VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED (SRC)

Quarterly Meeting
Draft Minutes
November 06, 2026
The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) via Zoom

SRC Members in Attendance

- **Amaan Karim,** Richmond, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Beth Klein,** Stafford, Representative of the Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- **Heidi Lawyer**, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)
- **Kathy Malone,** Bristol, Deputy Commissioner of Services
- **Kendall Morris,** Mechanicsville, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Rick Mitchell**, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member

SRC Members Not Able to Attend

- **Chanthen Nene,** Manassas, Rep. of an Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Mark Roane,** Richmond, Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services

DBVI Staff Present

- **Maggie Mills**, Executive Assistant to Commissioner Mitchell
- **Megan Hall,** Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
- **Rachel Dancy,** Executive Assistant, Commissioner's Office – Recorder of Minutes

ASL Interpreters

- **Elaine Hernandez**
- **Lorelei Schanstra**

Public:

- **Akita Rabsatt**
- **Alanna King**
- **Christine Appert**
- **John Leopold**
- **Rebecca Ceja**

Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called the meeting to order. Ms. Rachel Dancy conducted roll call. A quorum was met.

Adoption Agenda

Mr. Karim moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Ms. Lawyer seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Klein moved to adopt May 8, 2026, and August 14, 2026, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended, Mr. Karim seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Commissioner's Report – *Rick Mitchell*
Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

- Commissioner continues to follow up with the Secretary of the Commonwealth regarding pending SRC appointments and reappointments.
- Commissioner has received reappointment of his position through January 2030
- Dr. Mitchell shared that he has launched a "Commissioner's Listening Tour" to gather staff feedback from regional offices, headquarters, and Enterprise Division locations. Feedback received thus far has included requests to explore electronic signature software and concerns regarding lighting accommodation for staff with lighting sensitivity.
- An update was provided on Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB), where changes in federal procurement processes have reduced profit margins despite increased overall revenue. DBVI leadership continues to monitor financial performance and explore strategies to ensure VIB remains financially stable.
- DBVI's Vocational Rehabilitation program remains in a strong financial position, with sufficient carryover funding projected to support operations through late February or early March 2027, reducing concerns related to federal continuing resolution funding delays.
- Dr. Mitchell announced that DBVI has not been selected for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring during the current or upcoming year, which reflects positively on the agency's reporting and program performance.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – *Deputy Commissioner for Services Kathy Malone*
Written report provided with staffing and vacancies. Additional comments are as follows:

- Several O&M vacancies are not uncommon as many are experiencing shortages across the nation.

VR Program Update – *Megan Hall*
Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

- Megan Hall reported on attendance at the CSAVR and NCSAB conferences, where discussions focused on national vocational rehabilitation trends, including Order of Selection (OOS). Currently, 17 states are operating under OOS, with several more seeking approval. Virginia remains in a strong fiscal position and is not anticipating the need for OOS but is proactively learning about requirements and preparation processes.
- NCSAB discussions highlighted recent developments related to the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Litigation regarding priority for blind vendors on military installations has been resolved, restoring blind vendors' first right of refusal for vending and dining facilities. Virginia participated in a multi-state effort that secured opportunities within the Commonwealth.
- DBVI performance measures were reviewed. Virginia ranked #1 nationally in Measurable Skills Gains at 81.7%. Employment outcomes for the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit were lower than desired; however, federal employment and self-employment outcomes are often not reflected in wage data. Staff are developing methods to better capture those outcomes. Credential attainment was 58%, and median earnings were $9,050.
- Student services remain active. An upcoming partnership with Endless Opportunities in Abingdon will provide students with hands-on career exploration through simulated work environments such as banking and customer service.
- Ms. Hall provided an update on upcoming HR One Medicaid work requirements. DBVI is collaborating with partner agencies, including the Department of Education, DARS, and Virginia

Works, to establish referral, co-enrollment, and communication processes to support individuals affected by the new requirements. Guidance and resources will be shared with counselors to assist consumers in navigating these changes.

2027 SRC Meeting Dates
A draft calendar for 2027 SRC Meeting Dates was proposed. Ms. Klein moved to approve the dates. Mr. Karim seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the following meeting dates were adopted.
2027: February 19, May 7, August 13, November 5 (virtual)

Old and New Business

SRC Annual Report Update – *Kendall Morris*

- Ms. Morris reported that the Annual Report Committee reviewed prior reports and identified several improvements. Planned updates include creating an accessible, screen-reader-friendly format, adding an executive summary to highlight key accomplishments, and standardizing committee submissions for improved readability. A guide for future report development is also being created.
- Ms. Morris noted that the committee is reviewing data questions with staff and recommended incorporating council goals and recommendations into future reports. A draft report is expected before Thanksgiving, followed by review, accessibility testing, and revisions prior to the year-end submission deadline.
- Ms. Hall thanked Kendall Morris and the committee for their work in modernizing the report format.
- Ms. Hall shared a success story about a student who began receiving DBVI services at age 14 and participated in several student programs, including Cyberspace. While attending William and Mary, he completed an internship with MITRE and was recently offered a full-time position as a quantum physicist.
- Ms. Hall noted that this achievement reflects the long-term impact of DBVI's student services and transition programs as early participants begin entering the workforce. Ms. Morris requested that the success story and related materials be incorporated into the annual report.

Nominating Committee
The nominating committee recommended Mr. Amaan Karim as Vice-Chair and possibility of John Leopold as Chair once his re-appointment is confirmed.

Election of Officers- SRC Chair and Vice Chair
Ms. Lawyer moved to adopt the appointment of Vice Chair, Ms. Klein seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

VRCBVI Presentation – *Yadiel Sotomayor*

- Mr. Sotomayor reported that the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) welcomed two new staff members: Michael Fish, Access Technology Instructor, and Michael Craven, Wellness Instructor.
- Mr. Sotomayor provided an overview of VRCBVI programs, including the adult training program, which teaches orientation and mobility, personal and home management, Braille, access technology, and wellness. He noted ongoing efforts to incorporate emerging technologies and AI tools into instruction.

- He also highlighted the LIFE (Living Independent Feeling Empowered) summer program for youth and the Thrive55 program for older adults adjusting to vision loss. Both programs continue to produce positive outcomes, including participants who later enroll in the adult training program and serve as mentors to other students.
- Mr. Sotomayor shared several student success stories demonstrating increased confidence, independence, and successful transitions to higher education, employment, and leadership roles.

Adjourn
All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Next SRC Quarterly Meeting will be held in person on February 19, 2027.