

Final Minutes

Assistive Technology (AT) Advisory Council Meeting Thursday, July 31, 2008

Members Attending:

John Eisenberg, Vice Chair
Peggy Fields
Tom Dowling
Elizabeth Flaherty
Ben Garrett
Linda Harris
Sam Simon
Brenda Wickard

Conference Phone Attendee:

Patricia Beattie

Members Absent:

George Scott Higdon, Chair
Doug Owens
Senator Yvonne Miller
Celestine Walker

Guests:

James Rothrock, Commissioner
Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)

Staff:

Dr. Joseph Ashley, DRS
Kathy Hayfield
Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS)
Bob Krollman, VATS
Barclay Shepard, VATS
Elin Glass, VATS
Janice Austin, VATS
Emily McKeough, VATS North Regional Site
David Netherton, VATS Southeast Regional Site
Joann Ervin, VATS Southeast Regional Site
Sharon Davis, VATS Southeast Regional Site
Dr. Susan Asselin, VATS Southwest Regional Site
Rick Barrow, VATS Southwest Regional Site

Opening Remarks:

John Eisenberg, Vice Chair, brought the meeting to order. Mr. Eisenberg stated that he had discussed the plans for this meeting with Scott Higdon, Chair. The purpose of the meeting was to come together to reach a common goal and to discuss some new goals and to get excited about some new projects.

Congratulations were given to Scott Higdon, Chair, for a job promotion and new position. Mr. Higdon was not available to attend the meeting due to a previously scheduled training for his new position.

Introductions:

All members of the Advisory Council and VATS staff introduced themselves.

Welcome:

Dr. Joseph Ashley, Deputy Commissioner, DRS, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Dr. Ashley's comments included announcing that a new video-teleconference system had been put in place in the DRS Central Office conference room and that a demo using the equipment would take place. A presentation was on the Council Meeting agenda to take place from the DRS office in Roanoke by video teleconference. DRS will be experimenting with improvements for accessibility needs as the new equipment is being used. Video-teleconferencing is helping the agency reduce travel costs.

Dr. Ashley discussed the current activities in VATS, such as the 2 ½ day training held with DRS partners with the purpose of showing how to open doors for employment for people with disabilities. The goal is to insure the availability of assistive technology (AT).

Approval of 2/6/08 Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of the February 6, 2008, Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting were approved.

Public Comment:

No public comment was made.

General Comments:

Bob Krollman asked for a response to the “Update for Assistive Technology Advisory Council (ATAC)” package sent to Council members. Council members were pleased with the update information and requested to be informed on VATS activities as well as future event dates, on a regular basis. Bob Krollman will send Council members “Updates for ATAC” electronically and by hard copy upon request.

Remarks by James Rothrock, Commissioner, DRS:

James Rothrock joined the meeting by conference phone and his comments included the following: The role of VATS is being evaluated to be more integrated in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program and Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center; to be coordinated and more meaningfully connected with the universities; and to support and expand available durable medical equipment recycling efforts around the state.

DRS has brought in Kathy Hayfield, VATS, to listen to your ideas and to look at the VATS program and to better integrate our AT efforts around the state. Ms. Hayfield is working with our State Plan, the AT Grant and the recycling program.

Barclay Shepard, VATS, is new with the VATS program and is scheduled to attend the AT Reuse Grantee Meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, August 13-15, 2008, to bring new focus on the durable medical equipment recycling program.

Bob Krollman, VATS, has 25 years of experience with DRS and Assistive Technology, and working with AT and the VR programs.

VATS staff, Kathy Hayfield and Bob Krollman, attended the Rehabilitation Society of North America (RESNA) Conference in June. Ms. Hayfield pulled together a meeting with all DRS staff attending the conference so they could get to know each other better. DRS staff learned more about AT and the impact on their jobs.

The success of the VATNet Partners for durable medical equipment recycling was due to the AT Summit held at University of Virginia in which John Hager, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, attended. Other states have replicated this effort.

VATS will look at relationships with their regional sites (George Mason University, Old Dominion University and Virginia Tech) to insure that we maintain an effective working relationship with them.

General Comments continued by Council Members:

Elizabeth Flaherty

Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)

The Money Follows the Person (MFP) initiative officially started on July 1, 2008. This grant will allow those in nursing homes wishing to transfer into the home the possible opportunity to do so. Along with the start of MFP, two additional services were added to the EDCD waiver and the AIDS waiver. These services are Environmental Modifications and Assistive Technology.

John Eisenberg, Department of Education, requested a 30-45 minute presentation by DMAS at the next Council meeting so that Council members may consider ways to help DMAS with the new waivers added to their program. Ms. Flaherty agreed to coordinate this presentation.

Ben Garrett

Virginia Department of Aging (VDA)

The VDA program, named “No Wrong Door,” is in the process of changing the name to “Easy Access.”

Under the VDA’s Grand Driver program, there is a list of transportation available on the VDA website as many people do not have a way to travel to be independent.

The Lifeline program is keeping people in their homes, due to grants and donations, so they will not have to be in a nursing home.

Peggy Fields

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

Ms. Fields suggested the Council involve the Disability Service Boards and work with Richard Kriner, DRS, to make them aware of the durable medical recycling program.

Linda Harris

NewWell Fund (NWF)

The purpose of the NWF is to provide affordable financing to people with disabilities or their families for assistive technology (home modifications, accessible vans, hearing aids, etc.). The NWF has increased their direct loan amount to \$15,000. The NWF has a marketing plan and they are implementing their new strategic plan.

John Eisenberg

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

The NIMAS Center which provides accessible text books in alternate formats for students with disabilities is up and running at George Mason University.

The VDOE draft of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) handbook for teachers and students, grades K-12, will be available August 1. The Council may have one month to review and give Mr. Eisenberg their comments. This IEP handbook is due mid September

to be used in the educational field and training on the document is planned for the school systems.

Review of Strategic Planning Process and State Plan

Kathy Hayfield, VATS

Ms. Hayfield, Assistive Technology Resource Manager with VATS, provided a review of the upcoming AT State Plan process. She explained that the Council's "job" is to provide advice for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities of the Statewide AT Program (VATS). The FFY 2009-2011 State Plan for the AT State Grant Program will be submitted to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration this fall. She explained that we must define how Virginia will spend the Assistive Technology Act (ATA) dollars allocated to us in this plan.

Ms. Hayfield reminded the Council that the mission of VATS is to *ensure that Virginians of all ages and abilities can acquire the appropriate, affordable assistive and information technologies and services they need to participate in society as active citizens*. Further, she outlined the requirements of the AT Act of 2004. The Act divides required activities into the categories of State Level Activities and State Leadership Activities. 70% of our funds must be directed toward the State Level Activities, which are those that most directly affect the acquisition of assistive technology by consumers. Included under this category are device reutilization programs, device loan programs, and device demonstrations. 30% of our funds must be directed to the State Leadership Activities, which are those that raise awareness and understanding of assistive technology and engages others in assuring that those who need AT receive it.

The group discussed this information to further their understanding of the law as it relates to VATS activities. Ms. Hayfield stated that VATS is fulfilling the requirements of the Act very well as it relates to all areas, except device loans and device demonstrations.

Discussion of Future Direction and Developing Vision

John Eisenberg, Vice-chair of the Council, led a discussion to solicit input from the Council members regarding the future direction and activities of VATS. This discussion was recorded on flip charts and will be distributed to the Council as a separate document. The input from the Council will be used in the development of the State Plan for FFY 2009-2011.

Virginia Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Network (VATNet) Report

Sonja Schaible, Executive Director

Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE)

The purpose of VATNet is to increase reutilization of assistive technology devices and equipment among Virginians with disabilities who have limited resources. The grant is co-chaired by VATS and FREE. It is a three-year grant which started in October 2006 and ends September 2009. There is network of partners which includes VATS, the

disAbility Resource Center, Goodwill of Central Virginia and FREE. These network partners include seven full service programs, six satellite programs and 33 affiliates. VATNet serves 61 of the 95 counties in Virginia. VATNet served 1,924 people gifting 2,393 devices with a value of \$784,673 during the last year. Through the third quarter of the current Fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, VATNet served 1,775 people gifting 2,137 devices with a value of \$886,595. FREE numbers will surpass last fiscal year's numbers by the end of this fiscal year and the dollar value of the gifted equipment already has surpassed that figure.

VATS Regional Sites

All VATS Regional Sites reported on activities and initiatives for the second and third quarters of the current fiscal year.

New Business

There was no new business.

Next Council Meeting Date

The next Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled to be held Wednesday, September 27, 2008, at the DRS Central Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, Virginia.