
DBVI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
Quarterly Meeting
MINUTES
December 3, 2021, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227

SRC Members in Attendance

Christine Appert, Chair, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Alexa Bowe, Newport News, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Irene Conlin, Virginia Beach, Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself
Annette Hyde, Radiant, Representative of the Workforce Council
Prem Jadhvani, Leesburg, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor
Edna Johnson, Alexandria, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Liang Liao, Richmond, DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Joliefawn Liddell, Richmond, Representative of the Client Assistance Program
Ricardo Lizama, Arlington, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Marianne Moore, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education
Chanthen Nene, Manassas, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group
Mark Roane, Vice-Chair, Richmond, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Milford Stern, Roanoke, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor

SRC Members Not Able to Attend

Julie Akers, Radford, Representative of Business, Industry and Labor
Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member

DBVI Staff Present

Pam Cato, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant for Services – Recorder of Minutes
Richard Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services

ASL Interpreters

John Folker
Elaine Hernandez

Public

Elizabeth Patacca, Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

Chair Appert called the meeting to order. A roundtable of introductions took place. Quorum was met.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Roane moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Ms. Conlin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of June and September 2021 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Roane moved to accept the June 11, 2021, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Conlin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Roane moved to accept the September 10, 2021, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Nene seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Ray Hopkins

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

Deputy Commissioner Richard Mitchell reported in Commissioner Hopkins' absence. Dr. Mitchell welcomed the Council to the recently renovated DBVI Headquarters building.

Dr. Mitchell reported that there are concerns about federal funding as 78% of the Agency's programs are funded with federal dollars. The House passed a new FY 2022 continuing resolution through Feb. 18, 2022. The VR Program has carryover funds from last year, so the Agency is able to continue operating. DBVI did receive around \$11.5M for the renovation of the VIB Charlottesville office, \$600,000 for an outdoor classroom/pavilion on the Azalea campus and \$400,000 for upgrading HVAC systems in Agency-owned buildings to add ultraviolet lights to combat viruses.

A new RSA Commissioner has yet to be named. Effective January 20, 2021, Carol Dobak was delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the U.S. Department of Education. Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Daniel Carey, stepped down in October of this year, and Dr. Vanessa Walker Harris has been appointed to replace him.

Governor-elect Glenn Youngkin's transition team has been named and administration restructuring is in progress.

DBVI submitted four decision packages to the Secretary's Office. If approved, they will be submitted for the Governor's approval. These items have been requested in the past. The State still does not match state dollars well for the VR program. The Agency is requesting the last two years of funding that were allocated to it which is \$2.5M. The Agency is requesting funding for the Education Services Program and an additional Security Program on the campus, as well as a line of credit for Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB).

A number of capital projects are in progress on the DBVI campus. The Headquarters building is wrapping up its renovation. Renovation is beginning at the Library Resource Center (LRC). With the cost of labor and materials continuing to rise the LRC is about a \$16M project. Now that books can be downloaded as audio books, the Agency is looking to repurpose storage space. There are plans to renovate the paving of roads and sidewalks on campus this year.

During the pandemic, the Agency monitored the positivity rates across the state while offering virtual training. Now that most individuals are vaccinated, the Agency is changing protocols on in-person training and no longer monitoring positivity rates. Staff still need to wear face coverings when entering homes and school settings and will social distance when possible and use hand sanitizer. The Agency consulted with the Virginia Department of Health before coming to this decision. The Agency will continue to offer virtual training courses though not at the same scale as the last eighteen months.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Dr. Rick Mitchell

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

The Agency currently has 14 Counselors across the state and 3 vacancies, 2 which are in the Fairfax Regional Office. There are currently 3 Education Coordinator vacancies, and additional funding has been requested to fill these positions. These Coordinators work with children through the age of 21 if they are still in school system.

VR Program Update – Pam Cato

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows.

In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, DBVI's "Celebrating Ability in the Workplace" awards ceremony was held virtually on October 6th. Pam Cato presided over the awards ceremony. Amazon was named the "Employer of the Year". Individuals who successfully gained employment by Washington Headquarters, Facebook and the Richmond Main Branch Library were honored with "Employee of the Year" awards for their success in the workplace.

The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) Spring Conferences are scheduled to be held April 1 - April 8, 2022, in Bethesda, MD. SRC Members interested in attending should advise Pam Cato or Maggie Mills.

The 4th Annual IT Credential Fair will be held on December 7th, and due to crowd size restrictions, will once again be virtual. SRC Members will be sent a link to register for this event should they like to attend.

DBVI's Program Analyst, Deborah Collard, will tentatively present to the SRC at the March 2022 SRC Quarterly Meeting to review the Agency's Customer Satisfaction Survey. The response rate to the survey has risen due to the SRC's recent input.

Old and New Business

Annual Report

Mr. Stern and Mr. Jadhvani have completed working on the Annual Report. It will be sent to Ms. Mills to format and forward to the Governor's office before the end of the month.

Hearing Officer – Renewals

The Council voted on three Hearing Officer renewals. Daniel Hand's contract is up for renewal. This will be the last renewal as the full term of his contract will expire on September 30, 2022. Sarah Freeman and Carl Schmidt are up for renewal. This will be the first renewal for both, leaving three potential renewals after that. The full terms of these contracts will expire on September 30, 2025. Mr. Stern motioned to renew these contracts. Mr. Nene seconded the motion and the renewals were passed unanimously.

Election of SRC Chair/Vice Chair

Ms. Conlin was nominated as new SRC Chair. No other nominations were presented. Ms. Hyde motioned to elect Ms. Conlin as new SRC Chair. Mr. Roane seconded the motion and all were in favor. Mr. Nene and Mr. Jadhvani were nominated for SRC Vice Chair. By a show of hands, Mr. Jadhvani was elected SRC Vice Chair.

Bylaws Amendment

The proposed amendment to the SRC Bylaws was presented regarding electronic participation of SRC meetings. Mr. Nene motioned to adopt the proposed Amendment as presented. Ms. Conlin seconded the motion. All were in favor and the Amendment was adopted.

2022 SRC Quarterly Meeting Dates

The following dates were presented for the 2022 Quarterly SRC Meetings: March 11, June 10, September 9, and December 9. Mr. Roane motioned to approve the 2022 dates. Mr. Nene seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Working Lunch Presentation

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor, Liang Liao, spoke about her experience as a VR Counselor during the pandemic.

Adjournment

Mr. Nene motioned to end the meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2022.