

MINUTES OF MEETING
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
Wednesday, January 12, 2022
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Zoom Platform

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chairman)
Faye Perdue (Vice-Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Craig Camuso
Vincent Martin
Angela Mackey
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Chairman Wilson recognized the University of Georgia Bulldogs on their football national championship. He noted that this meeting's theme is "Supported Employment."

Approval of Agenda

The board unanimously approved the agenda for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the November 2021 meeting were unanimously approved. Ms. Perdue motioned to approve, and Ms. Adams seconded.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Chris Wells

GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells updated the board on Governor Kemp's proposed budget highlights, which includes a proposed pay increase of \$5,000 for all full-time state employees in addition to expanding the employer 401k match among other things. This proposed budget will still need to go through the budget process in the legislature.

Director Wells noted that counselor and counselor assistant positions continue to see a significant turnover rate, the turnover rate in these groups is still below the state average.

He said VR continues to shrink its waiting list, and as of Jan of this year, the average time on the waitlist is down to one week. All school systems will be contacted this month to offer GVRA services and further grow existing collaborations between the agency and school systems across the state. He broke down successful client closure rates, as well as noting the kind of occupations typically filled by GVRA clients.

GVRA will finalize its RSA monitoring information which is due by the end of January. GVRA continues to work through its corrective action plan with RSA.

Director Wells gave an overview of Georgia Industries for the Blind, noting that leadership is working to diversify product lines to help meet growing demands and adjust to the current economic realities.

He noted that the GVRA Employee of the Month Program continues to go smoothly and serves as a great opportunity to recognize staff who go above and beyond.

Administration Update -- Jonathan Buxton, Director of Administration

Mr. Buxton noted that IT continues its equipment refresh and will be finalizing a three-year laptop lease agreement in the coming weeks. IT is also bringing all offices up to modern standards in regards to internet speed and connectivity, though this process has been delayed due to supply chain issues. Mr. Buxton noted that staff are being transitioned away from landlines towards the Microsoft Voice VOIP system. In addition, he said, GVRA is almost done consolidating onto the 13th floor of 200 Piedmont Avenue, with a projected finalization date by the end of January.

Mr. Buxton gave an overview of capital projects, including the RWS portico project, the RWS HVAC system project and the CSC regrading project.

He said that the agency is working to hire a new Board and Legislative Liaison, and the second round of interviews will be completed this week. Staff is monitoring proposed legislation as the 2022 Legislative Session gets underway.

GVRA Fiscal is building out a contract-monitoring process, made possible due in large part to the increased staffing in GVRA's fiscally-focused departments.

Mr. Buxton reviewed agency expenditures through roughly half of the state fiscal year. GVRA expenditures are trending appropriately for this period of the state fiscal year.

Supported Employment Presentation -- Sharon Demille, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Ms. Demille gave an overview of Supported Employment, noting that it is effectively competitive integrated employment that requires ongoing support services. She examined spending as it applied to supported employment since SFY20. While SE spending has reduced since COVID-19 began, she said that it is slowly but surely ticking back up. She also showed Supported Employment outcomes over the last two fiscal years. Despite fewer clients, the successful closure rate during this time has actually increased.

GVRA has a collaboration with DBHDD around SE work. Cases that come in through the shared referral network are tracked by both organizations, and once GVRA closes, the individual returns to DBHDD for waiver services.

Ms. Demille turned it over to Christine Gudgin, supported employment manager with DBHDD, who said that the partnership between DBHDD and GVRA was life changing for individuals across the state, ensuring that the necessary supports are in place to allow clients with disabilities to go to work in competitive and integrated employment.

Ms. Demille gave a breakdown of IPS (Individual Placement and Support). While the structure looks like SE, IPS doesn't involve so much on the front end, instead jumping immediately to the efforts to find the client a job. She further broke down the steps taken through the IPS process.

IPS Provider Presentation – Robert Howell, State Director of Supported Employment for AmericanWork

Mr. Howell noted that AmericanWork has been a GVRA partner for 7 years, providing IPS services to GVRA clients during this time. He gave an overview of the seven principles of IPS (rapid job placement, benefits planning, frequent treatment team meetings, client choice, zero exclusion, competitive employment, continuing supports). Mr. Howell shared a recent success story.

New/Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

Chairman Wilson requested the board vote on their regular calendar through 2022. Ms. Adams made the motion to approve, and Ms. Perdue seconded. The calendar was adopted unanimously.

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.

Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the January 12, 2022, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on March 9, 2022.

Tom Wilson, Chair

Date