

Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy (VOPA)

Disabilities Advisory Council (DAC) Meeting

VOPA Conference Room – Richmond VA

Draft Minutes

August 12, 2011

Members Present	James Alexander III, Marvette Humphrey, Shirley McInnis, Melissa Meade, Arva Priola, Lisa Ritchie (Chair)
Members Absent	Barbara Barrett, Steven Hornstein, Mary Jane Sufficool, Linda VanAken (Vice-Chair), Monica Wiley
Guests Present	Daaiyah Rashid (VOPA Governing Board member), Morgan Tibor
Staff Present	Sherry Confer (Deputy Director), Clyde Mathews (Managing Attorney), Kim Mendella (Council Liaison)
Call to Order / Introductions	Lisa Ritchie, Chair, called the meeting to order. Ms. Ritchie welcomed the guests and asked everyone present to introduce themselves and to include how long it took to travel to the meeting. Ms. Ritchie thanked everyone for their dedication noting that many members travel several hours to participate in DAC meetings.
Public Comment	<p>No public comment was offered.</p> <p>Ms. Confer talked briefly about the DAC by-laws work session from the June 24, 2011 meeting. Ms. Confer wants to consult the attorneys in the office about having more than one family member on councils and boards serving concurrent terms.</p> <p>Ms. Confer also announced that Governor McDonnell declared August 12 a “Day of Mourning” for the Virginia servicemen killed in Afghanistan helicopter tragedy.</p>
March 2011 Meeting Minutes	Ms. Ritchie referred the Council to the June 2011 meeting minutes. With no changes, Ms. Ritchie asked if there was a motion to accept the minutes as written. Marvette Humphrey made the MOTION and Melissa Meade SECONDED the MOTION. The MOTION carried unanimously.
Presentation: Department of Rehabilitation Services “Order of Selection”	<p>Ms. Confer introduced Mona Siddiqui as a VOPA Staff Attorney who has done some remarkable advocacy work about vocational rehabilitation services. Ms. Siddiqui is part of the Communities Unit at VOPA working with Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) clients under the VOPA Client Assistance Program (CAP).</p> <p>Ms. Siddiqui talked about the process consumers go through to obtain DRS services. DRS created its policy on “Order of Selection” in 2004 for times when resources are limited. The “Order of Selection” places clients into one of four priority categories based on severity of disability in which to serve clients. DRS is not accepting new clients at this time, however,</p>

Ms. Siddiqui stressed that clients can still apply and go through the intake process and be placed on the waiting list. The intake process may include evaluations such as medical, diagnostic, personal assistance services, situational assessments in job settings, and assistive technology assessments. DRS may also provide support to access those assessments such as transportation.

DRS is charged with maximizing employment potential as a vocational goal. DRS clients can appeal if they believe that they are not meeting their employment potential. A member inquired if the Post-secondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) program is being continued at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) while DRS is operating under its "Order of Selection." PERT is considered to be an evaluation so high school students can still participate. PERT is a two week program where high schools learn how to apply for jobs, interview skills, and independent living skills.

Executive Director's Report

Litigation Reports and updates

Clyde Mathews, Managing Attorney for the Resource Advocacy Unit, provided a brief overview of a few of VOPA's current litigation cases. Mr. Mathews highlighted a case involving a child with a disability being transported on a school bus up to four hours round trip per day. As a result, the child arrived late to school and was taken out early from class to catch the bus. VOPA filed a complaint with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). As a result of VOPA's advocacy, the child has been placed on a different bus route and does not miss any instructional time. VOPA noted that there are other children on the bus. VOPA plans to address a systemic issue to ensure that other children are not facing long travel times and a reduction of instructional time.

3rd Quarter Progress on Objectives and updates

Members wanted to know if people with disabilities are receiving their medication in jails. Members acknowledge that jails are not a treatment facility. Members want VOPA to focus on improving conditions in the community so people with disabilities have the supports they need.

Members were very interested with VOPA's work about ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to appropriate and necessary health care. One member was concerned about communication access and the reliance of video remote interpreting to communicate with patients who are deaf or hard of hearing. She knew of complaints about not being able to see the interpreter on the screen and interpreters not being qualified.

Greetings from the Governing Board

Daaiyah Rashid introduced herself as a member of the VOPA Governing Board. The Board had its last meeting on July 17 followed by the Board retreat. The Board learned that the new fundraising entity had been established called the Virginia Disability Law and Advocacy (VDLA) Fund. The Board retreat focused on what they should be doing as board members.

Ms. Meade was the DAC representative at the Board meeting and

retreat. Ms. Meade talked about how the Board is the administrative oversight and really appreciates the DAC as being the venue to discuss issues facing local disabilities communities throughout the state. Ms. Confer proclaimed that VOPA Councils serve as the voice of reality in the communities informing both VOPA and the Board about local concerns about what is and is not working.

Lunch

The Council members and staff had a working lunch where they networked and shared resources.

Work Session – Council input for FY2012 Objectives

Mr. Mathews talked about VOPA's tri-annual work plan and that VOPA is currently in year three of that plan. The Goals and Focus Areas stay the same in that plan and the objectives change every year.

Goal 1: People with disabilities are free from abuse and neglect

Members were concerned about people with disabilities being released from training centers and not having the services they need in their communities. Council members believe that there is a lack of services and oversight in the community. Council members were also concerned about services not being provided at the level required by the individual with the disability.

Goal 2: Children with disabilities receive an appropriate education

A member was concerned about teachers being required to use a curriculum or strategy that did not fit the allotted time and another strategy had already proven to be effective. Mr. Mathews talked about the current objective that allows for technical assistance to anyone not being provided services in their IEP and how to access the VDOE complaint process. Mr. Mathews stated that special education is very resource heavy and VOPA often ties these cases to systemic work to achieve a greater impact in the disability communities. Members talked about VOPA creating a training or presentation to pilot with teacher organizations and educators.

Goal 3: People with disabilities have equal access to government services

One member was concerned that many governmental websites are not accessible. Many websites, such as DRS, has videos that are not closed captioned. Members were also concerned that Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are not buying videos with closed captions to show to clients.

The council was very happy with VOPA's work completing accessibility surveys of voting registrar offices throughout the state and would like VOPA to continue. A member suggested VOPA to write an article in the America Association of Retired Persons (AARP) newsletter to reach senior citizens with disabilities about accessibility of polling sites and how to request an accommodation.

Goal 6: People with disabilities have equal access to appropriate and necessary healthcare

A member discussed about trouble acquiring assistive technology and eventually giving up on the issue. This member did not know about

requesting a revised letter of medical necessity. Members would like VOPA to continue its work providing technical assistance to people being denied assistive technology and provide more information to the medical community.

Members also want VOPA to continue its work about advocating for dental care for people with disabilities.

Mr. Mathews referred the members to the public survey currently on VOPA's website to offer more suggestions. Members were encouraged to share this website with contacts they have in their disabilities communities.

Board Committee Reports

Finance Committee

Ms. Confer stated that the committee examined the proposed budget and reviewed the current expenses. The committee approved the proposed budget and sent it to the Governing Board for approval.

Resource Development

Kim Mendella stated that the DAC representative, Mary Jane Sufficool, participated by telephone. The Committee talked about recruitment for the new VDLA and possible projects.

Other business

Member Recruitment

Ms. Mendella asked the Council if they belonged to groups where she could provide a brief presentation about the DAC and VOPA to help with recruitment efforts.

Next Meeting

Ms. Confer is exploring having the next meeting at a training center. Ms. Confer wants to have a speaker from DBHDS to talk about how the system works. Ms. Confer will notify the DAC of the next meeting date.

Melissa Meade made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting and Shirley McInnis SECONDED the MOTION. The motion carried unanimously.

DRAFT MINUTES

Date

**Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy
Mission Statement**

Through zealous and effective advocacy and legal representation, to: protect and advance legal, human, and civil rights of persons with disabilities; combat and prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination; and promote independence, choice, and self determination by persons with disabilities.