

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Executive Committee
August 14, 2023
Approved Meeting Minutes

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

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 9:00 a.m.

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

Approval of remote participation for Justin Spurlock: No objections. Spurlock attending remotely from his residence in King William County due to a medical condition, disability, or caregiving matter.

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

Approval of June 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 continued the discussion of an alternate meeting location to be further considered by full SRC.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:09 a.m.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from June 12, 2023

**Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Nominating Committee
August 14, 2023
Final Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Heidi Lawyer and Madeline Nunnally.

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 9:30 a.m.

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

Committee Representative: Nunnally agreed to be Nominating Committee representative at the full Council meeting.

Approval of Chair/Vice-Chair slate: Upon discussion, Lawyer and Nunnally agree to include Spurlock and Nunnally for Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, on proposed slate.

Approval of Members-at-Large slate: Upon discussion, Lawyer and Nunnally agree to include Foard and Liddell for Members-at-Large on proposed slate.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:31 a.m.

**Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting
August 14, 2023
Final Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Frederick Foard, Heidi Lawyer, Joliefawn Liddell, Talisha McAuley-Davis, Madeline Nunnally, Justin Spurlock (virtual), and Jennifer Witteborg.

Members Absent: Commissioner Kathy Hayfield and Angie Leonard.

Others Present: Meghan Cox, DARS Policy Analyst; Elizabeth Patacca, Policy and Legislative Affairs; Dale Batten, Deputy Commissioner; Julie Jacobs, Field Rehabilitation Services; Alison Shaner, WWRC; James Hall, WWRC; Donna Bonessi, Employment Services and Special Programs; Matt Luther, Transition and Education Services; Charlotte Arbogast, DARS Senior Policy Analyst; Marianne Moore, Virginia Department of Education; Liz Leitch, ASL Interpreter; Carrie Humphrey, ASL Interpreter.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

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

Approval of remote participation for Justin Spurlock: No objections. Spurlock attending remotely from his residence in King William County due a medical condition, disability, or caregiving matter.

Approval of meeting agenda: DARS Commissioner's Report will be provided by Deputy Commissioner Dale Batten on behalf of Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, who is unable to attend. Motion to approve the amended agenda presented by Nunnally, seconded by Lawyer, and passed by voice vote.

Approval of June meeting minutes: No changes. Meeting minutes for June 12 approved by unanimous consensus.

Matters of Public Comment: One person signed up for public comment. Mr. Louis Olive provided public comment on his opinion regarding the potential services that his relative with ADHD might receive while in high school. Mr. Olive further commented on DARS' vocational rehabilitation (VR) performance. He shared data that he stated he received pursuant to a Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request indicating a downward trend in VR funding, expenditures, and client outcomes that started before the pandemic and that has generally continued. Mr. Olive provided SRC members with a printed copy of an Editorial Opinion submitted to the Richmond Times Dispatch by Yvonne Schutz also regarding DARS agency expenditures and outcomes. The date May 2, 2019 was handwritten on the document. The Chair thanked Mr. Olive for his public comment and stated that the SRC would take the comments into consideration in its role providing agency guidance and oversight going forward.

Chairperson's Report: The Chair provided a report from the Executive Committee meeting and presented the Council with proposed meeting dates for 2024. Motion to approve the initial proposed meeting dates presented by Lawyer, seconded by Nunnally, and passed by voice vote.

Upon noting that the initial proposed meeting dates included a state holiday, the proposed meeting dates for 2024 were amended. Motion to accept the amended meeting dates presented by Foard, seconded by Nunnally, and passed by voice vote.

The approved meeting dates for 2024 are:

March 11, 2024

June 10, 2024

August 12, 2024

November 18, 2024 (Council Retreat)

November 19, 2024

The Chair curated continuing discussion on holding the November SRC meetings at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC). Motion to hold the November 13 and 14 SRC meetings at WWRC presented by Foard, seconded by Liddell, and passed by voice vote. DARS staff will work to prepare for and facilitate these meetings.

Commissioner's Report

Deputy Commissioner Dale Batten gave agency updates to the membership, including:

- The 50th anniversary of the passage of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is September 26 and a number of events internal and external to the agency are planned in its commemoration.
- As an agency, DARS is in the process of evaluating and reemphasizing its core values.
- The state budget for the second year of the current biennium has not yet been fully approved and efforts in developing a budget for the next biennium have begun.
- VR performance data was provided regarding expenditures and outcomes, with additional information to be provided at the November SRC meetings.
- SRC Member Foard commented on the importance of DARS' continued emphasis on reporting on expenditures and service provision.
- Deputy Commission Batten also staffs the Virginia Board of Workforce Development on behalf of DARS: VBWD is currently recruiting for executive leadership and has also tabled the CareerWorks Referral Portal.
- The new Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement is still awaiting funding to complete tasks associated with logistics, infrastructure, etc.

DRS Division Reports

DRS Director of Field Rehabilitative Services (FRS), Julie Jacobs, provided DRS updates, including:

- A Statewide Manager's Meeting was held recently with an emphasis on a number of ongoing FRS priorities, including rapid engagement, Pre-ETS, and responses to internal audit.
- Provided statistics through July 2023 on IPEs, applications, and WIOA measures.

- SRC Member Foard agreed with FRS' emphasis on the provision of VR services as having the potential to impact individuals' lives; SRC Member Nunnally commented on counselor caseloads and compensation.

DRS Director of Employment Services and Special Programs, Donna Bonessi, provided DRS updates, including:

- Introduced Matt Luther as the new Transition and Education Services Coordinator.
- Summarized Pre-ETS non-compliance letter that DARS received from RSA and DARS' response:
 - o FFY 2021 expenditures were significantly impacted by COVID, staff turnover, provider capacity, and WWRC operations.
 - o Expenditures are the only performance measure for Pre-ETS that RSA considers.
 - o DARS and DBVI spent 10.7% of the 15% reserve requirement.
 - o Corrective action includes increased DARS and DBVI collaboration, un-blending of counselor caseloads, accuracy in timekeeping to make sure all expenditures are captured, and additional authorized services.
 - o DARS forecasts meeting the 15% requirement (in collaboration with DBVI) by FFY 2023.
- FRS is being restructured to provide for specialty counselor caseloads as related to Transition.
- DARS' corrective action also includes formal technical assistance agreements, staff training, and additional outreach.
- SRC Member Lawyer commented on Pre-ETS related issues also occurring with DOE and local LEAs and supported additional outreach; Foard inquired about potential relationships with local school boards and targeted recruitment efforts for counselors working with the specialty caseload.

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Report

Alison Shaner, VR Program Director, and James Hall, Manager, Career and Workforce Development Division gave updates on:

- Shaner introduced herself as the new Program Director for WWRC VR and explained her vision for moving WWRC forward.
- WWRC recently completed collaborative endeavors with VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities, Early Head Start, DRS' Business Development Managers, and Apprentice School.
- Virtual services are being offered for OT, driving, and speech; WWRC staff provided additional updates on Building Trades and Workplace Readiness Programs.
- SRC members viewed a short YouTube video produced in collaboration between WWRC and DARS Communications staff promoting WWRC's Manufacturing Technology Technician Training Program.

Chairperson's Member Awards

Spurlock recognized Leonard and Witteborg for their service on the SRC. Certifications of appreciation will be mailed to both at a later date.

Hearing Officer Contract Update

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

- A Hearing Officer Subcommittee Meeting was held at DARS on August 3, 2023. There was good discussion regarding the one bid that was received, and that the bidder would make for a good hearing officer. The subcommittee's recommendation was that both the DARS SRC and DBVI SRC contract with the bidder as a hearing officer for a term of one year, with 4 optional renewals, beginning 10/1/23.
- Motion to accept the subcommittee's recommendation presented by Cook, seconded by Witteborg, and passed by voice vote.

Policy Division Update

Meghan Cox, Policy Analyst with the Division of Policy and Legislative Affairs, provided a brief overview of the WIOA State Plan and VR Components:

- WIOA requires that the Governor of each State submit a State Plan to the US Departments of Education and Labor that outlines the State's four-year strategy for its workforce development system.
- DARS staff is in the early stages of gathering and formatting information for the VR Services Portion of the Combined State Plan.
- The November SRC meetings will be an opportunity for members to provide feedback, input, and recommendations on the State Plan, including development of SRC Recommendations for 2024 and DARS' responses to the 2023 SRC Recommendations.
- Foard asked that SRC member be made aware of dates for stakeholder input; Witteborg suggested that drafts of the State Plan be made available in ASL.

Nominations Committee Presents Slate of Officers for FFY23

Nunnally, on behalf of herself and Lawyer, presented the following Slate of Officers:

Chair: Justin Spurlock

Vice Chair: Madeline Nunnally

Members-at-Large: Frederick Foard and Joliefawn Liddell

All have agreed to be nominated and no nominations from the floor were received. Cook motioned to accept the slate as presented. Liddell seconded and the motion passed by voice vote.

SRC Recommendations from 2022

Cox provided the Council with the SRC recommendations from the 2022 SRC Annual Report and asked that members keep these recommendations in mind as they consider recommendations to include in the 2023 Annual Report.

- The Annual Report Committee is meeting on August 28, 2023 and report development will begin at that meeting.

Member Reports

- o Heidi Lawyer: This summer PEATC ran its IEP University and Transition University Trainings. IEP University will be repeated at the end of August. Transition University will run again in the fall. On September 9 PEATC will have annual Parent and Youth

Empowerment (PYE) Summit at the Great Wolf Lodge where parents and students learn together and separately in an interactive fashion. This year's keynote speaker will be Sara Thompson from DBHDS talking about supported decision-making. As the military TA provider for two regions in the U.S., PEATC has been talking with other parent centers around the country about how they can better serve military families who have children with disabilities. PEATC now has a signed contract with DARS to develop and deliver training and resources for families, students, and DARS professionals under the EPIC grant which seeks to move people out of sheltered employment or prevent people from entering sheltered employment. The first round of training and resource development will focus on Competitive Integrated Employment—benefits, barriers, myths and stereotypes, and more. There are a variety of partners on this grant; PEATC' contract focuses on youth and their families. By October PEATC should have annual contract with the Department of Education renewed and will schedule training dates under that contract. A variety of other trainings for the fall are scheduled and can be found on PEATC website or in PEATC newsletter.

- Frederick Foard: Requested that SRC be informed of stakeholder input meetings and public comment period for State Plan; commented on importance of branding and awareness building.
- Madeline Nunnally: Shared professional observations related to the impact of compensation on recruitment, retention, and credentialing.
- Jennifer Witteborg: Provided extensive comments on the importance of her work with VAD and as an advocate; plans to continue to follow the work of the SRC remotely; emphasized risk of language deprivation of deaf children and importance of skilled ASL interpreters for all populations; stated that DARS should collect more data on deaf/hard of hearing clients; additional written comments included among meeting materials.
- Billie Cook: Provided an update on her new position with Colanna's Shipyard and opportunities for increased interaction and awareness between business partners and DARS.
- Joliefawn Liddell: dLCV is in the process of developing new objectives and is gearing up for for its Disability Rights Summit on September 21, 2023.
- Talisha McAuley-Davis: Petersburg just finished its first year of Project Search, which was very successful; echoed DRS staff in goal of Pre-ETS being to reach as many students as possible.
- Justin Spurlock: City of Richmond employees in the office full-time; has held homebuilding fundraisers, including car show in July and thanked Jenny Witteborg for her help; groundbreaking for the home should be mid-September.
- Marianne Moore provided updates on behalf of Virginia Department of Education: DOE has held Special Education Director orientation with emphasis on secondary transition; held Aspiring Special Education Leadership Academy that culminated at WWRC; DOE is being visited by the Office of Special Education Programs and Pentagon/DoD officials will be visiting Joint Base Langley/Eustis to learn more about and explore potential of Project Search program opportunities; also provided updates on legislation effective July 1, 2023 that impact Special Education programs and records.

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

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:17 p.m.

The SRC Annual Report Committee will meet on August 28, 2023 at DARS Division for Aging Services, 1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100, Henrico, VA. The next meetings of the full Council will take place on November 13 and 14, 2023 at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, 243 Woodrow Wilson Avenue, Fishersville, VA.

Meeting Handouts:

1. Monday, August 14, 2023 Draft Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Meeting Minutes from June 12 Business Meeting
3. 2024 SRC Proposed Meeting Schedule
4. Letter from RSA to Virginia DARS Ref: FFY 2021 Pre-ETS Spending
5. WWRC Presentation Materials
6. Policy Presentation (State Plan)
7. SRC Recommendations from 2022

Additional Materials

8. Richmond Times Dispatch Letter to the Editor, dated May 2, 2029 (handwritten), provided by Louis Olive during Public Comment period
9. Written statement provided by SRC Member Jennifer Witteborg to supplement Member Roundtable Report