
VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED (SRC)

Quarterly Meeting

Final Minutes

August 15, 2025

The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227 and via Zoom

SRC Members in Attendance

- **David Andrews** (*virtual*), Hampton, Rep. of a Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Amaan Karim**, Richmond, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Beth Klein**, Stafford, Representative of the Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- **Beth Sellers**, Harrisonburg, Parent/Guardian of a Person with a Disability
- **Chanthen Nene**, Manassas, Rep. of an Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Christine Appert**, Charlottesville, Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Gary Talley**, Petersburg, Statewide Independent Living Council Representative (SILC)
- **Heidi Lawyer**, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)
- **Lasonya Jackson**, Crozet, Representative of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- **Mark Roane**, Richmond, Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Rachael Rounds**, Midlothian, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program
- **Rebecca Ceja**, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education
- **Susan Bowmaster**, Annadale, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group

SRC Members Not Able to Attend

- **Gerald Meredith**, South Chesterfield, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group
- **John Leopold**, Richmond, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Rick Mitchell**, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member

DBVI Staff Present

- **Ashley West**, Executive Assistant to Deputy Commissioners
- **Becky Keller**, Pre-Employment Transition Specialist
- **Kathy Malone**, Bristol, Deputy Commissioner of Services
- **Maggie Mills**, Executive Assistant to Commissioner Mitchell
- **Megan Hall**, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
- **Rachel Dancy**, Executive Assistant, Commissioner's Office – Recorder of Minutes
- **Rebecca Askew**, Senior Policy Analyst
- **Deborah Collard**, Senior Program Analyst

Guest

- **Cara Kaufman**, Policy Analyst/Assistant Regulatory Coordinator (DARS)

ASL Interpreters

- **Carrie Humphrey**
- **Elizabeth Leitch**

Public

- **Rebecca Colagreco**
- **Caitlyn Berry**
- **Sharon Payne**
- **Lori Epik**

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

Chair Nene called the meeting to order. Ms. Rachel Dancy conducted roll call. Quorum was met.

Adoption Agenda

Mr. Talley moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Mr. Karim seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Adoption of May 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Ms. Lawyer moved to adopt May 09, 2025, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended, Mr. Karim seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Commissioner's Report – Megan Hall

Written report provided. No additional comments provided.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Deputy Commissioner for Services Kathy Malone

Written report provided. Updates to Regional Office Staffing are as follows:

- Bristol Fully Staffed
- Fairfax Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
- Norfolk Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
- Richmond Recruiting for VRC
- Recruiting for Wage Regional Program Assistant
- Roanoke Fully Staffed
- Staunton Recruiting for Wage ASL Interpreter
- Headquarters Recruiting for 1 Pre-Employment Transition Specialist (Pre-ETS).
- Business Relations Fully Staffed
- VRCBVI Recruiting for Orientation & Mobility Specialist

VR Program Update– Megan Hall

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

- **Summer Activities:** DBVI completed a successful full summer of student engagement programs and continued collaboration with the Virginia Board for Workforce Development as a Title partner under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The next full Virginia Board for Workforce Development will be held in Newport News on September 18 and 19, 2025.
- **Virginia Works:**
 - The employment resources created as a result of the reorganization of the Federal Government can be found at the [Virginia Works website](#).
 - The Commonwealth of Virginia and Virginia Works have partnered with Google to offer free on-line training courses to help equip the citizens of the Commonwealth with relevant information and an understanding of the changing dynamics of the workforce. The first course being provided is “Activate your AI Potential”.
- **Policy Developments:**
 - Significant policy review underway at the Governor's level, incorporating AI—a new and evolving process.
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - NFB Convention, ACBVA convention

-
- **Statewide Needs Assessment:**
 - Conducted by a third party.
 - Focused on gathering input from businesses and individuals.
 - Emphasis on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Pre-ETS.
 - **Service Trends:**
 - A large cohort aged out, causing a temporary dip in student service percentages.
 - Numbers are expected to fluctuate as new participants submit referrals for services
 - Service tracking began in 2018–2019.
 - The full report includes 321 pages of recommendations, many of which have already been addressed.

Student Engagement Programs

- **JMU – Careers in Action at Massanutten Resort:**
 - Students will tour the resort and meet with departments like HR, IT, and Maintenance.
 - Includes a visit to the water park to explore filtration systems.
 - 29 families RSVP'd, expecting 40 families in October.
- **Cyber Warriors Program:**
 - Delivered 8 classes through Intellectual Point.
 - Topics included: building and coding a RoboMaster, 3D printing, and assembling a gaming PC.
 - Next year: Scaling back to 4–5 sessions.
 - Interest from 4 other states; their students will attend in June, allowing a break for local programming.
 - Intellectual Point will continue to support DARS.

Organizational Updates

- **Climate Survey:**
 - Conducted by Schmiege Consulting.
 - Results under review; Deputy Commissioners are developing action items around training, communication, and transparency.
 - The staff response has been positive.
- **Leadership Transition:**
 - Felicia Williams was promoted to Richmond Regional Manager.
 - Hopefully Felicia's position will be filled by August 25, 2025. She will continue to provide some support to the student team culminating in her last program, Careers in Action, in October 2025.
 - Felicia will continue her lead role as the project manager for the Blind Design Program. This program is provided in conjunction with Virginia Tech will take place in Spring 2026.

CVS/Aetna Partnership

- Ribbon cutting was held in June 2025.
- Tyler Boone is working with CVS to ensure accessibility and a smooth training experience for the students.
- First cohort starts mid-September, housed in the VRCBVI Administration Main Building.
 - Can accommodate up to 6 students (ideal size: 4 for the pilot program).
 - Includes online training and support to earn industry recognized customer service credentials.
- Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) is re-engaging in the partnership with CVS after a period of reduced involvement.
- CVS is enthusiastic about rebuilding the model CVS retail store program at WWRC for students to learn careers in retail sales as well as materials handling and inventory processing.

Old and New Business

Hearing Officers Update – Cara Kaufman (DARS)

Ms. Kaufman provided an update on procuring impartial hearing officer services. An Invitation for Bid (IFB) for services was released in June 2025, which netted two bidders: Jade Solutions and Kennington Law. The joint DARS/DBVI subcommittee met on August 21, 2025, to review writing samples from the two bidders. The subcommittee determined that the writing sample from Jade Solutions was unacceptable and the writing sample from Kennington Law was acceptable. Ms. Kaufman requested the Council vote on each candidate. The Council voted unanimously not to approve Jade Solutions. They then voted unanimously to approve Kennington Law as impartial hearing officer for the next fiscal year, with four annual renewals. Ms. Kaufman also requested a vote to renew the contract for an existing hearing officer, Rhonda Mitchell. The Council voted to renew Ms. Mitchell's contract for the next fiscal year.

Customer Satisfaction Survey – Deborah Collard

Ms. Collard presented the preliminary consumer satisfaction survey results for the program year 2024. Additional comments are as follows:

- The agency has been involved with a language access and simplification plan and making sure they are stated in a way that is easy to understand.
- Live [Survey Monkey](#) dashboard to view responses.

Nominating Committee – Chanthan Nene

Chair and Vice-Chair terms have expired and are due for appointment. Mr. Talley and Ms. Bowmaster were recommended for the nominating committee to review active SRC members who are eligible to serve as candidates for the positions. The SRC will hear recommendations and vote on Chair and Vice Chair at the November 7, 2025, SRC meeting.

Ms. Sellers moved to adopt a nominating committee, Ms. Rounds seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Four seats are currently vacant:

- Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- Workforce Council Representative
- Parent/Guardian of a child with a disability
- Community Partner

SRC Annual Report 2025 – Chanthan Nene

- Purpose: All State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs) submit an annual report to the Governor's Office and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- Deadline: Final report must be submitted by December 31, 2025.
- Process:
 - Megan Hall and staff will compile the content and data.
 - SRC members will serve as editors, ensuring the report reflects one unified voice.
 - Examples of past reports and other states' reports are available for reference.
 - Beth Klein and Gary Talley are volunteers to assist Megan and Rachel with editing.
 - Please send the final draft to Rachel Dancy by December 1, 2025, for formatting.

Adjourn

Ms. Lawyer moved to end the meeting. Mr. Roane seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Next SRC Quarterly Meeting will be held virtually on November 7, 2025.