

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
WEDNESDAY, JULY 8TH, 2020
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chairman)
Faye Perdue (Vice-Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Louise Hill
Suzanne Dooley
Craig Camuso
Jonathan Taylor
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May 13th and June 23rd meetings were passed unanimously.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Chris Wells

Recently appointed Executive Director Chris Wells thanked the board for providing him insight into GVRA over the last couple of weeks. In the near future, Mr. Wells says he plans to visit the VR field offices. He complimented the leadership team he inherited from the previous executive director. Mr. Wells stated initial areas to address include consolidation of resources, moving forward with Accenture recommendations and options not considered by Accenture for the VR Program. From a vision perspective, he stated he intends to focus on culture, communication, strategic planning and efficiency through collaboration. He noted his Executive Director's inbox, ExecutiveDirector@gvs.ga.gov, as a platform through which to address employee questions and concerns. All communication is confidential.

In remarks following the Executive Director's report, board member Louise Hill stressed the importance of training for staff going forward.

Vocational Rehabilitation – Dr. Christine Fleming, VR Director

The State Plan has been submitted with a new required measurable skills gain of 25.8. The Correction Action Plan is on hold due to a new data system implemented by RSA. The RSA monitoring visit has been placed on hold due to COVID-19 until further notice. Dr. Fleming

shared with the board the number of VR staff categorized by title and numbers of clients served in each case status. She also provided the data for the VR Performance Goals for SFY 2020.

Dr. Fleming stated that she and Mr. Wells are examining recommendations and issues identified in reports from Accenture and the University of Georgia in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

A taskforce has been put in place to study the functionality of AWARE regarding data for federal reporting, updates to the Policy Manual, and training for VR staff for recent federal reporting data changes. Mr. Wells and Dr. Fleming are both working on a formal response to questions submitted via public comments on Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) funding model changes.

Dr. Fleming informed the board of a 5% budget cut from DBHDD.

The Provider Manual is now available on the agency website. Currently, providers have the option to provide some services remotely. PreETs agreements have been distributed.

Information Technology – Don Privitera, Chief Information Officer

Don Privitera shared his background in IT. Mr. Privitera's initial assessment of the agency's IT department is that there exists a need for cross training, documented formal processes and cost-saving technology upgrades. COVID has presented challenges related to long-term teleworking for most staff. IT is working to mitigate associated cybersecurity risks.

Budget Report – Jessime McGarity, Director

Jessime McGarity provided data on the agency's financial performance as of June 2020. She described and provided a description of the agency SFY20 Budget vs Actuals by Object Class, with those listed by personal services, grants and benefits, contractual services, real estate computer and other operating costs. Ms. McGarity updated the board with budget highlights from all the programs. Ms. McGarity informed the Board that the Office of Planning and Budget is continuing to look at cost savings in contracts. She also provided an explanation to the Board regarding variable increases or decreases in various budget classes. The Office of Planning and Budget is currently working on year end close out.

New/Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

None

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Kate Brady, Chair

Ms. Brady welcomed Executive Director Wells. At the last SRC meeting, the annual budget was reviewed and there was no overage of spending due to virtual meetings and council members not travel. The SRC Executive Committee and CAP worked with Dr. Fleming on the collection of the public comments on the revision of the CTP/Policy and Funding model. In the next state fiscal year, the SRC will focus on employment and self-employment initiatives.

Statewide Independent Living Center (SILC) – Becky Ramage-Tuttle, Assistant Director

Ms. Ramage-Tuttle welcomed Mr. Wells on behalf of the SILC. The State Plan for Independent Living has been submitted to ACL for approval. The SILCs and Centers for Independent Living

are continuing to slowly open for business. The CILs are taking appointments or meeting via Zoom. The SILC and Georgia Independent Living Network Quarterly Board meeting will be held on Thursday, July 16th, via Zoom.

Employment First Council – John Wells, Vice Chairman

John Wells provided background on how the Employment First Council was created legislatively in 2018. Mr. Wells informed the board the DOL position is currently vacant. Mr. Wells shared some of the Council’s concerns, including funding issues, lack of a one – stop sources for individuals with disabilities, training and agency data conflicts. Due to the agency reorganization, the appointment of a new executive director and COVID, the council meetings are on temporary hold. Upon reactivation, the Council is interested in hiring a facilitator to work with all agencies involved.

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting date is Wednesday, September 9th. Meeting platform to be determined.