



**Southwest DARS EPIC
Local Advisory Council
March 2025 Meeting minutes**

Attendance:

Adam Page, Adrienne Robinson, Allison Enix, Amanda Compton, Cindy Copeland, Curtis Hawkins, Howard Chapman, Ingrid Gagnon, Ivory Pierce, John Stewart, Katelin Holmes, Ken Hergenrath, Lisa Richard, Melanie Fleenor, Melissa Munton, Melissa Williams, Sally Howell, Sandi Miller, and Sarah Arnold

I. Welcome and Introductions

John welcomed council members and guests. He shared that one of the pieces of the EPIC grant work is to build partnerships between agencies and organizations by creating collaborations to serve the clients to get people to employment through partnership development. By understanding the roles and services of our partners, we are better able to connect and collaborate with each other. John talked about how we can collaborate together. He shared the impact of the EPIC project through two case examples.

Case example 1: The first participant that John described worked in subminimum wage for many years before his current position. In the year prior to his new job, he averaged around 6 dollars per hour, and he had frequent layoffs. Now he earns above minimum wage and enjoys a consistent schedule. The reliable and increased earnings gives him the resources to proactively prepare for future financial needs. However, he was afraid to have too much money saved because he had been told this would put his Social Security benefits at risk. In a professional capacity, his family member attended the Financial Wellness session that the LAC identified as a community education priority. She was able to use that knowledge to help this participant establish an ABLE account. That has empowered him to save up to replace his car in the future. The participant is now working independently and has taken a new co-worker under his wing. This co-worker receives Job Coaching assistance. Acting as a natural support, he is contributing to his co-worker's ability to finish his shift independently. That has freed the job coach up to be able to develop a worksite and Coach the second participant several weeks sooner than anticipated.

Case Example 2: The second participant has been attending day support services for many years. She wants to work, yet she has fears about what she may encounter due to past trauma. Conversations with the first participant and his family member,

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that began as updates about the ABLE account, led to a connection that will provide Equine Therapy for the second participant, near her home. She is now participating in a Paid Work Experience. She will have equine therapy as an option to help her approach work with more confidence. This sequence of events would not have been possible if this Local Advisory Council (LAC) had not identified this need for education in the community.

These cases are examples of how the LAC's efforts are rippling out into our community.

II.Partnership Development and Resource Directories

Three community service providers presented.

Presentation 1:

Howard Chapman, representing the Twin Counties Rural Health Network, presented Building a System of Care and Expanding Resources Handouts will be provided. Described the service provision collaborations and needs in the southwest Virginia area. Services addressed included health access, transportation, and the Social Determinants of Health (e.g., health and safety, housing, employment, learning, transportation).

Strong ACC – Strong Accountable Care Community

<https://www.balladhealth.org/accountable-care-community>

Virginia Rural Health Association

<https://vrha.org/>

High Efficiency Navigation Initiative (HENI; assist people to find the most effective care to avoid inappropriate/ineffective use of emergency rooms)

https://vrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-conference_45_1485100888.pdf

Tri-Area Community Health Diabetes Monitor program (frequent follow up to encourage proper self-monitoring)

[https://www.triareahealth.org/news/how-our-medical-professionals-can-help-you-manage-](https://www.triareahealth.org/news/how-our-medical-professionals-can-help-you-manage-diabetes#:~:text=When%20medication%20is%20necessary%20to,start%20managin)

[diabetes#:~:text=When%20medication%20is%20necessary%20to,start%20managin](https://www.triareahealth.org/news/how-our-medical-professionals-can-help-you-manage-diabetes#:~:text=When%20medication%20is%20necessary%20to,start%20managin)
[g%20your%20diabetes%20today!](https://www.triareahealth.org/news/how-our-medical-professionals-can-help-you-manage-diabetes#:~:text=When%20medication%20is%20necessary%20to,start%20managin)

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The Ripple Foundation (health care including accessibility and intersectionality).
<https://www.theripplefoundation.org/>

MEOC – Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC; transportation in Norton & Wytheville areas)
<https://meoc.org/transportation/>

Presentation 2:

Sally Howell, representing Blue Mountain Therapy presented the Virginia Resource Library (VRL). The VRL is continually updated. Six volunteers update a few chapters a month. If you The VRL went public in February 2025 and presents a detailed and cross-referenced service resource database. The discussion addressed how to get the information in the VRL out and how to share resources locally and statewide. Anyone who would like to be a part of the verification team, verify your own facilities information, want to make sure that you're in it, or you want to update the programs currently in the VRL, you can email the VRL: varesourcelibrary@gmail.com

The Virginia Healthcare Foundation (medication assistance program to pay for meds) was identified as an additional resource.
<https://www.vhcf.org/>

Presentation 3:

Sarah Arnold presented three community resources:

Virginia Resource 211
<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/211.cgi>

No Wrong Door
<https://www.nowrongdoor.virginia.gov/>

VirginiaNavigator
<https://virginiannavigator.org/>

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III. Training Events:

- April 22, 2025: *Behavioral Economics and the Culture of Poverty.*
Wytheville Meeting Center. Tentatively 9am-3pm
- June 4, 2025 *Trauma Informed Approaches* (TBA location/time)
- Aug 13, 2025 *Medicaid Waiver* (TBA location/time)

IV. Next Meeting:

- June 4, 2025 Agenda items proposed: VA Easy Access, Virginia 2-1-1, Navigators, and the further development and sustainability of the SW Local Advisory Council

Attendance roster (names, organizations, email) areas of expertise

Member	email	Virginia Agency/Org
Altizer, Christi	Christi.Altizer@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Armstead, Melissa	Melissa.Armstead@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Arnold, Sarah	Sarah.Arnold@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Bolte, Jenny	jenny.bolte@vcwnrmr.com	Virginia Career Works New River/Mt. Rogers
Bonessi, Donna	Donna.Bonessi@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Carico, Beth	ecarico@peopleinc.net	People Inc.
Chapman, Howard	hchapman@triarea.org	Tri-Area Community Health
Cofer, Dave	dcofer@bvps.org	Bristol Virginia Public Schools
Compton, Amanda	acompton@oe-inc.org	Occupational Enterprises Inc
Copeland, Cindy	Cynthia.Copeland@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Cureton, Crystal	Crystal.Cureton@dss.virginia.gov	DSS
DeYoung, Dennis	DDeYoung@AscendBenefitsCounseling.com	Ascend Benefits Counseling
Enix, Allison	Allison.Enix@dars.virginia.gov	DARS

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Fleenor, Melanie	mfleenor@district-three.org	District Three / Mountain Lynx
Gagnon, Ingrid	Ingrid.Gagnon@dars.virginia.gov	DARS
Hawkins, Curtis	Curtis.Hawkins@mountrogers.org	Mount Rogers Community Services
Hergenrather, Ken	hergenkc@gwu.edu	GWU
Howell, Sally	sally.howell@bluemountaintherapy.com	Blue Mountain Therapy
Leftwich, Denise	dleftwich@oe-inc.org	Occupational Enterprises Inc
Miller, Sandi	sjmiller11@gwu.edu	GWU
Mutter, Shannon	shannonm@wcs.k12.va.us	Washington County Public Schools
Page, Adam	apage@highlandscsb.org	Highlands Community Services
Pierce, Ivory	Ivory.Pierce@dss.virginia.gov	DDS
Ralston, DJ	djralston@gwu.edu	GWU
Richard, Lisa	lrichard3@vcu.edu	VCU
Roark, Melissa	mroark@wcs.k12.va.us	Washington County Public Schools
Robinson, Adrienne	adrienne.robinson@gwu.edu	GWU
Stewart, John	John.Stewart@dars.virginia.gov	DARS

Attendance by organization:

N=25	Number of reps
Ascend Benefits Counseling	1
Blue Mountain Therapy	1
Bristol Virginia Public Schools	1
District Three Government Cooperative	1
George Washington University	4 (16.0%)
Highlands Community Services	1
Mount Rogers Community Services	1
Occupational Enterprises Inc	2
Virginia Career Works New River/Mt. Rogers	1

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Virginia Commonwealth University	1
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services	7 (28.0%)
Virginia Disability Determination Services	1
Virginia Department of Social Services	1
Washington County Public Schools	2

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