

**Commonwealth Council on Aging
FINAL MINUTES**

**Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
8004 Franklin Farm Drive
Henrico, VA 23229**

**April 17, 2024
10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

Quarterly Meeting

FINAL MINUTES

Members Present: In-Person: Dr. Andrea Buck, Harvey Chambers, Amy Duncan, Carla Hesseltine, Josh Myers, Ellen Nau, Debbie Preston, Michael Wampler, Paige Wilson, Roland Winston, Erica Wood, Kathryn Hayfield (Ex-Officio), Courtney Richter (Ex-Officio) and Ron Boyd (Ex-Officio); Via Zoom: Jo-Ann Chase, Dr. Cleopatra Kitt, and Dr. Tina Savla

Members Absent: David Broder, Tresserlyn Kelly, Diana Paguaga, Beverley Soble, and Tara Ragland (Ex-Officio)

Guests & Presenters: In-Person: Herb DeGroft and Steve Zollos; Via Zoom: Sarah Morton, Carol Paquette, and Wendy Zenker

Staff Present: In-Person: Charlotte Arbogast, Devin Bowers, John Carpenter, Frank Degaetani, Catherine Harrison, Kathy Miller, Cecily Slasor, Kiersten Ware, George Worthington, and Kelly Wright

Welcome and Member Introductions

Carla Hesseltine, Chair

Chair Carla Hesseltine called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and welcomed members, guests, staff, and presenters.

Carla Hesseltine reminded members that Council meetings is being live streamed for the public. Members of the public can register to listen to the meeting. Council members participating electronically have joined the meeting as “Panelists” as have our presenters for the meeting. Several council members are joining the meeting via Zoom as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The following members were participating electronically due to the 60+ miles distance provision: Jo-Ann Chase, Dr. Cleopatra Kitt, and Dr. Tina Savla.

Carla Hesseltine called for a Roll Call for attendance and for members to introduce themselves. Charlotte Arbogast confirmed that a quorum was present. DARS staff, guests, and the presenters for the meeting also introduced themselves.

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Review Proposed Agenda

Chair Carla Hesselstine

Proposed Action: Approve Proposed Agenda

Chair Carla Hesselstine presented the proposed agenda. Roland Winston made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Josh Myers seconded the motion. The motion passed and the agenda was approved unanimously.

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

Carla Hesselstine, Chair

Proposed Action: Approve Meeting Minutes

Harvey Chambers presented the January 17, 2024 meeting minutes for approval. Mr. Chambers stated that the minutes had been provided to members and for the public and are posted on the Council's webpage. There were no edits or changes so the minutes were approved as presented.

Public Comment Period

Carla Hesselstine

Steve Zollos, CEO of Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, provided comments on his agency and their services area. He noted that his AAA is one of the largest and serves the highest number of older Virginians in poverty. He spoke about the coming crisis due to the unprecedented growth of the 60+ population, inflation rate, and exorbitant housing and rental rates. He also noted the challenges his organization has with serving older adults due to the high demand and lack of sufficient funding.

Herb DeGroft of Isle of Wight County provided comments on the need for lobbying efforts on behalf of older persons. He highlighted the need to be engaged with legislators on an ongoing and coordinated basis and drew comparisons to other advocacy efforts on behalf of school age children and community colleges.

Chair Carla Hesselstine thanked the public commenters for their comments.

DARS Agency Update & Welcome Deputy Commissioner

Kathy Hayfield, Commissioner

Commissioner Kathy Hayfield welcomed members and guests and presented an update on DARS. She thanked the members whose terms will be expiring for their service and commitment to the Council. She noted that the General Assembly was conducting the Reconvened Session today. She highlighted the potential funding for the Commonwealth Council staff position, which was in the budget the Governor sent back to the General Assembly. She shared that the past few months had been a busy time for DARS, which included efforts to launch the Social Health Connector tool and host a Tribal Convening meeting as well as a lot of activity in serving youth and people with disabilities. She emphasized that the Council's nutrition videos had been received very positively and she commended them for that effort. She then turned it over to Kiersten Ware, Deputy Commissioner.

DARS Division for Aging Services Update

Kiersten Ware, Deputy Commissioner

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Deputy Commissioner Kiersten Ware provided an update on the Division for Aging Services (DAS). She shared how much she has enjoyed engaging with the aging network and stakeholder over the last few months. She noted that DARS is working internally on planning for compliance with the Older Americans Act (OAA) Final Rule. She also touched on the Tribal Convening, which generated a very good discussion and shared state and local resources among DARS, two OAA-funded tribes (Chickahominy and Monacan Indian Nation), and three AAAs (Senior Connections, Central Virginia Alliance for Community Living, and Valley Program for Aging Services). Also in attendance for the Tribal Convening was the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) Regional Administrator and an ACL Tribal Consultant.

Kiersten Ware also noted efforts around DAS Fiscal and Administration staff to host calls and engage more deliberately with the AAAs regarding contract management and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. She highlighted a recent webinar from the Weldon Cooper Center hosted webinar to unveil new aging demographic data and tools that are available for the AAAs. The prior week, she and the ACL Regional Administrator attended the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A) meeting in Blacksburg. She shared that the Governor's Conference on Aging will be held on May 19-20, 2025, and that V4A will be hosting the Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) Conference in October 2026.

Looking ahead, she highlighted a few events that she and other DARS staff will be attending in May to coincide with Older Americans and Older Virginians Months.

Presentation: Senior Legal Helpline

Sarah Morton, Staff Attorney

Virginia Poverty Law Center (Handout)

Chair Carla Hesseltine welcomed Sarah Morton, Staff Attorney with the Virginia Poverty Law Center, to present on the Senior Legal Helpline.

DARS started the Senior Legal Helpline several years ago through a time-limited federal grant and in partnership with Virginia Poverty Law Center. Unfortunately, as grants do, the federal grant funding ended. In December 2021, Governor Northam included \$100,000 for the Senior Legal Helpline in his introduced budget, which was retained during the 2022 General Assembly Session and has allowed the program to continue through the partnership with Virginia Poverty Law Center.

In her presentation, Sarah Morton shared that the Senior Legal Helpline provides telephonic advice to Virginia residents age 60+ on a number of legal issues. Topics could include Social Security and SSI, Medicare and Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs, Long-term Care, Housing Issues, Advance Planning, Guardianship alternatives, Elder Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation, Debt concerns, and other civil legal issues. The Helpline does not handle personal injury matters, traffic matters, criminal matters where the older adult is accused of committing the crime.

There is no income limit and no citizenship limit. If the case requires more than telephone assistance, the Senior Legal Helpline will usually attempt to refer to Legal Aid or a private attorney. She noted that interpreters can be provided for callers who communicate best in a

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language other than English. She emphasized that whenever possible, the older adult should be the one to call the Helpline for assistance.

Members had time to ask Sarah Morton questions, which included questions on representation of guardianship respondents, how to best connect older adults to the Senior Legal Helpline, the importance of housing for older adults, common confusion around insurance coverage, and inter-family conflicts.

Best Practices Committee Update: 2024 Winners

Debbie Preston, Committee Chair- (Handout)

Committee Chair Debbie Preston provided an update on the 2024 Best Practices Awards. The Council received 17 nominations. Submissions and winning programs reflected creative, innovative, and effective efforts in addressing the pressing issues of community engagement, social isolation and social connectedness, person-centered care, food insecurity, and more.

She reminded the Council that Dominion Energy provides financial support of \$10,000 for the winning programs. Last year and this year, the Council was pleased to also have financial support from AARP Virginia for \$1,500 for the winners.

She then provided summaries of the winning programs and honorable mentions:

- **FIRST PLACE AWARD (\$5,500):** The Opening Minds through Art (OMA) Center at The Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen (CACGA)
- **SECOND PLACE AWARD (\$3,500):** The Art, Leisure, and Recreation Program from Richmond Aging and Engaging
- **THIRD PLACE AWARD (\$2,500):** The Audio Accessibility and Inclusion Program from Virginia Voice
- The following programs also received honorable mentions:
 - Arlington Neighborhood Village
 - Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging (AAA)/Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) for The AAA Rhythm Makers
 - Southern Area Agency on Aging's Volunteer Driver Program

Debbie Preston noted that:

- DARS included the winning programs in its submission to the Governor's Office for an Older Virginians Month Proclamation.
- DARS staff have also updated the Council's website to highlight these programs, and prepared and issued a press release to highlight the 2024 awards.

In terms of next steps, Debbie Preston shared that the Committee and DARS staff are working now to:

- Issue the award winners their monetary awards.
- Mail out certificates for the honorable mentions.
- Plan & attend Best Practices Awards Ceremonies for the three winning programs.

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- Coordinate with the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (“V4A”) for recognition of these programs during the Virginia Governor’s Conference on Aging Webinar Series to be held on August 27 from 1-2 pm.

She encouraged Council members to save the date for the upcoming webinar.

Members interested in attending on-site ceremonies were encouraged to reach out to Charlotte Arbogast.

Lastly, she thanked the Committee members for their dedication to the process.

Budget & Legislative Updates (Handout)

Erica Wood, Legislative Committee Chair

Legislative Committee Chair Erica Wood provided an overview of the Council’s 2024 Legislative Priorities and the 2024 General Assembly Session. She walked through legislative and budget items that related to the Council’s priorities:

1. Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board
2. Require Guardian Training and Development of Training
3. Enhance Assisted Living Affordability
4. Incentivize State Contractors to Employ Older Virginians
5. Increase Funding for Home and Community-Based Services Through Area Agencies on Aging
6. Increase the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waiver Personal Maintenance Allowance (PMA)
7. Expand Virtual Access to Public Meetings; Allow All-Virtual Public Meetings for Advisory Boards and Commissions
8. Mandate Sick Leave for Direct Care Workers in Nursing Homes, Assisted Living, and Home and Community-Based Services
9. Develop and Promote Financial and Regulatory Incentives for Nursing Home Redevelopment into Small Household Model
10. Support Dementia Capable Training for First Responders
11. Enhance Outreach and Supplement Benefits for SNAP Enrollment

Members thanked Erica for all her hard work and asked about the future advocacy process after Erica’s term on the Council ends and the potential new CCOA staff person is on board.

Working Lunch: GTE Grant Implementation

Devin Bowers, DARS Grant Specialist

(Handout)

Devin Bowers provided a presentation on the GTE grant implementation. She reminded members that the goal was to create five visually engaging, micro-learning training and education videos for the VA gerontological and geriatric workforce. The purpose of the videos is to increase awareness of malnutrition and food insecurity and key resources available to help older Virginians.

She reviewed the project timeline and process. She also showed the Council the five videos that had been developed. These videos included the following topics:

- Overview of Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

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- Congregate (group) and Home-Delivered Meal Programs
- SNAP/Food Banks/Food Pantries
- Farm Market Fresh & Virginia Fresh Match
- Disease Prevention Self-Management Programs

She also provided an update on a webinar that was held on March 26, which received 487 registrants and resulted in 198 attendees. Attendees primarily included staff from managed care organizations, AAAs, and local departments of social services (LDSS).

In reviewing the outcomes thus far, an evaluation survey that found 89% of respondents increased their understanding of the issues after viewing the videos; 90% of respondents increased their knowledge of the issues; and 92% of respondents were very or extremely likely to refer others to the videos.

The Council will receive a final update this fall prior to turning in a final grant report to the Virginia Center on Aging.

CCOA Transition: Updates and Planning

Proposed Action: Delay Committee Assignments until the July 17, 2024 Meeting (Handout)

Carla Hesseltine & Charlotte Arbogast

Chair Carla Hesseltine recognized members whose terms are expiring, and Charlotte Arbogast presented them with certificates of appreciation.

Carla Hesseltine also reviewed the list of members who will be rotating onto the Council, including Tracey Gendron, Executive Director of the Virginia Center on Aging, and the hot-off-the-press appointment of Senator Chris Head. Other appointments are pending.

In looking at the transition process, Carla Hesseltine suggested the following:

- The Council may want to shift the meetings to avoid a January meeting date to better allow legislative members to participate.
- Be aware that the 2024 meeting dates may need to be adjusted to accommodate new members and attain meeting quorum.
- The current Legislative Committee meet in June to discuss the 2025 legislative recommendations so that they can be considered by the full Council at the July 17 meeting.
- Consider sunseting the Planning and Development Committee, which has not met in many years.
- Partner with the Virginia Center on Aging on the 2025 Best Practices Awards and beyond to ensure better staff support and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Be flexible regarding the Secretary position, which is still pending funding for the Council staff person.
- Hold a special election in July for the Executive Committee.
- Set the other committee memberships in July as well.

Council members had an opportunity to consider and weigh in on those suggestions.

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Carla Hesseltine indicated that she would work with the Council staff over the next month or so to prepare draft changes to the bylaws that will:

- Bring the bylaws into alignment with the SB 1218 legislative requirements.
- Update the Electronic Meeting Policy to reflect new permissions permitted under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Reflect the conversation from today's meeting.

Lastly, she encouraged Council members to reach out to her with any thoughts, questions or concerns about the transition plans.

Presentation: Virginia Insurance Counseling & Assistance Program (VICAP) Kathy Miller, Director of Aging Programs and Services (Handout)

Chair Carla Hesseltine reminded Council members that the Council's 2021 legislative priorities included a request for state general funds for the VICAP program. That year, VICAP secured \$600,000 annually to support its efforts to provide free, unbiased Medicare counseling to older Virginians through the Governor's Introduced Budget, which has remained in the budget since then. She then introduced Kathy Miller, Director of Aging Programs and Services, to provide an overview of VICAP.

Kathy Miller shared information about VICAP, specifically: program purpose, funding sources, program impacts and reach, and the program structure and involvement with AAAs.

Members had an opportunity to ask questions.

Announcements

Carla Hesseltine

Chair Carla Hesseltine asked Charlotte Arbogast for any regulatory updates.

Charlotte Arbogast highlighted the expected forthcoming final regulations for:

- Older Americans Act Proposed Regulations
- Adult Protective Services Proposed Regulations
- CMS Nursing Home Staffing Standards Proposed Regulations
- And Health and Human Services Nondiscrimination Proposed Regulations

She also noted that the Older Americans Act Final Regulations were released on February 14, 2024, took effect March 15, 2024, and all regulated entities, including State Units on Aging (SUAs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and services providers, will need to be in compliance by October 1, 2025. DARS, like many of the AAAs and service providers, is working hard to digest the content of the Final Regulations. There is lots to do and DARS will keep the Council apprised of this work as it gets underway over the summer and into 2025.

She also noted that from a state regulatory perspective, there has not been much movement or activity at the state level since the Council's last meeting in January. It is common for regulatory actions to slow down during the General Assembly Session. She predicted that there will be more activities on this front going into the spring and summer.

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Carla Hesseltine reminded members that the next Council meeting is July 17. The agenda will include:

- Welcome our new members to the Council
- Bylaws revisions for approval
 - Including electronic meeting policy revisions to reflect new FOIA provisions
- A Legislative Update/General Assembly update
- A review of and potential approval of the Legislative Committee's 2025 Legislative Recommendations
- Update on the 2024 Best Practices Awards ceremonies and webinar
- Update on the GTE grant implementation, and
- A report on the legislative priorities and any updates from the:
 - Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission
 - Public Guardian and Conservator Advisory Board
 - Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging

Carla Hesseltine asked members to please let her or Charlotte Arbogast know if you have any suggestions or questions.

Public Comment Period

Carla Hesseltine

Charlotte Arbogast reported that there were no public comments.

Meeting Adjournment

Carla Hesseltine, Chair

Chair Hesseltine adjourned the meeting at 1:35p.m.

Members Participating Electronically:

- Jo-Ann Chase: 60+ miles provision, Brambleton, VA
- Dr. Cleopatra Kitt: 60+ miles provision, Roanoke, VA
- Dr. Tina Savla: 60+ miles provision, Blacksburg, VA

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes for January 17, 2024
3. Senior Legal Helpline Flyer & Brochure
 - a. [PowerPoint slides presented, but not handed out]
4. Best Practices Awards Press Release
5. Best Practices Awards Summary of Winners and Honorable Mentions
6. Legislative Priorities Summary Update
7. GTE Grant Presentation Slides
8. SB 1218 Worksheet Handout
9. VICAP Presentation Slides
10. CCOA Regulatory Update
11. Boost Your Budget Flyer