

Board Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2025



Meeting Attendance

Board Attendees	Board Members Absent	Staff Attendees
Marcus Allen Tim Capoldo Alexander Campbell Allison Coles-Johnson Parthy Dinora Cesar Dulanto III Cathy Edwards Jennifer Greene Karen Grizzard Melinda Hanco Samantha Hollins Kyle Jones Jeffrey Katz Jen Kelly Richard Kriner Thomas Leach Amber Lee Rachel Loria Katie Morris/Ann Bevan Justin Sheets/Rick Mitchel Deanna Parker Lindsay Pearse Cynthia Pettus Nadia Rauhala Erika Rogers Shay Ruff Matthew Shapiro Mick Sladic Dana Taormina Kristie Bowie-Young	Amaan Karim Melanie Rice Mary Vought Adrian Frierson Eric Raff James Hall	Tara Bethea Christine Germeyer Nia Harrison Jennifer Krajewski Teri Morgan Penni Sweetenburg-Lee Kellie Vanella Jason Withers

Call to Order/ Opening Remarks

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities convened at the Short Pump Hilton Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, on September 9–10, 2025. The two-day meeting was structured as a

facilitated retreat for Board members to identify priority areas and activities for inclusion in the Board's next Five-Year State Plan.

Board Chair Allison Coles-Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. She welcomed Board members, staff, and the retreat facilitators. The Chair also extended a warm welcome to four new Board members: Alex Campbell, Amanda Forry-Fino, Dana Taormina, and Ginny Conroy.

Before proceeding, the Chair acknowledged with sadness the recent passing of colleague Henry Street, who served as the Board's Director of Administration, and recognized his many contributions to the agency.

The Chair expressed her enthusiasm for the retreat, noting that it provides a unique opportunity to set the Board's direction and priorities for the next five years. She encouraged all members to engage fully and share their perspectives throughout the process.

Following housekeeping announcements, the Chair introduced the facilitators from Aligned Consulting, who would guide the Board through the retreat's agenda and activities.

Getting to Know Each Other Activity

To begin the retreat, each Board member and staff introduced themselves to the full group by sharing their name, their role on the Board (either as a person with lived experience and/or through their professional expertise), and one new experience they had tried for the first time this year.

Following introductions, participants took part in a table activity where they shared a photo—either from their phone or one they had brought—that highlighted something meaningful about their life. This activity helped Board members and staff learn more about one another and set a collaborative tone for the retreat.

Setting the Stage

Ms. Nia Harrison, Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, presented an overview of the State Plan development process through a PowerPoint presentation. She reviewed the timeline, outlined the retreat goals, emphasized the importance of focusing on ideas rather than specific wording, and encouraged full participation, noting that everyone's voice is essential.

Ms. Teri Morgan, Executive Director, followed with a presentation providing context on the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Act. She highlighted the purpose of the DD Act, its core principles, and the areas of emphasis it covers. She also explained how DD Councils, such as the VBPD, create change through their federally mandated role and State Plan priorities.

Area of Emphasis World Café

Board members participated in a World Café activity designed to generate input on potential areas of emphasis for the next State Plan. The activity consisted of three rounds of small-group discussions. For each round, members selected the area of emphasis they wished to explore, joining a corresponding discussion table. Areas of emphasis included: Community Services, Employment, Education, Child Care, Early Intervention, Housing, Transportation, Recreation, Health, and Safety.

Using worksheets and drawing upon both public input and their own experience and expertise, groups addressed the following guiding questions:

- What do we want to see in this area of emphasis?
- What is currently going well (including existing efforts we can build upon)?
- What barriers or challenges remain?

In each round, one group member recorded key points on a worksheet. Subsequent groups reviewed these notes, added their own perspectives, and built upon earlier discussions. To distinguish rounds, notes were recorded in different colors (blue, black, and red).

Board members were highly engaged throughout the activity, asking questions, sharing ideas, and offering recommendations for future priorities.

The Board adjourned at 12:15 p.m. for lunch and networking, reconvening at 1:05 p.m. to continue the retreat agenda.

Identifying Areas of Focus

The facilitation team summarized key themes from the small-group brainstorming sessions and guided the full Board in a reflection exercise.

Board members then participated in a dot-voting activity. Each member received five colored dot stickers and placed them on the areas of emphasis they believed to be most strategic for inclusion in the next Five-Year State Plan.

Finalizing Areas of Focus

The facilitation team reviewed the results of the dot-voting with the Board. Members discussed the outcomes, noting areas of both high consensus and additional interest.

- Several members expressed hope that *Recreation* might be included, noting its potential for impact as “low-hanging fruit.”
- Another member emphasized the importance of *Early Intervention*, stating that the earlier children and families are supported, the better the outcomes.

These comments were acknowledged, and staff noted that broadly written goals may provide flexibility to incorporate activities that address Recreation and Early Intervention, even if not prioritized as top focus areas.

Following the discussion, the Chair asked for a **Motion to Approve** the inclusion of the top five areas of emphasis in the Board’s next Five-Year State Plan: Community Services, Education, Employment, Health and Housing. Ms. Erika Rogers made a **Motion to Approve**, Ms. Shay Ruff seconded the **Motion**. The **Motion** passed unanimously.

Area of Emphasis Activity Brainstorming

Board members were then asked to contribute specific ideas and goals for each of the five prioritized areas. Members wrote their ideas on sticky notes, with staff available to assist as needed.

Members were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- What would you like the Board to achieve in this area?
- What would you like to see change in this area?
- In five years, what do you hope has happened or is different in this area?

After completing their notes, members placed their comments on large posters corresponding to each area of emphasis.

Reflection and Wrap Up

The facilitation team closed the day with a group reflection, highlighting key insights and reminding members of important considerations to carry into Day 2 of the retreat.

Adjourn

Day 1 of the retreat adjourned at 3:35 pm.

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Call to Order/ Opening Remarks

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities reconvened for Day 2 of its retreat on September 10, 2025, at the Short Pump Hilton Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Board Chair Allison Coles-Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Recap and Reflections

The facilitation team provided a recap of the previous day's discussion and decisions made. Board members were encouraged to share any thoughts or reflections that they had.

Day 2 focused on building upon the discussions and priorities identified during Day 1, with continued work to shape the Board's next Five-Year State Plan.

Key Activities World Café

Board members then participated in the Key Activities World Café. This activity consisted of three rounds of small-group discussions focused on the Board's prioritized areas of emphasis: Community Services, Education, Employment, Health, Housing, and Self-Advocacy.

It was noted that Self-Advocacy is a federally required area of emphasis for all Developmental Disabilities Councils and therefore was not subject to elimination during the Day 1 prioritization process.

For each round, members selected one of the areas to join and were guided by the question:

- *What actions would need to happen in this area to achieve the changes people with disabilities and their families want to see?*

To support the conversations, each group received a list of themes and ideas generated from Day 1's sticky note activity. Discussions lasted approximately 25 minutes per round, and a Board member in each group volunteered to record key points on a provided worksheet.

Board members were highly engaged throughout the activity, sharing thoughtful ideas and practical recommendations to inform development of the next Five-Year State Plan.

World Café Report Out

The facilitation team provided a brief review of the key activities identified during the morning's World Café discussions for each prioritized area of emphasis.

The Board adjourned at 11:25 a.m. for lunch and networking, reconvening at 12:30 p.m.

Key Activity "Donut" Discussion

In the afternoon, Board members engaged in a small-group brainstorming exercise referred to as the "Donut" Discussion. Members selected one area of emphasis and worked in groups to review the key activities identified during the morning's World Café sessions.

Each group considered the following guiding questions:

- Which activities should the Board lead directly?

- Which activities should be carried out in partnership with other organizations or coalitions?
- Which activities fall outside the Board's scope or authority?

A member of each group volunteered to record notes on a worksheet and prepare a summary for the larger group discussion. This exercise was designed to help clarify the Board's unique role, identify opportunities for collaboration, and ensure resources are directed toward the most strategic and impactful activities.

Donut Report Out

Following the small-group work, representatives from each group reported back to the full Board, highlighting the key activities recommended for prioritization within their area of emphasis.

The facilitation team then guided a discussion with the full Board to reflect on the report-outs. Members explored common themes that emerged across groups, noted areas of alignment and synergy, and raised any concerns or surprises. This dialogue provided an opportunity to deepen collective understanding, confirm areas of consensus, and highlight issues for further exploration as the Board develops its next Five-Year State Plan.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Board Chair Allison Coles-Johnson closed the retreat by thanking the facilitators for their time, expertise, and skill in guiding the Board through thoughtful and productive discussions. She noted that the retreat was well-organized, engaging, and provided an excellent opportunity for members to shape the Board's priorities for the coming years.

Board staff reminded members that all notes and input gathered during the retreat will be synthesized into draft goals, objectives, and activities, structured in alignment with the federally required State Plan format. A draft of the Five-Year State Plan will be presented to the Board for review and approval at the December meeting.

1:50pm Break

2:05pm Board Business Meeting

Following the conclusion of the retreat, Board Chair Allison Coles-Johnson reconvened the Board for a brief business meeting. She called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., noting that the purpose of this session was to address time-sensitive business items requiring Board action.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Chair asked whether there were any changes to the June 5, 2025, Board Meeting minutes. Hearing none, the Chair called for a **MOTION to APPROVE**. Mr. Matthew Shapiro made a **MOTION to APPROVE** the June meeting minutes, and Ms. Parthy Dinora seconded. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Dental RFP

Mr. Jason Withers, staff to the Investment Committee, provided an overview of the proposed Dental Care Request for Proposals (RFP), referencing materials included in the Supplemental Packet. He noted that this initiative falls under the *Healthcare* area of emphasis in the Board's current State Plan.

The proposed RFP would:

- Support local, regional, or statewide efforts that provide financial, educational, and/or other resources to dental care professionals in Virginia to improve accessibility for people with developmental and other disabilities.
- Award up to \$200,000 to a single organization to conduct an 18–24 month grant project.
- Begin the selected project no later than January 16, 2026.
- Incorporate input provided by the Investment Committee regarding the topic area and example projects suitable for funding.

Following Mr. Withers' presentation, the Chair invited discussion. After brief comments, and with no further questions raised, the Chair called for a **Motion to Approve** the release of the Dental Care RFP. Mr. Jeffrey Katz made a **MOTION to APPROVE** the release of the RFP and Ms. Kristie Bowie-Young seconded the Motion. The **MOTION** passed unanimously.

Self-Advocate Funding Scholarship Request

Mr. Jason Withers provided an overview of the Board's Self-Advocate Scholarship Funding program and presented a request submitted by the Bright Center.

The Bright Center requested \$1,650 in funding to support its upcoming Gala, an event intended to raise awareness about the challenges people with disabilities face in securing needed resources and supports. The event would also highlight participants in the Bright Center's programs, featuring them in an evening wear fashion showcase.

Mr. Withers reviewed the program's funding criteria, noting that:

- Scholarship funding must align with the principles of the Developmental Disabilities Act by promoting systems change, capacity building, and policy/advocacy work.
- Funds are intended to support self-advocates with developmental disabilities in attending conferences or events designed to provide disability-related information.
- Funding cannot be used to support participation in events with a primary focus on entertainment or showcasing individual or group talents.

He explained that staff determined the Bright Center's request did not meet these criteria and therefore recommended that the Board not approve the funding.

Board members engaged in a robust discussion. One member noted that she had attended a similar event in the past and believed that, if funding enables self-advocates to participate, it may be valuable. Others emphasized the importance of maintaining fidelity to the program's stated purpose and federal requirements.

The Chair asked if there was any further discussion; hearing none, she asked for a **Motion** from the Board regarding Bright Center's funding request. Ms. Deanna Parker made a **Motion to Not Approve** the funding request, Mr. Cesar Dulanto seconded the **Motion**. The Chair called for a vote on the **Motion**, Ms. Dana Taormino abstained from the vote. The **MOTION** passed unanimously.

Other Business & Adjourn

Allison Coles-Johnson, Chair, reflected on the past two days and thanked VBPD staff for their efforts to organize a successful and productive retreat. The Chair also thanked Board members for their participation.

There was no other business. The Chair called for a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Amanda Forry-Fino made the **MOTION** to adjourn, and Mr. Thomas Leach seconded the **MOTION**. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:32 p.m.