

# Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired

## SRC Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Friday, February 20, 2026

9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

DBVI Main Conference Room

[Zoom Link to join virtually](#)

Meeting ID: 161 138 7697

Passcode: 504739

Or Telephone: +1 646-828-7666 US

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| 9:30 a.m.  | <b>Member Networking – OPTIONAL</b>  |
| 10:00 a.m. | <b>Welcome and Call to Order</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Roll Call</li><li>2. Adoption of Agenda – <i>Action Item</i></li><li>3. Approval of Meeting Minutes- November 7, 2025 – <i>Action Item</i></li></ol>   |
| 10:10 a.m. | <b>Public Comment</b>  |
| 10:20 a.m. | <b>Commissioner Report – <i>Dr. Rick Mitchell</i></b>  |
| 10:30 a.m. | <b>Deputy Commissioner’s Report – <i>Kathy Malone</i></b>  |
| 10:40 a.m. | <b>VR Program Update – <i>Megan Hall</i></b>   |
| 10:50 a.m. | <b>Old and New Business – <i>Chanthen Nene</i></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. New SRC Member Introductions</li><li>2. Member Orientation</li><li>3. Spring 2026 CSAVR NCSRC Conference – April 1-3, 2026, Washington, DC</li><li>4. Review proposed updates: Combined State Plan – <i>Action Item</i></li><li>5. Review updates: DBVI Technology Tutor contracting process</li></ol> |
| 12:00 p.m. | <b>Break/ Working Lunch</b>  |
| 12:10 p.m. | <b>SRC Member Updates</b>  |
| 1:00 p.m.  | <b>Adjourn</b>   |

**Department for Blind and Vision Impaired  
State Rehabilitation Council  
Agency VR Report  
February 20, 2026**

**Deputy Commissioner's Report – Kathy Malone**

**Regional Office Updates**

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor 1 driver
Norfolk	Fully Staffed
Richmond	Recent interviews held for VRC vacancy
Roanoke	Recent interview held for RM vacancy
Staunton	Hiring for wage ASL interpreter vacancy
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. DBVI VR leadership has begun making the necessary updates to the Title IV section of the Commonwealth's combined state plan. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner will review the proposed updates, and DBVI will send the draft to the SRC for review. DBVI will return the document with tracked changes to the coordinating agency by February 25, 2026
2. During this most recent quarter, DBVI received the final statistics for Federal Program Year 2024. DBVI is excited to share the following:
  - In reporting as a separate agency, Virginia Blind ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in Measurable Skills Gains and Credential Attainment rate among blind agencies! Virginia Blind ranked 6<sup>th</sup> for quarter 2 employment rate and 4<sup>th</sup> in quarter 4 employment rate when compared to other blind agencies. Virginia Blind ranked 15<sup>th</sup> among other blind agencies for Median earnings.
  - In reporting as a state, Virginia ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Nation for Measurable Skills Gains and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Credential Attainment Rate.
  - In reporting as a state, Virginia ranked 25<sup>th</sup> for quarter 2 employment rate, 42<sup>nd</sup> in median earnings and 22<sup>nd</sup> in quarter 4 employment rate.
3. Outreach efforts have continued throughout all of DBVI's regional offices and student team members. In FFY2025 (October 1, 2024- September 30, 2025 staff held an estimated 180 outreach events with an estimated 165 different community partners and businesses. DBVI staff expended approximately 500 hours and reached over 9,000 Virginians through these efforts. This shows a 13%

increase from FFY24, in large part due to improved staff networking and availability of outreach opportunities, an increase in the number of staff members providing outreach, and an enhanced outreach data capture and tracking process.

4. In the past quarter, there has been an emphasis on training VRCs related to supported employment and customized employment. While DBVI will certainly continue efforts to boost the use of supported employment and customized employment, DBVI is happy to share that there are several individuals proceeding through the customized employment discovery phase by partnering with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). VR leadership continues to reach out to other agencies to learn their best practices for both supported employment and customized employment and will review the findings to determine what might be appropriate to assist DBVI in increasing the number of participants for both case types.
  
5. During the final month of Governor Glen Yougkin's tenure, DBVI received a final report regarding DBVI's meeting the Objectives and Key Results which helped focus attention on critical priorities that advance the agency's mission. The 2022-2025 Annual Goals were intentionally designed as an ambitious stretch towards goal attainment. DBVI is excited to share that the agency met or exceeded the agreed upon goals for the time period. The 4 objectives that were highlighted are as follows:
  - Become the top state for employing people with disabilities (DBVI and DARS)
  - Become the top state for employing people with disabilities (VRCBVI)
  - Increase the opportunity for students with vision impairments to participate in pre-employment training programs (DBVI)
  - Become the top state for employing people with disabilities (DBVI)
  
6. In addition to partnering with DARS for customized employment support, DBVI continues to refine the process of dual case service provision throughout the Commonwealth. In recent years, DBVI has seen an increase in working with individuals with dual diagnoses that pose barriers to employment. By working in tandem with DARS and leveraging their expertise in disabilities other than blindness/deafblindness, DBVI is able to provide a more wholistic approach to ensuring that individuals have the support they need to enter into competitive integrated employment.

## **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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.
- During this quarter, DBVI VR staff participated in a two day Mental Health First Aid training to provide more clarity surrounding working with individuals with dual diagnoses of mental health in conjunction with blindness. DBVI staff have seen an increase in comorbid disabilities since COVID, and this training was one of many planned in the coming program year.

## **Business Relations Unit Updates-**

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

- During this reporting period, DBVI was excited to begin the first cohort of trainees for the CVS Customer Service Skills Lab. The pilot group has gone very well and allowed DBVI to recognize the capacity to provide both remote and in-person training. The first participants are quickly moving through the curriculum and will begin their paid work-based learning experiences soon. Many thanks to VRCBVI for the use of space in both the administration building and the dorm!
- The Business Relations Team welcomed Ms. Thea Pickett to the team for business relations assistance in the Fairfax region. Mrs. Pickett is no stranger to the disability agency community having come from DARS, and is very well poised to hit the ground running. Mrs. Pickett is currently out on anticipated leave and is looking forward to returning to the office soon!

- The DBVI Director of Business and Corporate Relations, Ms. Cindy Roberts, was honored as one of the keynote speakers at the latest CSAVR conference. Ms. Roberts shared the story of the development of the skills lab, and with permission, shared the personal journey with adjusting to blindness of the CVS Career Skills Lab instructor.
- Mr. Gary Joyce has been offered and has accepted more of a hybrid role within the business relations unit. Mr. Joyce will be working with students on business relations processes such as developing a High School Steer Your Career, a highschool Career Connections and assist with resume development, setting up paid work-based learning opportunities for students finishing the VCU Peer Mentoring Program, and is looking forward to developing sessions related to what happens once a student ages out of pre-ETS services.

### **Student Team updates- Tish Harris, Caroline Rammacher, Becky Keller and William Sutton**

- Twelve students had a wonderful experience at Career Exploration in Sports and Recreation last weekend despite the cold temperatures! Students heard directly from Massanutten HR what they want to see on an application and resume, what they look for in an interview, as well as what they do not want to see in an interview. Presenters stressed being early, being prepared by knowing the mission of the resort, dressing appropriately and never taking their phone out during an interview. HR reps also let students know that to stand out, they should send a detailed thank you.

Students also heard from a world medalist athlete who had an interactive session on Resiliency and pivoting when faced with obstacles. Students identified and shared pivots that worked for them in overcoming obstacles when things did not go as planned. Our speaker, Alex, spoke to how she maintained the resiliency to skate over 200 miles a week in practice even when she didn't feel like it. Students responded well to the program!

Students also had the opportunity to try adaptive skiing. Mark Andrews shared motivational quotes every morning, and spoke to the students on overcoming on Saturday evening. Twelve skiers all made it through the lifts and down the slopes to conquer the mountain. Surveys for the event represented the great time and learning opportunities that were had by all!

- On Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, the student team hosted their first ever "Adventures in O&M" Students heard from two schools that offer free assessments and training to determine if an individual would benefit from a guide dog. In addition, students learned

about the in-state options for orientation and mobility training in Virginia including attending the LIFE (Learning Independence Feeling Empowered) student summer program, the opportunity to practice independent travel at student programs like Launching Point and JMU and the adult skills of blindness training program held throughout the Fall and Spring at VRCBVI.

### **Virginia Rehabilitation for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)- Melody Roane**

- VRCBVI staff invite you to join them on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> for the 2026 Ability Fest. The event is held on the campus of VRCBVI and provides opportunities for individuals who are blind, vision impaired or Deafblind to learn more about the training center, catch up with friends, and join in community while learning and growing in their journey with vision loss. The theme for this year's event is "Spring Into Action: Discover What's Possible. For more information, please reach out to Center Director, Mrs. Melody Roane at (804) 371-3323.
- VRCBVI has begun marketing for the Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered (LIFE) Program. VRCBVI has accepted the first student with two more ready to review. Marketing and Outreach efforts are ramping up and the center expects to be able to fill all 22 available student spots this year. The LIFE Program is a four-week opportunity for students who are blind or vision impaired to learn the skills that will empower them to be independent, to participate in confidence-building activities such as whitewater rafting and improvisation training, and to test their job-readiness skills by participating in a Work-based Learning Experience. The program can accept up to twenty-two participants. VRCBVI is anticipating another action-packed summer filled with accomplishments and high expectations.
- VRCBVI is moving forward with its first cohort for the Work-Based Learning Experiences for Adults attending the center this training year. Four students have been selected for this cohort and are meeting regularly with the VRCBVI Program Recruitment and Outreach Specialist to discuss their employment goals and their current skill levels. These experiences will be paid, and the Program Recruitment and Outreach Specialist will work closely with the students and their respective VR Counselor throughout this process. Each work experience will be up to eight weeks, working approximately four hours each work day.