



Division of Rehabilitative Services

Employment Service Organization Steering Committee (ESOSC)

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

In-Person Meeting Location: 8004 Franklin Farms Drive Henrico, VA 23229

Minutes

Members Present: Jim Fenerty, Shirley Lyons, Joanne Aceto, Jason Harper, Chris Lavach, Shanna Boutchyard (electronically), Chuck McElroy, Chris Martin, Alan Hargraves, Greta Harrison, Stephanie Porter-Lopez

Members Absent: None

Committee Vacancies: None

DARS Staff Attending: Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Dale Batten, Anita Mundy, Donna Bonessi, Dionca Coleman, Jonathan, May, Catherine Harrison (electronically)

Full Committee Call to Order and Introductions

Chris Lavach, Committee Chair

Chris Lavach called the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. and welcomed members and guests.

Approve Meeting Minutes from January 14, 2025, and Current Agenda

Chris Lavach

The Committee reviewed a draft of the meeting minutes dated January 14, 2025, and the agenda for today's meeting. A motion was made by Chuck McElroy and seconded by Shirley Lyons to accept the minutes as written. All present voted in favor to accept the minutes as written. A motion was made by Chuck McElroy and seconded by Shirley Lyons to accept the agenda as written. All members present voted in favor to accept the agenda as written.

Public Comment

Chris Lavach

The ESOSC offered three opportunities during the meeting for public comment. Public notice was posted prior to the meeting with the opportunity for the public to submit written comment via a variety of means by April 14, 2025. No public comment was submitted prior to the meeting. No members of the public in attendance made comment during the meeting.

Social Security Overpayment and EWISA Service

**Jonathan May, DARS Financial Empowerment
Project Manager**

Jonathan May provided an update to the Committee on the Social Security Administration (SSA) reversing its policy on overpayment recovery. SSA is now withholding 100% of individuals pay to recoup Social Security benefits overpaid after March 27, 2025. This change reverses a previous policy implemented in 2024 that limited withholding to 10%. Under the new policy, individuals who receive overpayments will have their entire monthly benefit withheld until the overpayment is fully recovered. Mr. May explained that individuals have the right to appeal the overpayment decision and/or the amount. Mr. May encouraged Employment Service Organizations to continue to have conversations with DRS participants about the need to report their monthly wages to SSA and to keep records of all their wages. DARS has notified all approved WISAs of the change in policy and will also send out a summary to providers to notify them of this change.

Review Of Committee Term Date Expirations, and Update by Committee On Succession Plan for New Appointments

**Anita Mundy
DARS Staff to the Committee**

Anita Mundy shared a document with the Committee that outlined the term dates and timelines for each member's Appointment and Successors. Seven of eleven members will be ineligible to reapply to serve on the Committee when their terms end on June 30, 2025. They will, however, be permitted to continue to serve on the Committee until replaced, if they choose to do so. Ms. Mundy has requested updates from the House of Delegates and the Governor's Office on the vacant appointments. Ms. Mundy will contact the new appointees to provide an orientation to the new members.

Michelle Lotrecchiano was appointed by the Senate Rules Committee on April 1, 2025, for a 3-year full term to replace Joanne Aceto, beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.

Adair Jensen-Smith was appointed by the Senate Rules Committee on April 1, 2025, for a full 3-year full term to replace Jason Harper, beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.

Madeline Fitzgerald was appointed by the Senate Rules Committee on April 1, 2025, for a 3-year full term to replace Chuck McElroy, beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.

Stephanie Porter-Lopez was reappointed on April 1, 2025, for a 3-year full term beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028. Ms. Porter-Lopez was previously filling an unexpired term vacated by Stephanie Hoer.

Status Update on Recommendations Previously Made by the Committee

Anita Mundy

01/10/2023 Recommendation 2 (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that DARS create a service specifically for Extended Employment Services (EES) to support activities for individuals transitioning from Group Supported Employment, center-based, or facility-based employment, into community-based employment. (Recommendation made by Stephanie Hoer, seconded by Jason Harper. Members in favor: Lavach, Harper, Hargraves, Fenerty, Aceto, Hoer, and McElroy. Lyons abstained.)

The Committee discussed the E1200 service code initially be set up as an individual service code, set up for reimbursement at an hourly rate. The Committee is recommending that DARS expand on the service description to allow for the E1200 service to be delivered in a Group Setting of no more than 7 individuals

in a group and reimbursed at a Daily Rate. Chris Lavach made a motion for DARS to establish a Group Rate for no more than 7 individuals in a group based off the E1200 service description and reimbursed at a Daily Rate. Joanne Aceto seconded the motion. Lavach, Aceto, McElroy, Hargraves, Harper voted in agreement of the motion. Lyons abstained. DARS will establish a group code for this service. The E1201 service code was created for this purpose.

Update 04/15/2025— There was no usage of the E1200 code and no significant usage (5 hours) of the E1201 service code for Quarter 3. DARS will continue to monitor.

07/11/2023 Recommendation (Approved/Ongoing)

The Committee recommends that DARS conduct a pilot to increase employment services to individuals with Medicaid Waiver funding. This pilot will allow LTESS funding to be utilized to fund staff travel that is over one hour, one way, from the employment staff's starting point. Current LTESS providers who serve Medicaid Waiver participants are eligible. Providers that participate in this pilot (Service Code E6030) will sign an agreement stating that they will continue services if LTESS funds can no longer support staff travel. The pilot will be reviewed quarterly by the ESOSC and DARS. (Motion put forth by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Alan Hargraves. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried and was immediately approved by DARS Commissioner, Kathy Hayfield).

Update 04/15/2025— Five organizations consistently used the E6030 service code. There were 710 service hours, with a total reimbursement of \$53,531.59 for Quarter 3, bring the total reimbursement for the first three quarters of SFY25 to \$170,720.09.

EWISA Services Update - DARS staff provided an update on EWISA services for Q3 SY25. There were 250 hours of services provided, totaling \$19,950.60 billed to DARS. Total reimbursement to date for SFY25 is \$61,962.96.

04/02/2024 Recommendation 1 (Approved/Ongoing)

A motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Chuck McElroy that LTESS-EES funds be made available to all eligible Employment Service Organizations, up to \$10,000, to be used for costs related to Employment Services CARF accreditation. This is for expenses paid to CARF and not to cover internal expenses. Surveys must be completed between June 1, 2023, and May 31, 2026, to be eligible for this reimbursement. This is a one-time reimbursement for the achievement of a 3-Year accreditation. All members present voted in favor of this recommendation. Commissioner Hayfield was present during discussion and approved this recommendation.

Update 04/15/2025— To date, DARS received few requests for CARF cost reimbursement. DARS has been informed by numerous ESOs that CARF International has been issuing temporary survey date extensions due to the lack of qualified surveyors. This SFY, DARS reimbursed CARF costs to 4 organizations and has received requests for reimbursement from five additional organizations. There is opportunity for 20 organizations to receive reimbursement this SFY. The delay in surveys could be a reason that DARS is not seeing more requests for reimbursement. Organizations seeking reimbursement who have achieved CARF accreditation have until May 15, 2025, to request reimbursement from the SFY25 available funds. There will be two more opportunities for reimbursement in SFY26.

04/02/2024 Recommendation 3 (Approved/Completed)

A motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Chuck McElroy recommending that DARS expand allowable activities under LTESS-EES funds to include brief intervention/time limited services to help an individual maintain job stability resulting from unforeseen circumstances. DARS will determine what the additional allowable activities may include and will update the service description to reflect these changes. All members present at today's meeting voted in favor of this recommendation. DARS Commissioner, Kathy Hayfield, approved this recommendation immediately after the recommendation was made by the Committee.

Update 04/15/2025- This recommendation is still under consideration by DARS. No feedback has been received from the Committee or Public for the past state fiscal year. Because of this, a motion was made by Joanne Aceto and seconded by Jim Fenerty to remove this recommendation from further updates. All members present voted in favor to remove this recommendation from future updates.

04/02/2024 Recommendation 4 (Approved/Completed)

Alan Hargraves made a motion and Shirley Lyons seconded, that DARS investigate capacity building in underserved areas and how LTESS-EES funds may be used to support this. All members present approved this recommendation. DARS Commissioner, Kathy Hayfield, approved this recommendation immediately after the recommendation was made by the Committee.

Update 04/15/2025 – DARS continues to encourage new providers to consider services in these areas. The EPIC Project continues to work to increase the accessibility of CIE for VR participant in the Southwest District. A motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Stephanie Porter-Lopez to remove this recommendation from further updates since the outcome of the recommendation is unclear as to whether it has been met. Seven members voted in favor (McElroy, Martin, Boutchyrd, Porter-Lopez, Lyons, Fenerty, Harrison), two opposed (Aceto and Hargraves), two abstained (Harper and Lavach). Motion carried. This recommendation will be removed from further updates.

LTESS-EES SFY25 Third Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons And Projected Balances

Donna Bonessi, DRS Director ESSP

Ms. Bonessi reviewed the LTESS-EES SFY25 Third Quarter Spending Report, Comparisons, and Projected Balances. Below is the Quarter 3 SFY25 Report that reflects a Quarter 3 balance of \$905,856.94. The total Year-to Date balance is \$3,020,555.44.

Year to Date Summary			
	EES	LTESS	Total
Expected Expenditure	\$ 2,571,136.00	\$ 5,887,658.00	\$ 8,458,794.00
Actual Expenditure	\$ 1,089,952.36	\$ 4,348,286.20	\$ 5,438,238.56
YTD Balance	\$ 1,481,183.64	\$ 1,539,371.80	\$ 3,020,555.44
			\$ -
			\$ -
Total YTD Balance			\$ 3,020,555.44

Commissioner's Updates***Kathy Hayfield, DARS Commissioner***

Commissioner Hayfield participated in the ESOSC meeting and gave appreciation to those committee appointees whose terms are ending. The Commissioner provided an update that it is anticipated that Governor Youngkin will approve the proposed budget that includes language to combine LTESS-EES funds. National discussions with CSAVR and other state VR agencies regarding what entity Vocational Rehabilitation may be moved under, since it is currently housed under the US Department of Education, took place at the CSAVR. The Commissioner stated at this time there are no concerns for vocational rehabilitation services being impacted from federal changes. Commissioner Hayfield informed the committee that while the number of DARS referrals has increased, our spending has increased and is outpacing the increase in referrals. The Commissioner reported that DARS is not currently under an order of selection. Additionally, she informed the committee that there are no expected cost of living increases this year for the VR program.

Discussion of Projected Balances & Future Use of Funds, Recommendations to DARS***Chris Lavach***

A motion was made by Shirley Lyons and seconded by Greta Harrison to allocate LTEES initial funding for SFY26 at the full amount of ten thousand dollars to You Show US LLC, pending full CARF accreditation, to allocate LTEES funding to RSVP- NoVa at the full amount of ten thousand dollars, and allocate LTEES funding to Employment Advocate Group LLC, in the amount of five thousand dollars. Upon use of initial allocations, Employment Advocates Group LLC would then be eligible for inclusion into the three-year rolling average. Ten members voted in favor of the recommendation (Hargraves, Aceto, Lavach, McElroy, Boutchyard, Porter-Lopez, Lyons, Fenerty, Harrison) with one abstained (Harper). Motion passed.

SFY25 Future Meeting Dates, Upcoming Agenda Items and other Business, Committee

The next meeting of the Employment Service Organization Steering Committee is scheduled for July 8, 2025. The Committee will meet from 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. or until all business has been conducted.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment report will be placed on the agenda for July 8, 2025.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.