

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD**  
**January 11, 2023**  
**1:00 PM – 2:25 PM**  
**1197 S Lumpkin St, Athens, GA 30602**  
**+1 470-579-3674**  
**Conference ID: 175 643 660#**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Tom Wilson (Chair)  
Faye Perdue (Vice Chair)  
Sandy Adams (Secretary)  
Craig Camuso  
Louise Hill  
Vincent Martin (Virtually)  
Jonathan Taylor (Virtually)  
Jane McCall (Virtually)  
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

**Introduction**

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance, and the meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Approval of Agenda**

The board unanimously approved the agenda for the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the November 16, 2022, meeting were unanimously approved. Mr. Perdue motioned to approve, and Mrs. Perdue seconded.

**GVRA Staff Updates/Reports:**

**Executive Director Report – Executive Director Chris Wells**

Executive Director began his report by acknowledging Karen McClure, Counselor Assistant, as the November 2022 Employee of the Month.

**Program Highlights -- Executive Director, Chris Wells**

Executive Director, Chris Wells, presented an Executive Report on the agency's program highlights:

**Key Recruitments:**

- Posting for 50 Counselors statewide
- Three (3) Interns have been promoted to Counselor 1 as of January 1, 2023
- Eight (8) VR Supervisors have been hired
- Anticipates 20-25 new hires to start on February 1st (most are Adjudicators).

**Key Vacancies:**

- VR Statewide Employment Coordinator
- Statewide Training and Development Manager

- Residential Director

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Georgia Academy for the Blind
  - Interviewed and selected a dedicated counselor to work for Georgia Academy for the Blind
- Certified Public Managers Training
  - Twenty-eight (28) employees represented from each program
- Georgia Industries for the Blind
  - Level-3 Face Mask Certification approved
  - Potentially purchasing a new KN95 Mask Machine to replace faulty one
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring
  - Five (5) of eight (8) findings resolved
  - Business Enterprise Program still outstanding

### **Legislative Updates – Deputy Executive Director of Programs, Bethany Whetzel**

Deputy Executive Director of Programs, Bethany Whetzel presented on legislative updates:

#### **Legislative Updates**

- Study Committee for Individuals with Disabilities Report – GVRA identified as an agency that should play a collaborative role in implementing Medicaid waivers
- Public Affidavit due by January 31, 2023
- Anticipating Senate Bill 108 to be reintroduced

### **Supported Employment – Supported Employment Statewide Coordinator, Sharon DeMille**

Supported Employment Statewide Coordinator, Sharon DeMille presented an overview of the Senate Study Committee on People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Waiver Plan Access. The following items were discussed:

- The Senate Study Committee has asked that GVRA have an active Employment First Council. (meetings that include plans and goals)
- Add Supported Self Employment to policy as an offered service; this is an initiative on which GVRA is actively working
- GVRA & DBHDD Developmental Disability division currently collaborate around Supported Employment for this population, and both embrace the philosophy, “competitive, integrated employment is the first and preferred option in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities.”
- More ACRE certified providers are needed to increase the Supported Employment services that are offered

### **Individual Placements and Supports (IPS)**

- DBHDD MH has been in collaboration with IPS Supported Employment (SE)
- Working with twenty-three (23) DBHDD-approved providers across the state
- IPS serves only clients diagnosed with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness and embraces evidence-based procedures that have proven effective with this population
- DBHDD has approved 2,611 client slots that GVRA can potentially work with

## **Developmental Disabilities**

- Ten (10) counselors working on the collaboration between DBHDD and Supported Employment
- Working with Waiver approved clients-whether their waiver is fully funded, or they are on the planning list
- Utilizes dually approved providers (by both GVRA and DBHDD) to provide consistency in care as they transfer from GVRA SE to Medicaid waiver services
- Follows the Employment First philosophy that “work is the first and preferred choice for all individuals with a disability” and “all individuals can work, with the right supports in place.”
- Utilizes both Traditional Supported Employment and Customized Supported Employment

## **Traditional Supported Employment Model**

- Is open to any counselor, caseload, and any type of Most Significant Disability
- Still follows “Place and Train” model
- Is only used for those who will benefit from extensive & ongoing supports
- Is a “Place and Train” model - no prerequisites required. Coaching takes place in real world situations
  
- SE cases during SFY 20-23
  - SFY 20- 2,387
  - SFY 21- 1,448
  - SFY 22- 1,434
  - SFY 23- 1,784
- Number of Cases closed Successfully through SE for SFY 20- SFY 23
  - SFY 20- 552
  - SFY 21- 376
  - SFY 22- 493
  - SFY 23- 211
- Total payment amount for SE services during SFY 20-23
  - SFY 20- \$6,782,100
  - SFY 21- \$4,351,775
  - SFY 22- \$4,715,050
  - SFY 23- \$1,459,050

## **Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE)**

- Awarded SWTCIE grant and will use the first year to plan and determine how the grant will be allocated
- Posted the internal jobs that are related to the grant
- Working to approve contract for the outside services (such as external evaluator and technical assistance)
- Working to bring together the core partners and developed MOUs for continued relationship
- Arranging for first pilot site (for year two) at Creative Enterprises in east Metro, along with the school systems in Gwinnett & Forsyth counties.
- Establishing second pilot site (year three) at SunnyDale Services in Ocilla, GA, along with Irwin City school system

## **Residential Services – Interim Director, Tamika Wright**

Interim Director Tamika Wright presented an overview of the current state of Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) and Cave Spring Center (CSC). During her presentation, Wright also discussed Transition Services and the trend of PTS cases between 2021-2023:

- 2021 – 1,034 PTS cases
- 2022 – 3,030 PTS cases
- 2023 – 3,637 PTS cases

## **RWS/Cave Spring Highlights**

- Carl Hearn has been promoted to Chief of Police
- Candidate has been selected for our collaborative with Georgia Academy for the Blind and is scheduled to begin on January 16, 2023
- RWS will host six weeks of summer GROW opportunities beginning in June. This will feature the unique ability for potentially eligible students to gain independent living skills
- Cave Spring Center will host six weeks of summer GROW opportunities beginning in June. This will be a unique opportunity, as it will focus on our deaf population
- RWS will be assisting field services by providing direct services to surrounding counties in PRE-ETS.
- Beginning in January, RWS will begin to leverage the academic and assessment team by utilizing their skills to provide direct client services in Harris, Troup, Meriwether and Talbot counties
- RWS and CSC have been granted accreditation by the Georgia Non-Public Post-Secondary Education Commission. This accreditation gives the agency the ability to:
  - a. report pre-employment transition services being delivered to RSA
  - b. potentially become eligible to receive financial aid in the future
  - c. collaborate with local public schools that may not have a career and vocational program and expand service delivery.
  - d. offer accredited degrees and certifications
- RWS is moving away from having an onsite psychology department; additionally, field counselors have discussed opportunities to leverage local mental health service providers and crisis intervention resources for students and their families
- In April, once students have left campus, RWS staff will begin extensive campus wide training on best practices related to case management, documentation, AWARE, CPR, crisis intervention etc.
- On December 15, 2022, Roosevelt Warm Springs held its Winter Commencement Ceremony
- 87 students graduated
- 467 certifications achieved
- 10 students have obtained or returned to employment
- RWS will begin accepting applications statewide for the summer GROW camp in February, with its first camp beginning in June.
- August 2023 will begin RWS' first semester-based programming, utilizing the six (6) core vocational paths (Health Science, Commercial/Residential Infrastructure, Warehousing, Hospitality, Retail, and Self Employment)

## **Comprehensive State Needs Assessment (CSNA)- Director of Policy and Compliance, Jeff Allen**

Director of Policy and Compliance, Jeff Allen presented an overview of the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment (CSNA):

- The CSNA is an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing in the State of Georgia
- It is intended to help inform the Unified State Plan developed by the core partners in Georgia's Workforce Development System
- Required every three years
- The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) are responsible for completing
- For 2023, partnered with The Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) housed at the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD) at the University of Georgia (UGA)

### **CSNA Requirements Covered**

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this part
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system as identified by those individuals and personnel assisting those individuals through the components of the system
- An assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services provided under this part are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.](#)) in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities

### **CSNA Concerns and Solutions**

- Concern: Communication
- Solutions: Implemented "Is VR Right for Me?", transition forums, provider summits and client services informational
- Concern: Transportation barriers
- Solutions: Participation in Statewide Planning, Fleet Vehicles and Online Referral
- Concern: Access to services
- Solutions: Online referral portal and fleet vehicles
- Concern: Consistency of Services
- Solutions: Standardized curriculum, training department, policy team, provider training and contract alignment
- Concerns: Timeliness of Services
- Solutions: Data analytics team, increased hiring, case alignment, counselor v. PTS duties

### **New/Old Business –**

- Next meeting March 8, 2023, 1:00 PM

### **Public Comment/Adjournment- None**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 P.M.

## Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the January 11, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on March 8, 2023.

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Tom Wilson, Chair

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Date

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Sandy Adams, Secretary

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Date