

**Commonwealth Council on Aging  
FINAL MINUTES**

**Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
VIRTUAL – DURING A DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY**

**January 7, 2025  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**Quarterly Meeting**

As permitted by §§ 2.2-3701, 2.2-3707(I), and 2.2-3708.2, the Council held a virtual meeting without a quorum of the Council physically assembled at one location due to an active declared a state of emergency in accordance with § 44-146.17.

**Members Present:** Via Zoom: Dr. Tracey Gendron, Dr. Andy Buck, Carla Hesseltine, Senator Christopher Head, Tresserlyn Kelly, Dr. Cleopatra Kitt, Jo-Ann Chase, Ellen Nau, Paige Wilson, Roland Winston, Joshua Myers, Dr. Yolanda Stevens, and Ex-Officio Members: Ron Boyd, Tara Ragland, and Courtney Richter

**Members Absent:** Amy Duncan and Delegate Patrick Hope

**Guests & Presenters:** Via Zoom: Sydney Palinkas, Carol Paquette, Dana Parsons, Melanie Greer, Erica Wood, Sharon Lindsay, Ashley Staton

**Staff Present:** Via Zoom: Charlotte Arbogast, Sara Stowe, Kiersten Ware, George Worthington, Catherine Harrison, Joani Latimer

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**Welcome and Member Introductions**

**Carla Hesseltine, *Chair***

Chair Carla Hesseltine called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and welcomed members, guests, staff, and presenters. Sara Stowe reviewed the meeting logistics and FOIA compliance requirements for all-virtual meetings during a declared state of emergency. This meeting was being held as permitted by the Council's Electronic Participation and Meeting Policy under the State of Emergency Provision of that policy.

Carla Hesseltine then asked members to introduce themselves. Sara Stowe confirmed that a quorum was present. DARS staff also introduced themselves. Following introductions, Roland Winston inquired about when the new Council structure will take place from members appointed by congressional districts to members being appointed by Weldon Cooper districts. Carla Hesseltine shared that the new members representing the Weldon Cooper regions will start rotating on the Council in July 2025.

Carla Hesseltine concluded the opening of the meeting by reminding members about the Council's purpose in the Code of Virginia and about opportunities for members to get involved in promoting the Council's work and supporting the Council's efforts.

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### Review Proposed Agenda

#### Carla Hesseltine, *Chair*

Carla Hesseltine presented the proposed agenda with an amendment to swap the *Legislative and Budget Updates* and *Overview of Virginia's Legislative Information System* in order to maximize Senator Christopher Head's time at the Council meeting. Dr. Tracey Gendron made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, which was seconded by Joshua Myers. Upon a vote, the motion was approved unanimously, and the amended agenda was approved.

### Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

#### Sara Stowe, *Council Staff*

Council Staff Sara Stowe presented the September 30, 2024 draft meeting minutes for consideration and approval. There were no edits or changes. The draft minutes were approved via unanimous consensus.

### Public Comment Period

#### Carla Hesseltine, *Chair*

Carla Hesseltine opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were made.

### DARS Division for Aging Services (DAS) Update

#### Kiersten Ware, *Deputy Commissioner*

Deputy Commissioner Kiersten Ware provided an update on the Division for Aging Services (DAS). Her updates focused on the following topics:

- DAS' engagement with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), including site visits
- Staffing updates within DAS
- Ageism Awareness Day event on October 9<sup>th</sup>
- DAS biweekly e-newsletter
- Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization and federal funding update
- Progress on implementing the OAA final regulations through internal efforts and periodic engagement with the AAAs
- Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A) Older Virginia Advocacy Day on February 5<sup>th</sup> at the General Assembly and the Virginia Governor's Conference on Aging, May 19-20<sup>th</sup> in Williamsburg, VA
- Governor's Budget Amendments issued December 18, 2024, with no new funding to AAAs or aging services being included
- Virginia Center on Aging (VCOA) Annual Update upcoming on January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9am-10am held virtually. Update will share about initiatives, collaborations, and partnerships in aging services throughout Virginia and beyond.
- No Wrong Door (NWD) launched its Brain Injury Screener in collaboration with DARS' Brain Injury Unit in November as a self-screening tool for connecting individuals with resources based on their individual experiences.
- Adult Protective Services (APS) launched its secure online reporting portal in November.
- The Senior Cool Care Program utilized Dominion Energy's \$85,000 grant to purchase 975 cooling units. With these funds, AAAs provided air conditioners and fans to 922

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older adults and leveraged an additional \$17,348 in supplementary funds to purchase additional cool care items due to the high level of needs in the state.

- Virginia Lifespan Respite Program (VLRVP) received 687 applications for vouchers in 2024. To date, 404 caregivers (VLRVP and kinship) have been reimbursed for a total of \$217,571.99 (VLRVP) with kinship caregivers receiving \$6,277.30 in reimbursement (total being \$223,849.29).
- The *Farm Market Fresh* program saw \$853,505 in redemptions in 2024 for seniors and WIC combined. The senior side specifically saw \$777,700 in redeemed vouchers, a 19% increase from the previous year. 187 farmers and 61 roadside stands accepted the vouchers and improvements were made to the voucher redemption process allowing vendors to use a mobile application for redemptions.

### Legislative & Budget Updates

#### Dr. Andrea “Andy” Buck, Legislative Chair

##### *CCOA Legislative Priorities*

Dr. Andy Buck shared updates on the current CCOA Legislative Recommendations.

1. Increase funding for Home and Community-based Services through the AAAs
  - a. She shared that a budget amendment is expected to be filed, but patrons have not been nailed down at this time. Ron Boyd echoed Andy sharing that V4A is continuing to work on nailing down patrons and will share more once known
2. State funds for Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program
  - a. She shared that no legislators have been nailed down at this time
3. Conduct a Study on the Feasibility of a Multisector Plan for Aging
  - a. She shared that there is no concrete plan to introduce in General Assembly. However, a similar effort is going on at the federal level, but not yet been passed. She will keep an eye on the federal impacts as well.
4. Replication of the RAFT program in Other Areas of the Commonwealth
  - a. She shared a budget amendment has not been solidified yet. Josh Myers reported that Delegate Destiny LeVere Bolling will be introducing legislation to expand RAFT for the Central VA area. Josh Myers also shared that Delegate Vivian Watts and Senator Barbara Favola are expected to introduce budget amendments around crisis management.
8. Expand Dementia Care Management to Underserved Areas of Virginia
  - a. A similar budget amendment regarding dementia training for Medicaid home care staff is expected from Senator Barbara Favola and Delegate Rodney Willett
9. Provide State General Funds for the Ongoing Operations of the Virginia Memory Project
  - a. Dr. Tracey Gendron shared that Delegate Betsy Carr is expected to patron this budget amendment.

##### *Other Aging Related Legislation*

- Andy then shared an update from AARP Virginia’s legislative priority: Prescription Drug Affordability Board. This was introduced last General Assembly Session, but not signed by the Governor. This will be introduced by Delegate Karrie Delaney.

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- The Virginia Villages Collective is expecting Senator Surovell and Delegate Krizek to file matching budget amendments to expand Villages across the Commonwealth. The
- Virginia Assisted Living Association is seeking to recalculate the Auxiliary Grant to not include income and an increase in Auxiliary Grant personal needs allowance.
- Delegate Atoosa Reaser has introduced a bill for localities to negotiate affordable rental units in proposed assisted living developments.
- Andy also shared SB821 was introduced providing nursing facility residents the right to have electronic monitoring in their rooms.

Charlotte Arbogast, DARS staff, shared an email received from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) requesting the support of the Commonwealth Council on Aging in regards to two VDH bills:

1. Nursing Home (and hospital) licensure fees. The bill authorizes the State Board of Health to establish a new licensure fee structure through regulatory action. This is intended to provide more financial support to VDH for licensing and oversight of nursing facilities.
2. The second bill authorizes the State Health Commissioner to impose "intermediate sanctions" on nursing homes for violations of state nursing home licensure regulations.

Jo-Ann Chase and Dr. Andy Buck inquired about the “players” in nursing facility inspections. Charlotte shared that VDH certifies as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) Surveyor and performs inspections on behalf of CMS.

Roland Winston asked how the Council can provide support. Charlotte suggested that the Council has the option to provide support in the form of a letter and members can advocate in their personal capacities. Roland made a motion to provide a letter of support for the two bills presented, and Jo-Ann Chase seconded. Andy Buck provided a discussion suggesting the Council wait until Senator Christopher Head can provide insight into the nursing home transparency bill, which he showed interest in introducing to see if there is alignment. Roland withdrew the motion and Andy suggested we wait until later in the meeting to discuss the VDH bills.

Senator Christopher Head joined the meeting. Senator Head drafted and had planned to introduce the bill to *Strengthen Nursing Home Transparency, Data and Oversight* which is number seven of the CCOA’s legislative recommendations. Last year, Delegate Rodney Willett introduced a similar bill that was unsuccessful. Upon more research, Senator Head learned that Delegate Willett was not planning to introduce the bill again this year due to federal regulations from CMS which may be duplicative and due to an indication from AARP Virginia, that while AARP Virginia supported this legislation last year, it preferred to wait until the CMS regulations are solidified. At this time, Senator Head suggested the Council table this legislation until the CMS regulations are solidified, but he would be open to exploring the legislation in the future. The Council shared the VDH support request with Senator Head, who was familiar with the proposed legislation. Roland Winston made the motion to move forward with the letter of support to VDH on both bills and Jo-Ann Chase seconded. Upon the vote, the motion was approved. Council staff will draft a letter on behalf the Council for VDH.

### Overview of New LIS System

**Sara Stowe, Council Staff and Charlotte Arbogast, Senior Policy Analyst**

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Sara Stowe shared a presentation on the new Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS). The new LIS was launched for the 2025 General Assembly Session. Currently, the previous LIS is still active and provides historic Session information from 1994-2024 and will be consolidated to the new system in 2026. She shared features such as excluding failed bills, keyword searches, and how to find the proposed changes in current legislation. Lastly, she shared resources such as the LIS Learning Center and an overview presentation for members to find additional navigation resources for the new website.

### **RAFT Overview**

#### **Sydney Palinkas, RAFT Coordinator**

Carla Hesseltine, Chair introduced Sydney Palinkas, RAFT Coordinator and reminded members that expansion of the RAFT program across the Commonwealth is one of the CCOA's legislative recommendations.

Sydney's presentation covered the following facets of the RAFT Program:

- Regional Older Adults Facilities Mental Health Support Team (RAFT) is a program of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) Regional Projects Office since 2008. The goal of the program is to provide support to older adults with serious mental illness and dementia with challenging behaviors and to discharge/diverts older adults from state psychiatric hospitals to nursing homes and assisted livings.
- RAFT contracts with long-term care communities, provides intensive mental health services, supports training needs to community staff, and accepts consultations from communities
- RAFT serves residents of the northern Virginia area: City of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties who are 65 and up with serious mental illness diagnosis or dementia with challenging behaviors who are at risk for psychiatric hospitalization.

She also shared about the RAFT Dementia Support Program:

- This is a short-term, free program to support individuals living with dementia and their families through education and support to families and caregivers
- Trained dementia specialists work with families to identify challenges, provide individualized education, connect to resources and services, plan to prevent crisis, and facilitate free respite care in assisted living facilities.
- Respite is provided through two assisted living communities for 2 weeks up to 30 days. There are no income requirements and respite care are determined by level of need and appropriateness of care.
- 269 referrals have been received since the start of the Dementia Support Program, with the highest concentration in Fairfax County. The Community Services Board (CSB) accounts for 15% of total referrals with 4% from local hospitals, 19% from private agencies and 31% from other sources such as friends, family and self-referrals.
- 156 total clients have been served by this program.
- RAFT also provides consultations to professionals, organizations, and community members and training for organizations, community groups, and professional using dementia simulations and the Teepa Snow- Positive Approach to Care Training.

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### Best Practice Award Updates

#### **Tresserlyn Kelly and Dr. Tracey Gendron, *Co-Chairs of Best Practices Awards Committee***

Tresserlyn Kelly, Co-Chair of the Best Practices Awards Committee shared that the 2025 Best Practices Awards have been funded again this year by Dominion Energy in the amount of \$10,000 and AARP Virginia in the amount of \$1,500. With this funding the awards will be as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: \$5,500 (\$5,000- Dominion Energy; \$500-AARP Virginia)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: \$3,500 (\$3,000- Dominion Energy; \$500-AARP Virginia)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: \$2,500 (\$2,000- Dominion Energy; \$500-AARP Virginia)

The Request for Nominations will go live on Friday, January 10, 2025 with a deadline of close of business on Wednesday, February 12, 2025.

After the nomination deadline, Committee members will review and score proposals on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Two members are set to rotate off in June: Tresserlyn Kelly and Cleopatra Kitt. Going into the March and June meetings, members should think about if they have an interest in joining the committee.

Carla Hesseltine, Chair reiterated to members about the importance of the work of the Best Practices Committee and encouraged members to think about joining the committee.

### **Presentation: Civil Monetary Penalty Fund & Nursing Facility Quality Improvement Program**

#### **Courtney Richter, *Nursing Facility Quality Supervisor, DMAS***

Carla Hesseltine, Chair introduced Courtney Richter, Nursing and Quality Supervisor with the Department for Medical Assistance Services (DMAS).

In her presentation, she highlighted the following programs and initiatives from Civil Money Penalty Reinvestment Program (CMPRP):

- CMPRP reinvests penalties assessed on noncompliant nursing facilities back into facilities through projects that directly improve the quality of life and care of residents.
- DMAS oversees the Virginia program and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) make the final funding determination.
- This fund maintains \$1 million for the relocation of Nursing Facility Residents in the event of voluntary or involuntary closings.
- Projects can be in one of four categories: Resident or Family Council, Training to Improve Quality of Care, Activities to Improve Quality of Life, and Consumer Information.
- Since the programs inception in 2018, \$7.7 million has been reinvested, 33 unique projects funded and over 75% of nursing facilities have participated
- CMPRP's anticipated timeline begins with application opening in January, DMAS reviews in February, CMS reviews in March and April, contracting with approved projects in May and projects beginning in June.

She then highlighted the Nursing Facility Quality Improvement Program (NFQIP):

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- In 2022, the Virginia General Assembly directed DMAS to design and implement a quality improvement program to address capacity building. An environmental scan was performed and framework defined and revised based on CMS-initiated program changes.
- State Agency Projects allows training as only allowable category, a cap of \$300 per nursing facility per training. Nursing facilities may apply to conduct multiple trainings and letters of support are not required. Materials must also be completed in advance.
- In order to quickly roll out the trainings, an interagency agreement with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Department of Gerontology was established. A series of applications were drafted to CMS for use of CMP Reinvestment funds and the first application has been approved and started January 1, 2025.
- The tentative topics are:
  - Application 1: Person-Centered Trauma-Informed Care
  - Application 2: Unlearning Dementia Care
  - Application 3: Dementia Certification
  - Application 4: Technical Assistance
  - Application 5: Ethical Decision Making

### **Announcements, Regulatory Update and Future Meetings**

#### **Charlotte Arbogast, Sara Stowe, Carla Hesseltime**

Council staff Charlotte Arbogast provided an update on recent regulatory activities. In reviewing the handout, she focused on the highlighted items.

### **Member Updates**

#### **Carla Hesseltime**

Chair Carla Hesseltime opened the floor for any updates from members.

Ron Boyd shared updates from V4A. He noted that plans are underway for the Virginia Governor's Conference on Aging to be held on May 19-20, 2025 in Williamsburg, VA, and that Older Adult Advocacy Day will be held on February 5, 2025. Ron will share once patrons have been finalized in the request for additional AAA funding legislation.

Andy Buck shared that Paige Wilson offered to coordinate efforts with CCOA Members who may be interested in attending the Older Adult Advocacy Day on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

Sara Stowe shared with members that the Financial Disclosure Statements have been emailed out to Council members. Members are expected to complete the Financial Disclosure Statement annually and is due by February 1, 2025. If it is not completed, the Commissioner can face a fine of \$250 per member. Jo-Ann Chase requested the email be resent. Carla Hesseltime asked if the email could be resent to all members as a reminder.

### **Public Comment Period**

#### **Carla Hesseltime**

Chair Carla Hesseltime opened the floor for public comment. Sara Stowe shared that Carol Paquette representing the Virginia Villages Collective signed up to speak. Carla shared that public commenters have 2 minutes and 30 seconds to make their comment.

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Carol Paquette shared a slight correction that the Villages legislative mentioned in the Legislative and Budget section of the agenda is being supported by the Virginia Villages Collective and not the Village-to-Village Network.

Dr. Andy Buck apologized for the mix-up and thanked Carol for providing updates on the legislation. Carla Hesseltine thanked Carol for her comment.

**Meeting Adjournment**

**Carla Hesseltine**

In wrapping up the meeting, Carla Hesseltine noted that the next meeting will be March 12, 2025 from 10am-2pm.

Having completed the meeting agenda, Carla Hesseltine adjourned the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

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**Meeting Handouts:**

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda for January 7, 2025
2. Draft Meeting Minutes for September 30, 2024
3. Overview of Virginia State Legislative Information System Presentation
4. Review User Training NEW LIS and LIAB Presentation
5. Summary Pending Legislation
6. How to Talk to Legislators Handout
7. Membership List and Elected Officials
8. 2025 CCOA Legislative Recommendations
9. RAFT Overview Presentation
10. RAFT Dementia Support Program Brochure
11. Best Practices Awards Nomination Instructions
12. Best Practices Awards Nomination Form
13. Best Practice Awards Timeline
14. DMAS CMP and NFQIP Presentation
15. Regulation Update
16. Financial Disclosure Form