

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired

SRC Quarterly Meeting Agenda

Friday, August 15, 2025

9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

DBVI Main Conference Room

[Zoom Link to join virtually](#)

Meeting ID: 161 876 1637

Passcode: 310251

Or Telephone: +1 669 254 5252 US

9:30 a.m.	Member Networking – OPTIONAL
10:00 a.m.	Welcome and Call to Order 1. Adoption of Agenda – <i>Action Item</i> 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes- May 9, 2025 – <i>Action Item</i>
10:10 a.m.	Public Comment
10:20 a.m.	Commissioner Report – <i>Dr. Rick Mitchell</i>
10:30 a.m.	Deputy Commissioner’s Report – <i>Kathy Malone</i>
10:40 a.m.	VR Program Update – <i>Megan Hall</i>
10:50 a.m.	Hearing Officer Updates – <i>Cara Kaufman</i> Approval of hearing officer – <i>Action Item</i>
11:15 a.m.	New Business – <i>Chanthen Nene</i> 1. Customer Satisfaction Survey- Deborah Collard 2. Nominating Committee – <i>Action Item</i> 3. Current vacant seats: • Business/Labor/Industry Representative • Workforce Council Representative • Parent/Guardian with Disability
11:45 a.m.	Break / Pick Up Lunch – Working Lunch
12:00 p.m.	SRC Member Updates
1:00 p.m.	Adjourn

**Department for Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Agency VR Report
August 15, 2025**

Deputy Commissioner's Report

Kathy Malone

Regional Office Updates

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
Norfolk	Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
Richmond	Recruiting for Regional Manager (hiring is imminent) Recruiting for VRC Recruiting for Wage Regional Program Assistant
Roanoke	Fully Staffed
Staunton	Fully Staffed
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. During this quarter, DBVI's Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services attended the Full Virginia Board for Workforce Development board meeting in June. During that meeting Secretary Bryan Slater shared information regarding the increase in the number of unemployment claims as a result of the Federal Re-Organization.

Virginia Works has launched a partnership with Grow With Google which is providing 10,000 scholarships for Virginians to access Google career certification on AI essentials, and a new AI upskilling page as part of VirginiaHasJobs.com (VirginiaHasJobs.com/AI). Virginia is hoping to be the first state to max out Google's investment in us. Virginia currently has 1,700 citizens signed up for the courses which leave 8,000 scholarships available.

2. During this most recent quarter, DBVI provided comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to 1,009 individuals aged 14 and up. This was an increase of 18 individuals over the prior quarters data. During this quarter, DBVI VR had 81 new applicants, 72 new eligible individuals and a total of 68 initial Individualized Plans for Employment completed. DBVI's top three training services for the quarter were Disability Related Skills Training, Job Readiness Training and Four-Year College or University Training. DBVI's top three Career Services for the quarter were Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and Guidance, Job Search Assistance and Benefits Counseling.
3. Outreach efforts to local education agencies have continued at a steady pace. Since the creation of 2 specific pre-ETS outreach position, the student team has processed over 50 new referrals for VR services or potentially eligible case types which afford students the opportunity to participate in student programming without application or eligibility requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
4. In the most recent dashboard data spreadsheet provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, DBVI provided supported employment services to 32 individuals. This number is 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. DBVI and DARS have developed specific VR counselor training related to serving individuals who are Deafblind and will be holding the first joint training session in September. DBVI is hopeful that the success and collaboration of services for this disability subgroup will lead to further collaborative opportunities to improve upon the dual services approach that many individuals with disabilities could benefit from.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administration Updates

Megan Hall

- DBVI completed the required Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment with the assistance of the San Diego State University Interwork Institute. A copy of the full CSNA for this three year cycle can be found at [Virginia DBVI 2025 CSNA - final report](#)

- DBVI, in partnership with Schmeig Consulting, has begun offering individuals served through VR the opportunity to opt into the completion of Pule Surveys at specific points in time throughout the life of their case. These surveys consist of three short questions at critical service development points to gauge the individual's experience with VR so that any pain points or concerns can be addressed in real time rather than waiting until an individual's case is closed. DBVI will still provide individuals with the opportunity to complete the full customer satisfaction survey following case closure as customary, but we are hopeful that real time information will allow us to address any deficiencies to prevent premature case closure prior to the individual receiving an offer of competitive integrated employment related to their chosen vocational goal.

Business Relations Unit Updates

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

Program Update

- On June 4th, The CVS Health Ribbon Cutting Ceremony took place on the DBVI campus to launch the new Career Skills Lab funded by Aetna Better Health of Va. Cindy Roberts, Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives, provided a welcome and acknowledged those elected officials and representatives attending the event. Commissioner Rick Mitchell provided remarks and expressed his gratitude to CVS Health and Aetna Better Health of Va for their generous contribution to our agency. Leah Mills, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources spoke on behalf of the Governor's office, followed by Kathy West-Evans, Director of Business Relations, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. Ms. Roberts provided some history behind the lab, and dedicated the lab in memory of LaPearl Campbell Smith, Business Relations Specialist for DBVI. Rick LaFerriere, Lead Director, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health provided remarks and expressed that DBVI is the only blind agency in the country representing Vocational Rehabilitation to receive a grant to fund a career skills lab. Joel Gray, CEO Aetna Better Health of Virginia, provided background on Aetna and expressed gratitude for all those involved that brought the skills lab to fruition. Kathy Malone, Deputy Commissioner for Services, provided closing remarks. Guests moved outside into the courtyard for a formal ribbon cutting ceremony, followed by tours and a luncheon hosted by CVS Health to round out the event. Guests

traveled from across the country to attend the momentous occasion. DBVI state agency partners, community partners and leaders were in attendance.

- DBVI is excited to welcome Mr. Tyler Boone (a former VRCBVI student) who has been hired in a wage position to serve as DBVI's Career Skills Lab Instructor. Mr. Boone is currently working through the curriculum to ensure accessibility and understanding of the content and will test for the same certification that the career seekers go through the skills lab in the coming weeks. DBVI anticipates the first training cohort to begin in September.
- Since the career skills lab ribbon cutting event, Mrs. Roberts and Mr. Boone have been meeting with other states who are interested in opening their own skills lab. Mrs. Roberts has graciously agreed to and has provided introductions to CVS employees who were instrumental in establishing the partnership and the design of the training program. DBVI is honored to be able to assist other states in standing up their own training lab.
- With the current restructuring of the Federal Government, DBVI is pivoting from the large event held in Richmond each October in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year, DBVI will recognize individuals and employers in each region of the Commonwealth. DBVI will host a small gathering of employers, career seekers (career obtainers) and DBVI staff to recognize the great accomplishments of the individuals we work with. More specific information and dates to follow.

Student Team Updates

Tish Harris, Felicia Williams, Becky Keller and William Sutton

- The student team has continued to provide meaningful and successful programming throughout the summer. In this quarter, the student team planned and executed two large in-person residential programs, Cyber Space and Launching Point at James Madison University as well as 8 Cyber Warriors one weeklong courses. Cyber Warriors focuses on technology and coding and includes topics such as 3D printing, RoboMaster, Build your own gaming PC, etc. These programs allow students to assemble the equipment and code the equipment themselves as they are learning about various career pathways related to technology and coding. DBVI would like to thank all of our valued

partners for assisting us in having a successful summer full of student learning opportunities.

- Launching point at JMU, DBVI's College Immersion program took place July 13-20 on the campus of James Madison University. A total of 29 DBVI students and mentors lived on campus for a week in a freshman dorm; used the dining halls; navigated campus using the transit bus; met with Professors, Admissions and Student Disability Services, participated in adaptive sports, experienced the JMU arboretum, and hung out in the dorm social areas making friends!

Students met two college Presidents: President James Schmidt of James Madison University and Blue Ridge Community College President John Downey. The DBVI student group was President Schmidt's first meeting with students in his tenure as the new President of James Madison University, and he expressed the inclusivity of JMU and his desire to provide our DBVI students with the best experience possible. President Schmidt challenged our students to envision their future and then to achieve it! President Schmidt met with DBVI leadership who were present, including Commission Rick Mitchell, VR Director Megan Hall and VR Assistant Director Justin Sheets, as well as JMU alumni and Student Team Coordinator Tish Harris.

At Blue Ridge Community College, Dr. John Downey welcomed students and gave an overview of how the community college has many tracks based on what the student needs including shorter certificate programs that allow an individual to go to work quickly, transfer programs that allow transfer to a four-year college or university, and Associate Degree programs. Students met with the Student Disability Director and Coordinator of Admissions and Outreach, then took a tour of the campus and Recreation Center.

Students took tours of several study areas at JMU including the School of Media Arts and Design, College of Business, College of Education, and Kinesiology. Students also toured the Student Success Center to learn about support in place for tutoring, mental and physical health needs, pharmacy, clubs, and study and social areas in the Center. Students toured the East campus including the Engineering, Biology, Integrated Sciences and Technology areas, and heard from student tour guides how they adapted to college life. One of our DBVI student participants shared the history of Kissing Rock and the echo spot on the Quad

portion of the campus, and students visited those areas along with the Bluestone buildings.

David DeNotaris and Eileen Rivera-Ley presented sessions to students centered on advocacy, networking, communication, time management, interviewing, and team building. Several team building competitions were well received, with students working together to reach a common goal. Students introduced themselves on multiple occasions and answered questions, building their confidence in speaking up in front of a group.

Fun was also a part of the program, with students enjoying the super soaker showdown, a dance party complete with a JMU dance instructor to teach popular line dances, roller skating, a trip to Smiley's for ice cream, and Uno tournaments! Students made friends and had fun.

Parents arrived on Saturday and visited with students on campus who were challenged to show their parents their favorite campus spot. Saturday evening parents and students gathered together to celebrate, with a welcome from Associate Vice-President Art Dean, who visited every table and met all students and parents. Students heard from Jalen Jackson, who had a sports injury and had to adapt to college life while teaching himself to walk again, and from a panel of DBVI students and former students who all started in student team programs:

Kenny Calhoun, a rising Junior at William and Mary who interns with Mitre who started his DBVI journey with Robotics.

Abhishek Poudyal, a recent UVA graduate this past May, who is interning at Palo Alto Networks, who also started in Robotics.

Alexis Williamson, who recently graduated from JMU with her master's degree and who started with Leap into Linux.

All three presenters encouraged our students to get outside their comfort zone, try new things, be resilient and to lean on their support at DBVI.

- DBVI hosted 16 students and 5 student mentors for Cyber Space June 22- 27, 2025 on the DBVI Azalea campus. Students were dropped off on Sunday afternoon and quickly settled in. Evenings were full of bowling and lots of chicken

fingers on Sunday, Comedy Improv on Monday and Wednesday, Blind Soccer and focus on relaxation and handling stress from Antoine Craig on Tuesday. Due to storms, we could not have our super soaker showdown, so we moved forward with our first ever Uno Championship and Ohana family induction.

The classroom was vibrant and full of energy Monday through Thursday. Dr. Chuck Gardner taught on Monday and Tuesday, and guided students through foundational Linux skills, using WSL, Ubuntu, command-line navigation, HTML basics, and the installation of Ubuntu Desktop via VMware to prepare for advanced labs the next two days. Our Palo Alto Networks partners facilitated three and four days on Wednesday and Thursday, including a session led by Abhishek Poudyal, who began his tech journey at DBVI's Robotics program! The student became the teacher. Students learned about configuring firewalls provided by Palo Alto Networks. Palo Alto Networks sponsored the first ever DBVI Cyber Competition with students working in teams of 2 for a round, then reversing roles for round 2 to break to configure a firewall and break through to a Raspberry Pi machine. Although Palo Alto Networks instructors left 90 minutes for the first round, all teams were in under 60 minutes. Time shortened to 60 minutes for round 2, and again all teams were in under 60 minutes—some as fast as 15 minutes.

Cyber Space hosted visitors this week to our program: Deputy Secretary Leah Mills, Assistant Secretary Jona Roka, Assistant Secretary Mindy Monay from the Office of Health and Human Resources visited on Tuesday, met students, and were present as DBVI presented Palo Alto Networks Director of Cybersecurity Academy Mary Ann Byrnes and Cybersecurity Instructor Jim Boardman DBVI Champion of Tomorrow Awards for their work to insure inclusiveness and accessibility in Cyber Security, and particularly for their support of Virginia DBVI students.

Other guests during the week included Jed Deaver of Capital One and Kyle Herceg of CVP in Arlington. Deputy Commissioner Gaines came by our classroom and Commissioner Mitchell was a frequent visitor offering encouragement to all students!

Parents joined staff and invited guests to our Friday Cyber Celebration as students each presented the websites they created from scratch. Parents were

amazed at all the students had accomplished! Thank you's was given from students and mentors and everyone left Richmond very happy!

VRCBVI- Melody Roane

- On Friday, August 1, the 2025 Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered (LIFE) Program culminated with a graduation celebration where fourteen students were recognized for completing the program successfully. At the graduation, several students talked about how the LIFE Program challenged them to go outside their comfort zones and do things they did not know they could do as a person who is blind or vision impaired. One student commented to staff that he wanted to stay longer in the program because it was the first time he was asked to help out with various tasks. He said he finally understood what VRCBVI staff meant when they encouraged him to take an active role rather than a passive one in his life. He said the staff lived that expectation with him by including him in helping out. At the graduation celebration students who participated in Work-Based Learning Experiences explained to the audience what they had learned and how much work experience increased their confidence. Several employers were in attendance including Amy Lacy from WTVR Channel 6 and Amy Stewart, Special Assistant to Governor Youngkin. Employers thanked the LIFE Program for giving them the opportunity to work with students who are blind or vision impaired, and because of their positive experience, they told the audience they want to be included in the Work-Based Learning Experiences again next year. Students left after graduation with confidence to continue using and building on the skills they learned in the LIFE Program. They also have greater expectations of themselves knowing that they can set and achieve personal, school, and employment goals. Parents left knowing that they have a supportive resource at VRCBVI in the availability of staff to help them solve problems and develop strategies to overcome challenges associated with the misconceptions of blindness.
- VRCBVI is hosting 2 sessions of the “Live Active, Live Healthy, Live Modern” program for Seniors who are experiencing vision loss and a plus 1. The sessions will address topics such as Daily living skills, independent travel, Assistive technology skills such as learning to use iOS devices, Diabetes education, nutrition consultation, and training on the use of talking glucometers and other tools, Orientation and mobility, Recreational activities designed to promote a healthy, active lifestyle and Community resources. The weeklong sessions will take place

from August 10- 14, 2025, and August 17- 21, 2025. Recruitment is ongoing so if you know of someone who could benefit from the sessions, please reach out to Melody Roane at (804) 371-3323 or Lloyd Dunnavant (Program Recruitment and Outreach Specialist) at (804) 371-3204.

August 2025 Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Common Performance Measures Report
Deborah Collard

Mrs. Deborah Collard will be with us during the meeting on August 15, 2025, to share information regarding the Common Performance Measures and the most recent data collected from the Customer Satisfaction Survey process for the last year's program.