

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Quarterly Meeting: January 22, 2025, 1-4 PM



Roll Call/Approval of Minutes/Agenda

Juliet Hardeman, SRC Chair





Chair Update

- 2025 SRC Election Results
- CILs Showcase- SenseAbility Week 2025
<https://gvs.georgia.gov>
- GCDD Advocacy Days
 - January 29, 2025 - Employment Day
 - February 12, 2025 - Waivers Day
 - February 26, 2025 - I/DD Commission Day
<https://gcdd.org>

2024 Georgia Workforce Conference

Matthew Barnes





Thrive Program

An Albany Area Chamber of Commerce talent development initiative for youths with disabilities who are in either middle or high school.

The Thrive initiative program is designed to support, encourage, and assist youths in the Southwest Georgia High School educational community to either pursue competitive employment opportunities or further their education in either university or technical post-secondary education/degrees after high school.

The vision behind the Thrive program is very simple yet profound: To empower students with disabilities to envision a brighter future for themselves and develop key employability skills that will lead to employment success in any competitive workplace settings.

The Thrive program believes that diversity is our strength and that students with disabilities can be a valuable member of the Albany – Southwest Georgia workforce.



Thrive Program

Albany Chamber of Commerce Thrive program activities:

October 26th, 2024 – A large Thrive event for High School students with disabilities in the Albany area was housed at the Albany Tech – Kirkland Center and more than 40 students with disabilities attended this event.

Topics for the Thrive event included:

- Employer Talks – Dr. Jen Williams, Phoebe Hospital & Dan Gillan, C.E.O. of the Albany Y.M.C.A.
- Professional Development Activities – Public Speaking Skills & Interviewing Skills sessions (mock interviews with some of the Albany Business Community).
- Work Fashion Show – (what is appropriate and what is inappropriate to wear to an interview).



Thrive Program

The Albany Thrive program presented at the University of Georgia Workforce Conference on November 12th.

Presenters included Jay Houston, Albany Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Jen Williams, Phoebe Hospital and Matthew Barnes, Arc of Southwest Georgia.

Focuses were on the importance of creating employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities – especially students with disabilities in the workforce. How businesses, state organizations, and post-secondary education system can benefit from the contributions of individuals with disabilities was also explained; emphasizing that individuals with disabilities are a real untapped asset and how they contribute to their community workforce in meaningful and impactful ways.

Chris Wells, GVRA Executive Director, presented some of the new programs and services to assist and support individuals with disabilities to find and maintain meaningful employment opportunities in the state of Georgia.

SRC Committee Appointments for 2025

Juliet Hardeman





GA SRC Standing Committees

Per bylaws, we have the following standing committees:

1. Executive Committee - Current Chair
2. Policy Committee - Vacant
3. Membership - Lisa Leiter
4. Outreach - Katie Hearn

In preparation for the upcoming 2026 CSNA, I recommend we consider adding a CSNA committee.



SRC Current Committee Chairs

Membership - Vacant

Public Outreach - Katie Hearn

Policy - Michele Mason

Parliamentarian - Jennifer Page

SRC Committee Reports

Membership – Juliet Hardeman





Membership

Upcoming Key Appointments

DOE Sped Director (Charity Roberts), PTI and IWD or Caregiver/Parent representing IWD

Membership will meet to:

- 1) review needs/bylaws
- 2) develop an outreach plan for new members, (representation from rural areas of the state)
- 3) and increase council membership to at least 18-20 to better support the work of the SRC

SRC Committee Reports

Policy – Michele Mason



SRC Committee Reports

Public Outreach – Katie Hearn



SRC Committee Reports

Client Assistance Program (CAP) – Jennifer Page



Community Partner Spotlight

Tracy Rackensperger, University of Georgia



Advancing Employment for Georgians with Disabilities: Engaging Multiple Stakeholders

Tracy Rackensperger, Ph.D.
Public Service Assistant
Employment Initiatives Coordinator and Augmentative and
Alternative Communication (AAC) Outreach Specialist
CAUSE Facilitator and Resources and Outreach Manager,
Advancing Employment
UGA Training Director, Rehabilitation Research Training Center
(RRTC) on Accommodations, Employment Supports and Success
for People with Physical Disabilities (ACCESS-PD)
Project Manager, Improving Employer Practices and Hiring
Policies

Advancing Employment

Advancing Employment is Georgia's
Technical Assistance Center for Best
Practices in Employment Supports



Advancing Employment

Building a community for inclusive employment in Georgia

Supporting Coalition-Building to Phase Out 14c

Started March 2022

Funded by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

The purpose of the project was to support the development of a coalition that is meaningfully engaged in organizing at the grassroots and state levels to advocate for needed regulatory, legislative, and policy changes to ensure the phased ending of 14c in Georgia.



Historical Background of 14c

Early 1900s

1938

1986

2000+

Veterans return from wars with disabilities

Fair Standards Labor Act (FLSA)

Removal of a wage floor

Various exploitative practices discovered

Manufacturing economy

Created minimum wage exemptions to encourage re-employment.

Prior to 1986, people in sheltered employment were guaranteed a certain subminimum wage.

From Henry's Turkey Service to how subminimum wages are determined, practices are not consist with equal rights.

No advanced assistive technology

Once positive, this turns exploitative.

With no floor, people are making pennies on the dollar.

Many legal challenges are being sought.

Initial GCDD Funding for CAUSE

Phase I – Education

Webinars and online materials

Phase II – Coalition-Building

Strategic planning



Introduction to CAUSE

The Coalition Against Unfair Salaries for Employment (CAUSE) ensures all Georgians with disabilities use their gifts and talents in meaningful ways that are not oppressed by the practice of paying them subminimum wages or segregating them in settings.

We believe all Georgians with disabilities are capable of having meaningful lives within their local communities. We believe this is achieved when individuals are supported to use their gifts and talents to live, work, and play alongside their peers without disabilities. CAUSE values full community inclusion which encompasses individualized support, personal choice, and access to competitive integrated employment and income-generating activities.

CAUSE's Objectives

Our objectives are to:

Advocate for the thoughtful, timely end of the use of 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in Georgia, while ensuring no new 14c certificates are issued.

Work with the State of Georgia to ensure all Georgians have quality options for individualized support, access to competitive integrated employment and income-generating activities, and self-determination.

Educate stakeholders about alternatives to 14c employment focusing on community inclusion and prioritizing personal choice.

Promote initiatives, such as State as Model Employer, addressing increased access to competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Four Strategic Priorities

Legislative advocacy	Employer engagement
State agency partnerships	Informational resources

Efforts to Phase Out 14c

One effort to eliminate subminimum wages regarding 14c has been through the introduction of federal legislation and funding to demonstrate the implementation of practices leading to CIE outcomes.

The second effort of eliminating subminimum wages regarding 14c has been through introducing state-level policy and practical changes.

What was House Bill 1125?

In 2024, the Georgia Assembly unanimously passed through the House of Representatives a bill “to phase out the payment of subminimum wage to persons with disabilities; to repeal provisions concerning exemptions to the state minimum wage law for persons with disabilities; to provide that no employer shall utilize a certificate issued by the United States Department of Labor pursuant to 29 U.S.C. Section 214(c) to pay individuals with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage; to provide exceptions; to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.” (Georgia General Assembly, 2024, p. 1).

Unfortunately, this bill failed to be heard in the Senate.

2025 Legislation

We are working with legislators to reintroduce the bill this legislative session.



Employer Engagement

Georgia as Model Employer (GAME) is a policy requiring state agencies to set goals for the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.

GAME policy put the state in position to be a leading example for employers throughout the state.



Partnership with State Agencies

State ADA Coordinator's Office (GAME)

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (SWTCIE-DB101)

DBHDD (CBTAC-supported self-employment credential with Griffin-Hammis)

Information Resources

Adding material to our website, www.advancingemployment.com

White paper: *Phasing Out 14c in Georgia: Ensuring Meaningful Days Based on Personal Choices for Georgians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)*



Do You Know Your State Legislators?

You can look up your district, state representative and state senator at www.openstates.org Please take a moment to do so now.



Questions?
Thank you!

GVRA Executive Update

Executive Director, Chris Wells



Agency Spotlight



Sandra Butler is the September 2024 Employee of the Month. Sandra works in Fiscal Services.

Per those that nominated her, “Sandra is always cheerful and helpful. She has graciously helped me with a challenging case and has never tired of the many questions I have had for her. She is very patient and encouraging.

Sandra often works into the evening and continued to work without electricity for over a week due to Hurricane Helene. Using her Hotspot, she continued working--without even mentioning the circumstances she was enduring.

Sandra is an incredible asset to GVRA. She makes it a pleasure to work here. Sandra is knowledgeable, encouraging, and a joy to work with!

Sandra encourages and helps fellow employees. She is especially helpful to co-workers who are learning processes.”

Agency Spotlight



Patricia Burns is the October 2024 employee of the month. Patricia works at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Per those that nominated her, “Patricia always has a positive attitude and is always willing to help when needed. When changes occur, she will always reach out to let staff know when it's related to their job. She is always willing to go the extra mile to help in any way!

She is responsible for ordering for several different departments at RWS and CSC. She is always trying to save money and get the best items needed for the cause.

She always goes the extra mile to finish a task, whether it's working late or taking her work home to finish a deadline. When an issue happens, she is always quick to try to help resolve the issue. She has been in the field for a long time, and we are lucky that she has the experience and understands most of the rules and guidelines we must follow. She is a great asset to our team and especially to me as an individual.”

Agency Spotlight



Dana Skelton is the November 2024 employee of the month. Dana is a Supervisor in the Cleveland VR office.

Per those that nominated her, “Dana deserves to be recognized for her outstanding commitment, not just to GVRA and ensuring the clients receive beneficial services, but more importantly for her encouragement & support of her direct reports, & ensuring that while we are serving VR clients, we also take care of our own mental health.

Her daily attitude & spirit contribute to the numerous VR clients that are served successfully every month. She encourages & offers hope to each new client she meets with when she excitedly tells the story of how she was once a VR client herself following a traumatic brain injury, but the support of VR services contributed to her earning her college degree. She explains to the clients that she loves her job because it gives her the opportunity to return the gift of VR services that she received by helping other VR clients receive the same services.

Dana provides ongoing training to make sure the staff thoroughly understand how to complete tasks related to providing services to the clients, & she creates templates & other time-saving processes to make the staff’s responsibilities more manageable. She first praises staff for their efforts & or what was done right, then she discusses the improvement or corrections that need to be done. She takes a personal interest in the staff’s mental health & encourages self-care! She takes it upon herself to provide an office environment that is positive & uplifting & uses her own personal funds to keep the office break room stocked with what she refers to as “essentials”. Dana understands that a happy & appreciated staff member is always more willing to work hard, go the extra mile & be more productive. She offers personal encouragement to each staff member so that they feel supported & appreciated for their contributions to the office & are content working at GVRA.”

Client Success Story



After graduating from Telfair County High School in 2022, Gabe Materne looked into joining the U.S. Army. In high school he had a 504 Plan because he had been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Gabe stated, he “didn’t like math or science, and when plans to enter the U.S. Army didn’t work out, one of his high school teachers recommended the pathway programs at Roosevelt Warm Springs”. “Enrolling at RWS turned out to be a positive, life-changing experience for me.”

After finishing high school, Gabe entered the logistics/warehousing pathway at RWS. During his enrollment at RWS, Gabe accompanied his classmates and instructors on a tour of a distribution center. Once he saw firsthand how the distribution center operates, he knew he wanted to seek forklift positions in a warehouse environment. While completing his studies at RWS, he applied for and was hired as a forklift operator at the Walmart Distribution Center in Douglas, Georgia.

In spring 2024, Gabe successfully earned his OSHA-10 General Industry certification. When asked if he likes his duties, Gabe indicated this position is a good starting point for him at 21 years of age. “Some days it’s exhausting, but it’s rewarding to think I am contributing to my family’s income. I am glad I earned my OSHA and forklift certifications, because that knowledge helps me in my current position,” he said.

Reflecting on his academic experience at RWS after graduating in May 2024, Gabe said he would wholeheartedly recommend the logistics pathway to potential students. “Thanks to the support I received from my instructors, I find myself in a job that allows me to contribute to my family’s lifestyle. For that I will always be grateful,” he said.

Client Success Story



At age four, Jasmine Moore was diagnosed with osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as Brittle Bones---a genetic disorder.

Jasmine initially wanted to become a forensic scientist. However, after taking chemistry & calculus discovered that wasn't the right curriculum for her. "I knew I wanted to be in that field, but I needed to find another pathway," declared Jasmine. "So, I studied criminal justice at Kennesaw State University. The education I received has allowed me to obtain a job in which I am helping people who have entered the criminal justice system."

Soon after finishing her undergraduate studies, Jasmine began her career with the Douglas County District Attorney's Office as a paralegal. After serving in that role for nearly five years, she was promoted to program manager for diversion programs within the PACE Unit (Programs Accountability and Community Engagement).

Because Jasmine feels strongly about advocating for people with disabilities, she formed a non-profit organization known as Grateful Hands, Inc., which aims to educate & empower individuals with disabilities by providing essential resources. "I founded Grateful Hands based on my life's challenges & how I've overcome them," explained Jasmine. "Having faced numerous challenges firsthand, I understand the importance of comprehensive support & advocacy."

Jasmine originally requested GVRA services when she graduated from high school in 2013 & continued to receive services through 2018. She credits supportive GVRA staff in helping her meet her transportation needs to & from her job site. The assistive technology department at GVRA modified a van for Jasmine, who uses an electric wheelchair daily. "The assistive technology team at GVRA has been very supportive," Jasmine noted. Thanks to assistive technology, I can drive myself to work. Receiving vehicle modification services changed my life." Jasmine observed. "I would absolutely recommend GVRA to anyone living with a disability who may need assistance for 'big' life moments."

GVRA Update

- Business Enterprise Program
- Roosevelt Warm Springs

New/Old Business, Public Comment, Adjournment

Juliet Hardeman, SRC Chair





New/Old Business

New/Old Business/Upcoming Events

- GA SRC Annual Report is on the GVRA website
- SRC Member Training <https://www.ncsrc.us>
- April Conference - date & location TBA
- Planning for rollout of the 2026 CSNA