

**PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS  
(PAIMI)  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING  
June 27, 2007  
Final Minutes**

- Members Present:** Irene Rebholz, Chair, Jackie Brown, Lisa Ritchie,
- Members Absent:** Ward Marsteller, Byron Smith, CW Tillman
- Guests Present:** There were no guests present.
- Staff Present:** Sherry Confer, Eileen Levandoski, Colleen Miller  
Julie Kegley, Paul Buckley (for portions of the meeting)
- Call to Order/  
Welcome/  
Introductions:  
Meeting Minutes:** Irene Rebholz, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:10 am. Ms. Rebholz welcomed members and staff.  
Ms. Rebholz requested that Council members review the February 15, 2007 meeting minutes. As there was no quorum, no vote was held to formally consider for the record these minutes. Council will consider them at its next meeting.
- Public Comment:** There were no members of the public present and no public comment was offered.
- Governing Board  
Update:** Brent Brown, Chair of VOPA's governing board, joined the Council meeting via conference call.  
  
Mr. Brown thanked PAIMI Council members for their service to VOPA. He emphasized how valuable the input of both the PAIMI and DAC Councils was to the Board. He explained how Board committees were set up to include a member from both Councils and that good work was being done through these committees.  
  
Mr. Brown described the Internal Policy Committee has being very active in deciding how VOPA will ultimately be operated. In discussing the work of the Public Awareness Committee, he noted that this committee is now dedicated to addressing outreach that better reflects the nature and scope of VOPA services given its limited resources. He reported on the work of the Finance Committee in assisting with what was ultimately a glowing audit report.  
  
Mr. Brown closed his remarks by again thanking Council members for their service and asking them to continue keeping the Board up-to-date on their work.

**Presentation:  
Current Mental  
Health Policy  
Issues:**

Paul Buckley, VOPA Managing Attorney, reported on his participation on the Commission for Mental Health Law Reform. He described the Commission as being an inter-agency advisory council involved with investigating systems for delivering mental health services in Virginia. He said the Commission was started in 2005 by Chief Justice Hassel. VOPA staff participates on the various task forces that the Commission has set up, he said. He mentioned that each task force is able to move along well as there is consensus amongst all the parties involved.

Mr. Buckley provided an overview of the issues within the Commission's study to include access to services by children and adolescents, relinquishment of parental custody, foster care, and mental health needs in the juvenile justice system.

He mentioned the processes for civil commitment being one of recent and intensified interest in light of the events occurring at Virginia Tech. Mr. Buckley serves on the task forces examining this issue. He distributed to Council members copies of a Powerpoint presentation that outlined the Commission's proposal for changing the law on civil commitment. He noted that the Commission is moving towards a broadening of the standards for involuntary civil commitment.

Council members questioned Mr. Buckley regarding the Inspector General's study of Community Services Boards (CSBs) and the services they provide. Mr. Buckley responded that the report reflected that CSBs do a good job providing emergency services and evaluating persons in need of acute care but CSBs are limited in providing other services in the community.

Mr. Buckley referred Council members to the DMHMRSAS's Commission on Mental Health Law Reform website [www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/omh-mentalhealthcommission.htm](http://www.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov/omh-mentalhealthcommission.htm). He also advised Council members that he was available anytime to answer their questions and he provided them with his contact information.

**Working Lunch**

**Work Session:  
VOPA FY08-09  
Focus Areas**

Sherry Confer introduced Julie Kegley, Staff Attorney, who distributed a handout entitled "Focus Areas for FY2008 and FY2009". Ms. Kegley explained that the VOPA Board had voted on the goals at its meeting in April, and that it was now time for the Council to go over the focus areas under each goal and provide its recommendations for the Board.

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

Ms. Rebholz indicated that she felt the focus areas listed were sufficient.

Jackie Brown expressed concern for a shortage of beds for adults with mental health issues. Lisa Ritchie indicated support for focus areas dedicated to abuse and neglect in community settings. Council members expressed support for looking at juvenile facilities, focusing on residential treatment facilities and monitoring at juvenile detention centers.

2. Children with disabilities receive an appropriate education:

Ms. Ritchie expressed concern for children with disabilities and their proclivity for school absences due to medical appointments. Ms. Kegley indicated that these absences could be addressed in IEPs. Ms. Brown stated that often parents don't understand their child's IEP. She also noted issues with people being denied eligibility based on an inappropriate assessment. Ms. Brown also mentioned concern for educational services not being available when behavior problems are part of the child's disability.

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

Ms. Kegley stated that certain Federal grants require VOPA to take on certain cases, such as voting rights. Ms. Ritchie mention that this focus area needs to be concerned with the issue of coordination, whereby all services available to persons with disabilities are better networked and promoted. Ms. Brown also noted that rarely has she found state facilities to make available any information or guidelines on where to go for assistance. Ms. Ritchie noted that it is important also for these facilities to have toll free numbers available to the residents.

4. People with disabilities live in the most integrated environment possible:

Ms. Ritchie mentioned problems with access to housing where emotional support animals were allowed. There was discussion amongst Council members regarding the fact that over 35,000 people live in assisted living facilities due to a lack of more reasonable housing alternatives. Ms. Brown mentioned how Virginia sent 3,000 housing vouchers back to the Federal government. Council members also discussed issues involving HUD Section 8 housing and community based care. Ms. Ritchie discussed alternate decision making and off-campus activities. Council members also discussed the importance of vocational rehabilitation programs providing more appropriate job training for people with mental illness.

5. People with disabilities are employed to maximum potential:

Ms. Kegley described the Client Assistance Program and the possibility of assisting a client with a disagreement with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. This is an area she feels VOPA can be of assistance. Council discussed various problems with DRS in trying to train and secure employment for persons with disabilities. Sherry Confer mentioned how some people mistakenly fear loosing their benefits if they go back to work not knowing about work incentives.

6. People with disabilities have equal access to appropriate and necessary health care:

Council members engaged in discussions regarding Medicaid's involvement with providing transportation and a lack of public transportation being a widespread issue for persons with disabilities. Ms. Brown added that there are issues where people either make too much and make too little to benefit from certain services. She added her concerns for access to dental care, relaying incidents whereby young people emerge from prison with rotten teeth. Ms. Ritchie noted that many with seizure disorders can have significant problems with their teeth and gums as well.

7. People with disabilities in Virginia are aware of VOPA's services:

Ms. Brown noted that people do not have a lot of time to gather information. Ms. Ritchie added that either people do not know VOPA exists or that they have unrealistic understandings of what it is that VOPA can or cannot do. Ms. Brown asked about fact sheets to which Ms. Miller replied that VOPA distributed quite a few.

Ms. Kegley thanked the group and added that if anybody had anything else to add to please contact her.

**Governing Board  
Committee  
Reports:**

Ms. Rebholz reported that the Public Policy Committee had not met and that there was nothing to report. Ms. Ritchie reported that the Goals and Public Awareness Committee had a meeting the next day and that they planned to discuss the recent results of VOPA's Public Input Survey. Ms. Miller reported that the Finance Committee had met and discussed the recent audit and VOPA's new accounting manual. She mentioned that the committee had reviewed reports on expenditures and felt that the agency was spending at safe levels. Ms. Confer reported that the Internal Policy Committee is working on policies governing what services can be provided by certain funding streams. She spoke about a concern of the Board for case file management. She noted that the policy was changed to accommodate a range of cases that attorneys will be required to carry, rather than a fixed number of cases. Ms. Confer also discussed policies governing holidays.

**Executive  
Director's Update:**

Colleen Miller, VOPA's Executive Director, presented the Second Quarter Progress Report for the FY2007 Goals and Focus Areas. Ms. Miller discussed VOPA's efforts to work with veterans' facilities and the difficulties staff was experiencing gaining access to these facilities. She also reported on access issues exist at juvenile facilities. She also spoke of additional work being done monitoring assisted living facilities. Ms. Miller reported on work completed under a HUD grant that concluded in March 2007. She reported on continued efforts by VOPA staff to work with assisted living facilities.

**Litigation Report:**

Ms. Miller pointed out that what she meant by “litigation” is anything that is decided by a neutral third party. She said that as a policy, the agency tries to work out issues at the lowest level with the goals being to make systemic changes. Nine different funding sources, she said, provide for the majority of the cases VOPA takes on.

Updating on other items of importance to Council, Ms. Miller explained to Council that Clyde Matthews, VOPA Managing Attorney, is on military leave in Iraq. She indicated that Steve Traubert would be filling in for Mr. Mathews in the Resource Advocacy Unit (RAU) as Acting Managing Attorney. She added that VOPA is looking at its internal disaster response plan.

**Other Business:**

Ms. Rebholz voiced concern about how few serve on the PAIMI Council. Ms. Confer mentioned that the Public Input Survey collected names of about 30 people indicating an interest in serving on Councils. Council members engaged in a discussion on how better to recruit members, better publicity for their meetings, and care in picking meeting places that were available via public transportation.

Ms. Rebholz read to Council members a letter of resignation from Lisa DuVal. Although without a quorum Council could not make nominations, Ms. Rebholz discussed naming Ms. Ritchie as Chair of the PAIMI Council, Ms. Brown as Vice Chair and CW Tillman to remain as Secretary. Ms. Confer indicated that she would reiterate those nominations in an email to all Council members.

Ms. Rebholz reminded Council members to complete their travel vouchers.

Ms. Confer mentioned difficulties that a VOPA Board member was having finding a psychiatrist covered by Medicare. Ms. Ritchie expressed knowing of the same difficulty in her area.

**Adjournment:**

Ms. Rebholz made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 2:05 pm. Ms. Ritchie SECONDED the MOTION and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous approval.

**FINAL MINUTES**

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November 14, 2007

Date