

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
WEDNESDAY, April 12, 2017
2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Augusta Marriott and Convention Center
2 10th Street
Augusta, GA 30901

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sandy Adams
Tom Wilson
Dianne Davis
Angela Mackey
Louise Hill
Vincent Martin
Jimmy DeFoor

Jimmy DeFoor, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. DeFoor called for approval of the Feb. 2017 minutes. Mr. Wilson moved to approve the minutes, and Ms. Adams seconded. The minutes were passed unanimously.

High School High Tech Presentation

Karen Royston, Chief Executive Officer of the Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities—which administers the Georgia High School High Tech (HSHT) program—gave a presentation on HSHT, noting that the program has extended to 54 school systems and 94 high schools, on the whole serving 1,234 students statewide. She noted that the program has grown exponentially in the years since its inception, and because of its emphasis on outcomes, the program has seen increases not only in graduation rates but also post-secondary attendance.

Executive Director's Report

GVRA Executive Director Sean Casey noted the recent conclusion of the 2017 legislative session. During the session, the Georgia House and Senate increased GVRA's budget by 6 percent.

GVRA staff as well as board members recently returned from the CSAVR conference in Washington D.C. Mr. Casey noted they had a very successful trip, delivering the message of GVRA to key stakeholders and elected officials.

VR Field Report

Chief Client Management Officer Dale Arnold said that staff are in the middle of doing business process mapping, noting how clients move through the VR process and how the organization engages with them at each step of the process. This will amount to more streamlined processes and will allow clients to move through the program quicker and with better success rates.

He noted that staff are working on data conversion for the new AWARE case management system, ensuring that it's accurate and will yield sound statistics whenever a query is entered.

Policy Manual Update

Policy and Appeals Manager Jennifer Howell noted that the State Rehabilitation Council has eight upcoming public hearings regarding policy changes mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). A new policy format will go live on July 1 of this year. This will, on the whole, ensure that service delivery is not impeded by procedural practices as they conflict with policy mandates.

Transition Update

Assistant Director of Transition Services Shelley Kraft described some new happenings under the E3 grant. She noted that students at the Georgia Academy for the Blind recently visited with Georgia Industries for the Blind staff and were excited to see opportunities for individuals who share their disability. In addition, Georgia School for the Deaf was recently added as an E3 pilot. The Georgia Academy for the Blind has also been named as a Project Search site. Video recording also recently wrapped in Troup County as part of a larger video project outlining the successes of the E3 program. She noted that collaborations between the agency and schools systems have never been stronger.

Training and Development Update

Chief Human Resources Officer Marya Calhoun noted the various technical and Section 511 trainings the agency has previously conducted. She said that new manager and supervisor training will occur every quarter. She highlighted several future trainings that will ensure both compliance under WIOA as well as professional development of staff. Ms. Hill noted that training should be conducted in core competencies to ensure all staff use inclusive and appropriate languages regardless of audience.

Financial Report

Chief Finance Officer Minerva Nixon reiterated the 6 percent increase in the SFY 2018 budget that was approved by the House and Senate during the recent legislative session. She noted that monies were allocated both this year and the next for merit-based pay raises. She noted that while GVRA is coming closer to drawing down the maximum amount allowed from federal matching funds, the organization would require a significant amount more in state funds. She noted that the FY 2016 audit has been concluded and invited the board to give any questions they may have about it to her.

Deaf Blind Report

Director of Deaf and Blind Services Denine Woodson said that the organization is committed to providing specialized services to sensory populations. She noted that while foundational issues from the past have been addressed, there's still a long way to go to ensure the best possible service delivery. She said that staff will be holding listening sessions across the state in the coming weeks in an effort to hear from the clients and stakeholders and use their feedback to develop the most optimized plan for proceeding in the future.

State Rehabilitation Council Update

SRC Liaison Dana Skelton-Sanders said that the council has finalized a resource plan, as mandated by the federal government. She said they're collecting feedback from the clients and will be holding several public hearings across the state in the month of May. She noted that the customer satisfaction survey for the coming year is being prepared by staff at the University of Georgia. The SRC will be providing recommendations to GVRA in the coming year.

State Independent Living Council Update

SILC Director Shelley Simmons said she appreciates the support at a recent fundraiser. The SILC received \$100,000 from the Georgia Legislature to go into housing resources for clients. She played a promotional video, which will be a part of a larger video series.

New Business

Mr. DeFoor mentioned the possibility of a program that would encourage agency retirees to partner with current staff, a concept that would help staff drawn from the knowledge and experience of those who have come before.

Mr. Wilson noted the annual federal recognition of qualified rehabilitation counselors, which this year occurred on March 22. He read a portion of this year's federal legislation that commemorated the day.

Mr. Casey announced that Mr. Wilson was the recent recipient of the 2017 Lean On Award from the National Rehabilitation Association.

Mr. DeFoor noted that board members have received a tentative meeting schedule for the remainder of this year, saying that members have discussed the possibility of moving board meetings to once every other month. Mr. Wilson moved to adopt that bi-monthly meeting schedule, and Mr. Martin seconded. It was unanimously adopted.

Old Business

Mr. DeFoor mentioned that individual board members should select certain departments within the organization to which they would serve as a liaison.

Mr. DeFoor said that board officer elections will need to be held during the June meeting.

Public Comment

Jim Hilderbrandt said that he wants to put a face to the clients GVRA serves. He said he's had an open case for seven years and had to resign from his job in October of 2009. He said he wishes GVRA would provide him with more training so he can go back to work. Mr. Casey said that he has reached out to Mr. Arnold, and Ms. Woodson will be in contact with him shortly.

Vashaun Jones said he appreciates GVRA's service but he echoes the sentiments of Mr. Hilderbrandt. He said the organization he works for is aimed at creating work for individuals with disabilities. He listed four requests for the board and on the whole encouraged the organization to focus predominantly on results. He said he has been attempting to get a service renewal for his business, Fedora Outlier.

Special Announcement

Mr. DeFoor congratulated Chief External Affairs Officer Katie Womick on her birthday.

Adjournment

Mr. DeFoor adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m.