Waiver
- Transition (Students with disabilities, within the meaning of the IDEA that receive transition services; and Adults who are individuals with disabilities maintaining or transitioning to community living)
- VR professionals
- Employers

And finally, as advised by the ATAC, the Virginia AT State Plan proposes to examine the issue of how *AT Follows the Student* – VATS and the ATAC will examine change to state practice where AT cannot follow students as they transition out of the public school system.

A copy of the 2009-2011 AT State Plan submitted to RSA is available to Council members upon request.

Comments by DRS Commissioner Rothrock

James Rothrock, DRS Commissioner, joined the Council during the working lunch. Commissioner Rothrock stated that he was excited about seeing new people on the Council and appreciated Senator Miller's leadership and work as an advocate as a member of the Council. Commissioner Rothrock spoke about VATS history, working together with other agencies and entities and the mission of VATS.

The Commissioner also reported on the year-long process to plan for and recruit an Assistive Technology Manager. He introduced Kathy Hayfield as the new DRS AT Manager and Director of the VATS program. He also discussed his strategic vision on how the new Manager will operate within the agency, helping to better integrate assistive technology services into and across DRS, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, and VATS. Additionally, the Commissioner offered comments on the current fiscal situation within the Commonwealth and the strategic and tactical implications.

Review of Virginia Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Network (VATNet) Annual Meeting

Barclay Shepard reported that Virginia Assistive Technology System hosted the first Virginia Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Network's (VATNet) Annual Partners Meeting in December 2008. Mr. Shepard explained that the one-day meeting, "Shaping the Future of AT Reuse Programs in Virginia and Beyond" was facilitated in part by two staff from the Pass It On Center, the national technical assistance center for assistive technology reuse programs. Mr. Shepard reported that Virginia is one of twelve states to receive a 3-year Model Demonstration Grant from the RSA to develop assistive technology (AT) reuse programs for persons who do not have the means to purchase AT through their healthcare insurance or private funds. Mr. Shepard reported that over the first two years of the grant, VATNet programs served 4,569 persons, gifting 5,466 AT devices valued at \$2,076,379 and that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Mr. Shepard also reported that RSA recognized Virginia Assistive Technology System's VATNet program for the large number of persons served when compared nationally as well as its commitment to AT reuse in Virginia. The meeting was attended by more than twenty participants including VATS Advisory Council members. The meeting focused on local, statewide, and national AT reuse efforts as well as the long term sustainability of Virginia's statewide partnership of assistive technology device reutilization programs. Mr. Shepard and Kathy Hayfield will be meeting with VATNet partners next week for a meeting focused on VATNet sustainability

Mr. Shepard reported that members of the Council gave input regarding the marketing of VATNet during the last Council meeting and during the VATNet Annual Meeting. As a

result, Mr. Shepard reported that VATS developed a “VATNet Press Release” in conjunction with the DRS Public Relations Department regarding VATNet reuse programs. Mr. Shepard reported that several follow-up articles have been written by reporters from local newspapers served by VATNet partner programs. Mr. Shepard also reported that VATS sent letters and VATNet brochures to statewide Centers for Independent Living, Area Agencies on Aging, Disability Services Boards, and Community Services Boards to inform them of reused assistive technology drop-off and distribution sites available to eligible individuals with disabilities.

New Business

Future Direction and Structure of VATS

Scott Higdon suggested having an opening on the Council meeting Agenda to discuss problems and brainstorm.

Members were asked to think about Council leadership roles to replace Mr. Higdon, Chair, and Mr. Eisenberg, Vice Chair, as their terms as officers on the Council will end September 30, 2009. Scott Higdon, John Eisenberg and Peggy Fields will serve as a nominating committee to develop a slate of officers for consideration at the next Advisory Council meeting

Next Council Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Assistive Technology Advisory Council is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2009, at the DRS Central Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, Virginia.

Adjourn

A motion for adjournment was made from the floor, seconded and a vote was called. An unanimous vote was cast for adjournment. The Council meeting adjourned at 1:57pm.