

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting
November 9, 2023**

Approved Minutes

Members Present:

Kelvin Harris, Chair; Christy Crowther, Vice Chair; Elizabeth Flaherty; Sara Pruett; Paige Moore; Clay Huie; Eric Raff; Joann Willis Lindholm

Members Present by Conference Call: None

Guests:

Dale Batten, Deputy Commissioner, DARS
Robin Ramsey, Director, F.R.E.E.
John Naples, Manager, C.A.T.S.
Alison Clarke, SAI
Sharon Jones, VDOE

Staff Present:

Barclay Shepard, Manager, VATS
Elin Glass, VATS
Sonja Schaible, VATS
Emily McKeough, VATS
Paula Martin, VATS

Interpreters: Ivy Brothers and Bernice McCormack Venuto

Call to Order:

Kelvin Harris, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Mr. Harris stated that this meeting was focused on services and facilities at “Sheltering Arms Institute”. The meeting took place at the first-floor conference room at Sheltering Arms Institute in Short Pump.

Approval of Minutes:

The May 18, 2023, draft minutes were approved as written.

Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Harris reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any additions from the floor. No additions were made.

Public Comment:

There were no comments from the public.

Old Business:

No report

New Business:

VATS Program Updates:

Mr. Shepard provided the following general program updates to include:

- More than 7,000 individuals served by VATS demonstration, short-term loan, reuse, training and information & assistance programs in 2022. Reuse services continue to grow at a rate of greater than 20% per year.
- Reviewed VATS' partnership with Virginia No Wrong Door (NWD) which has expanded both VATS' and NWD's capacity to serve older adults and individuals with disabilities through assistive technology devices and services. Reviewed several assistive technology kits placed with NWD partners to include Sheltering Arms Institute, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, and Sportable, Inc.
- Reviewed VATS focus/involvement with Emergency Preparedness
- Reviewed previous years priorities which include but not limited to:
 - DME reuse-medical model, standardizing data collection, standardizing sanitation policies/practices, reuse site expansion to meet statewide needs.
 - AT & Aging initiatives
 - Portable ramps and accessible pathways
 - Legislation that allows for the transfer of assistive technology devices between school divisions or State agencies. Transfer is also permissible to the child or parent of a student with a disability following graduation, transfer between school divisions, or when the individual ceases to receive special education services.
 - Handheld technology
 - Telerehabilitation
 - Assistive technology to address personal safety, emergency preparedness and social isolation.
 - Assistive technology to address recreational needs
 - Emergency preparedness
- Discussed VATS' priorities for 2024 based on gaps in historical data, constituent feedback, moving prior initiatives forward and changes with the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act reauthorization. For 2024, these priorities include:
 - Childrens and Adult DME Reuse: The Childrens Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S.) and the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (F.R.E.E.) received a Subrecipient Funding Agreement to continue to provide medical model, durable medical equipment reuse services through 2028. These contracts will assist VATS in implementing the requirements of the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act.
 - Emergency Preparedness: VATS continues to monitor needs and work with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and its contracted durable medical equipment reuse partners to address access and equipment needs of Virginians with functional needs before and after natural disasters.
 - AT for cognitive health/dementia
 - AT for sensory regulation
 - AT for recreation

- Data-Annual Progress Report due to the Administration for Community Living on December 31, 2023.
- Reviewed VATS' Priorities/Changes with the Reauthorization of the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act. Priorities include:
 - Expand target entities to include long-term care and assisted living facilities
 - Engaging with housing and transportation agencies
 - Collaboration with State agencies that fund AT (State Education Agencies-SEA, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and others)
 - Emphasis on assistive telehealth/rehabilitation
 - Advisory Council mandated partner requirements. Currently VATS has five mandated partners to include representation from: Workforce Investment Board, DBVI (vocational rehabilitation for individuals who are blind), DARS (general vocational rehabilitation), State Center of Independent Living, and State educational agency. Two additional partners are required by the new AT Act. Mr. Shepard will work with the Commissioner's office, DARS, to make the appropriate appointments to meet the new mandated partner requirements.
 - New performance measures and State Plan requirements.
- Ms. Schaible provided the following program updates to include:
 - Update on CATS and F.R.E.E. reuse contracts
 - Emergency preparedness initiatives
 - Portable temporary ramp and accessible pathway program
- Ms. Martin provided the following program updates to include:
 - Shared multiple anecdotal success stories regarding Information & Assistance requests from constituents to include referrals to DME reuse partners, ATLFA, NWD and VDDHH among other partners.
 - Discussed VATS' resource guides developed and available for community requests.
- Ms. McKeough provided the following program updates to include:
 - Collaboration with the DARS vocational rehabilitation program to include the development and implementation of time management and sensory processing classes.
 - Data collection efforts for the upcoming Annual Progress Report.

Working Lunch: Sheltering Arms Institute Facility Tours

Sheltering Arms Institute staff gave ATAC participants tours of the My Life Room, therapy gym, outdoor garden and patient rooms.

VATS Contractor Updates:

John Naples from Children's Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S) provided an update on CATS to include the following:

- C.A.T.S. reported that it has received 572 requests for 700 pieces of equipment worth a reuse value of \$900 thousand.
- Reviewed CATS' fundraising event named "Hallowheels". This is the 7th Annual event.
- Discussed two new equipment drop-off points for CATS to include Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center and Aveanna Healthcare in Fairfax. These sites will house equipment to make equipment more accessible to individuals in need of DME equipment.
- Discussed "Equipment Palooza" event in Lynchburg and Roanoke to give community members access to try equipment.
- CATS will celebrate its 10th anniversary in July 2024.

Robin Ramsey from the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment & Endowment (F.R.E.E.) provided a program update to include updates from full-service reuse sites. Highlights included:

- F.R.E.E. reports serving more than 2,900 individuals and provided more than 4,200 pieces of equipment to individuals in need up to this point this year. F.R.E.E. is on target to serve more than 3,500 Virginians this year.
- Participated in a Department of Emergency Management disaster exercise this year.
- Developed educational handouts regarding equipment use on their website.
- Working with JMU occupational therapy students on a video project on how to use DME equipment properly.
- Developed a pilot project with the Roanoke Local Office on Aging to develop a DME loan closet.
- Participating in more in-person occupational therapy and physical therapy conferences.
- F.R.E.E.-Harrisonburg is in operation as of the summer 2023.
- Discussed full-service DME reuse site expansion plans for 2024 and 2025 to include Marion, Northern, and Halifax, Va.
- Reported that F.R.E.E.-Virginia Beach has a new location on Virginia Beach Blvd.
- Working collaboratively with Sentara Health System to develop mobile unit services that include readily available DME. This mobile unit will target rural/underserved areas.

ATAC Member Updates:

Several ATAC members reported updates from their organizations or constituent groups.

Next ATAC Meeting:

The next ATAC Meeting (tentative):

- Thursday, May 16, 2024 (Location TBD)

*Unless otherwise noted, meetings will be held at the DARS Central Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA. 23229

Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00pm