

MINUTES
DBVI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
June 11, 2021
Held Via Zoom Video Conference

SRC Members In Attendance

Julie Akers, Radford, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Christine Appert, Chair, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Alexa Bowe, Newport News, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Irene Conlin, Virginia Beach, Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself
Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member
Annette Hyde, Radiant, Representative of the Workforce Council
Prem Jadhvani, Leesburg, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor
Ken Jessup, Virginia Beach, Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council
Edna Johnson, Alexandria, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Larysa Kautz, Alexandria, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program Provider
Liang Liao, Richmond, DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Ricardo Lizama, Arlington, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Marianne Moore, Richmond Representative of the Virginia Department of Education
Chanthen Nene, Manassas, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Mark Roane, Vice-Chair, Richmond, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Laura Sinclair, Richmond, Representative of the federally mandated Client Assistance Program
Milford Stern, Roanoke, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor

SRC Members Not Able to Attend

Tammy Burns, Midlothian, Representative of Virginia's Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center

DBVI Staff Present

Pam Cato, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
Tish Harris, Pre-ETS and Career Pathways Coordinator
Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant for Services
Richard Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services
Megan O'Toole Hall, Assistant Director of Vocational Rehabilitation

Public

Leah Mills, Policy Analyst, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

Chair Appert called the meeting to order. Ms. Cato welcomed and identified those on the call. Quorum was met.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Kautz moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Mr. Roane seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval March 2021 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kautz moved to accept the March 12, 2021, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Conlin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Ray Hopkins

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

Governor Northam has lifted most COVID-related distancing and capacity restrictions as of May 28. Most DBVI staff who have been teleworking have returned to working at the office on a part-time basis. As the Agency operates on a more normal basis, we expect that there will be an increase of staff working at the office. The Agency will continue to offer virtual opportunities, as well as continue many of the protocols of sanitizing and ventilation of Agency buildings.

Since the SRC last met the General Assembly has passed its budget. DBVI is disappointed the additional funding appropriated for VR services a year ago, then put on hold due to the pandemic, will not be restored to the Agency. DBVI will request funds for improving and expanding VR services so that we do not have to rely on expenditures in the Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program to allow us to match the federal grant. Funding for some capital projects was appropriated, so plans are under way for the renovation of the LRC, as the renovations of the Headquarters building comes to a close.

The Agency continues to move forward with its Centennial Celebration. DBVI's Centennial Kick-Off was held March 24. In May a Centennial video was shared highlighting the VIB and VEB, and in July the VRCBVI will be highlighted.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Dr. Richard Mitchell

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

The Services Division has gotten back to more normal operations. Staff are visiting homes, schools, businesses, and meeting face-to-face with individuals. COVID-19 positivity rates continue to be monitored watching that "hot spots" do not develop.

Many of the creative ways DBVI services have been conducted during the State of Emergency worked so well, they will be continued when the Emergency ends. VRCBVI has realized that virtual technology during the pandemic has been beneficial in many ways and is reviewing how future classes will look, possibly with some as hybrid.

A new rehabilitation teacher has been hired for the Roanoke office. The Bristol office manager will be making an offer to a candidate to fill the rehabilitation teacher vacancy in that location.

There is a vacant vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor position in the Fairfax office. The caseload in the Fairfax office is so high it hopes to create a fourth VR counselor position for that location.

LIFE, Leap into Linux, and STEPS to Success are three programs that will be offered this summer. LIFE and Leap into Linux will be conducted in person but limited to 15 students with continued social distancing and wearing of face masks, as most students probably have not been vaccinated. STEPS to Success will be conducted virtually with 10 students.

VR Program Update – Pam Cato

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

At the last meeting, it was announced that VR was able to open all disability categories and remove all individuals from the waitlist. Those individuals have been contacted, and only a few of them declined proceeding with services. All new applications can move into plan development and services if they are eligible.

Customer satisfaction survey response rate: 24% current response rate/last yr 8%

At the September 10 SRC Meeting the DBVI Business Relations Team will provide a presentation to the Council members.

It is anticipated that Deborah Collard will talk with the Council at the December SRC Meeting regarding the common performance measures that will be shared in the annual report as well as the customer satisfaction survey.

September 29 from 2 – 3 PM please join the DBVI Centennial webinar highlighting VR & Rehabilitative Technology.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Overview – Tish Harris / Megan O’Toole Hall

Ms. Harris and Ms. Hall shared a PowerPoint entitled “Disruptive Innovation” which covered Robotics, virtual innovations used during the pandemic, IT tiered credential trainings, Sky’s the Limit, Ace Success and Leadership Training for college and college bound, assisting individuals in creating a personal inventory of strengths and skills, and establishing personal college success goals.

Old and/or New Business

CSAVR Conf Updates – *Larysa Kautz / Christine Appert*

Chair Appert and Ms. Kautz gave positive feedback on their attendance of the virtual conference. The next conference will be held in the fall and hopefully in person in South Carolina. This will be an item for discussion on the September SRC meeting agenda.

Annual Report – *Christine Appert*

Ms. Sinclair, Mr. Stern and Mr. Jadhvani had volunteered to assist Chair Appert with the Annual Report. Chair Appert will provide a timeline to complete the report by required deadline in December, and Ms. Cato will assist in gathering the required information.

SRC Elections – *Christine Appert*

Elections for SRC Chair and Vice Chair will be conducted at the September 10 SRC meeting. Members interested in filling either of those seats should express their interest to Maggie Mills, Pam Cato or Chair Appert by August 6. The current Chair and Vice Chair are available to answer any questions about the position.

Representative Roundtable

Ken Jessup

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Mr. Jessup shared that in January the SILC identified underspent operational funds (part B federal funds) which were in turn directed to the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living for consumer-directed COVID relief.

Larysa Kautz

Melwood

Melwood launched a pilot program with the College of Southern Maryland to provide construction training and continues to work on a grant to provide OSHA training for individuals with disabilities to enter into a career in Risk and Safety in the construction trades. Resuming day camp this fall. Applying for an FDA grant to help with entrepreneurship.

Marianne Moore

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

VDOE is providing web meetings to stakeholders across the state to assist with setting new targets for the next round of state performance plan annual performance reports. Data is collected and sent to the Federal government and then Virginia is provided with a score as to how they are performing as a state in special education. The Youth Symposium will be held virtually July 18-20, which revolves around helping young people become more self-determined. See <https://www.imdetermined.org/> website: The I'm Determined project, a state-directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior.

Mark Roane

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

Continuing collaboration with DBVI on Pre-ETS training. NFB has started a seniors program called Silver Bells, which provides in-person training across the state to seniors who are blind or vision impaired.

Laura Sinclair

disAbility Law Center of Virginia (dLCV)

The 2021 Impact Awards on June 17 will be livestreamed and will recognize those individuals and organizations who excelled at serving others even through the extra challenges presented by COVID-19. Due to work by dLCV, the Commonwealth of Virginia will permanently make its elections accessible and safe for voters who cannot mark a paper ballot privately and independently due to disabilities such as blindness, beginning with the June 2021 Primary Election. dLCV also worked to provide permanent curbside voting.

Adjournment

Mr. Jessup motioned to end the meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held September 10, 2021. If it is in-person, the meeting will include a tour and a working lunch. It is recommended to block out the entire day on the calendar to allow for travel time if it is in person.