

**Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)**  
**State Rehabilitation Council Executive Committee**  
**March 13, 2023**  
**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Frederick Foard, Joliefawn Liddell, Madeline Nunnally, and Justin Spurlock.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Meghan Cox, DARS Policy Analyst; Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m.

**Introduction of Members:** Spurlock called the meeting to order. All members and others present introduced themselves.

**Approval of meeting agenda:** No changes. Agenda approved by unanimous consensus.

**Approval of November meeting minutes:** No changes. Minutes approved by unanimous consensus.

**Matters of Public Comment:** There were no public comments received.

**Discussion:** Cox provided an overview of current SRC membership and updated the Council on the retirement of Mable Fleming, a DARS staff member who has worked closely with the SRC on administration of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 9:23 a.m.

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**Meeting Handouts:**

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from November 14, 2022

**Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)**  
**State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting**  
**March 13, 2023**  
**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Frederick Foard, Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Heidi Lawyer (virtual), Angie Leonard, Joliefawn Liddell, Talisha McAuley-Davis (virtual), Madeline Nunnally, and Justin Spurlock.

**Members Absent:** Billie Cook and Jennifer Witteborg.

**Others Present:** Dale Batten, Deputy Commissioner DRS; Catherine Harrison, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs; Julie Jacobs, Director of Field Rehabilitative Services; Lance Moran, WWRC; James Hall, WWRC; Mable Fleming, DARS Analyst; Lisa Robertson, DARS Policy Analyst; Meghan Cox, DARS Policy Analyst; Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs; Marianne Moore, Virginia Department of Education; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter;

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

**Introduction of Members:** Spurlock called the meeting to order. All members and others present introduced themselves.

**Approval of remote participation for Heidi Lawyer:** No objections. Lawyer attending remotely from her residence in Hanover County due to medical condition, disability, or caregiving.

**Approval of remote participation for Talisha McAuley-Davis:** No objections. McAuley-Davis attending remotely from her residence in Chesterfield County due to medical condition, disability, or caregiving.

**Approval of meeting agenda:** No changes. Agenda approved by unanimous consensus.

**Approval of November meeting minutes:** No changes. Meeting minutes for November 14 and November 15 approved by unanimous consensus.

**Matters of Public Comment:** There were no public comments received.

**Chairperson's Report:** The Chair provided a report from the Executive Committee meeting and asked for Annual Report Subcommittee volunteers. Spurlock and Nunnally volunteered to serve. The Chair also announced the retirement of Mable Fleming, DARS staff and point of contact for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Fleming was presented with a certificate of appreciation from the Chair.

## **Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Kathy Hayfield gave agency updates to the membership, including:

- The 2023 General Assembly session was a busy session for DARS as an agency, but there was not a lot of legislation related to vocational rehabilitation specifically.
  - o Commissioner Hayfield highlighted the creation of the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement, as well as legislation related to subminimum wage employment.
- February was Job Shadowing Month, which presented opportunities for DARS clients throughout the Commonwealth.
- National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day/Week is in March and is an opportunity to recognize the work of DARS' 200+ rehabilitation counselors.

## **DRS Division Report**

DRS Deputy Commissioner, Dale Batten, gave a DRS update, including the following:

- WWRC Director Tim Woodward resigned, and recruitment for his replacement will begin soon.
- Batten is a member of the Virginia Board of Workforce Development and plans to recruit for a VBWD representative for the SRC after July 1.
- Reported on various items, including WIOA measures. Referrals and expenditures are both up. There are currently 17,317 clients in the system, with 3600+ pre-ETS clients.
- Julie Jacobs, FRS Director, added that the field is particularly focused on performance and outcomes.
  - o Some initiatives associated with this focus are rapid engagement and non-traditional referral sources. Hampton Roads has deployed a small-scale test of rapid engagement that has been successful.
  - o Also provided a Virginia Workforce Portal summary and answered questions from Foard regarding barriers to services.

## **Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Report**

James Hall, Manager, Career and Workforce Development Division gave updates on:

- Adult Services Panel; DARS Job Shadow Month; Co-teaching at WWRC; and Virtual services at WWRC.
- WWRC graduated 65 students in December.
- WWRC beginning a program in workplace readiness behaviors in April 2023: 6-week program with 30 consumer capacity to start.

Lance Moran, Supervisor, Career, Technical, and Adult Education gave updates on:

- WWRC moved from 18-week semester system to 6-week intake to minimize class vacancies.
- WWRC developing generalized building trade program to complement current industry credential offerings.

## **Policy Division Update**

Catherine Harrison, Director of the Division of Policy and Legislative Affairs, gave updates on:

- VR Manual changes out for public comment

- Voter Registration (technical), Substance Use, Project SEARCH, Financial Participation (annual update), Purchasing (technical), and Appeals
- 2023 General Assembly session
  - DARS closely followed legislation on APS, Alternative Hiring Process, disability terminology, transition services, and guardianship.
- Harrison also provided an informational presentation on application and eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, and answered follow-up questions from Foard on eligibility, language interpretation, and race/ethnicity.

### **Fair Hearing Update**

Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs VR Appeals Coordinator, provided an update on DARS Fair Hearing Officers:

The IFB that was out did not receive any bids, so the subcommittee meeting was canceled. Hearing officer recruitment is down across the country according to appeals coordinators in other states. We are working with procurement on relisting the IFB if we can identify other avenues of getting the word out and would appreciate help if anyone has recommendations or knows of interested parties. We are also exploring using hearing officers maintained by the Office of the Executive Secretary. Patacca spoke with the Due Process Coordinator at VDOE and additional details. DARS still has 3 hearing officers on contracts that expire 9/30/23- two with possible renewals.

### **Member Reports**

- Talisha McAuley-Davis (virtual): DARS is revving up for summer work experiences and Pre-ETS collaboration.
- Heidi Lawyer (virtual): PEATC continues with its training opportunities. We currently are running Transition University and IEP University, which are VDOE-funded. These will also happen in the summer and fall. Building Strong Parent Advocates, also VDOE-funded, just completed and we will be holding additional sessions throughout the year. In February, we partnered with DBHDS to hold a series of Supported Decision-Making webinars based on the new state SDMA template. Our parent leadership trainings are scheduled. We have parent institute, PACL, and PACL Advanced. Our Parent-Youth Empower Summit is scheduled for Sept 9 at Great Wolf Lodge. We have been working with JMU for the last 3 years on Sexual Education/Health Relationships for youth with disabilities and last month a PEATC-developed curriculum received IRB approval-- now considered a research-based program. We continue to release new resource documents and fact sheets. In the last month or so, we have released our Special Education Complaint toolkit and Special Education Mediation Toolkit. Our Due Process toolkit is under VDOE Review and our Manifestation Determination Review Toolkit, which is related to discipline, is under internal review. We continue to support our family engagement, military, and Latino initiatives as well. We participated in the DARS EPIC Grant planning meeting and are working with DARS Pre-ETS staff on potential work to support students and families related to the EPIC Grant.
- Angie Leonard: St. Vincent's Home Services/Blue Ridge Autism and Achievement Center formally merged with Virginia Institute of Autism on January 1, 2023. VIA will be working with DARS for Pre-ETS services in the near future.

- Joliefawn Liddell: In 2023, dLCV will honor an individual whose work has promoted transition and telling one's own story in the disability community with the Darrel Tillar Mason Excellence in Advocacy Award. Think mentors, coaches, and storytellers when contemplating a nominee. Our narratives and real experiences have power when trying to help the larger world understand and empathize with the everyday experiences of people with disabilities. dLCV was busy during the 2023 General Assembly session and is currently examining the experiences of individuals with disabilities using ridesharing platforms, such as Lyft and Uber.
- Madeline Nunnally: Working for DBVI and attending events with DBVI/DARS crossover. Recently attended an event at the stadium and noted that DBVI was the only state agency represented, but made efforts to promote both DBVI and DARS services.
- Frederick Foard: Inquired about job placement efforts associated with the hospitality industry in Hampton Roads, particularly in recently opened/planned casinos.
- Justin Spurlock: Continues to work with King William Board of Supervisors on accessibility issues; entrance to Administration Building recently became ADA accessible.

**Matters of Public Comment:** There were no public comments received.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on June 12, 2023 at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Central Office in Henrico.

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**Meeting Handouts:**

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes from November 14 Meeting
3. Draft Meeting Minutes from November 15 Meeting
4. WWRC Presentation Materials
5. Policy Presentation Materials on Application and Eligibility for VR Services