

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting
May 16, 2024**

Draft Minutes

Members Present:

Kelvin Harris, Chair; Christy Crowther, Vice Chair; Elizabeth Flaherty; Scott Pruett; Sara Pruett; Paige Moore; Clay Huie; Joann Willis Lindholm; Korey Singleton; Dan Aunspach; Kevin Koziol

Members Present by Conference Call: None

Guests:

Kathryn Hayfield, Commissioner, DARS
Robin Ramsey, Director, F.R.E.E.
John Naples, Manager, C.A.T.S.
Blythe Johnson-Jones, VDOE
Britney Howard, VDDHH

Staff Present:

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

Interpreters: N/A

Call to Order:

Kelvin Harris, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Mr. Harris stated that this meeting was focused on “AT to Support Inclusive Education”. The meeting took place at the first-floor conference room at DARS Central office 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA.

Approval of Minutes:

The November 9, 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:

- VATS staff participated in the 2024 AT Act Programs Leadership Symposium which provided VATS staff to interact with other state and US territory AT Act staff. Symposium highlights included: Changes AT Act reporting, collaboration with target entities, and innovations in AT, artificial intelligence (advancements and concerns for individuals with disabilities), emergency preparedness and future accessibility rulemaking / standards provided by the US Access Board.
- Discussed new Annual Progress Report and State Plan requirements for 2025
- VATS remains committed to adult and children's DME reuse services
- AT Act reauthorization priorities for 2024 and beyond include focus on the following: Collaboration with state agencies that fund AT, expand target entities to include long-term living facilities and assisted living, and collaboration with housing and transportation entities.
- Reviewed VATS significant accomplishments in FY23 to include:
 - Served 6,610 Virginians through the following assistive technology (AT) services: Demonstrations; Short Term Equipment Loans; Reuse; Training; and Information & Assistance.
 - Provided durable medical equipment (DME) to 4,553 Virginians with limited resources. VATS contracted adult and children's DME reuse programs provided 6,490 pieces of gently used DME valued over \$3.1 million to qualifying Virginians.
 - Served sixty-five (65) DRS clients in DME Reuse Program. Since 2010, the reuse program provided 1,127 DARS clients with primary or back-up equipment needed to maintain or obtain employment.
 - Provided high-impact assistive technology trainings across Virginia to 680 participants.
 - Provided 580 (633 individuals) AT demonstrations and 104 short-term equipment loans.
 - Provided Information & Assistance to 697 individuals needing assistance connecting to valuable assistive technology resources.
 - Discussed the Department of Justice Final Rule which changes Title II of the ADA. Public service websites are required to conform to web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA success criteria. This refers to state and local government requirements for websites and mobile applications.
 - Discussed VATS mission statement. With changes to the newly authorized AT Act, VATS would like to review potential changes with ATAC members to modernize VATS mission. More information forthcoming.

Presentation: AT to Support Inclusion-Primary and Secondary Education

Ms. Johnson-Jones provided a presentation regarding AT supports and services provided by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs) and the Virginia Assistive Technology Network to include discussion of the following:

- VDOE’s “Myths and Facts Surrounding AT Devices and Services” and “Dear Colleague Letter”
- 2024-29 Educational Technology Plan for Virginia
- TTAC locations, resources and services
- AT Network website: <https://atnetwork.ttaonline.org/>
- Upcoming conferences.

Working Lunch: Advisory Council Member Updates

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

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. serves clients up to age 26
- Six-month data, C.A.T.S. reported that it has provided 742 pieces of equipment to 625 families with an estimate value of approximately \$1 million.
- Discussed a new access point location for families in northern Virginia area in Fairfax, this is partnership with Aveanna Health.]
- Recap of locations and access points:
 - Offices Roanoke, Richmond, Norfolk & Marion
 - Access pick-up locations for families in Fairfax, Hopewell, Charlottesville, and Fishersville.
- Discussed C.A.T.S. board member changes.
- C.A.T.S. is partnering with The Hokie Way a Virginia Tech student athlete NIL charitable wing.
- C.A.T.S. will be doing another Buzz4Good PBS episode, updating families that were in the last episode plus new families' stories. Filming will take place in September and airing in November or December on PBS.

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:

- Discussed services.
- Reviewed several client success stories.
- Discussed a loan closet partnership with the Roanoke Local Office on Aging.
- Participated in the Reeve Summit in March and provided a presentation on disaster planning and operations in collaboration with state and federal partners.
- Partnered with Habitat for Humanity and the local fire department to provide DME donations to F.R.E.E. Williamsburg
- Reported on planned expansion efforts (FY 24/25) in Marion/Wythe, Northern Virginia and Halifax as well as collaborating with Sentara Health System to develop medical mobile units, which include durable medical equipment, to target rural/underserved areas.

Presentation: AT to Support Inclusion in Post Secondary Education

Mr. Singleton provided a presentation regarding AT supports and services provided at George Mason University (GMU) and higher education. The presentation includes discussion of the following:

- Background information.
- Presentation focused on the accessibility side versus specific AT provided.
- Common types of AT supports include note taking, reading, and writing.
- GMU's strategy for digital access to include web accessibility monitoring and testing.
- Digital accessibility training provided.
- Upcoming conferences.

Next ATAC Meeting:

The next ATAC Meeting:

- Thursday, November 21, 2024

*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