

VIRGINIA ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES for 3/21/07

Members Attending

Chet Avery, Chair
Pat Beattie
Tom Dowling
John Eisenburg
Elizabeth Flaherty
Peggy Fields
Ben Garrett
Linda Harris
George Scott Higdon
Doug Owens
Celestine Walker
Brenda Wickard – by conference call

Guests

Joyce Sharp
Clarence Wells

Staff

Ken Knorr
Bob Krollman
Jane Lively
Elin Glass

The Virginia Assistive Technology System's (VATS) Advisory Council held its quarterly meeting on March 21, 2007, Board Room for Virginia Department of Forestry, Charlottesville, Virginia. Chet Avery, Chair of the Council, called the meeting to order at 10:15AM.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chet Avery welcomed members and guests to the meeting and called for round-table introductions. Two new members introduced themselves and provided a description of their current work places and responsibilities, saying how they hoped to contribute to the Council.

Housekeeping

Elin Glass explained meeting logistics. Jane Lively, VATS, confirmed with council members that they had received the forms needed to use direct deposit for their travel reimbursements

Approval of 12-06-06 Council Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the December 6, 2006, Council Meeting was approved as corrected.

Public Comment

Chet Avery, Chair, opened the meeting for public comment.

Clarence Wells, President of the Board of the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE) program in Lynchburg, Virginia. Their program is looking at Kansas Equipment Exchange as a model for recycling Medicaid purchased durable medical equipment. Wells stated that FREE, which covers Roanoke, Lynchburg and Martinsville in the State, is getting requests for bariatric wheelchairs for individuals who weigh over 250lbs, but these chairs are not being donated by the general public.

Jane Lively, VATS, responded, letting the Council know that efforts had been made to work with Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) in 2005. Elizabeth Flaherty, who represents DMAS on the Council, agreed to provide a report at the next Council meeting. Ms. Lively will forward background information to her.

Once the council receives the report from Ms. Flaherty, then the council may consider sending a letter to John Hager, Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, U.S. Department of Education, to make him aware of this issue or if a policy change is needed.

Report on Assistive Technology in the Schools

John Eisenburg, Virginia Department of Education, provided a report, "State of the State on Assistive Technology. Mr. Eisenburg stated that he would provide council members with an electronic version of his report. Virginia has 132 local school divisions and each school develops its own policies with regard to how the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is developed. The same is true about the use of assistive technology accommodations for students with disabilities. This explains the lack of continuity from one school district to another.

Schools are now required to adapt books for students with disabilities and must change contracts with text book publishers who don't provide accessible texts. The new laws require books to be sent from publishers in a timely manner. Schools will have a national depository and new bids on contracts with publishers will take place August 2007 for books published after August 2006.

VATS has expressed interest in working with the schools to recycle assistive technology that the schools are no longer using. The Department of Education looked at models provided by other states for equipment recycling. A "Memorandum of Agreement" had been in place by other states and was considered a failure. Local school divisions own property; equipment is not owned by the students. Some equipment is not compatible when upgraded due to new equipment available.

Mr. Eisenberg offered to work with VATS to target 2 school districts to demonstrate the feasibility of recycling assistive technology. Chet Avery and Brenda Wickard would also like to participate.

Member Activities

Peggy Fields, Department for Blind and Vision Impaired agreed to follow up with the Council as to what technology and training, for older people who are not VR clients, is not available. Peggy Fields, DBVI, stated that laptops are provided for students to listen to books so they may enjoy listening in their own environment. Ms. Fields will work with Ms. Lively to on assistive technology for blind and vision impaired that might be recycled.

Tom Dowling, representing the Virginia Association of the Deaf, reported that the video phone is the latest communication technology for people who are deaf. Mr. Dowling will demonstrate the use of a video phone at the next council meeting. Neither employers, IT staff, nor hospitals are current with the use of this new technology, which is making it difficult to use in those settings. Mr. Dowling added that hospitals provide no communication technology or interpreters for the deaf. This is something that is badly needed. One up-coming event is "Deaf Nations", March 31, 2007, at the Richmond Coliseum and invited council members to come.

Clarence Mills, FREE, presented an up-date on the Lynchburg recycling center. The center has been open for six months and 28 people served during the last month. They informed the two hospitals in their areas, therapy departments and social workers, about their services. They are connected with FREE and are working on letting people know about the equipment recycling; that it exists and where the drop-off site is located. The center will host an open house April 26, 2007. In May 2007 they will hold a golf tournament, accessible to individuals with disabilities to raise funds for the center.

Doug Owens, representing the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, reported that his business is providing an open computer training program at no cost to consumers with disabilities. Culpeper County has donated Office 97 equipment to the program that will be used to increase computer familiarity and to develop typing skills. Mr. Owens distributed a proposal seeking support for free and open computer and vocational training to citizens of Virginia who are not eligible for public training resources. He requested that the Council members review his proposal and offer whatever comments they had.

Ben Garrett, Department of Aging, reported that they have hired a Grand Driver trainer and will be able to implement the program which is targeted to seniors. The Department of Aging is participating in the "No Wrong Door" program, which allows consumers to access services through one agency one time. Consumers may also refer to the "Senior Navigator" web site for additional information.

Linda Harris, ATLFA, reported that the ATLFA is interested in helping to provide accessible housing for veterans, increase ATLFA visibility, find new ways of branding themselves and increase applications each month. The ATLFA provides low interest loans for hearing aids and other assistive technology. Ms. Harris's employer, Tidewater Community College, is working with the VATS Southeast site to hold the "Say Yes to College Weekend", June 8-9, 2007, at Old

Dominion University. Students have an opportunity to live on campus, see classes, and attend workshops.

Brenda Wickard, disAbility Resource Center, reported on their equipment recycling program in Fredericksburg. The equipment recycling program has a building and electricity and they are planning an Open House.

Recycling Update

Ken Knorr stated that The Disability Commission is an opportunity to solicit support for State funding that will support the recycling programs. Ken will provide council members with future meeting dates of Disability Commission meetings. Chet agreed to make a presentation to the Commission. It is recommended that consumers attend to describe how their lives have improved as a result of acquiring recycled AT.

Jane Lively provided a progress report on the VATNet Grant. There are seven operating recycling programs in the State. A web-based communication system is being developed to support interaction among partners and to provide information to the public. An AT Summit is planned for later this year. Ms. Lively will let council members know about the event.

Bob Krollman, VATS, reported on VATS Regional Sites activities. The Southeast and Southwest Regional Sites are planning multiple day transition events on their respective campuses in June 2007. Future Quest”, a transition event in Northern Virginia will be held on December 1, 2007. Mr. Krollman is working with DRS and the VATS Regional Sites on the integration of assistive technology into the VR System. This includes a pilot program for AT services in Northern Virginia., and two AT education pilot programs in the southeast and southwest regions

Council Orientation Manual

Mr. Krollman overviewed the draft Orientation Manual for council members and gave the Manual to Ms. Flaherty to review and comment. Mr. Krollman will be requesting information from each council member to include in the notebook. A questionnaire for all Council members will be distributed and the information from these completed forms will be included in the Orientation Manual.

Mr. Krollman stated that business cards will be developed with council member’s name, State association, and with same mailing address for council members.

Next Meeting/Adjournment

The next council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, 2007, in Richmond, VA.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.