

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting
May 15, 2025**

Draft Minutes

Members Present:

Kelvin Harris, Chair; Christy Crowther, Vice Chair; Scott Pruett; Sara Pruett; Paige Moore; Joann Willis Lindholm; Dan Aunspach; Eric Raff; Jennifer O’Berry,

Members Present by Conference Call: None

Guests:

Robin Ramsey, Director, F.R.E.E.

Tobi Somoria, F.R.E.E.

David Ruggles, DARS

Staff Present:

Barclay Shepard, Manager, VATS

Sonja Schaible, VATS

Emily McKeough, VATS

Paula Martin, VATS

Interpreters: Ivy Brothers and Sherry Parsons

Call to Order:

Kelvin Harris, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Mr. Harris stated that this meeting was focused on “Making ‘Sense’ of Tools for Self-Regulation”. The meeting took place at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center in the Assistive Computer Technology Lab, Room 196.

Approval of Minutes:

The November 21, 2024, draft minutes were approved as written.

Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Harris reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any additions from the floor. No additions were made.

Public Comment:

There were no comments from the public.

Old Business:

No report

New Business:

VATS Program Updates:

Mr. Shepard provided the following general program updates to include:

- Discussed new Annual Progress Report and State Plan requirements for 2025
- VATS remains committed to adult and children's DME reuse services
- Discussed VATS ongoing priorities to include durable medical equipment reuse contracts as well as increased collaboration with other state agencies that fund AT.
- Reviewed VATS significant accomplishments in FY24 to include:
 - Served 7,352 Virginians through the following assistive technology (AT) services: Demonstrations, Short Term Equipment Loans, Reuse; Training, and Information & Assistance.
 - Provided durable medical equipment (DME) to 5,142 Virginians with limited resources. VATS contracted adult and children's DME reuse programs provided 7,506 pieces of gently used DME valued over \$3.9 million to qualifying Virginians.
 - Served 83 DARS vocational rehabilitation clients in DME Reuse Program. Since 2010, the reuse program provided 1,210 DARS clients with primary or back-up equipment needed to maintain or obtain employment.
 - Provided high-impact assistive technology trainings across Virginia to 566 participants.
 - Provided 701 (756 individuals) AT demonstrations and 242 short-term equipment loans (441 pieces of equipment).
 - Provided Information & Assistance to 697 individuals needing assistance connecting to valuable assistive technology resources.

Electronic Meeting Policy:

Mr. Shepard provided members with a copy of an electronic meeting policy for VATS. Discussion ensued. Mr. Harris asked the membership if someone would like to make a motion to further discuss and vote on this policy. *A motion was made, second and unanimously approved to adopt the VATS electronic meeting policy.*

Presentation: Adaptive Driving and Overview and Tour of the AT Sensory Lab

Ms. Martin and Sonya Gasser provided a brief history of assistive technology services at the Center and why tools for self-regulation were important for DARS clients participating in evaluation and training programs, to be successful. A tour of the Sensory Lab followed as well as a demonstration of an adaptive vehicle.

Working Lunch: Advisory Council Member Updates

Several ATAC members reported updates from their organizations or constituent groups.

VATS Contractor Updates:

Sonja Schaible reported and update from the Children's Assistive Technology Service (C.A.T.S):

- C.A.T.S. received funding to rebuild and migrate their website and inventory database.
- HalloWheels is a fundraising event for C.A.T.S. This event will kick off on October 25 with Trunk or Treat events scheduled in Richmond, Roanoke and Virginia Beach.

- C.A.T.S. Roanoke will be moving at the end of May with an open house event to be determined.
- Equipment requests and family support have been steady, running about the same numbers as the previous year.

Robin Ramsey from the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment & Endowment (F.R.E.E.) provided a program update to include updates from full-service reuse sites. Highlights included:

- F.R.E.E. hired a full-time Director of Community Development, Tobi Somorin.
- During the first quarter of 2025, F.R.E.E. has served 874 individuals with 1,292 devices.
- F.R.E.E. of Smyth County will open this summer. The HubScrub will be delivered to the F.R.E.E. space at the Chilhowie Goodwill in the first week of June. Funding has been secured to hire program staff.
- A partnership agreement was announced between F.R.E.E. and Sentara Health System. This agreement will increase Virginians' access to DME through reuse. The partnership will roll out in these phases:
 - Continuing the current partnerships at Williamsburg, Harrisonburg, and South Hampton Roads
 - Outfit Sentara Mobile Medical Units and community care clinics.
 - Provide DME on-site at all other Virginia-based Sentara hospitals (DME Closets).
 - Build F.R.E.E. full-service programs (like Williamsburg and Harrisonburg) on campus at Sentara Woodbridge and Sentara Halifax.

Guided Tour of WWRC

Members were provided a tour of the Center by WWRC staff.

Next ATAC Meeting:

The next ATAC Meeting:

- TBA

*Unless otherwise noted, meetings will be held at the DARS Central Office. This office will be moving later this summer, and we will update the address once the move is complete.

Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00pm