

Virginia Brain Injury Council

April 26, 2024, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

DRAFT MINUTES

In-person at Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Central Office
8004 Franklin Farms Drive Henrico, VA 23229

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Puglia, Chair
Kara Beatty, Vice Chair
Patrik Sandas, Secretary
Cara Meixner, Immediate Past Chair (virtually, personal reason)
Maria Altonen
Ann Bevan
Gayl Brunk
Kristen Galles
Deborah Johnson
Amol Karmarkar
Kevin Koziol
Kelly Lang
Elizabeth Horn
Christiane Miller
Teri Morgan
Susan Moon
Derek O'Neal
John Reynolds
Nicholas Rudisill
Erika Sisson
Maria Stransky (virtually, personal reason)
Amber Walter
Linda Wilkinson
George Worthington
Jason Young

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Steven Nape
Joani Latimer

DARS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Donna Cantrell, DARS, Staff to Council
Marcia DuBois, DARS, Deputy Commissioner, Division for Community Living
Carolyn Turner, Director, Disability Programs
Betsy Civilette, DARS Director of Communications

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

Liz Wilson, Brain Injury Association of Virginia

OTHERS OBSERVING VIRTUALLY:

Kathy Stumm, Family Caregiver

Nichole Davis

Estella Obi-Tabot, Joint Commission of Health Care

Steve (last name not available)

Welcome and Introductions of Members Present

Mike welcome everyone and Donna verified that a Quorum was physically present.

Mike asked members to introduce themselves for 2 new members: Linda Wilkinson (Interim Chair of the Brain Injury Association of Virginia) and Ann Bevan (the new member representing the Department of Medical Assistance Services/DMAS).

Two (2) members participated virtually and members present did not object to their full participation in the meeting. Members participating virtually were:

- Cara Meixner - personal reason
- Maria Stransky - personal reason

Rescinding Council Action Extending Member Terms

Chris acknowledged that after a review of the Bylaws by DARS policy staff, the decision voted on at the January meeting extending member terms was not allowed.

This means Nick Rudisill has completed his second and final term per the Bylaws and is not eligible to continue as a Council member. Mike thanked Nick for his 6-years of service and valuable contributions to the Council and presented him a certificate commemorating his membership.

Amber Walter and Kelly Lang both completed their first three-year terms in March. Had the Council presented a slate in January, they were eligible to be appointed to second terms. Both have indicated that they would like to continue to serve if appointed to a second term.

Appointments to Orientation Planning Committee and Housing Workgroup

The current bylaws allow the Chair to appoint non-Council members to ad hoc Committees. Mike appointed Amber Walter to the Orientation Planning Committee and Kelly Lang to the Housing Workgroup and the State Plan Input Committee.

Review Proposed Agenda

DRAFT Agenda was approved by consensus.

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

Prior to approving the January meeting Minutes, Kristen objected to the fact that in practice the staff had required that proposed new business be submitted more than a month in advance of the council meeting (even further in advance than the general

public must submit public comments). She also objected to the requirement that the executive committee approve the proposed new business before allowing its discussion at the council meeting. She noted that these requirements were different from what the staff presented at the January meeting as merely a request to give staff time to prepare for the new agenda item. She believed that as applied, the new requirements eliminated, in practice, the “new business” agenda item that the council had voted to add in July, 2023. Kristen expressed that the original vote should stand and that a new vote would be required to substantively change or eliminate the ability of council members to raise new business at the council meetings.

After discussion of what was decided at the January meeting, Gayl Brunk made a motion to table the approval of the January Meeting Minutes until the July meeting, allowing time for the January meeting recording to be reviewed to see what was discussed. Derek O’Neal seconded the motion. Members present and eligible to vote approved the motion, with Ann Bevan abstaining. The Minutes were tabled until the July meeting. Donna will review the meeting recording and provide a transcript of the discussion.

Mike noted that following the January meeting, he received a request from a member to make Council-member’s personal stories part of the agenda. After discussion, the Executive Committee agreed that personal stories are important but that there may be other opportunities aside from Quarterly Business meetings for them to share. For example, the Orientation Planning Committee is considering how to incorporate stories into the Orientation process, and Council may choose to invite personal stories from members as specific topics come up on the agenda. One suggestion to choose 2-3 members to do quick shares at set points during meeting, might be one option to be considered at future discussions.

Public Comment Period

Kathy Stumm asked to make Public Comment. Ms. Stumm began by giving some background related to her advocacy for her brother Tom, who is a Virginia resident currently living in the Virginia Home. She acknowledged the great amount of substantive work Council achieved over the past quarter. She expressed some frustration with the 3-minute time limit on public comment and that the Meeting Materials were not posted to the public website until the day before, which did not allow her to written comments, as requested. She also noted that records from other past meetings were not complete and needed to be reviewed.

Ms. Stumm agreed that New Business is an important part of meetings and that it should be included in all agendas. She noted that she’s spoken at several past meetings and made numerous calls to the Secretary’s Office and has yet to receive a response from DARS or the Secretary’s Office.

Ms. Stumm encouraged members to reach out to the Joint Commission on Health Care, to Senator Ghazala Hashmi, and to the staff person at the Commission who is studying barriers to brain injury services in Virginia. Ms. Stumm has extensive experience navigating the system on behalf of her brother and knows a great deal about working within the system in Virginia as it relates to housing. She noted that she might be a

good resource for the Housing Workgroup, should that committee continue in the future.

Ms. Stumm very much appreciates the good work Council has done and will submit written comment following the meeting related to the individual items on the Agenda and their respective written materials. Mike thanked her and noted that staff will share her written comments with members.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Housing Workgroup Report

Kelly Lang, Chair of the Housing Workgroup, explained that the Housing Workgroup began in 2021, as a result of the 2021 Priorities Letter. The Workgroup acknowledged that housing is an extremely complex issue that requires many partners and supportive services and is an area that needs further consideration. Kelly reviewed the findings and recommendations that would be shared with DARS' leadership and other agencies as appropriate. This report will be shared with the DARS' Commissioner. Council members are free to share it within their own agencies and networks. The Workgroup's final report is Attachment A.

Several members expressed their appreciation for the depth and breadth of the Report and discussed issues around funding. It was suggested that grants could be a source of funding for some of the recommendations and that the report should be shared with the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI) Advisory Board to make them aware of the issue. At the request of the Council, DARS staff will report back on any further action taken.

Ann Bevan serves on the Interagency Housing Workgroup and offered to share the report with them and discuss ways to share data that could support the Council housing related recommendations. Council members accepted her offer. Council also asked that staff report back with any feedback from the DARS' Commissioner after she receives the report.

Council took a short break.

Funds Dissemination Committee Recommendations

Mike Puglia, Chair of the Committee, noted that the 2024 Virginia General Assembly appropriated new funding for brain injury services in Virginia. The final amount of the funding is still unknown as the General Assembly continues work on the budget. Mike presented the recommendations for dissemination of new funds (included in Attachment B.) Gayl noted that the item 314 1c and 2c were reversed and should be corrected for the record.

The committee recommended supporting the formula for workforce retention funds developed by the Alliance of Virginia Brain Injury Providers and the Brain Injury Association of Virginia. If the amount of these funds is changed from the original amount, the committee supports the formula developed by the Alliance and BIAV, if all members agree.

The committee recommends that funds for expansion first provide funding for the eight unserved counties. They recommend that any funds remaining be distributed according to a plan developed by the Alliance and BIAV, as long as all members agree.

Deborah Johnson made a motion to approve the Funds Dissemination Committee recommendations; Kristen Galles seconded. The Motion passed with all members voting to approve the recommendations, with Linda Wilkinson and Jason Young abstaining. Recommendations will be shared with the Commissioner of DARS.

Priorities Committee Recommendations

Jason Young, Chair of this Committee, reported on Committee discussions and proposed recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2025 Council Priorities. He noted that there are more priorities that remain on the list of important projects, but the Committee decided to focus on four areas that were achievable in the coming year. The recommendations include:

1. Increase Council understanding of the availability of behavioral health services for people living with brain injury.
2. Bring awareness to the benefits of and barriers to Cognitive Rehabilitation for people living with brain injury.
3. Learn more about the needs and current services for youth living with brain injuries.
4. Increased Neurobehavioral Services and/or Medicaid Waiver funding for services for people living with brain injury.

The Committee also wanted to support the recommendations that the Council's Housing Workgroup included in its report to the Council. Council members agreed that the Housing recommendations be included fully as a priority.

Derek O'Neal made a motion that the priorities recommendations be approved, adding support for the Housing Workgroup report as a fifth recommendation. Linda Wilkinson seconded. All members present voted to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Priorities. Revised Priorities including this change can be found in Attachment C.

Council took a short break.

Council Membership Proposal

DARS presented a revised Council membership structure to bring that meets ACL requirements for both 50% of members being individuals with lived experience and incorporating specific organizations that 1) ACL requires and 2) that Council feels are important to have a seat at the table. Members representing organizations that are not specifically required by ACL will become Ex-Officio members.

Chris reviewed the structure and asked Council to endorse the DARS plan, noting that nothing will officially change until the Bylaws have been amended and approved. Kara Beatty made a motion to approve the proposed structure; Linda seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The approved membership structure can be found in Attachment D.

Bylaws Committee Appointments

Mike Puglia noted that several items in the Bylaws need to be updated, based on recent Council votes and discussions: Membership structure, committee appointment and reporting schedules, and potentially information related to nominations and elections timelines and terms.

Mike noted that the Bylaws Committee will need to meet several times over the next quarter to make and finalize revisions, providing them a minimum of 10 days prior to the July meeting for approval.

Mike asked for volunteers to serve on this Committee. Patrik Sandas (Chair), Kristen Galles, John Reynolds, and Derek O'Neal volunteered. Donna will convene this group within the next 2-3 weeks.

Orientation Planning Committee Report

On behalf Committee Chair, Steven Nape, Amber Walter briefly summarized the Committee's work over the past 6 months. A summary of this work is attached as Attachment E. Members are encouraged to offer their feedback/input as they are comfortable doing, by emailing Donna directly or by responding to the post-meeting survey that will follow this meeting.

Director's Report

Chris Miller, Director of Brain Injury Services, provided a written summary ahead of the meeting, describing activities related to brain injury services in Virginia (attachment F).

Closing Protocol

Mike thanked members for their participation in the meeting and reminded them that if they have New Business, they would like to have the Executive Committee consider for the July meeting, to submit those topics by May 31st.

Mike reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Friday, July 26, 2024, but after that, the regular meeting schedule changes to Thursday afternoons at 12:30 p.m. Members voted to have the July, 2024 meeting be virtual.

Deborah Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Derek O'Neal seconded this and the meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

Adjourn

NEXT MEETING: Friday, July 26, 2024
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Virtual

REMINDER: The October Quarterly meeting moves to Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. through 3:30 p.m.

The October meeting date is: Wednesday, October 23, 2024.

Housing Workgroup Report 2024 can be found in a separate Attachment A.

**Virginia Brain Injury Council
Funds Dissemination Committee Recommendations
For State Fiscal Year 2025**

Attachment B

A 2006 General Assembly budget amendment requires the Department of Rehabilitative Services consider the recommendations of the Virginia Brain Injury Council when allocating new funds for brain injury services. Recommendations must meet any requirements established by the General Assembly in appropriating the funds.

The General Assembly appropriated two new sets of funding for brain injury in its budget during the 2024 session. In the Governor's amended budget returned to the General Assembly, these amounts were cut. Currently, the General Assembly is reviewing the budget.

The Funds Dissemination Committee reviewed the General Assembly appropriation language and the Alliance and BIAV recommendations for the use of the funding at the full level. With this information they were able to develop a set of recommendations that can be used regardless of the final appropriations.

1. Item 314 #1c

Provides \$775,000 each year from the general fund for workforce retention to ensure quality accessible services for people living with brain injury. This funding will support currently existing state contracted brain injury service providers.

NOTE: The amended budget, still under consideration, reduces this funding to \$300,000.

The Alliance and BIAV recommend a three-tiered system in which organizations with smaller state contracts would receive a larger percentage increase as indicated in the table below.

Current State Funding	Percentage increase in current contract amounts	Providers
Providers receiving more than \$2M	9%	Brain Injury Services
Providers receiving \$1 - \$2M	10%	Brain Injury Solutions Community Brain Injury Services
Providers receiving less than \$1M	12.65%	Eggleston BridgeLine No Limits Eastern Shore Virginia Supportive Housing Brain Injury Association of Virginia Brain Injury Connections of the Shenandoah Valley

Recommendation: Endorse the three-tiered allocation system developed by the Alliance and BIAV. The final percentages should be determined and approved by all Alliance members and BIAV.

Item 2: Item 314 #2c

Provides \$1.875 million each year from the general fund to strengthen and expand the existing state contracted safety net brain injury services system by increasing the numbers of case managers, clubhouse staff, clinical professional staff and/or program support staff.

A portion of the allocation may be used to support development of new safety net services in unserved areas of the state.

NOTE: The amended budget, still under consideration, reduces this funding to \$1,300,000.

The Alliance and BIAV recommended that of this funding:

- \$220,000 be used to provide Case Management in the eight unserved counties to assure that the entire Commonwealth has access to brain injury services. The distribution is included in the table below.

BridgeLine	\$ 95,000	add 3 counties – Nottoway, Prince Edward, Cumberland
Community Brain Injury Services	\$ 30,000	add 1 county - Essex
Eggleston	\$ 95,000	add 4 counties – Sussex, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Greensville
SUBTOTAL	\$220,000	8 new counties

- The remaining \$1,655,000 be distributed among the nine state-funded brain injury providers as outlined in the table below.

Brain Injury Connections of Shenandoah Valley	\$150,000
Brain Injury Services	\$330,000
Brain Injury Solutions	\$285,000
BridgeLine	\$157,500
Eggleston	\$95,000
Community Brain Injury Services	\$257,500
No Limits Eastern Shore	\$140,000
Virginia Supportive Housing	\$90,000
Brain Injury Association of Virginia	\$150,000
TOTAL	\$1,655,000

Recommendation: Distribute what is required to provide Case Management in the eight unserved counties first. Any remaining funds then should be distributed among the nine state-funded brain injury providers using a plan developed and approved by all Alliance members and BIAV.

Purpose of Priorities

The Council's priorities serve several purposes.

- They are a list of what is important to Council as a whole.
- They drive the Council's work and focus over the next fiscal year.
- They are shared with DARS to make DARS aware of Council's interest in these issues.
- They may help inform the Brain Injury State Plan and/or recommendations for the dissemination of new funds.

While the Council's priorities are not a list of recommendations for DARS or a "to-do" list for DARS, the Council may include suggestions for DARS to consider.

Another valuable purpose of Council's priorities is that they inform the individuals, advocates, and state agency representatives on Council. Council members can then take the priorities back to their networks and agencies to inform them and help build partners in building support for what's important for people living with brain injury, their families, and the service network.

2025 Recommended Priorities

These recommendations include the four top areas identified through the survey of Council members and an ongoing priority carried over from previous years.

1. Increase Council understanding of the availability of behavioral health services for people living with brain injury.

In addressing this priority, the following actions are recommended:

- Ask DARS staff to provide an overview of the screening initiative for brain injury in Community Services Boards funded through the federal grant and to share updates on the progress and outcomes.
- Invite a representative from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to share with Council members the mandates of the Community Services Boards and eligibility for services and to learn more about the number of people with brain injury in state hospitals.
- Ask the state-funded brain injury providers to share information about how they connect the people they support with behavioral health services.
- Identify the availability of trauma informed and brain injury informed behavioral health services among private practitioners (those outside the Community Services Board system).

2. Bring awareness to the benefits of and barriers to Cognitive Rehabilitation for people living with brain injury.

In addressing this priority, the following actions are recommended:

- Council members need to have a shared understanding of cognitive rehabilitation including how it is provided, the outcomes of the service, and where it is available in Virginia.
- Council should ask brain injury advocates to research the benefits of an advocacy campaign to increase access to cognitive rehabilitation in Virginia, including a mandate that it be covered by private insurance.

3. Learn more about the needs and current services for youth living with brain injuries.

As a starting point, Council requests that current Council members who work with youth and a pediatric Case Manager identified by the DARS brain injury services staff work together to increase Council members knowledge and understanding of this issue in 2025.

4. Increased Neurobehavioral Services and/or Medicaid Waiver funding for services for people living with brain injury.

Council members as individual advocates, the advocacy network through Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) and the Alliance, and DARS should support and continue to request a brain injury waiver.

5. Support the Housing Workgroup Recommendations

The Council's Housing Workgroup has been meeting for two years and will be sharing the results of their work and recommendations. The Committee feels strongly that these recommendations should be supported by Council and that housing remain an ongoing priority.

In 2022 the Virginia Brain Injury Council approved a membership structure proposed by a committee of Council members with lived experience of brain injury. The Committee was charged with developing a membership structure that would address the Administration for Community Living requirement that all states receiving federal funding through the TBI Act have a Council membership of at least 50% individuals with brain injury.

At that time, DARS BI Unit Director Chris Miller placed emphasis on the membership requirement for people living with brain injury and did not present the other Council representation required by the Administration for Community Living.

Since the Council Retreat in September, 2023, DARS has been reviewing these requirements to assure the agency is meeting its obligations while respecting the considerable work done by the original Committee in developing a Council membership that brings together a variety of perspectives that speak to the needs of people living with brain injury in Virginia and their families.

Revisions to the original membership structure are minimal and respect the decisions made previously including:

- Fifty percent of Council is made up of people living with brain injury
- Family members/Caregivers are important members of a strong Council.
- State agency representatives have a lot to offer to Council through their experiences working with people with brain injury in other systems and as liaisons back to their agencies with information to inform improved services.

A membership structure that DARS believes meets the requirements of the Administration for Community Living, reflects the decisions driving the current structure, and maintains an engaged and effective Council is outlined below.

The membership structure includes the following changes:

- State agency representatives become Ex Officio Members, fully participating in all Council meetings but are non-voting members without term limits. This includes the DARS BI Services Unit Director. The representative of the Virginia Department of Health and DARS' Long Term Care Ombudsman Program remain voting members, as required by the Administration for Community Living.
- Because the Council has a role in advising DARS, the membership structure removes other DARS staff to minimize the effect of having DARS' staff advising DARS. The two Council positions that are impacted by this are the DARS' CIL Director and the DARS' Dementia Coordinator. In response, and in keeping with the Administration for Community Living requirements:
 - Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) will be represented by an appointee from the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living.
 - Aging & Disability Resource Centers will be represented by an appointee from Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging.
- Representatives of licensed healthcare providers and hospital systems have been consolidated into the Administration for Community Living requirement for public and nonprofit private health related organizations.

DARS is asking the current Council membership to endorse the membership structure outlined below and to revise its Bylaws to reflect these changes.

Virginia Brain Injury Council Membership (27 Members)

Representative	Number	Required by ACL	Status
Individuals who have sustained a brain injury/survivor of a brain injury	14	Yes – Minimum 50% of members	Term Limits Appointed
Family Members/Caregivers	3	Yes	Term Limits Appointed
Public and nonprofit private health related organizations	2	Yes	Term Limits Appointed
Injury control programs at the State or local level/State Health Dept	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Center for Independent Living/State Independent Living Council	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Aging & Disability Resource Center	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Protection & Advocacy Agency	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Long Term Care Ombudsman	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
TBI Model Systems	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV)	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits
Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Services Providers (VABISP)	1	Yes	Agency Appointed No Term Limits

Ex Officio Members (Agency Appointed, Non-Voting, No Term Limits)

Dept. of Education
 Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
 Dept of Corrections
 Veteran's Services
 Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
 Dept. of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)
 DARS Brain Injury Services Coordination Unit Director

**Virginia Brain Injury Council
Orientation Committee Report**

April 26, 2024

Attachment E

We are very excited that our sub-committee meetings have been going so well. We've all contributed, and we have had good discussions around all the aspects of New Member Orientation. We have debated many topics and have arrived at what we anticipate will be strong recommendations for an enhanced program.

We have several exciting changes to preview today. Among many other things, we plan to increase involvement and engagement of current members in the new program through things like:

- Member stories.
- Enhanced web resources for members.
- A revised orientation schedule.
- A mentorship program.
- Self-paced learning opportunities.
- Other opportunities for existing members to participate in the orientation process in ways that are comfortable to them and that meet their time constraints.

We have a meeting scheduled with the communication and web team to help us put thoughts/ideas into the formats we would like to propose for the new program. These formats will be compelling and digestible. Our first meeting is scheduled for May 1.

In July, we will have tangible materials to show, and our hope is that everyone will be enthusiastic about our progress and will begin to find meaningful ways to contribute. In addition, we hope the new program and all its features will educate and engage new and existing members. To receive input from the full VBIC membership, we will send out a survey soliciting ideas very soon. Members may also submit their own ideas directly to Donna (Donna.Cantrell@dars.virginia.gov). Thus, everyone will have the opportunity to share their thoughts and contribute as we continue to develop the new program.

Although we are not ready to reveal many details, we have received positive feedback from the Executive Committee, and look forward to receiving feedback from the full VBIC membership.

We encourage you to complete the upcoming survey and share your ideas and thoughts with Donna.

Brain Injury Services Unit Director's Report – April 2024**State Funding for Brain Injury**

You will be hearing more about state funding for brain injury in the recommendations from the Council Funds Dissemination Committee. As of April 19th the General Assembly has decided to work on the state budget and plans to reconvene May 13th for a special session to review the proposed budget with a goal of voting on it May 15th.

Included in the budget approved by the General Assembly and sent to the Governor in March were two appropriations related to brain injury.

- **Item 314 #1c** provides \$775,000 each year for workforce retention for existing state contracted brain injury service providers. The amended budget returned by the Governor reduced this funding to \$300,000.
- **Item 2: Item 314 #2c** provides \$1.875 million each year to increase the numbers of case managers, clubhouse staff, clinical professional staff and/or program support staff among existing state contracted brain injury providers and allows a portion of the allocation to be used for Case Management in the 8 unserved counties in Virginia. The amended budget returned by the Governor reduces this funding to \$1,300,000.

TBI Program Reauthorization Act of 2024

For those of you keeping track, the Reauthorization continues moving forward bill still needs to move through Appropriations. Follow NASHIA or the Brain Injury Association of America to learn about advocacy if you are interested.

Included in the Reauthorization:

- Increase in the TBI State Partnership Program funding (what we refer to as the federal TBI grant) so that all states can receive funding.
- Reduce the match (funds that state must contribute when receiving this grant) required for the federal TBI grant from 50% to 25%.
- Federally designate brain injury as a chronic condition which will open doors to increased resources.
- Expand the definition of brain injury covered by the Act from Traumatic to Acquired brain injuries. This means those who incurred their brain injury through an internal cause would be eligible as well.
- Fund the National Concussion Surveillance System (NCSS) which would help to better track injury to student athletes among others.
- Funding for Protection & Advocacy program (like the disAbility Center of Virginia where Council member Elizabeth Horn works).

- Expand the number of TBI Model systems (like the one here at Virginia Commonwealth University where Council member Amol Karmarkar works) and the data and statistical centers for all TBI Model Systems.

State Fiscal Year 2023 Brain Injury Annual Report

The 2023 Brain Injury Annual Report was approved and published several months ago. You can read the report here: <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2024/RD117/PDF>. We will start work collecting information for the 2024 report in August of this year. This report on the number of individuals served is required annually.

DARS Podcast: Olivia from the Fredericksburg Day Support Program of Brain Injury Services

DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Division has a podcast related to people's journeys towards employment. In March, they featured Olivia Zerbinati, who shares her experiences and the services she's receiving to enhance her capacity to work through Brain Injury Services in Fredericksburg. On the podcast with Olivia is the Program Manager Zachary Daniel. Zach has done a phenomenal job creating connection and engagement with people participating virtually and developing interesting and skill-based programming.

You will hear me talk about brain injury services but I need to correct one thing I misspoke about on the podcast. I said that the CDC already designates brain injury as a chronic condition but that is something we are still working toward.

I must give big thanks to the fantastic Communications team at DARS. You'll hear both Betsy Civilette and Rick Sizemore doing the interviews. Rick also shared his own experiences with brain injury.

Listen here: <https://vrworkforcestudio.com/brain-injury-awareness-month-and-the-road-to-employment/>

Brain Injury Solutions, Virginia Tech, and Carilion Clinic Video

Brain Injury Solutions (in southwest Virginia) and the Carilion Clinic partner with Virginia Tech to provide experiences for students in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics into the lives of individuals with a brain injury by pairing the students with people with lived experience.

Not only is this a wonderful program, but when you watch, keep an eye out for Council member Steven Nape. (It's only 5 minutes long)

https://news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/03/1_e380ufit.html?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_march2724-public&fbclid=IwAR1-NINzPbeNGcr_0gY1Kq0_1EQfe1F4DtQeCfJT21QpJhalcvHr0Rd2La8_aem_AWE2hndLRG5fkGCJriGX6porjxQtJ6O6hibGgD5bsXadmaHLoUQeo7tcx5etQD9rLHIIAVYSc4AqWM8OkOLr43Wt