

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Meeting Agenda
February 21, 2025, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm
DBVI Main Conference Room

Zoom Link: <https://dsa-virginia.zoomgov.com/j/1600381937?pwd=2o4Yr9d2IynlMJ1g2XzAf6aicIbFC0.1>

Meeting ID: 160 038 1937

Passcode: 044558

Or Telephone: +1 646 828 7666 US

9:30 am **Member Networking – OPTIONAL**

10:00 am **Welcome and Call to Order**

1. Adoption of Agenda – *Action Item*
2. Approval of November 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes – *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 am **VR Program Update – *Megan Hall***

10:50 a.m. **Old and New Business – *Chanthan Nene***

1. Hearing Officer Updates – Cara Kaufman, DARS
2. Spring 2025 CSAVR NCSRC Conference – Bethesda, MD
3. By Laws Discussion

12:00 p.m. **Break / Pick Up Lunch – Working Lunch**

12:10 p.m. **SRC Member Updates**

1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Department for Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Agency VR Report
February 21, 2025

Acting Deputy Commissioner's Report – Kathy Malone

Regional Office Updates

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Fully Staffed
Norfolk	Fully Staffed
Richmond	Fully Staffed
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Fully Staffed
Headquarters	Deputy Commissioner for Services
Business Relations	Fully Staffed
VRCBVI	Recruiting for Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Administrative support, Program Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator

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 quarter, DBVI's Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services along with DBVI's Senior Program Analyst engaged in collaboration with Virginia Works and several of the 14 local workforce boards throughout the Commonwealth to talk about the request from the Virginia Board for Workforce Development's edict that workforce data be available from all core partners at the local workforce catchment areas. Currently, DBVI, along with the other Title partners, submit various statewide WIOA focused data reports, and this collaboration aims to determine if some of those current reports can be retrofitted to meet the Board's ask. Bi-weekly meetings have been scheduled with the group through June, 2025.
2. During this quarter, 16 DBVI students and their parents attended the Careers in Sports and Recreation student event. This event incorporates the WIOA 5 required student services and affords the students the opportunity to speak with various departments within the resort to learn about hiring processes, what the interviewers look for in a candidate that they expect to be a successful employee, learn about the highs and lows of front line customer service and hear from employees about their own career journey and how they ended up working for the resort. The confidence building/self advocacy service was reached by the students having the opportunity to learn about adapting sports for people with varying disabilities, learning a new skill, speaking up for themselves if there was an issue or something needed to be addressed, etc. The students participated in learning adaptive skiing so that they could

understand the importance of confidence, workplace readiness skills (including listening, trusting others, timeliness, responsibility for their own actions, etc.) and stepping outside of their comfort level and trying something new.

3. During this reporting period, the student team continued their outreach efforts by participating in community fairs, careerquests, conferences and in meeting with the Department of Education to explain what “Pre-ETS services are and how the services intersect with the transition planning done as a part of a student’s IEP process.
4. During the third quarter of the program year, DBVI counselors and staff supported 70 individuals in pursuing careers of their choice by providing targeted supported employment services. Several individuals located work in competitive integrated environments and continue to receive follow along services to ensure continued employment success.
5. DBVI continues to meet or exceed the negotiated common performance measures as set forth by the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
6. During this quarter, DBVI staff continued to work with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to update policy and regulations in relation to serving individuals with dual enrollment. The Virginia DeafBlind Project, with members from both DBVI and DARS, meet on a quarterly basis to determine process improvements to streamline combined VR services.

Business Relations Unit Updates- Cindy Roberts and Team

- Ms. Roberts met with Ashley West, in the skills lab. They held a zoom meeting with Stacey Butler, Workforce CVS/Aetna and Liz Brew, Marketing and Branding. An update was provided from DBVI with the build out of the workstations, etc. Ms. West was able to use her laptop to show the CVS team the room, layout, office space etc. Ms. Brew showed ideas they had for branding, which was very professional and well done. They really liked the space and felt it was perfect, especially with all the natural sunlight. The team felt like June would be an ideal time to aim for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Dates will be proposed at the next meeting.

- Ms. Roberts and BRS McBride met with Mike Hess, Blind Institute of Technologies. They are the recipients of a large DIF grant that will focus on registered apprenticeships (sales force, digital accessibility) and the goal is 300 individuals placed. Individuals must have logistical thinking and very tech savvy. He discussed how individuals can apply to the program. Ms. Roberts asked if he would be willing to speak with a group of career seekers interested in these fields of study and VRC's and he said absolutely! More to come. This is an amazing opportunity for our career seekers.
- Ms. Roberts attended a SHRM Webinar on Executive Orders surrounding workforce. The former Director of the EEOC presented and stated no changes have been made to 503c, Federal Contracting guidelines regarding individuals with disabilities and veterans.
- Diane McBride, BRS NOVA met with Jackie Kanupp, DARS, Business Development Manager. The purpose of the meeting was to develop plans for the DARS/DBVI Federal/Professional Job Club. The consensus is to pivot from a focus on federal employment to county, local, private industry employment. Jackie is developing a survey to learn more from participants what subjects they would like covered in the sessions.

Student Team updates- Tish Harris and Team:

- The DBVI Pre-Employment Transition/student team hosted a program entitled Careers in Sports and Recreation in partnership with Massanutten and Therapeutic Adventures January 31-February 2, 2025. 16 students who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind and their parents attended programming filled with learning about various careers related to sports and recreation, teaching adaptive ways to participate in sports and recreation to help them develop good workplace readiness and self-advocacy skills and the importance of staying active. The students also met with various departments including human resources, front desk staff, lodge staff, etc. to learn about different industries/career pathways (i.e. customer service, marketing, information technology, etc.) that are an inherent part of running an organization and in turn, received instruction related to four out of the five Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act required services for students with disabilities. This career exploration experience afforded the students the opportunity to see various careers in action to provide career information to enhance student's career

awareness and understanding as they begin to think about entering the workforce.

- The student team has been busy planning the following upcoming student programs:
 - Careers in the Arts
 - Spring Into Determination
 - Blind Design
 - Cyber Space

For information regarding the programs please visit the following link:
<https://www.dbvi.virginia.gov/students.htm>

VRCBVI- Melody Roane

- The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) Diabetes Educator met in-person at VRCBVI for 45 minutes with Rachel Wang and Betsy Riggs. Rachel and Betsy are Libre CGM Diabetes Sales Specialists with Abbott Diabetes Care. The VRCBVI Educator initially met them at the American Diabetes Association State of Diabetes Conference that took place 11/14/2024. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss any areas of education and collaboration between DBVI/VRCBVI and the services they provide. The VRCBVI Diabetes Educator discussed the issues she has with getting physicians to override an insurance denial for the Libre CGM because the DBVI client does not meet the insulin requirement. Rachel and Betsy said they can help our clients get approved for the Libre by visiting the client's physician's office and discussing the Libre and the approval process with the physician. They also provided the VRCBVI Educator with a phone number to give to DBVI clients that connects them to Libre diabetes educators via phone or virtually and a local customer support number. The VRCBVI Diabetes Educator also received a Libre 2 and Libre 3 plus demo unit to use for client education. The Diabetes Educator will share information on diabetes training for individuals who are blind. They would like to have the VRCBVI Diabetes Educator speak with all the Virginia Libre Diabetes Sales Specialists in the near future to inform them about DBVI/ VRCBVI services and working with blind diabetes patients.

- The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired has forged a meaningful partnership with Beyond Boundaries and Wintergreen Adaptive Sports to provide students with the opportunity to participate in adaptive skiing. This initiative enabled eight students to engage in a skiing event, where they learned how to ski as a blind person, while also gaining the confidence to venture beyond their comfort zones. Furthermore, many students had the opportunity to explore the Wintergreen resort, demonstrating how the mobility skills they developed, such as cane techniques, can be applied in unfamiliar settings. Such experiences encourage students to push boundaries and reinforce the understanding that their vision loss does not hinder their ability to achieve their professional and personal goals.
- On Friday, January 24, the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired hosted SportAble, a local organization that provides access to various sports and recreational activities for individuals with disabilities, as they gave individuals who are blind or vision impaired the opportunity to learn how to play goalball and blind soccer. Several VRCBVI students participated in this activity and expressed their interest in continuing to participate in Sportable-sponsored activities.
- On Thursday, January 23, VRCBVI experienced a water pipe break, which led to sizable damage in the community kitchen. At this time, the community kitchen is not usable for instruction, and the instructor is moving his classroom to one of the Independent Living apartments until he can return to the community kitchen. The damage has also affected two of the Access Technology classrooms. These classes have been relocated to the Assembly Room until repairs are made to the classrooms. VRCBVI staff adapted quickly to this situation, and students continued with their classes with minimal disruption.

Students Refurbish Canes for the Blind Around the World

Do you know of a person who has an old, broken or unused white cane in their closet? Students at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) are beginning a project to collect and repair canes so that they can be sent overseas to blind people who desperately need this critical tool for independence. In most countries, canes are either not available or people cannot afford them. This project-based learning initiative empowers

our students to apply the professional and personal skills of blindness they are learning at the Center while also giving back to the community. Students are organizing themselves into collaborative teams to manage the project that will integrate braille, access technology and even personal home management for the occasional pizza needed for the student-led group work sessions. The work involves assessing the condition of each cane, ordering spare parts, organizing cane repair work days, and documenting the entire process so that future students can continue this valuable work. A Tennessee-based non-profit partner, the You Cane Give Initiative, will donate the spare parts and provide training materials on how to refurbish the canes. It will then send the repaired canes to blind people around the world. To date, You Cane Give has provided over 2,700 canes in thirty countries. VRCBVI students are excited to be part of this initiative while also building their own personal skills.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Common Performance Measures Report **- Deborah Collard**

DBVI has transitioned to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Common Performance Measures (CPM). These measures replace the Standards and Indicators report that was previously shared with the SRC. The six core WIOA programs are all required to now report on the CPMs. The six core partners in WIOA include:

- Adult Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Youth Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Dislocated Worker Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (WIOA title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (WIOA title IV)

Common Performance Measures:

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary indicators of performance:

- A. Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit).

B. Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit).

C. Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

D. Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program.

E. Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

- a) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level.
- b) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
- c) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards².

d) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training.

e) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

F. Effectiveness in Serving Employers: WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments (DOE and DOL) to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The Departments are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community.

Approach 1 – Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;

Approach 2 – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time.

Approach 3 – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

² Within each State there is an administrative unit that provides authorization to postsecondary institutions within the State. States differ in the requirements to which they hold postsecondary institutions responsible for satisfactory progress. Progress for WIOA purposes must comply with any applicable State standards. Likewise, every State has a State educational agency that establishes education standards for secondary education within the State, which would apply for purposes of determining if a participant is meeting the State's academic standards.

Virginia WIOA Employer Engagement Common Performance Measure (CPM)

DBVI reports with Virginia WIOA core partners on the joint CPM of Effectiveness in Serving Employers as described below:

1. Effectiveness in Serving Employers:

- Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; and
- Employer Penetration Rate - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

All state VR agencies nationwide continue working with RSA on reporting of WIOA Common Performance Measures (CPM) and utilizing RSA 911 data along with performance data dashboards developed by RSA to demonstrate VR program performance.

CPM **PY19** **PY20** **PY21** **PY22** **PY23**
PY24Q1

Employment rate 2 nd Q after exit	37.6% DBVI 54.4% VA*	39.9% DBVI 51.6% VA*	39% DBVI	51.4% DBVI	47.4% DBVI	27%
Employment rate 4 th Q after exit	27.7% DBVI 52.2% VA*	30.2% DBVI 47.5% VA*	33% DBVI	39.1% DBVI	53.3% DBVI	22.2%
Median Earnings 2 nd Q after exit	\$4445 DBVI \$3127 VA*	\$5540 DBVI \$3238 VA*	\$4878 DBVI	\$7465 DBVI	\$7174 DBVI	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	16.7% DBVI	61.8% DBVI 43.3% VA*	49% DBVI	49.3% DBVI	62.5 DBVI	74%
Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Rate	82.6% DBVI 85.65 VA*	85.5% DBVI^ 88.9% VA*	85% DBVI^	93.3% DBVI^	85.9% DBVI^	10%
Number of DBVI Participants	247	243	244	237	189	17

Earning an MSG**						
Effectiveness in Serving Employers						
Employer Retention Rate	62% VA*	70% DBVI	69% DBVI	34% DBVI	69% DBVI	TBD
Employer Penetration - DBVI	266 services 132 businesses	190 services 84 businesses	190 services 117 businesses	227 services 118 businesses	416 services 188 businesses	67 services 42 businesses

*Reported for the state of Virginia, this includes Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) VR data combined with DBVI VR data.

**Not a WIOA CPM but considered a primary indicator of performance by RSA.

^ DBVI is first in the nation among blind agencies, and Virginia is first nationally for the MSG performance measure.

As part of the implementation of the WIOA CPMs and to assist state VR agencies with determining how the RSA 911 data elements are used and how the CPMs are calculated, RSA has developed a set of dashboards or graphics that illustrate key data elements. One of the dashboards outlines Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) outcomes. In PY24 Q1 there were 36 CIE outcomes achieved. DBVI continues to have a wide variety of occupations and strong median wages represented in CIE outcomes. The top ten careers by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) categories, median hourly wage, and median weekly hours are listed in the table below:

Standard Occupational Classification	Individuals	Median Hours	Median Wage
Chief Executives	3	40	\$30.00
Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors & Advisors	3	40	\$21.63
Customer Service Representatives	3	38	\$17.00
Financial and Investment Analysts	2	40	\$43.51
Retail Salespersons	2	33	\$15.00
Randolph-Sheppard vending facility operator	1	21	\$59.52

Computer Programmers	1	40	\$57.69
Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates	1	40	\$48.08
Managers, All Other	1	40	\$48.08
Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	1	40	\$45.19

Another WIOA performance area where DBVI continues to be consistent and robust is in the provision of the required pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS). For PY2024 Q1, DBVI reported 105 students receiving pre-ETS, including the following number of services provided: 95 job exploration counseling services (18%), 126 work based learning experiences (24%), 119 counseling and enrollment opportunities services (23%), 89 work readiness training experiences (17%), and 86 instructions in self-advocacy services (17%).

Additionally, In FPY24 Q1, DBVI had 998 total VR participants of which 957 participants had a most significant disability representing 95.9% of participants receiving VR services.

VR Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program Jan 2025 - Deborah Collard

The VR consumer satisfaction evaluation program for federal program year (FPY) 2024 continues with outreach to 131 eligible individuals with VR cases closed July 1, 2024 – Dec 2024. During the current cycle of the evaluation program several changes implemented in FPYs 2020 and 2021 in order to improve response rate and enhance the feedback received continue to be in place. In FPYs 2020 and 2021, DBVI partnered with the SRC to update and edit the survey platform and questions and add additional personnel resources to provide follow up. Also, adjustments to outreach of eligible individuals, including the re-introduction of providing the option to complete the survey by mail, and increased follow up activities with the addition of resources that were implemented in March 2021 remain in place. The current response rate is approximately 18%, down from 27% in FPY23. Additionally, the time to complete the evaluation is down approximately 20%.

Responses to the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation continue to be shared with the Director of VR and Workforce for consultation, training planning, resolution of potential issues, and continuous program improvement. Data review and analysis will continue to take place in order to provide quarterly updates to the SRC and as needed. Response summaries and graphics for FPY2023 can be viewed at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-MwwOba1djYN8IUyABVQQ1A_3D_3D/

VR Customer Satisfaction PRELIMINARY results to date; through Dec 2024.

The information in Tables 1 and 2 below, includes preliminary* data from FPY2024 evaluation responses. The FPY2024 evaluation program is open through the third calendar quarter of 2025. Data included in this update are preliminary* and are subject to change.

Table 1. Overall Satisfaction rating with the VR Program FFY2016 through current FPY2024, range = 20-100 points.

Year	Total	Rehabilitated	Not Rehabilitated
FFY2016	73.7	82.8	63.3
FFY2017	79.7	85.6	69.8
FFY2018	78.6	94.7	58.5
FFY2019/20	73.3	87.3	45.5
FPY2020	78.8	91.82	71.20
FPY2021	87.7	94.7	76.7
FPY2022	85.6	95.0	67.7
FPY2023	90.89	92.31	86.67
FPY2024*	88.24	TBD	TBD

Table 2. Satisfaction with VR Staff FFY2016 through FPY2024, range = 20 – 100 points.

How satisfied are you that your VR Counselor was:

Year	Respectful	Knowledgeable About your disability	Sensitive to your needs
FFY2016	83.7	78.6	78.0
FFY2017	86.6	86.0	83.9
FFY2018	92.9	81.4	85.7
FFY2019/20	84.4	83.8	85.7
FPY2020	85.8	87.2	84.3
FPY2021	90.9	88.7	90.9
FPY2022	88.6	90.5	88.3

FPY2023	94.9	94.5	94.5
FPY2024*	94.1	81.2	87.1