**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

**Advocacy, Outreach, and Training (AOT) Committee Meeting Minutes**

***March 13, 2019***

**Committee Members Present:**

Matthew Shapiro (Chair)

Allison Coles-Johnson

Alexandra Dixon

Ethel Paris-Gainer

Jocelyn Kilgore

Sarah Kranz-Ciment

Rachel Loughlin

Eric Mann

Alexis Nichols

Caroline Raker

Alexus Smith

**VBPD Staff:**

Heidi Lawyer

Benjamin Jarvela

Penni Sweetenburg-Lee

Megan Weems

Ronita Wilson

Evette Wingfield-Woodley

**Guests:**

Selonia Miles

Amy Yenyo

Kennedy Rose

Angela Barnhill

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair, Mr. Matthew Shapiro called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m*.*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE:** The Chair explained the Executive Director’s report and other issues discussed at the Executive Committee meeting, including special initiatives/legislative and policy work, committee involvement, Board member attendance, grant reviews, training and alumni, Board administration, and programs.

The Chair called for a **MOTION** to approve the December Committee minutes. Ms. Ethel Paris-Gainer made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes and Ms. Caroline Raker **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried and the December meeting minutes were approvedas written.

**PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING PROGRAM UPDATE**: Dr. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee, Director of Training Programs, updated the committee members regarding the ongoing recruitment efforts for the 2019/2020 Partners in Policymaking program (PIP). Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted that so far 27 applications had been received, but that the application period may be extended if insufficient numbers of applications are received by the closing date of March 15. Training staff hope for 40 to 50 applicants in total. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that the PIP selection committee has been identified and is tentatively set to meet on April 17, 2019. The committee will need the applications two weeks prior to meeting, so any extension to the application deadline will move the committee meeting date. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted that her unit and the Administrative team have been working with Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) procurement personnel on a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the hotel for PIP. Three applications were been received and, as of the meeting, only one location remained as a potential awardee

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PROGRAM UPDATE:** Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee stated there were no updates regarding Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) because of the current focus on PIP.

**ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UPDATE**: Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the efforts of the regional Alumni Development Program (ADP) chapters to encourage members to participate in grassroots advocacy. She explained that the ADP was now completing its third year and that chapter leadership teams were invited to give reports to the Board. Representatives from the NOVA chapter, Ms. Selonia Miles and Ms. Amy Yenyo, discussed the efforts of their chapter throughout the year. Ms. Miles introduced herself and explained that her participation in the PIP program inspired her to run for local office. She was elected as a Councilwoman in Dumfries, VA. Ms. Yenyo introduced herself and explained that her participation in PIP inspired her to start a small business to impact policy for the healthcare industry. Ms. Miles presented an update on meetings held and accomplishments in advocacy and outreach efforts that included: a meeting with guests from Prince William Department of Elections and the Disability Law Center of Virginia, and marketed NOVA town hall meetings to encourage advocacy with local leaders. Ms. Miles and Ms. Yenyo discussed the success of their Developmental Disability Advocacy Day (DD Day) on January 30, 2019, at the General Assembly of Virginia (in collaboration with the Arc of Virginia). The NOVA chapter had five alumni participants who met with 10 legislators and staff and discussed current policy issues impacting the disability community. NOVA alumni also developed a plan of action to engage members who were unable to attend DD Day. Ms. Miles and Ms. Yenyo then discussed some of the challenges they faced as chapter leadership: low alumni engagement, region size and traffic, technological challenges, and coordination and collaboration with existing advocacy organizations. Ms. Miles and Ms. Yenyo then offered possible solutions to these challenges which included: modify the quality of engagement versus quantity of alumni involved, fund ongoing training and advocacy events to help keep alumni involved, streamline the documentation, and communicate the expectations of alumni from the beginning of the PIP and YLA programs.

Dr. Sarah Kranz-Ciment asked whether there was a lack of information online about the DD Advocacy Day event and whether it was possible to include the Board in ADP event communications. Mr. Eric Mann asked if there is a way staff can push the information to the full Board. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee and the Chair discussed the potential of a content calendar being developed. Dr. Kranz-Ciment asked if there was one disability advocacy day where all organizations could work together. Ms. Heidi Lawyer, Director of the Board, explained the previous logistical issues involved in planning such an event that included the weather and the cooperation of various overlapping focus groups.

The representative from the SWA chapter, Ms. Kennedy Rose, introduced herself and discussed the efforts of her chapter throughout the year. Ms. Rose gave an update on meetings held and accomplishments in advocacy and outreach efforts that included: the October Teal Pumpkin campaign, which focused on spreading awareness of food allergies, the plans to focus on ABA Therapy in their March meeting, and accessibility audits in May which would be a direct conversation with community leaders about specific accessibility issues. She noted the engagement of the significant number of recent YLA alumni, and discussed the extensive efforts to establish virtual meetings as well as, the increased efforts in digital communications on social media about local advocacy events and efforts. This was based on the size of the region, the age of alumni, and the direct effect of these factors on meeting attendance and member engagement. Ms. Rose then discussed the impact of their DD Day on February 4, 2019. The SWA chapter had eight alumni participants who met with 17 legislators and staff. Ms. Rose noted the importance of the legislative updates provided to ADP chapters from Ms. Lawyer. She then discussed some of the challenges she faced as a chapter leader which included: low engagement from the 1998-2008 alumni versus the more recent classes, and transportation in the region. Ms. Rose then offered possible solutions to these challenges which included: focusing advocacy efforts on topics alumni are motivated by, and engaging older alumni classes in advocacy events. Ms. Caroline Raker commented that, as an older PIP alumnus, her priorities shifted the further out from the program she got, and she understood that the motivation to participate must come from the members.

The representative from the TARC chapter, Ms. Angel Barnhill, discussed the efforts of her chapter throughout the year. Ms. Barnhill gave an update on meetings held and accomplishments in advocacy and outreach efforts that included: the Tidewater Autism Summit, and the Virginia Beach SEAC Community Resources Fair. She noted the significant engagement of 2016 and 2018 alumni classes in the region, and discussed the efforts to engage members via virtual meetings. Ms. Barnhill then discussed the impact of their DD Day on January 23, 2019. The TARC chapter had five alumni participants who met with seven legislators and staff. Ms. Barnhill noted the chapter member’s preparations for DD Day, including Mr. Joshua Parker and a self-advocacy letter he wrote and used to help communicate with legislators the issues impacting the disability community. Ms. Barnhill also noted the addition of a non-alumnus, Mr. Richard Luxford, a self-advocate who had been intrigued by and involved in the advocacy efforts of the TARC chapter. Ms. Barnhill discussed the planned upcoming advocacy topics which included: the Faith Inclusion Network, and the Endependence Center Paratransit Presentation. She then discussed some of the challenges faced by chapter leadership which included: changes in the leadership team and leadership team medical issues, which directly impact outreach efforts. Ms. Barnhill then suggestions to these challenges which included: increasing the marketing of meetings and events, engaging older alumni classes in advocacy events, collaborating with other organizations in the region, and working closely with ADP/Board staff to improve efforts.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee commented on the importance of efforts of each regional chapter’s leadership team and ADP staff, Ms. Ronita Wilson, to confront the issue of member engagement and meeting attendance. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee also pointed out the impact of having members attend advocacy events, like the DD Advocacy Days. Ms. Barnhill noted that for her personally attending and participating in DD Advocacy Day reignited the passion for engagement in grassroots efforts; and that it seemed that members of the TARC chapter who attended felt the same.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee gave the presentation for the CVA ADP chapter, because the representatives, Mr. Jason Gray and Mr. Sohail Safeer, were unable to attend the meeting. She noted that the challenges included a lot of the same issues as the other chapters: older alumni attendance/engagement, the size of the region, and attracting a diversity of members involved in the chapter. She explained that the CVA chapter meetings have been held in various locations across the region, but that the previous suggestion of hosting more virtual meetings and scheduling the meetings around members’ needs, did not seem to be the best solution to the issue. Like other chapter leaders, Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee suggested carrying the momentum from the programs to alumni advocacy efforts. She noted that all current leadership teams in each chapter are 2018 PIP graduates. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee then explained that the CVA chapter had a lot of discussions on the difference between advocacy and awareness events but this year had more awareness events. They hope to change this next year.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed CVA DD Advocacy Day, on January 17, 2019, which had five alumni who attended, but noted that a lot of members chose to participate in other disability-focused advocacy days (ie, autism), which was understandable but meant that CVAs numbers for that day were lower. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted the challenges presented that brought some gaps to the attention of Board staff with respect to PIP/YLA content. She explained that, for example, we expect alumni to write letters, petitions, etc. but don’t actually teach them how to do this within the advocacy training. She and Ms. Lawyer noted that they would be reviewing the content of the training programs to Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee commented that some of the technical difficulties of virtual meetings may have impacted ADP meeting attendance, but that all ADP chapters use social media to share information, as well, as the formal channels established by the Board. She and Ms. Lawyer noted that the annual evaluation of the program would take place in May and that recommendations for improvements to the program, including infrastructure, data collection, and training opportunities would come forth from that evaluation and be presented to the ADP in June. . Ms. Jocelyn Kilgore suggested that chapters could work throughout the year to develop legislative documents to help support DD Advocacy Day. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee agreed that this was a possibility. Ms. Alexandra Dixon added that the Virginia House of Delegates are up for election in November 2019.

**EVENT SUPPORT APPLICATION**: Mr. Benjamin Jarvela, Director of Communications, explained the details of the event and the application from the Virginia Department of Elections for its Accessible Voting Engagement Expo on April 30, 2019, at the Henrico Recreation Center. Mr. Jarvela explained that he worked with Department of Elections’ staff on planning and logistics for the event, as well as having conducted a disability sensitivity training session with event staff, at the request of that agency. He also noted that many agencies and other organizations were invited and are planning to attend the event. Ms. Raker asked whether this was the only application and how much money remained in the yearly Event Support budget. Mr. Jarvela replied that this was the only application for this meeting and that $6,000 remained in the fund. A discussion ensued. Mr. Eric Mann made a **MOTION** to support at $2,000. Ms. Kranz-Cement **SECONDED** the **MOTION** at $2,000. The **MOTION** torecommend full funding of $2,000 to the entire Board was approved.

**EVENT SUPPORT POST-EVENT REPORTS:** Mr. Jarvela walked through Ms. Nia Harrison’s report on the Oral Health Coalition event the Board funded for $1,500 of the $2,000 requested, and explained that Board staff and event attendees agreed the event was a successful investment. Mr. Eric Raff gave an explanation of the Virginia Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing event the Board funded at $2,200 and commented on the success of the session style (lecture and breakout groups). Mr. Raff felt that it was a successful Board investment, and that it would be beneficial to hold the same event in other regions throughout the state. Ms. Dixon and Ms. Alexis Nichols gave a report on the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond event the Board funded for $2,500, and discussed the successful elements of the event. Ms. Dixon expressed her reservation in funding or attending events about various disabilities that do not directly involve persons with disabilities in the planning, programs, or presenter positions. An extensive discussion ensued regarding the specific funding periods, i.e., whether the Board should keep four funding periods or move to two periods, and the desire to ensure that leadership teams of conferences the Board funds are culturally and linguistically diverse. Board staff stated they would review modifications to the Event Support Application and the application time periods and return to the Board in June with suggestions.

**COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**: Mr. Jarvela gave an abbreviated version of the Communications Updatedue to time, but reminded committee members that he would be available to discuss further and answer questions any time throughout the rest of the day or via email.

**ADJOURNMENT**: The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.