

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired

SRC Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Friday, November 7, 2025

9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

[Zoom Link to join virtually](#)

Meeting ID: 160 466 9819

Passcode: 467509

Or Telephone: +1 646-828-7666 US

- 9:30 a.m. **Member Networking – OPTIONAL**
- 10:00 a.m. **Welcome and Call to Order**
1. Roll Call
 2. Adoption of Agenda – *Action Item*
 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes- August 15, 2025 – *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 a.m. **VR Program Update – *Megan Hall***
- 10:50 a.m. **2026 SRC Meeting Dates – *Action Item***
- 11:15 a.m. **Old and New Business – *Megan Hall***
1. SRC Annual Report Update
 2. Nominating Committee Recommendations
 3. Election of Officers- SRC Chair and Vice Chair – *Action Item*
- 12:00 p.m. **SRC Member Updates**
- 1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired

SRC 2026 Draft Meeting Calendar

2026

Friday, February 20

Friday, May 8

Friday, August 14

Friday, November 6

2025

Friday, February 21

Friday, May 9

Friday, August 15

Friday, November 7

**Department for Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Agency VR Report
November 7, 2025**

Deputy Commissioner's Report

Kathy Malone

Regional Office Updates

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher and 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Norfolk	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
Richmond	Recruiting for Wage Regional Program Assistant
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Fully Staffed
Headquarters	Pre-ETS Specialist (offer imenent)
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 most recent quarter, DBVI has begun prioritizing the review and proposed bi-annual updates for the Virginia Combined State Plan.

Also during this quarter, DBVI's Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives met with Virginia Works staff to identify best practices in public/private partnerships as well as a review of DBVI's paid work-based learning process.

2. During this most recent quarter, DBVI provided comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to 1,028 individuals, with 79 new applicants, 78 new eligible individuals, and 79 new individualized plans for employment.

The largest service categories that individuals received was Rehabilitation Technology Services (380), Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and Guidance (1,014), Job Search Assistance (55), Short Term job supports (77) and Benefits Counseling (69).

Individuals exiting the program in PY24 Quarter4, the top 10 employment sectors were customer service representatives, Accountants/Auditors, Packers/Package Handlers, Social/Community Service Managers, Property/Real Estate Managers, Business Operations Specialists, Community Health Workers, First Line Supervisors, General/Operations Managers and Operations Research Analysts. Of those who exited the program in the top 10 employment sectors, the median hours worked was 34.7/week. The hourly wage for those exiting this quarter was Minimum wage/hour up to \$50.00/hour.

3. Outreach efforts have continued throughout all of DBVI's regional offices and student team members. For the prior program year, DBVI staff conducted 140 instances of outreach to various businesses and organizations to provide information, comprehensive Windmills training, etc. DBVI began tracking outreach efforts for the current program year starting October 1, 2025.
4. In the most recent dashboard data spreadsheet provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, DBVI provided supported employment services to 28 individuals. This number continues to be an increase over prior quarters.
5. 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. During this quarter, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from both DARS and DBVI met for a two day deafblind expo provided by VCU and the deafblind project. This gave counselors from both agencies to get to know one another, learn about resources specific to the deafblind population, and begin laying out the process for dual cases.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administration Updates

Megan Hall

- DBVI VR administration has begun reviewing the current Combined State Plan to ensure that goals remain achievable and measurable compared to the stated priorities, DBVI's continued partnership with all other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act workforce partners, and to work with DARS for discussions on the Rehabilitation Services Administration required section updates and data points that they would like to see added. DBVI and DARS VR administrators are scheduled to meet on November 7th to begin discussions.
- DBVI, in partnership with Schmeig Consulting has been working on an effort to capture data regarding which pre-ETS services students found to be most helpful in their transition from high school to post-secondary training or employment. DBVI is particularly interested in learning of any gaps in programming that students could benefit from or those services that students would like to learn more about.

Business Relations Unit Updates

Cindy Roberts, Diane McBride, Karen Kahn, Gary Joyce, Tina Hawley-Blount

- During this quarter, two DBVI Business Relations Team members received personal letters from Governor Youngkin highlighting their efforts that have made significant contributions to the workforce system in the Commonwealth. In addition, DBVI's Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives received one of 6 inaugural Virginia Works Workforce Partner awards. Ms. Roberts was chosen out of over 100 hundred nominated members of the Commonwealth's business and community partners.
- The Business Relations Team celebrated the retirement of long-time DBVI employee, Ms. Diane McBride. Ms. McBride served as the business specialist for the Fairfax region and provided additional coverage for the Staunton region.
- DBVI is happy to welcome Ms. Thea Picquette as the newest business relations team member. Ms. Picquette will step into the role previously held by Ms. McBride. Ms. Picquette comes to DBVI from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services where she most recently served as a job placement counselor. In her role with DARS, Ms. Picquette worked closely with Ms. McBride on various regional initiatives and served on several boards with Ms. McBride. DBVI welcomes Ms. Picquette to the DBVI family!

Student Team updates

Tish Harris, Becky Keller and William Sutton

- Tish Harris and Becky Keller hosted two info sessions, one in the morning with 35 on the Zoom -including two schools- and another in the evening with 15 on. We kicked off the info session with Stephen Ware, our preferred instructor from Intellectual Point, answering questions for participants on the demand in the tech industry in Virginia, changes that AI is making in tech employment, average starting salaries, credentials for IT and micro credentials. Stephen's information laid out the importance of credentials, even micro credentials, in being competitive for employment. Stephen also shared a question page that helped individuals determine what area of technology they might be interested in. For example, I love helping people solve problems might lead you to Help Desk tier 1 to begin.

After the Q&A with Stephen, Tish Harris explained how the Tiered IT Cohort works. Participants begin with Tech + which is a great career exploration and foundational credential class. Tech + is considered a win-win because if you love the class and want

to move, your move to the next tier OR if you now know tech is not your field of choice, you have a sound foundation of tech and keeping information safe that any employer will appreciate seeing on your resume.

If you want to move on in training, the next tier is ITIL or Information Technology Infrastructure Library, a credential that demonstrates that professionals are educated in IT Service Management best practices. . ITIL is a business based credential appreciated by employers because it helps save time reduce waste and maximize efficiency by avoiding costly rework in tech processes. The third-tier step is the more advanced ISC2 Certified in Cyber Security which is the equivalent of Security + with the added advantage of accessibility. ISC2 CC is a globally recognized entry-level cybersecurity certification covering security principles, access controls, risk management and incident response. The final tier is Splunk, which is one of the industry's leading tools for security and IT operations. Splunk equips students with real-world skills in data analysis and monitoring.

- Careers in Action is a family event, with 44 students and their parents attending. This year is the largest event the Student Team has hosted with over 125 in total in attendance!

Our Career Exploration began on Friday with students rotating between sessions on -Customer Service and Front Desk where students role played handling guest requests and complaints, learning the importance of tone, patience, and communication. Our presenters would like to hire some of our students following the exercise!
-IT where students learned how the IT team works together to secure not only the employee computers, but the call center, wireless networks and business offices as well. Our IT presenter was extremely impressed with the questions and depth of knowledge that our students presented with.

-Maintenance where students learned how a team of 90 maintenance professionals on various teams all worked together to maintain property the size of a small city. Students painted a drywall and learned that touch up painting and plumbing repairs are the most frequent calls on the mountain. Presenters touched on how varied their team is and what training is needed since it has everything from engineers to keep the ski lift running to painters to touch up rooms after each checkout to staff to maintain parking lots and landscaping.

-Students also heard from the Head of Catering and their mission to serve guests not only great tasting food, but also to make their experience at Massanutten pleasurable.

Ana began on the front desk, moved to catering, and is now the lead for banquets and groups for catering. She introduced her staff and spoke to working as a team and the importance of customer service and communication.

-On Sunday morning, students had the opportunity to learn about water safety from the lead instructor at the waterpark, then practice CPR skills on mannequins at the water park with 6 of the 90 certified lifeguards at the resort.

On Saturday, students participated in a series of workshops that included a presentation with information on entrepreneurship, a presentation on communication, a presentation on the opportunities and demand careers in hospitality, and a presentation on communication. After the round robin sessions, students filled out a Career Preferences sheet that tied what they liked to do, favorite classes in school to possible careers. Students had to determine a possible career and commit to a 30 day and 60-day goal.

While students were busy learning, parents also had sessions to learn about social security and other finance topics from a Workforce Incentive Specialist, from our VR leadership and DBVI staff on resources that DBVI can assist with as well as the importance of the VR Counselor in a central role. Four parents participated in a parents panel and answered questions, then a Q&A session followed, with parents eagerly meeting one another and offering resources.

Each student on Saturday afternoon practiced communication and interview skills by taking the microphone and introducing themselves to a packed room full of people and telling them one or more of their goals. This was a huge win, especially for our new students who are shy and quiet.

The program was a huge success and offered students and parents the opportunity to find community, learn and have fun together. Comments were positive and multiple follow ups with counselors have already taken place by Monday morning, which reflects the high level of learning and participation.

Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)

Melody Roane

- On Thursday, October 2, staff and students from the VRCBVI toured the Virginia State Capitol and the Executive Mansion as a White Cane Awareness initiative. In recognition

of White Cane Awareness Day, observed annually on October 15, this powerful event provided VRCBVI students with the opportunity to practice independent navigation, engage confidently with tour guides, and advocate for greater accessibility including the expansion of Braille signage. Thirty-two students and staff attended. Over 100 members of the community observed or interacted with the group. During lunch, the group met in one of the Capitol committee rooms where they discussed what stood out for them during the tours, how it felt navigating the spaces independently, strategies for exploring unfamiliar environments, what worked well, and what challenges were encountered. The discussion concluded with students making suggestions for additional field trips and activities that allow them to use the blindness skills they are learning at VRCBVI.

- The VRCBVI hosted its annual Family and Friends Ability Fest on Saturday, October 18, 2025. With over 150 participants in attendance, the event was an outstanding opportunity for families with loved ones who are blind or vision impaired to learn more about resources that are available to promote independence, to achieve academic success, and to pursue career goals. It was a beautiful day, and people of all age groups were in attendance. From trying one's physical abilities on a climbing wall to exploring entrepreneurial ventures by learning about one VRCBVI staff member's experience in owning and operating a food truck, from learning how to cook food on an outdoor grill safely and confidently to learning about how individuals who are blind or vision impaired travel independently around the world, immersing oneself in other cultures, Ability Fest participants gained information and insight into the active lives blind people lead. Some of the vendors included: The Blinded Veterans Association, the Choice Group, MedaRVA, the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, Sportable, and the Science Museum of Virginia. Discussions in the afternoon revolved around activities blind staff members do outside of work such as: raising a family and growing vegetables and canning fresh produce. Participants also had the opportunity to try out an escape room designed by Kim Ladd, and there were a couple games of goalball. The VRCBVI Family and Friends Ability Fest is moving to the spring beginning in 2026, and the date for the event is Saturday, April 25. Mark your calendars, and join VRCBVI staff, students, families, and friends as they experience the possibilities for individuals who are blind or vision impaired to live the lives they have imagined.
- VRCBVI is excited to host the first ever customer service training lab experience which will begin in January 2026. VRCBVI will host students on campus for 6 weeks while they complete the customer service training modules and sit for the industry recognized customer service certification. Following certification, the students will return to their home area to begin an 8 to 12 week paid work-based learning experience to help them

put their skills to practice in the real world. DBVI VR is thankful to the administration and leaders of VRCBVI in their openness to collaboration and campus oversight at the students learn critical employment skills. While there are always unknown when a new program is starting, VRCBVI has stood ready and willing to assist with the initial formation of the program, and DBVI VR is truly grateful for the excellent collaboration and support.

- On Wednesday, October 29, David Denotaris from Sky's the Limit, will present a one-day workshop for students entitled "AI Solutions for Job Search Problems." This fun, meaningful and memorable training will assist participants in learning about Artificial Intelligence AI, how it works and how you can make it work for you as a person who is blind or vision impaired during the job search process.
- Two current VRCBVI students had the wonderful opportunity of showcasing the importance of White Cane Day and the Skills of Blindness training at VRCBVI. The students were interviewed by Amy Lacy with WTVR Virginia This Morning, and did an outstanding job. [Link to the segment.](#)