

Employment First Council  
Working Meeting Minutes  
February 19, 2019  
GCDD Offices  
2 Peachtree Street  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Members Present:

Shawn Ryan  
Tim Evans  
Parker Glick  
Brandt White  
Dave Ward  
Rossany Rios  
Felita Williams  
Eric Jacobson  
John Wells  
Paula Poulicek  
James Stinchcomb  
Conrado Marion-Landais  
Amy Riedesel  
Todd Youngblood

GVRA Executive Director and Employment First Council Chair Shawn Ryan called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Mr. Ryan welcomed everyone and gave a brief overview of his career background.

GVRA Attorney II Michael Huenig outlined the timeframe of the first report to the Governor and Legislature, noting that a draft should be completed by March 7, with the final first report going out before the end of this year's legislative session. The second report would be distributed sometime in the fall.

GCDD Executive Director Eric Jacobson gave an overview of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, specifically highlighting the three major programs funded through his organization.

Paula Poulicek, a special education teacher with Floyd County Schools, spoke on how the Georgia Department of Education partners with the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to prepare students to transition into higher education or into the workforce.

Mr. Huenig described the functions of GVRA's five statutory programs and how federal WIOA legislation has informed the agency's mission in recent years.

DBHDD Director of Community Services Amy Riedesel spoke on how the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities works to provide supports for individuals once they are on the job, effectively taking the reins from GVRA following job placement.

Rossany Rios, the Disability Employment Initiative Lead with the Georgia Department of Economic

Development, discussed the GDED's efforts to serve individuals with disabilities. She noted that communication between agencies has historically been a weak point, and the creation and functions of the Employment First Council should do much to improve this.

Dr. Felita Williams, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Partnerships & Accreditation with the University System of Georgia, highlighted the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (formerly AMAC) at Georgia Tech and the Library System's GLASS Program as examples of how assistive technology can help students overcome barriers and ultimately succeed in their studies and in their chosen career.

Georgia Department of Labor Deputy Commissioner Tim Evans described the various tax credits available to those looking to employ individuals with disabilities as well as the services offered to those individuals at the various DOL Career Centers.

Vice Chair John Wells spoke on the struggles he experienced navigating the state's systems of benefits and supports for his son Joshua. A high level of staff turnover and a lack of internal communication posed primary problems, he said. The Council, then, should serve as a place where all the organizations present can find common ground and work together for the best interest of the consumer, he said.

Conrado Marion-Landais, Diversity & Inclusion Manager at Georgia Power, gave an employer's perspective of hiring individuals with disabilities. He said a consortium of Atlanta business leaders, named DisabilityIN, is working to break down stigmas and encourage such hiring practices at companies both big and small.

The Council then discussed the proposed format of the first report and possible future meeting dates.

Executive Director Ryan thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 2:25 p.m.