

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Executive Committee
June 12, 2023
Final Meeting Minutes

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

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Meghan Cox, DARS Policy Analyst; Catherine Harrison, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs; Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs; Lisa Robertson, DARS Policy Analyst; Jennifer Witteborg; 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 March meeting minutes: No changes. Minutes approved by unanimous consensus.

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

Discussion: Cox provided an update on current SRC vacancies, discussed SRC committees, and introduced possible alternate meeting location to be further considered by full SRC.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:20 a.m.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from March 13, 2023

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting
June 12, 2023
Final Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Frederick Foard, Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Heidi Lawyer, Joliefawn Liddell, Madeline Nunnally, Justin Spurlock, and Jennifer Witteborg.

Members Absent: Billie Cook, Angie Leonard, and Talisha McAuley-Davis.

Others Present: Catherine Harrison, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs; Lance Moran, WWRC; James Hall, WWRC; Lisa Robertson, DARS Policy Analyst; Meghan Cox, DARS Policy Analyst; Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs; Barbara Burkett, Policy and Legislative Affairs; David Leon, Director of Workforce Programs; Kate Kaegi, DARS Pathways Grant Team; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:02 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. Meeting minutes for March 13 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 Nominating Committee volunteers. Nunnally volunteered to serve. Cox will inquire with Cook (absent) and Leonard (absent) for an additional possible volunteer. The Chair curated a discussion on holding a future SRC meeting at WWRC. A definitive decision was not reached, and the possibility will be discussed again at the August meeting.

Commissioner's Report

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

- New DARS staff, particularly the WWRC Director and agency CFO;
- Brief update on VR performance and Pre-ETS spending;
- VR portion of the State Plan is under development by Policy/DRS.

DRS Division Report

DRS Director of Workforce Programs, David Leon, provided DRS updates, including:

- Three Pathways Grant-funded positions help liaise clients with state agencies: in DOLI, DHRM, and a quick response counselor.

- An October event is planned between DHRM and DARS; over 1000 individuals have requested Certificates of Disability with 14 successfully hired pursuant to the Alternative Hiring Process.
- Windmills training has been provided to over 1300 HR professionals since the beginning of the state fiscal year with 43 state agencies represented.
- Workforce Programs is also working on registered apprenticeships, limited English proficiency workgroups, bridging apprenticeships to WWRC credentials, and state job clubs.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Report

James Hall, Manager, Career and Workforce Development Division, and Lance Moran, Supervisor, Career, Technical, and Adult Education gave updates on:

- Tours by First Lady Younkin and DOLI Commissioner Gary Pan; Worlds of Work; Virtual Services; Workplace Readiness Program Completion Ceremony.
- WWRC began a program on 13 different workplace readiness behaviors in April 2023: 6-week program with 30 consumer capacity to start; has had 23 consumers complete the program so far.
- Building trades program update- currently recruiting for an instructor, evaluating curricula, and procuring supplies/equipment.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey Update

Barbara Burkett, DARS Analytics, Research and Program Evaluation, gave a short update on the Consumer Satisfaction Survey.

- In the FFY 2022 survey, consumers responded to questions related to service delivery, counselor and DARS offices helpfulness, plan development, timeliness of services and general communication. In addition, the survey allowed the opportunity for consumers to provide additional context and comments through open ended questions. Percentages for survey questions are indicative of real time assessment or in other words what was happening at the time of survey completion.
- In FFY22, DARS sent a total of 1,683 surveys to consumers via U.S. mail and email. Consumers completed a total of 404 surveys. The response rate was 24%. The response rate was 1% higher than in FFY21.
- Over 50% of all respondents answered in the affirmative regarding receiving quality DARS vocational rehabilitation services.

Hearing Officer Contract Update

Elizabeth Patacca, VR Appeals Coordinator, provided an update on DARS Fair Hearing Officers:

- Daniel Hand's contract extension will expire on September 30, 2023. There are no opportunities for renewal. We thank him for his service to the VR program and wish him the best.
- Sarah Freeman and Carl Schmidt are both up for renewal. Renewing for another year will extend their contracts to September 30, 2024. This will be the 3rd renewal for both hearing officers, leaving 1 (one) potential renewal. The full terms of the contracts will expire on September 30, 2025.

- We had 1 (one) response to the IFB that closed on May 16, 2023. The hearing officer subcommittee has been notified and will meet to take action on the bid before the next SRC meeting in August (DARS)/September (DBVI). The subcommittee will report on the bid at that time.
- Still exploring other options for maintaining a pool of qualified hearing officers, as required by federal regulations. Unfortunately, this is a problem for many VR programs across the country. Any related updates will be shared with both SRCs.

Motion to renew the contracts for Sarah Freeman and Carl Schmidt presented by Lawyer, seconded by Nunnally, and passed by voice vote.

Policy Division Update

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

- Provided an informational presentation on VR appeal rights, methods of appeal, the hearing process, administrative review process, and client protections.

Member Reports

- Joliefawn Liddell: dLCV is in the process of administering its public survey and gearing up for a Disability Rights Summit on September 21, 2023.
- Jennifer Witteborg: Currently working with VAD to gather and use available data.
- Heidi Lawyer: PEATC continues with its training opportunities. Currently 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, partnered with DBHDS to hold a series of Supported Decision-Making webinars based on the new state SDMA template. Parent leadership trainings are scheduled: parent institute, PACL, and PACL Advanced. Parent-Youth Empower Summit is scheduled for Sept 9 at Great Wolf Lodge. 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. Continue to release new resource documents and fact sheets. In the last month or so, have released Special Education Complaint toolkit and Special Education Mediation Toolkit. Due Process toolkit is under VDOE Review and Manifestation Determination Review Toolkit, which is related to discipline, is under internal review. Continue to support family engagement, military, and Latino initiatives as well. Participated in the DARS EPIC Grant planning meeting and working with DARS Pre-ETS staff on potential work to support students and families related to the EPIC Grant.
- Madeline Nunnally: Attended a deaf/blind expo in Staunton, completed training on returning citizens/reentry and wraparound services.
- Frederick Foard: Commented on use of VR acronyms by presenters and DARS staff, as well as possible efforts to improve knowledge of SRC-related subject matter.
- Justin Spurlock: City of Richmond employees are back in the office full-time.

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

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on August 14, 2023 at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Central Office in Henrico.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes from March 13 Meeting
3. WWRC Presentation Materials (Quarterly and Workplace Readiness)
4. WWRC Presentation Materials (Building Trades Update)
5. Preliminary Consumer Satisfaction Information
6. Policy Presentation Materials on VR Appeals