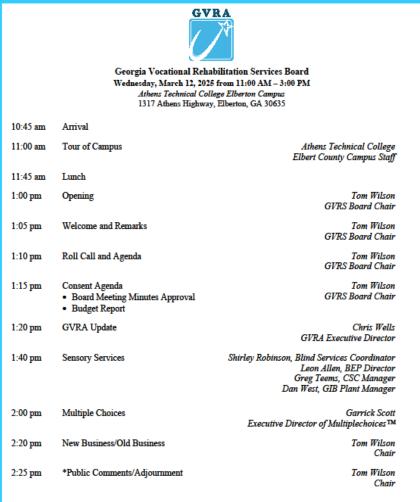
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board Meeting

Tom Wilson, Board Chairman GVRS_Board@gvs.ga.gov



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board Meeting Agenda



*Individuals are allowed up to five (5) minutes for public comment. The board asks that individuals seeking public comment, provide written notice in advance or upon completion of the meeting.

Please join the Zoom meeting by clicking on this link.



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Consent Agenda

- Previous Board Meeting Minutes Approval
- Budget Report



MEETING MINUTES OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD January 8, 2025 10:00 AM – 3:01 PM Tomy Nobis Center 240 Interstate N. Parkway, Atlanta, Georgia 30339

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson, Chair Faye Perdue, Vice Chair Sandy Adams, Secretary Craig Camuso Chris Wells, GVRA Executive Director & Ex Officio Member Louise Hill (virtually) Vincent Martin (virtually) Jane McCall (virtually)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Suzanne Dooley James Defoor Johnathan Taylor

Invocation

Mrs. Faye Perdue, Vice Chair of the GVRS Board, offered the invocation for the January Board meeting.

Opening and Welcome

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance, and the meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda

Chairman Wilson performed a roll call and recommended the approval of the amended agenda.

On motion of Vice Chair Perdue, seconded by Mr. Camuso, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Agenda as amended.

Chairman Wilson recommended the approval of the Consent Agenda, consisting of the following:

- <u>Approve</u> Board Meeting Minutes from Previous Session
- <u>Approve</u> Budget Report

On motion of Secretary Adams, seconded by Vice Chair Perdue, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented.



MEETING MINUTES OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD January 8, 2025 Page 2 of 4

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports:

Executive Director Report - Executive Director Chris Wells

Budget Reports

Executive Director Wells reviewed the FY2025 Budget and further shared performance measures for each area within the Agency.

Agency Spotlights

- Executive Director Wells highlighted those chosen as Employees of the Month for September 2024 through November 2024:
 - Sandra Butler, Fiscal Services Billing Supervisor, September 2024 Employee of the Month
- Patricia Burns, Procurement Specialist at Roosevelt Warm Springs, October 2024 Employee of the Month
- Dana Škelton, VR Supervisor at the Cleveland Office, November 2024 Employee of the Month
- Executive Director Wells shared examples of Staff Recognition and Celebrations with the Board.

Legislative Updates

 Executive Director Wells provided a legislative update to the Board, including bills becoming effective January 1, <u>2025</u> and specific bills we are watching during the 2025 Legislative Session.

Disability Adjudication Services (DAS)

- Executive Director Wells presented information on the two programs that DAS processes claims for, SSDI and SSI.
- Although DAS employees are state employees, the program is 100% federal funded and
 processes federal workers for the Social Security Administration (SSA). SSA establishes
 policies and procedures, establishes each state's program budget to include hires and
 personnel totals, and manages all IT infrastructure.
- Since 2020, DAS adjudicators have declined from 180 to 147, although the percent of cases
 processed accurately rose from 92% to 96%.

Vocational Rehabilitation Updates

Investment in Staff and Performance

- Saw the number of counselors rise drastically from 88 in FY2021 to 170 in FY2025
- Expanded opportunities through degree requirements



MEETING MINUTES OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD January 8, 2025 Page 3 of 4

- Increased pay by 65%
- CRC Test and Certificate Reimbursements
- Saw the Number of Days from Referral to IPE Reduced from 166 to 51 in FY2025

The Bud McCall Post-Secondary Grant

- Effective January 2024, the Amount of Grants Awarded Rose from \$1.867M to \$2.398M.
- The Number of Post-Secondary Students Served Rose from 313 in FY2024 to 524 in FY2025.

Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) / Cave Spring Center (CSC)

- The Number of Credentials Earned Rose from 35 in August 2023 to 311 in August 2024.
- The Graduation Rate Rose from 94% in August 2023 to 100% in August 2024.
- The Enrollment Rose from 16 in August 2023 to 96 in August 2024.

Pathways to Partnerships (P2P)

Mrs. Shannah Mabry, Project Manager, Mr. Vincent Bass, Project Coordinator, and Ms. Julie Moilanen, Chief Officer of Polk County Schools and P2P Partner, shared information about the Pathways to Partnership (P2P) program and their mission to improve training and preparation of children and youth with disabilities in Georgia to eventually obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment in conjunction and coordination with other state, local, and private entities.

P2P has seen a growth of enrollment and receiving additional supports and services

- 1600% in Disability Connections
- 467% in Northwest Georgia CIL
- 900% in Walton Options

Tommy Nobis Center (TNC)

Dave Ward, President and CEO of the Tommy Nobis Center, provided a tour of their center and shared the services offered through their School-Based Pre-ETS programs in Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Gordon, Gwinnett, Forsyth, Fulton/APS, and Paulding counties.

Mr. Ward shared information about their Summer and School Break GROW programs and their path for students in The Academy at TNC, which includes three months of classroom-based education, three months of job discovery and development, and six months of employment support.



MEETING MINUTES OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD January 8, 2025 Page 4 of 4

Upcoming Events

Brandeis Thompson, Community Engagement Manager, provided an update on the GVRA Day at the Fair and shared the following upcoming events:

- SenseAbility Week 2025 CILs Showcase
- Transition Fair
- Career Fair
- · GVRA Day at the Fair
- Southeast Regional Institute on <u>Deafness (SERID) Conference Host</u>

Old Business/New Business

Chairman Wilson reminded the Board about upcoming Board meeting dates for 2025 and stated he <u>will</u> provide additional information as available:

- March 12, 2025 Athens Technical College Elberton County Campus, Elberton, Georgia
- May 14, 2025 TBD
- August 13, 2025 Roosevelt Warm Springs, Warm Springs, Georgia
- October 8, 2025 Georgia National Fair, Perry, Georgia

Public Comment & Adjournment

Chairman Wilson opened the floor for public comment. Juliet Hardeman, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chairman, shared the following:

- How to Strengthen Parent Voices
- Always seeking new SRC members
- Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Looking to Place Students Based on Their Interest/Preference/Availability
- SB10 and SB233
- · Georgia Youth Challenge for Students on Military Bases
- Upcoming SRC Meeting January 22, 2025

<u>Adjournment</u>

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Wilson called for a motion to adjourn.

On motion of Mr. Camuso, seconded by Vice Chair Perdue, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:01 p.m.



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency FY2025 Agency Budget Comparison

Category	Total Expenditures	Current Budget	Percent to Budget
Personal Services	\$53,734,580	\$89,368,155	60%
Regular Operating Expenses	7,184,824	7,930,520	91%
Motor Vehicle Expenses	23,640	-	-
Equipment	1,514,864	1,949,142	78%
IT Expenditures	4,188,220	5,152,845	81%
Real Estate Rentals	4,124,617	8,071,572	51%
Telecommunications	874,394	1,602,783	55%
Capital Projects/Outlay	303,440	-	-
Contractual Services	12,658,786	13,921,204	91%
Transfers	-	135,000	-
Grants and Benefits	6,637,560	6,358,601	104%
Other	438,130	1,018,493	43%
DAS Case Services	11,820,058	21,092,853	56%
VR Case Services	42,161,146	47,919,651	88%
Total Expenditures	\$145,664,259	\$204,520,819	71%

*As of February 28, 2025



Wednesday, March 12, 2025 GVRS Board Meeting Executive Director's Report

Chris Wells, Executive Director Chris.Wells@gvs.ga.gov





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Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Agency Spotlight – Employees of the Month



Greg Teems, Facility Manager of Cave Spring Center, (**December 2024**) – Greg is responsible for overseeing the Cave Spring Center (CSC), a 24/7 residential facility. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of programming at CSC, maintaining day programming for local schools, and extending certain pathways for VR clients. Greg does all of this while seeking out ways to recognize and appreciate his employees, seek out partnerships for new pathways, and keep his clients' best interests at heart. Since joining the agency, Greg has seen an increase in staff from five employees to currently over 15. Greg has also worked with the BEP team to begin a residential pilot program on certifying vendors. This would be the first residential setting for BLV clients focusing on independent living and entrepreneurship. Greg is the epitome of a high-achieving staff member of GVRA.

Tunesia Durham, Intake Unit Specialist (**January 2025**) – Tunesia consistently exemplifies dedication and diligence, ensuring every task is completed to the highest standard. Since being added to the intake unit, she has seamlessly integrated and maintained her exceptional performance. Her patient demeanor and exceptional rapport with applicants have earned her glowing feedback and admiration. She truly stands out as a deserving candidate for Employee of the Month. She goes the extra mile to ensure consumers and external/internal stakeholders feel heard and all cases are moving forward.





Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Staff Recognition

District 5 Staff at the Bibb County Schools Transition Fair!

Shout out to the District 5 Warner Robins/Macon staff for greeting families and sharing information about GVRA services at the Bibb County School District Transition Fair on Saturday, February 5th. Great job Transition Supervisor Jennifer Arnorld and Transition Counselors Natalie Smith Oldaker and Stephanie Brazziel!





Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency **NextGen Project Newsletter**



NextGen Project Team minds want to know!

The latest scoop on updates and accomplishments across the NextGen Project.



Letter from Leadership

From Gerlda B. Hines, SAO, NextGen Project Executive Sponsor

As the NextGen Project inches closer to go-live, we are seeing the need for more cross-functional collaboration to complete project activities and initiatives. This is to be expected and is a great opportunity to discuss best practices and lessons learned with your colleagues to prevent unnecessary hiccups that could impact the timeline.

With the recent alignment of the HCM and FIN/PRO timelines, we must be even more intentional about working collectively to ensure activities and tasks are accomplished on time and efficiently.

The Testing Team recently completed HCM UAT testing, and we know this could not have been accomplished without the help of the Security, Technical and OCM teams. Likewise, the OCM Team just launched the Agency Readiness Checklists this month with the help of the Project Managers, Workstream Leads and SharePoint Administrators.

These are just a few examples, and as the project carries on, I foresee more team collaborations around Testing, Training, Cutover and go-live activities.



February 2025

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Agency Readiness Checklists available on GA@WORK Resource Library.

In the words of Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success!" Let's continue to partner across workstreams to ensure a successful transition to GA@WORK in October.



Ga@Work Kickoff Video

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Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Legislative Update

March 6th was Crossover Day, the final day this year where bills can pass from one legislative body to the next. Below is an update on key legislation which has a possibility of becoming effective this year.

SB 12: This bill seeks to clarify some of the definitions and responsibilities related to the maintenance and inspection of public records. The main impact of this bill is requiring third party entities to produce any records maintained on behalf of the agency. While this has generally been the agreement in the past, this bill codifies the practice into law. The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 49-0 and is currently assigned to the House Governmental Affairs Committee. Sponsored by Senators Ginn, Robertson, Summers, Dixion, Still, and others, the full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.

SB 28: Know as the Red Tape Rollback Act, this bill seeks to revise the process of enacting laws as well as the process of agencies adopting new rules and regulations. While this bill covers a large scope of topics, the main takeaway for the agency is that if any new rules or regulations are proposed with an estimated cost of over one million dollars in the first 5 years of said rule's implementation, then the agency must prepare and submit an economic impact analysis before the rule takes effect. The specific language referenced can be found in Section 2-2 beginning on line 115. The bill, sponsored by Senators Dolezal, Gooch, Kennedy, Tillery, Brass, and others, passed the Senate by a vote of 33-21 and has been assigned to the House Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee. The full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.

SB 46: Known as the Government Serves the People Act, this bill seeks to establish a new position within GTA to monitor service delivery of agencies. Additionally, this bill requires each agency to appoint an individual to coordinate and work with GTA's new appointee to increase monitoring and improve service delivery. This bill cleared the Senate with a vote of 51-4 and has been assigned to the House Budget and Fiscal Affairs Oversight Committee. Sponsored by Senators Harbin, Dolezal, Tillery, Anavitarte, Kennedy, and others, the full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Legislative Update

SB 55: Known as the Dignity and Pay Act, this bill eliminates 14(c) subminimum wage payments by gradually ending the issuance of certification to employers and raising employee wages from a period of July 1st, 2025 to July 1st, 2027. This bill cleared the Senate with a vote of 51-3 and has been assigned to the House Industry and Labor Committee. Sponsored by Senators Hickman, Halpern, Esteves, Parent, and others, the full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.

SB 96: This is the bill that seeks to modernize and update various boards and commissions throughout state government. While covering a broad range of topics, Part X, beginning on line 936, calls for the dissolution of the Employment First Council while reassigning their duties to the GVRS board on July 1st, 2025. The bill cleared the Senate with a vote of 35-18 and has recently been assigned to the House Code Revision Committee. Sponsored by Senators Echols, Hatchett, Hufstetler, Payne, Robertson, and others, the full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.

HB 67: This is the AFY 25 Budget. At 9:30am on Crossover Day, Governor Kemp signed the budget into law. GVRA's information can be found on sections 28.19 – 28.23, lines 1565 – 1589. The bill as signed into law can be found <u>HERE</u>.

HB 68: This is the FY 2026 budget. GVRA's information can be found on section 28.19 – 28.23, lines 1950 – 1986. While the bill has yet to be heard by the House Appropriations Committee, this bill will still be addressed this year due to legal statutes. It is worth noting that during a preliminary hearing, our subcommittee responded very positively to Executive Director Wells' presentation and our overall agency progress. The full bill text can be found <u>HERE</u>.



Wednesday, March 12, 2025 GVRS Board Meeting Sensory Services

Shirley Robinson Blind Services Coordinator Shirley.Robinson@gvs.ga.gov





Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Project Independence

Project Independence: Georgia Vision Program for Adults 55 or Over

Project Independence is a vision program for those 55 years of age and over, administered by GVRA, which provides services that may help a client remain independent and continue doing what they like to do. Services may include:

- Skills training in the client's home community by certified rehabilitation specialists to allow the client to continue daily tasks and remain active.
- Mobility training by certified instructors so clients can travel safely
- Support groups that offer opportunities to learn from and interact with peers who also have visual loss
- Comprehensive low vision evaluations by qualified professionals to assess practical and useful ways to access information with magnification
- Assistive aids/devices like talking watches and clocks, lighting, big button phones, and various household kitchen aids.

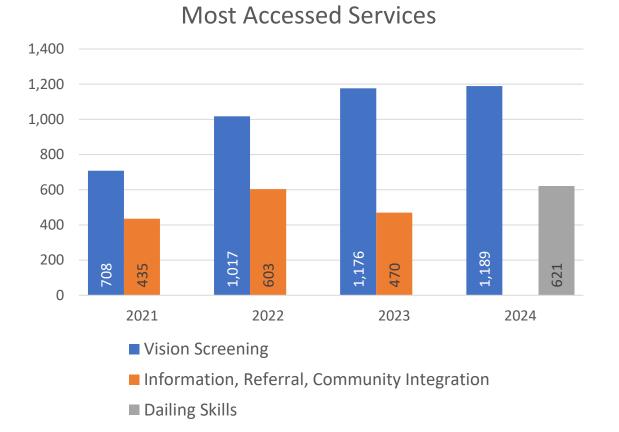
Project Independence (PI) contracts with six service providers throughout Georgia as well as Mississippi State University (MSU) -The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision.

MSU conducts program evaluations and serves as a consultant to Project Independence. Mississippi State University continues to provide a yearly detailed program evaluation and assists with measuring customer satisfaction. The six main PI providers send names and phone numbers on a quarterly basis of closed cases to MSU who, in turn, contact the seniors to conduct the customer satisfaction survey. MSU does not provide direct services to seniors.



Services continue to be provided using a hybrid model, in person and remotely. While many of the low-vision clinics opened, the remote low-vision evaluation continues to be an alternative option in some areas.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Project Independence





Number Served



Wednesday, March 12, 2025 GVRS Board Meeting Sensory Services

Leon Allen Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Director <u>Herman.Allen@gvs.ga.gov</u>



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Designed to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to become self-employed and operate their own businesses.

- Number of Vendors = 51
- Number of Locations = 103
- Number of Helpers = 67
- Average Monthly Vendor Income (As of January 2025) = \$7,497.00











Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

2025 Recent Facility Announcements & Potential Profit Earnings for Awardee

- Location: Welcome Center Augusta Facility Type: Vending Projected Yearly Revenue: \$153,000
- Location: Roosevelt Warm Springs Facility Type: Café and Vending Projected Yearly Revenue: \$140,000
- Location: Rutledge Roadside
 Facility Type: Vending
 Projected Yearly Revenue: \$291,000









Wednesday, March 12, 2025 GVRS Board Meeting Sensory Services

Greg Teems CSC Manager <u>Greg.Teems@gvs.ga.gov</u>





Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Cave Spring Center (CSC)

Pre-ETS Program: Schools Served

- Cedartown High School
- Rockmart High School
- Armuchee High School
- Pepperell High School
- Model High School

Hospitality Pathway: Certifications offered for Day Students

- Polk County
- Floyd County





Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Sensory Services – Cave Spring Center (CSC)

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Currently preparing for implementation of the BEP program at CSC:

- Residential Pilot Program
- Five (5) Participants
- Chicago Lighthouse Curriculum
- ServSafe Training
- Vending Machine/Equipment Training

Future Plans:

- Continuing BEP with up to 8 potential new clients
- Begin residential services for pathway students including Hospitality and Retail
- Continuing the day Pre-ETS program with area high schools





Wednesday, March 12, 2025 GVRS Board Meeting Sensory Services

Dan West GIB Plant Manager Dan.West@gvs.ga.gov



Products Manufactured

- All products we manufacture are made using American-made supplies.
- We currently manufacture Classification Folders, Vinyl Ticket holders, Safety Vests, Pillows and PPE Safety Masks.
- We are one of the very few suppliers in the Ability One program that is a true manufacturing environment.



GVRA





GIB is more than just a Job.



GVRA

Lionel moved from Miami Florida to work at GIB in 2011. Lionel is a Military Veteran who lost his eyesight rapidly after leaving the Army. He got up one day looking out the window of his apartment and it looked like everything was covered in a thick smoke. He eventually lost all of his site. He will tell you that he was depressed and felt like he could not contribute to society and had lost his value, but (In his words) GIB saved his life.

Roger was an Auto Mechanic by trade. Then his eyesight started failing him at a quick pace. In 2013 at GIB, he found a new home and a means of providing for his family.



IMPORTANT GIB UPDATES

- We passed our ISO audit this past July.
- Reduced folder backorders.
- Hired additional employees
- Finalized our submission to add our PPE Masks to the National Industries for the Blind Catalog.
- Replaced lost employees.
- Replaced faulty heaters in the production area.
- GIB Bainbridge was 75 years old.
- Two years ago, we purchased a paper sheeter and are currently working on replacing our 40-year-old Pillow Tic machine.
- We will be receiving Capital Outlay Planning for FY2026 funds to repair Water Lines, electrical systems, and building safety issues.







Wednesday, March 12, 2025 Multiplechoices Center for Independent Living (CIL)

Garrick Scott, Executive Director gscott@multiplechoices.us



Multiple*choices*™ Center for Independent Living



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Multiplechoices[™] Center for Independent Living (CIL)



Based in Athens, GA, we at Multiplechoices[™] Center for Independent Living (MCCIL) proudly serve the following 10 northeast Georgia counties: Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. Our home office is in Athens (Clarke County), Georgia.

As does each Center for Independent Living (CIL) nationwide (www.ilru.org), we offer the following five core services to people living with a disability (or disabilities).

- Peer Support
- Information and Referral
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Systems and Individual Advocacy
- Community and Youth Transition

As funding permits, we can also facilitate:

- Transportation
- Home modification
- Micro-enterprise development.

GVRA



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services GVRS Board New Business & Old Business

Tom Wilson, Chairman GVRS Board@gvs.ga.gov



Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services GVRS Board Public Comments & Adjournment

Tom Wilson, Chairman GVRS Board@gvs.ga.gov



