

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Executive Committee
March 10, 2025
Draft Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Brandy Schantz, Joliefawn Liddell, Christopher Martin, and Nick Zweenink.

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Ryan Mauzy, SRC; Ryan Haywood, SRC; Lillian Garland, SRC; Lee Talley, SRC; Frederick Foard, SRC; Catherine Harrison, DARS; Meghan Cox, DARS; Cara Kaufman, DARS; Lisa Robertson, DARS; Patricia Morgan, VDOE; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Introduction of Members: Schantz 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 update on current membership/vacancies and previewed business meeting items.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:35 a.m.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from November 7, 2024

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting
March 10, 2025
Draft Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Brandy Schantz, Joliefawn Liddell, Nick Zweerink, Ryan Mauzy, Ryan Haywood, Lillian Garland, Travis Staton, Heidi Lawyer, Becky Alwood, Gayl Brunk, Christopher Martin, and Frederick Foard.

Members Absent: Marco Callender and Talisha McAuley-Davis.

Others Present: Dale Batten, DARS; Catherine Harrison, DARS; Donna Bonessi, DARS; Julie Jacobs, DARS; Alison Shaner, WWRC; Cara Kaufman, DARS; Lisa Robertson, DARS; Meghan Cox, DARS; Barbara Burkett, DARS; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

Approval of meeting agenda: Amended agenda presented to move Commissioner's report to later time slot in the meeting. Motion to approve presented by Talley, seconded by Lawyer, and passed by voice vote.

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

Approval of November Business Meeting minutes: Haywood noted typographical errors. Motion to approve amended minutes presented by Haywood, seconded by Garland, and passed by voice vote.

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. Liddell, Haywood, and Staton volunteered to serve.

DRS Division Reports

DRS Deputy Commissioner, Dale Batten, welcomed new and returning SRC members and introduced DRS staff.

Donna Bonessi, Director of Employment Services and Special Programs, provided a quarterly update on Pre-ETS that the Council requested in its 2024 Recommendations and delivered a

related presentation, which was provided in advance to Council members in their meeting materials.

Julie Jacobs, FRS Director, provided updates on Field Rehabilitative Services and delivered a related presentation, which was provided in advance to Council members in their meeting materials.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Report

Alison Shaner, Director of Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, delivered a presentation that included updates on the facility and its services. The presentation is included among meeting materials.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Hayfield reported on the current status of the agency and the tracking of developments at the federal level that may impact agency programs or funding.

Commissioner Hayfield also provided a brief update on the General Assembly session just concluded and an additional anticipated upcoming session, as well as potential Medicaid changes. Council members shared thoughts and insights related to potential changes impacting the constituencies they represent.

Policy Division Update

Catherine Harrison, Director of the Division of Policy and Legislative Affairs, provided a status report and update on the 2025 General Assembly Session and selected legislation, and the state budget. Harrison also updated on pending VR regulatory action and VR Policy Manual changes.

Hearing Officer Selection Update

Cara Kaufman, Fair Hearing Coordinator, provided an update on the hearing officer selection process. At this time, DARS has three hearing officers under contract, two of whom are in their last year of renewal. Their contracts will expire September 30, 2025. DARS released an IFB for Hearing Officers on December 20, 2024. It closed on February 13, 2025, with one response received. Ideally, DARS would like to have 3 or 4 hearing officers under contract and is working with procurement to rerelease the IFB one more time. After the IFB closes for the second time, Kaufman will be in contact with members of the selection committee.

Member Reports

- Joliefawn Liddell: Nothing to report.
- Brandy Schantz: Nothing to report.
- Chris Martin: Nothing to report.
- Becky Alwood: Nothing to report.
- Lee Talley: Nothing to report.

- Lillian Garland: Prince William Disability Services Board has been tasked with informally investigating businesses for accessibility and so she has been undertaking those activities.
- Nick Zwaerink: Nothing to report.
- Ryan Haywood: Governor Youngkin launched the "Virginia Has Jobs" initiative on February 24, 2025, connecting Virginians with over 250,000 job opportunities across diverse industries while simultaneously introducing a Federal Worker Support Resource Package to assist those affected by Federal workforce changes. ~\$10B in total contracts/2.2K+ individual actions have been terminated by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)/U.S. DOGE Service (USDS) since January 20, 2025, with ~\$4B in cancellations attributed to the restructuring of USAID. ~350 contracts terminated by DOGE/USDS were delivered in Virginia. Additional funding/contract cuts are expected within several departments/agencies, including Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED), as the newly appointed/confirmed leadership teams settle into their roles.
- Patricia Morgan: Nothing to report.
- Ryan Mauzy: Nothing to report.
- Gayl Brunk: The focus of the new SPIL is dedicated to supporting Centers for Independent Living developing and providing their communities with education and training opportunities that are specific to the needs of their individual communities. Most Centers are spending the first year researching the needs and developing the training in collaboration with consumers and other identified stakeholders. The SPIL also prioritizes the need for increased accessibility in all areas of emergency planning and the Council has representation on the VDEM Emergency Management Equity Workgroup, as well as the DSS Accessible Sheltering Workgroup. The quarterly meeting of the Equity Workgroup was held on February 24th. Topics discussed included progress updates on the recovery efforts in SW VA. The far southwestern tip of the state was already heavily impacted by Hurricane Helene and recently experienced additional flooding due to the winter storms. The Annual Program Performance Report for the Independent Living State Grant that funds the SILC will be submitted by 3/31. This report is usually submitted at the end of January, but the Administration for Community Living extended the deadline for this year. The next meeting will take place April 10, 2025 at the Appalachian Independence Center. AIC has been instrumental in the Hurricane Helene recovery efforts and the Council is visiting to learn more about AIC, as a CIL, as well as the best practices that have been formed in response to the weather-related emergencies.
- Frederick Foard: Introduced himself to new Council members.
- Heidi Lawyer: PEATC has experienced significantly increased engagement with more than 7,000 visits to website between February 28 and March 5. Among the most accessed resources related to post-secondary transition were Life Skills Checklist which received 1,177 clicks and Employment Skills Checklist which had 302 clicks. PEATC regional program continues to thrive. Between January and March, held one-on-one meetings with 96% of the appointed school liaisons and have had direct contact with every school division in the last quarter, whether through parent or professional engagement. PEATC has launched community office hours in all eight Superintendent regions and regional staff works with community organizations like Centers for Independent Living that have offered space so that families are able to meet staff face-to-face and get support. Over the past quarter, PEATC has completed multiple sessions of online trainings and new sessions start today. Transition University is currently underway. Planning is in progress for family engagement and military

events. Under DARS Pre-ETS contract focused on students with disabilities, PEATC has completed resource documents on work incentives in both Spanish and English.

Matters of Public Comment: There were no public comments received. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on June 9, 2025, at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Central Office in Henrico.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes from November 6 Meeting
3. Draft Meeting Minutes from November 7 Meetings
4. DRS Updates Presentation
5. WWRC Updates Presentation