

**Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Meeting Agenda
May 9, 2025, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm
DBVI Main Conference Room**

Zoom Link: <https://dsa-virginia.zoomgov.com/j/1611801396?pwd=L4ELCK6xoAbQKGPfaYFpT0yhkuu11j.1>

Meeting ID: 161 180 1396

Passcode: 622823

Or Telephone: +1 646 828 7666 US

- 9:30 am **Member Networking – OPTIONAL**
- 10:00 am **Welcome and Call to Order**
 1. Adoption of Agenda – *Action Item*
 2. Approval of February 21, 2025, Meeting Minutes – *Action Item*
- 10:10 a.m. **Public Comment**
- 10:20 a.m. **Commissioner Report – *Dr. Rick Mitchell***
- 10:30 a.m. **Deputy Commissioner’s Report – *Kathy Malone***
- 10:40 am **VR Program Update – *Megan Hall***
- 10:50 am **Hearing Officer Findings – *Cara Kaufman (hold)***
- 11:00 a.m. **Old and New Business – *Chanthan Nene***
 1. By Laws Discussion
- 11:30 a.m. **Break / Pick Up Lunch – Working Lunch**
- 11:40 a.m. **VR Presentation**
- 12:30 p.m. **SRC Member Updates**
- 1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Department for Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Agency VR Report
May 9, 2025

Deputy Commissioner’s Report – Kathy Malone

Regional Office Updates

Bristol	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
Fairfax	Fully Staffed
Norfolk	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
Richmond	Fully Staffed
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Fully Staffed
Headquarters	Fully Staffed
Business Relations	Fully Staffed
VRCBVI	Recruiting for Orientation & Mobility Specialist

State Plan Goals

DBVI, with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed six goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs for this state plan cycle. The six goals are listed below and updates are included in this report.

1. Engage and collaborate with WIOA core partners to coordinate business service efforts to include the blind and visually impaired labor market.
2. Provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to students with disabilities, youth in transition, and adults resulting in the attainment of industry recognized credentials to obtain competitive integrated employment.
3. Conduct outreach efforts to Local Education Agencies and other Community Partners to assist in increasing the number of students with disabilities participating in and benefiting from DBVI offered Pre-Employment Transition programs.

4. Continue to expand the utilization of Supported Employment and Customized Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
5. Achieving agency annual performance goals and establishing base lines for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.
6. Increase collaboration with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to provide comprehensive wrap around services to address the needs of individuals who have dual diagnoses.

State Goal Updates:

1. During this quarter, DBVI's Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services, attended the Full Virginia Board for Workforce Development board meeting in March. During that meeting Secretary Bryan Slater shared information regarding the impending and expected increase in unemployment claims as a result of the Federal Government's reduction in force. Secretary Slater reviewed the resource deployment that the Virginia Employment Commission and local workforce offices are doing to address the expected influx. The Secretary also shared that at that point, Virginia hadn't seen a large increase in claims or foot traffic that might be attributed to several factors including the stay orders put in place by the Judicial System as decisions are reviewed, many individuals may have opted to accept the retirement/severance package from their respective agencies and are not eligible to file for unemployment benefits, or individuals may live in another state (MD, DC, etc.) and are filing in their state of residence.
2. During this quarter, DBVI's students were provided with several opportunities to engage in fun while learning. Among the events were Spring Into Determination in Williamsburg and Blind Design in Blacksburg. This program year is the first time that DBVI has partnered with I'm Determined to present an event specifically for DBVI's student's with disabilities and their families. Both student and parent groups met together as a whole group as well as separately. The feedback following the event was very positive and many expressed appreciation for the partnership between both agencies. This year marked the fourth year of partnership between DBVI and the School of Architecture and Design at Virginia Tech for the Blind Design program. 13 DBVI students met at Virginia Tech to learn about architectural concepts, universal design,

sound absorption and reflection, etc. Throughout the week, students put their newly learned skills into practice by constructing a model room based on the principles that were learned. During the evening, DBVI's students had the opportunity to learn workplace readiness and self advocacy skills through adaptive sports, kinetic dance and comedy improv. DBVI is looking forward to the ability to work with our partners to bring similar programming next program year.

3. During this most recent quarter, DBVI's student outreach team continued their efforts. The development of the specific outreach positions has been instrumental in forging a close partnership between DBVI and DARS' student services teams. Joint presentations to the Virginia Department of Education and other key stakeholder agencies have helped message that Virginia is fortunate to have two separate Title IV VR agencies. The presentations have focused on the ability for one student to have a case open with DBVI and DARS at the same time which provides a more comprehensive wrap around approach of support for those student's who have multiple disabilities. As the student teams partnership continues to grow, DBVI is hopeful that similar messaging related to the vocational rehabilitation services of both agencies will become commonplace.

4. During the third quarter of the program year, DBVI counselors and staff supported 97 individuals in pursuing careers of their choice by providing targeted supported employment services. Several individuals have already located work in competitive integrated environments during the current program year, and they continue to receive follow along services to ensure the continuation of their employment success.

5. DBVI has received the latest quarterly dashboard (quarter 2/October- December 2024) from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. In showing all data from that time period, DBVI had 83 new applicants for VR services with a high percent of meeting specific timelines in movement through services related to eligibility and developing the Individualized Plan for Employment. This adherence to timeliness not only meets the criteria set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, but more importantly, shows that DBVI is committed to exceeding expectations which allows for individuals to receive services in a more timely manner.

6. During this quarter, DBVI staff continued to work with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to streamline processes and shorten timelines to ensure timely and effective services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administration Updates- Megan Hall

- Following her time serving in the Acting Deputy Commissioner role, DBVI is happy to announce that Mrs. Kathy Malone has assumed the permanent position of DBVI Deputy Commissioner for Services. DBVI's Commissioner shared the following with staff. "Kathy's journey with DBVI began in September 2012 when she joined as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Prior to her time at DBVI, she amassed an impressive fourteen years of experience in private vocational rehabilitation, a background that has provided her with a comprehensive understanding of program evaluation, policy development, case documentation, and budgeting. Her experience and deep knowledge of the field position her to be a strong visionary leader for DBVI's Services Division."
- During the month of April, DBVI staff from all three divisions were afforded the opportunity to complete a climate and belonging survey that was developed in partnership with Schmiegl consulting. The survey was designed to help DBVI better understand staff experiences at DBVI and develop ways to improve. The 10 minute survey allowed for both quantitative and qualitative responses and was offered in accessible formats, other languages, and the ability to participate by phone. The survey closed on April 11, 2025 with a responses recorded from 163 staff members. DBVI was very encouraged by the almost 50% response rate which far exceeded the consulting groups anticipated 30% response rate. Commissioner Mitchell has received the detailed analytical report along with the qualitative data, and is in the process of meeting with DBVI's Deputy Commissioners to review each division's feedback to be shared with their direct reports and field staff.

Business Relations Unit Updates- Cindy Roberts, Diane McBride, Karen Kahn, Gary Joyce, Tina Hawley-Blount

Program Update:

- **SAVE THE DATE:** The DBVI Business Relations Unit is excited to announce that the ribbon cutting for the CVS skills lab is scheduled for June 4, 2025. Through a partnership with CVS/AETNA HEALTH, DBVI will be the first skills lab of its kind to be dedicated to customer service training for individuals who are blind, deafblind and vision impaired. The skills lab will be located towards the end of the North Hall at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI), and will have space for

4-6 learners at a time. Through an additional partnership with Wilson Workforce, DBVI will utilize the same customer service training curriculum that has been used in training numerous individuals with disabilities over the years. DBVI has ensured that all curriculum, training documents, and workstations/equipment truly meet the definition of accessibility and functionality. With the assistance of a Skills Training Instructor, DBVI learners will have the opportunity to learn and practice remote customer service in a practical environment. The culmination of the training will be a paid work-based learning experience to be set up in the learner's home area. Although this partnership is through CVS/AETNA HEALTH, there is no requirement that learners obtain jobs at only those facilities (although they are encouraged to apply if the open position meets their preferences) but the training is also transferable to any employer who provides remote customer service training.

DBVI is excited to see this years long planning process come to fruition, and we invite everyone who is interested to attend. The formal invitation is in the final stages of being developed and approved. Once that is finalized, we will send the invitation to everyone so that you can register at the Eventbrite link to notify DBVI of your attendance.

The Business Relations Unit would especially like to thank Mrs. Melody Roane (Director of VRCBVI) and her staff for their collaboration and the use of space to bring this vocationally related training program to campus.

- Long time Business Relations Specialist, Ms. Diane McBride, has announced her retirement from state service. Her retirement effective date is December 31, 2025, however, her last day in the office will be October 1st. Through her tenure with DBVI, Diane has assisted in forging numerous employer, career seeker and partner relationships which have afforded DBVI's career seekers with the opportunity to attend a Federal Job Club (co-facilitated with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services, DARS), countless employment opportunities for career seekers, and is leaving th DBVI business relations world in wonderful shape. Please join us in congratulating Ms. McBride for her dedication and accomplishments in her almost 10 years of service. She will certainly be missed.
- The Business Relations Unit and VRCBVI staff hosted 20 career seekers for the second offering of "Elevate your Career". During the two day long program, career seekers learned from human resource and talent acquisition professionals regarding what today's employers are looking for in a successful candidate for employment, had the chance to update and refine their resume, continued working on their elevator pitch

(short introduction that captures the essence of the career seekers background and current employment solutions), and much more.

On the final day of the event, DBVI welcomed many business partners from around the Commonwealth to attend a “Reverse Career Fair” in which each career seeker sets up a booth and the employers come to meet with them and learn more about their talents, skills and abilities to determine if the career seekers skill sets might fit a need that the company has, and if so, extend an offer for an interview. Several businesses participated in “on-the-spot” interviews, and the career seekers are eagerly awaiting word surrounding possible employment.

- The Business Relations Unit team members continue to facilitate “Steer Your Career” throughout the calendar year. Steer Your Career was born out of an idea during the COVID era which saw DBVI’s need to quickly pivot career services to a virtual platform. Over the 7 week program, career seekers receive in-depth training on presentation, resume development, interviewing skills, elevator pitch development, LinkedIn and much more. To date, over 100 DBVI career seekers have benefited from the program which has remained virtual 5 years later.

Student Team updates- Tish Harris, Felicia Williams, Becky Keller and William Sutton:

- Spring Into Determination: At the beginning of April, DBVI students, their parents and staff converged in Williamsburg for a new student program that was presented in coordination with I’m Determined. I’m Determined was developed as a state run project under the Virginia Department of Education to focus on providing direct instruction and modeling for students with disabilities pertaining to self-directed concepts and creating a deeper understanding of themselves and how they interact with the world around them. I’m Determined held concurrent sessions with both students and parents in separate tracks to talk about self-determination, what self-determination looks like from the parent’s perspective, how to assist students in their exploration of what it means to be themselves in a constructive, supportive and more independent way.

As a result of changes at the Federal level, I’m Determined has moved from merely a state run project to having its own I’m Determined Center. With the development of the center model, I’m Determined will continue to provide the great training that they are known for while being able to increase staff capacity and increased access to additional funding sources, which will allow I’m Determined to engage in a broader reach than

before. DBVI is thrilled to learn of the organizations new model and looks forward to many years of continued partnership. To learn more about I'm Determined, please visit their website at Imdetermined.org.

- Also during this quarter, DBVI students and staff attended the 4th Annual Blind Design program in partnership with the College of Architecture and Design at Virginia Tech. During the 4 day program, students had the opportunity to learn about various building concepts such as sound absorption, hard scapes vs. soft scapes, energy conduction through various building materials, and universal design. The capstone project consisted of the students designing their own "space" through the use of various materials such as wood, metal, plastic, foam, wikisticks and more. Each student demonstrated their model to the group on the last day and explained the concepts that they learned throughout the week and how they utilized the various materials to achieve the desired effect. Students were given the opportunity to donate their capstone projects to Virginia Tech to be displayed and showcased in an exhibit on campus. DBVI looks forward to continuing the tradition next program year.
- The DBVI student team, recognizing that all students wouldn't be interested in the same types of programs for various reasons, the DBVI student team has partnered with "Sky's The Limit" to provide a 5 week program focusing on careers in arts and entertainment. DBVI is very fortunate to work with multi-talented students and recognized the passion and desire for more information regarding employment opportunities related to the more creative field. During the program, students learn from other blind, vision impaired or deafblind individuals who have committed themselves to following their passion in careers such as music development, art, graphic design, theater and more. During the sessions, students are encouraged to ask questions of the presenters on how they became interested in their chosen field and the dedication and determination that it takes to make your dream become a reality.
- The student team is excited to meet with the SRC at this meeting to share more about how DBVI is meeting the intent of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Acts directive to involve students in learning the fundamental principles of being ready for employment through the 5 required Pre-Employment Transition Services of career exploration, workplace readiness, work-based learning, counseling on post-secondary enrollment opportunities and self-advocacy. The DBVI student team programs have contributed to numerous student's employment success and is excited to provide even more!

VRCBVI- Melody Roane

- During this quarter, VRCBVI focused on increasing their capacity to provide training to more adult students at one time. In previous years, the “comfortable and manageable” number of students hovered around 14. This quarter, VRCBVI was encouraged to reimagine what the adult training program would look like in order to increase opportunities for DBVI’s adult population to benefit from the skills of blindness training that so many need prior to feeling comfortable independently and in employment. VRCBVI stretched their wings, and currently has 24 adult students attending the residential skills of blindness training. This increase has helped DBVI meet more individuals where they are and the agency’s ability to provide more timely direct services.
- For the summer, VRCBVI will transition to working with students with disabilities ages 14-18 attending the Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered program. This 4 week intensive skills of blindness training is the only DBVI student program solely focused on skills of blindness instruction to help students understand how to best interact with the world around them while building confidence, self-advocacy skills and friendships. To date, VRCBVI has received 19 applications for this year’s program, and has extended the application deadline until June 6, 2025 to ensure that all interested students have the opportunity to apply.

May 2025 Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Common Performance Measures Report – Deborah Collard

DBVI has transitioned to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Common Performance Measures (CPM). These measures replace the Standards and Indicators report that was previously shared with the SRC. The six core WIOA programs are all required to now report on the CPMs. The six core partners in WIOA include:

- Adult Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Youth Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Dislocated Worker Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (WIOA title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (WIOA title IV)

Common Performance Measures:

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary indicators of performance:

A. Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);

B. Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);

C. Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

D. Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program;

E. Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

a) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;

b) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;

c) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards²;

d) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or

e) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

F. Effectiveness in Serving Employers: WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments (DOE and DOL) to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The Departments are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community.

Approach 1 – Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;

Approach 2 – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and

Approach 3 – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

² Within each State there is an administrative unit that provides authorization to postsecondary institutions within the State. States differ in the requirements to which they hold postsecondary institutions responsible for satisfactory progress. Progress for WIOA purposes must comply with any applicable State standards. Likewise, every State has a State educational agency that establishes education standards for secondary education within the State, which would apply for purposes of determining if a participant is meeting the State's academic standards.

Virginia WIOA Employer Engagement Common Performance Measure (CPM)

DBVI reports with Virginia WIOA core partners on the joint CPM of Effectiveness in Serving Employers as described below:

1. Effectiveness in Serving Employers (States select two of three measures) – Virginia has selected employer retention and employer penetration as described below:
 - Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; and
 - Employer Penetration Rate - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

Since this indicator is a new approach for measuring performance under WIOA’s six core programs, DOE and RSA have implemented a pilot program during which States must select two of the three approaches. DOE and RSA will evaluate State experiences with the various approaches and plan to identify a standardized indicator to be implemented in the future.

All state VR agencies nationwide continue working with RSA on reporting of WIOA Common Performance Measures (CPM) and utilizing RSA 911 data along with performance data dashboards developed by RSA to demonstrate VR program performance. Based on current information, DBVI is able to report on several measures as shown in the table below.

CPM	PY18	PY19	PY20	PY21	PY22	PY23Q3
Employment rate 2 nd Q after exit	42.2% DBVI 51.5% VA*	37.6% DBVI 54.4% VA*	39.9% DBVI 51.6% VA*	39% DBVI	51.4% DBVI	34% DBVI
Employment rate 4 th Q after exit	N/A	27.7% DBVI 52.2% VA*	30.2% DBVI 47.5% VA*	33% DBVI	39.1% DBVI	47% DBVI
Median Earnings 2 nd Q after exit	\$4362 DBVI \$3011 VA*	\$4445 DBVI \$3127 VA*	\$5540 DBVI \$3238 VA*	\$4878 DBVI	\$7465 DBVI	TBD

Credential Attainment Rate	N/A	16.7% DBVI	61.8% DBVI 43.3% VA*	49% DBVI	49.3% DBVI	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Rate	53.0% DBVI 45.0% VA*	82.6% DBVI 85.65 VA*	85.5% DBVI 88.9% VA*	85% DBVI	93.3% DBVI	2% DBVI
Number of DBVI Participants Earning an MSG**	249	247	243	244	237	15
Effectiveness in Serving Employers						
Employer Retention Rate	N/A	62% VA*	70% DBVI	69%	34% DBVI	TBD
Employer Penetration - DBVI	256 services 129 businesses	266 services 132 businesses	190 services 84 businesses	190 services 117 businesses	227 services 118 businesses	150 services 79 businesses

*Reported for the state of Virginia, this includes Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) VR data combined with DBVI VR data.

**Not a WIOA CPM but considered a primary indicator of performance by RSA.

As part of the implementation of the WIOA CPMs and to assist state VR agencies with determining how the RSA 911 data elements are used and how the CPMs are calculated, RSA has developed a set of dashboards or graphics that illustrate key data elements. One of the dashboards outlines Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) outcomes. In PY24 Q2 there were 16 CIE outcomes achieved. DBVI continues to have a wide variety of occupations and strong median wages represented in CIE outcomes. The top ten careers by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) categories, median hourly wage, and median weekly hours are listed in the table below.

Standard Occupational Classification	Individuals	Median Hours	Median Wage
Massage Therapist	3	20	\$20.00
Training and Development Managers	1	40	\$62.50
Data Scientists	1	40	\$54.09
Software Developers	1	40	\$31.25
Property, Real Estate, Community Managers	1	40	\$31.25
Personal Care and Service Workers (all other)	1	40	\$27.00
Personal Care Aides	1	40	\$20.00
Market Research Analysts/ Marketing Specialist	1	40	\$19.24
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Worker	1	40	\$14.90
Fast Food Counter Workers	1	30	\$14.00

Another WIOA performance area where DBVI continues to be consistent and robust is in the provision of the required pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS). For PY2024 Q2, DBVI reported 96 students receiving pre-ETS, including the following number of services provided: 55 job exploration counseling services (17%), 64 work based learning experiences (20%), 77 counseling and enrollment opportunities services (24%), 63 work readiness training experiences (19%), and 65 instructions in self-advocacy services (20%).

Additionally, through the national Rehab Data Workgroup, RSA has shared several “Other Measures that Matter” with the RSA quarterly Dashboards. These measures are provided to enhance the VR agencies’ understanding of the use of the new data elements collected and the implementation of WIOA. In FPY24 Q2, DBVI had 991 total VR participants of which 949 participants had a most significant disability representing 95.8% of participants receiving VR services.