

**Commonwealth Council on Aging
FINAL MINUTES**

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

**March 12, 2025
10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

Quarterly Meeting

Members Present: In-Person: Dr. Andrea Buck, Tresserlyn Kelly, Carla Hesseltine, Josh Myers, Senator Christopher Head, Ellen Nau, Paige Wilson, Roland Winston, Tracey Gendron, Yolanda Stevens, Kathryn Hayfield (Ex-Officio), Tara Ragland (Ex-Officio), Courtney Richter (Ex-Officio) and Ron Boyd (Ex-Officio); Via Zoom: Jo-Ann Chase and Amy Duncan

Members Absent: Cleopatra Kitt, Delegate Patrick Hope, and Paige Wilson

Guests & Presenters: In-Person: Steve Zollos; Via Zoom: Ron Hess, Dana Parsons, Erica Wood, Carol Paquette

Staff Present: In-Person: Sara Stowe, Joani Latimer, Charlotte Arbogast, Matt Jones, Catherine Harrison; Via Zoom: George Worthington

Welcome and Member Introductions

Carla Hesseltine, Chair

Chair Carla Hesseltine called the meeting to order at 10:03 am and welcomed members, guests, staff, and presenters.

Carla Hesseltine reminded members that Council meetings are 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 joined the meeting via Zoom as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): Jo-Ann Chase joined electronically via the caregiving provision, and Amy Duncan joined electronically due to the 60+ miles distance provision.

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

Review Proposed Agenda

Chair Carla Hesseltine

Proposed Action: Approve Proposed Agenda

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Chair Carla Hesselstine presented the proposed agenda. Dr. Andrea Buck 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

Sara Stowe presented the January 7, 2025 meeting minutes for approval. She stated that the minutes had been provided to members and for the public and are posted on the Council's webpage. Senator Christopher Head made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ellen Nau seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment Period

Carla Hesselstine

Sara Stowe reported that there were no public comments.

DARS Agency Update & Welcome Deputy Commissioner

Kathy Hayfield, Commissioner

Commissioner Kathy Hayfield welcomed members and guests and presented an update on DARS. She began with an update regarding federal level funding stating that the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) is 80% federally funded. The Vocational Rehabilitation program makes up a large portion of that which is provided through the U.S. Department of Education. The Older Americans Act (OAA) also makes up a large part and is provided through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and within that, the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Currently concerns are less focused on these funding sources, but more on the discretionary funding sources, like grants. The Continuing Resolution (CR) is set to end this Friday, 3/14 and the agency is watching closely to see if another CR will be passed. At this time, the House has passed its CR with the Senate vote scheduled for Friday, 3/14. In addition, federal agency submissions for workforce reduction programs are due on Thursday, 3/13.

She shared some highlights from the 2025 General Assembly Session. The House of Delegates and Senate passed their joint budgets and have submitted those to the Governor. Medicaid is being watched very closely due to the potential federal impacts. If Medicaid's budget is reduced by 10% then Medicaid expansion in Virginia would end. This is related to a funding threshold needed to fund Medicaid expansion.

She shared that during this time of change, it is important for DARS not to work in silos, focus on our mission and work on being nimble.

She then asked for thoughts from Council members. Roland Winston asked about if we had a mechanism for reallocating funding based on potential federal cuts and asked if it was typical for an agency such as DARS to operate with 80% federal funding in other states. Commissioner Hayfield replied that she believed that to be the case based on the funding sources. Jo-Ann Chase shared that the federal cuts are about cutting out waste and was hopeful that the impacts to older Virginians will be minimal. She asked about how the Council may be able to help advocate for

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the protection of these programs. Dr. Andrea Buck shared that agencies could benefit from being proactive and seeing where they can make cuts and reorganize proactively. Commissioner Hayfield shared that Governor Youngkin's directive has been to be more efficient and that proactivity has been ongoing.

DARS Division for Aging Services Update

Matt Jones, Director of Aging Programs

Matt Jones, Director of Aging Program, thanked the Council for having him and shared that he was filling in for Deputy Commissioner, Kiersten Ware, who is attending the 2025 Title VI Training and Technical Assistance Conference in which this provision provides services to older American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

The Division of Aging Services (DAS) has two staffing updates: 1) NWD Director position is currently in the interviewing process and hoping to make an offer very soon, and 2) the DAS External Auditor is retiring. Hiring will begin soon for that position.

Matt shared that a new two-way SharePoint portal has been created for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and DAS to share and update documents in real time. Work is underway for revamping the monitoring tools for oversight of AAAs. Internal DAS sessions begin this week for updating DAS' policies and procedures, Service Standards, and other documents to align with the OAA Final Rule.

Matt Jones shared a federal update that DARS is anxiously awaiting the Senate vote on Friday, March 14th. Aging Services funding remains level through March 14th, 2025. State funding has passed the House and Senate and are now awaiting the Governor's signature or his edits. The OAA Final Rule work has continued with the DAS internal team hosting monthly AAA Input Sessions to provide updates to AAAs on the work to come into compliance. The drafted State Plan for Aging Services has been approved by the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) and will be available for public comment soon. The tentative date for the State Plan Virtual Public Hearing is April 11th. Charlotte Arbogast will share more about this in her presentation.

The DAS team is putting the finishing touches on the updated Area Plan template for the AAAs. Revisions have streamlined the document including a more user-friendly version of the template. DAS will be hosting training sessions broken down by sections of the documents and office hours for technical assistance beginning mid-April.

He also shared that a new dementia screening tool will be added to the client screen in PeerPlace. Two memory questions will lead the user to the dementia screening tool if they answer "yes" to either question. These questions will be used for information and referral by Care Coordinators and Options Counselors in all AAAs. DAS is hopeful the projects will be rolled out by the end of May or June.

In addition, he reported that Senior Cool Care's anticipated start date is May 1, 2025. This program provides fans and window air conditioning units to older Virginians in need. Currently, DAS is awaiting the Notice of Award from Dominion Energy to determine the award amounts for the AAAs.

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Lastly, he highlighted that the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program (VLRVP) is still completing vouchers for 2024, as of today, a total of \$24,507.64 which is an additional \$23,935.65 since our last report. In 2025, the VLRVP has received 231 applications for vouchers. To date, 51 caregivers have been reimbursed for a total of \$25,590.90. Kamryn, the Lifespan Respite Grant Coordinator.

Presentation: Older Americans Act (OAA) New Regulations and Virginia State Plan for Aging Amendments

Charlotte Arbogast, Senior Policy Analyst

(Presentation and Handout)

Chair Carla Hesseltine welcomed Charlotte Arbogast, Senior Policy Analyst with Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and previous Council Staff to share about the OAA Final Rule and amendments to the State Plan for Aging Services.

OAA Final Rule

Charlotte Arbogast began the presentation with background and overview of the OAA) including the initial federal OAA regulations issuance in 1988 and most recently the update to the OAA regulations in 2024. During that same time period, the OAA was reauthorized a number of times in Congress. Charlotte shared a timeline of expected activities leading to the OAA Final Rule compliance deadline of October 1, 2025 and a Correction Action Plan (CAP) process following that date. DARS is continuing to analyze the impacts and engage in activities related to the implementation of the OAA Final Rule.

Charlotte Arbogast provided outlined a high-level overview of key changes that ACL made to the regulations through the OAA Final Rule.

Charlotte Arbogast also shared products that are expected to be impacted by regulatory changes of the OAA Final Rule. The DAS internal team has been working to identify the levels of difficulties in implementation based on items that require DAS internal implementation, straightforward implementations or may require a CAP for a more robust implementation.

Draft Amended State Plan for Aging Services

The second part of Charlotte Arbogast's presentation is focused on the State Plan for Aging Services. DARS is hoping to avoid a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for this portion of the OAA Final Rule. ACL issued new State Plan Guidance in January and to avoid a CAP, State Units on Aging (SUAs) must submit draft amended State Plans to ACL this summer.

Charlotte Arbogast shared the current anticipated timeline, in which the Amended State Plan has been submitted on Town Hall and in April, the 30-day Public Comment Period and Virtual Public Hearing will begin. She then provided an overview of the amendments made to the State Plan, which are mostly focused in Attachment B.

Charlotte Arbogast shared with the Council members how they may get involved. The first way by reviewing the draft amended State Plan, attending the virtual public hearing, and commenting online or by email. The Draft Amended State Plan is now online at the DARS website and the

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Town Hall website. The Virtual Public Hearing is scheduled for April 11th, and the Public Comment period is formally open from March 24-April 23.

Charlotte concluded her presentation and asked if members had any questions. Members had no questions.

Best Practices Committee Update: 2025 Winners Tresserlyn Kelly, Committee Co-Chair- (Handout)

Carla Hesseltine, Chair, stated that before we move into the Best Practices Awards update, she wanted to recognize our members who are rotating off of the Council this year. Amy Duncan and Dr. Cleopatra Kitt are set to rotate off of the Council as well as Tresserlyn Kelly. Tresserlyn has served two terms and is not eligible to be reappointed. Carla Hesseltine thanked Tresserlyn Kelly for her work and contributions to the Council over the last 8 years and presented her with a certificate. Tresserlyn Kelly thanked Carla Hesseltine and the Council.

Committee Co-Chair Tresserlyn Kelly provided an update on the 2025 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):** Fellowship Fresh of Fellowship Square in Reston, VA
- **SECOND PLACE AWARD (\$3,500):** The Beat Goes On: A Community Choir with the Engagement Center for Creative Aging (ECCA) in Blacksburg, VA
- **THIRD PLACE AWARD (\$2,500):** Virginia HEAR—Helping Elders Access Resources- Elder Justice and Ageism Program with Virginia Center on Aging, VCU Gerontology, and Virginia Commonwealth University with a statewide impact.
- The following programs also received honorable mentions:
 - Safety and Wellness for Independent Living of LOWLINC
 - AGE (Advocacy and Generational Equity) Program with Peninsula Area Agency on Aging and Christopher Newport University

Meet Me: Community Outings with Insight Memory Care Center Tresserlyn Kelly 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.

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

- Prepared and issue a press release to highlight the 2025 awards.
- Issue the award winners their monetary awards.
- Mail out certificates for the honorable mentions.

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- Plan & attend Best Practices Awards Ceremonies for the three winning programs.
- 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.

She encouraged Council members to be on the lookout for the upcoming webinar date. Members interested in attending on-site ceremonies were encouraged to reach out to Sara Stowe.

Budget & Legislative Updates (Handout)

Dr. Andrea Buck, Legislative Committee Chair

Legislative Committee Chair Andrea Buck deferred to Senator Christopher Head to share his updates from the General Assembly to start. Senator Head shared his sentiments that Virginia is one of the most efficient General Assemblies in the nation, with very short sessions in comparison to other states. He shared that the State Budget is always of particular importance, but a bigger deal when it is presented with a two-billion dollar surplus. General Assembly legislators received over \$30 billion in budget requests in 2025. Senator Head shared that unlike the Federal government, the Virginia’s government cannot operate without an approved budget, so this is always an important step.

Senator Head shared legislation he worked on with the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) and CCOA ex-officio member, Tara Ragland. Tara shared about the provisional licenses for assisted living facilities (ALF) legislation and that the legislation almost failed due to language concerns, but Senator Head helped to rectify the language and it moved forward.

Senator Head shared advice to Council members to start advocating now and to focus on legislators who may not be as familiar with aging services. Senator Head stated that he knows the issues within aging and he used the example of the \$12.41 minimum wage not being a livable wage especially for our direct care workforce. He also mentioned that we need to focus in on those who are disproportionately affected and in greatest need. Andrea Buck thanked Senator Head for his update and insights.

Legislative Committee Chair Andrea Buck provided an overview of the Council’s 2025 Legislative Priorities and the 2025 General Assembly Session. She pointed members to the review the handout of CCOA Legislative Priorities. On April 8th, the Legislative Committee will meet to discuss stakeholders’ successes from 2025 and if they have priorities for 2026. This will be an opportunity for stakeholders to find alignment on priorities so the various groups can all work together.

Andrea Buck shared some legislation that did not pass in 2025 of the CCOA priorities; this included the Lifespan Respite program, the multisectoral plan for aging, increase in the personal needs allowance, and legislation related to the nursing homeowner transparency.

Andrea Buck shared a vision for where the Council can focus efforts in the future, such as utilizing public/private partnerships. She shared that an increased focus on mobilizing and members taking a leadership role in addition to contacting legislators in the summer and fall months. Particularly focusing on budget amendments in the summer. Andrea then asked

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members to go around the room and share topics of particular interest. Among the topics members mentioned were:

- Long-term care workforce issues
- Increased support and staffing for licensing inspections and monitoring
- Funding for the Virginia Memory Project
- Training for first responders on dementia
- Funding for the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)
- Funding for the Lifespan Respite Program
- Support to help prevent older adults homelessness
- Aging in place efforts
- Support for the rights of LGBTQ elders
- Support for caregivers
- Funding for Regional Older Adult Facility Team (RAFT)
- Funding for home modifications

Andrea Buck thanked the members for their insights.

Working Lunch: Presentation: State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Overview

Joani Latimer, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Chair Carla Hesseltine introduced Joani Latimer, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman with DARS. Joani Latimer began her presentation with sharing about the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program where the mission is to serve as an advocate for basic rights, dignity, quality of care and quality of life, and to give a voice to recipient's concerns. Joani shared a case study of man who has received long-term care ombudsman services and the lesser-known cases that are not related to abuse or neglect, but related to the individual's quality of life.

Joani Latimer shared information on the following topics:

- The extent of elder abuse, mistreatment and neglect
- Headlines of local articles related to elder abuse, mistreatment and neglect
- Recent reports, cases, and findings from federal government sources
- The impact of COVID-19 on nursing facility quality
- The laws governing nursing facility quality
- Barriers to nursing facility residents speaking out
- Federal and State program authority
- Responsibilities of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- Prevention of elder abuse, mistreatment, and neglect
- Structure of Virginia's Long-Term Care Ombudsman program
- Nursing facility and assisted living most common compliant types

Joani Latimer provided a call to action to support the LTC Ombudsman program. She shared that they are stretched thin and local ombudsman salaries are low due to funding constraints. At the end of the presentation, Council members asked Joani Latimer a number of follow-up questions.

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Identify Nomination Committee Members

(Handout)

Carla Hesselstine & Sara Stowe

Chair Carla Hesselstine shared about the need to form a Nominating Committee so a slate of officers can be presented at the summer meeting. The Chair and Vice-Chair are two-year terms or until successors are elected by the Council. Elected Officers may succeed themselves once, provided that such succession is consistent with the term of appointment to the Council. The Nominating Committee, per the bylaws, is to be comprised of five members. The Chair appoints two members and three are elected by the majority.

Carla Hesselstine named two members: Roland Winston, who served as Chair of the Nominating Committee in 2023, and Andrea Buck. The remaining three slots were filled by volunteers: Jo-Ann Chase, Ellen Nau, and Tresserlyn Kelly. Tracey Gendron made the motion to approve the Nominating Committee members as: Roland Winston, Andrea Buck, Jo-Ann Chase, Ellen Nau, and Tresserlyn Kelly. Josh Myers made a second motion and was approved by a majority of the members.

CCOA Committee Assignments

Carla Hesselstine

(Handout)

Chair Carla Hesselstine proceeded with the next order of business of CCOA Committee Assignments. CCOA has three standing committees: Best Practices Awards, Legislative, and Executive. This meeting was intended to confirm meeting assignments for the Best Practices and Legislative with the Executive Committee assignments being confirmed at the annual meeting this summer.

Beginning with the Legislative Committee, this Committee helps to shape the Council's legislative priorities, track legislation and budget items, and they support coordination efforts on the Legislative Recommendations over the summer, fall, and into the General Assembly Session. Sara Stowe named the current members and confirmed that all members would like to remain on the committee, therefore no open slots are available. The Legislative Committee members put forward were: Josh Myers, Ellen Nau, Jo-Ann Chase, Roland Winston, and Andrea Buck, Legislative Chair. This was approved via unanimous consensus.

Carla Hesselstine then turned to the Best Practices Awards Committee which has five members: three are Council members, and two are representatives from the Virginia Center on Aging. Paige Wilson was not in attendance but expressed previous interest in continuing to serve on the committee, Cleopatra Kitt and Tresserlyn Kelly are set to off. Carla Hesselstine asked the members for volunteers. No members volunteered. Carla asked what we do if we cannot fill the slots, the members agreed to revisit this at the next meeting.

Announcements

Carla Hesselstine

Chair Carla Hesselstine asked for a V4A update from Ron Boyd. Ron shared that the Virginia Governor's Conference on Aging (VGCOA) early bird registration pricing closes Friday, March 21st. The VGCOA is being hosting in Colonial Williamsburg. He also noted that the Southeastern

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Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) is also being hosted in Colonial Williamsburg in 2026.

Charlotte Arbogast offered regulatory updates. Key actions were highlighted in her handout for the meeting and these were reviewed with members during her update.

Carla Hesseltine asked for any Council member announcements. Tresserlyn Kelly shared that Valerie Price recently passed who was a former CCOA member. She asked the Council to keep the Price family in their thoughts and prayers.

Carla Hesseltine reminded members that the next Council meeting is scheduled for June 18, but given the timing of the Legislative Committee on June 26th, the Council leadership and staff still wanted to ensure the Council has time to vote on our legislative priorities at the summer meeting. Carla shared the new potential dates for the Council meeting and stated that Sara Stowe will send a survey with the potential date.

Carla Hesseltine review the expected agenda items for the next meeting:

- Welcome new members to the Council
- Bylaws revisions for approval
- A Legislative/General Assembly update
- A review of and potential approval of the Legislative Committee's 2026 Legislative Recommendations
- Update on the 2025 Best Practices Awards ceremonies and webinar
- 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 Sara Stowe know if they have any suggestions or questions.

Public Comment Period

Carla Hesseltine

Sara Stowe reported that there were no public comments.

Meeting Adjournment

Carla Hesseltine, Chair

Chair Hesseltine adjourned the meeting at 1:52p.m.

Members Participating Electronically:

- Jo-Ann Chase: Caregiving provision, Brambleton, VA
- Amy Duncan: 60+ miles provision, Bristol, VA

Meeting Handouts:

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1. Proposed Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes for January 7, 2025
3. OAA Final Rule Presentation
 - a. Amended State Plan for Aging Services Flyer
4. 2025 Best Practices Awards Summary of Winners and Honorable Mentions
5. Legislative Priorities Summary Update
 - a. Joint Conference 2025 Budget Highlights
6. State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Presentation Slides
7. Nominating Committee Handout
8. CCOA Committee List
9. CCOA Regulatory Update