



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Group: Review of Virginia's Special Education Dispute Resolution System

September 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.

West Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building

Attending:

Beth Ackerman; Sheila Bailey; Jerry Baldwin; Krista Barton-Arnold; Carol Bauer; Jeremy Bennett; Hank Bostwick; Joan Brunner; Josette Bulova; Sean Campbell; Delegate Carrie Coyner; David Curran; Senator Barbara Favola; Secretary Aimee Guidera; Samantha Marsh Hollins; Mills Jones; Jen Krajewski; Heidi Lawyer; Tonya Milling; Kate Oppe; Scott Reiner; Jill Ryan; Delegate Irene Shin; Jim Wheaton; Mychael Willon

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen
Consultant: Deusdedi Merced, Special Education Solutions, LLC

I. Welcome and Introductions:

The Honorable Barbara A. Favola, Senator, Senate of Virginia

Senator Favola thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. Sen. Favola then asked all Advisory Group members to introduce themselves.

II. Study Overview:

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director, Virginia Commission on Youth

Amy Atkinson gave a brief introduction of the study and the work the Commission did over the summer conducting listening sessions.

III. Listening Session Recap

Will Egen, Senior Policy Analyst, Virginia Commission on Youth

Will Egen presented on the listening sessions that VCOY conducted over the summer in partnership with the Parent Education Advocacy Training Center (PEATC). The Commission held one virtual listening session and four in person sessions at Wytheville, Henrico, Arlington, and

Norfolk. Mr. Egen shared the feedback heard during the listening sessions including some suggestions for improvements.

This presentation can be accessed on the Commission's webpage under the meetings tab.

IV. SB 220 (Favola) and HB 1089 (Coyner) Implementation Update

Samantha Hollins, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Populations, Virginia Department of Education

Tammy Burns, Executive Director, Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)

The next agenda item was split up into two presentations. First, Samantha Hollins, Ph.D. presented on a four-page hand out on HB1089/SB220 Special education omnibus legislation with requirements for local school divisions and the Virginia Department of Education focused on special education and related services for students with disabilities. Dr. Hollins reviewed what the Department has already done to implement this legislation and what is still on the horizon.

Following, Dr. Hollins' presentation, Tammy Burns, Executive Director of PEATC, presented on the ongoing hiring process for positions at the regional parent support centers across the state.

The Department of Education handout and PEATC presentation can be accessed on the Commission's webpage under the meetings tab.

V. Consultant Progress Update

Deusdedi Merced, Esq., Managing Member, Special Education Solutions, LLC

Deusdedi Merced, Esq. introduced himself, explained his background and experience in special education and what he has done and will be doing in furtherance of the Commission's study on dispute resolution over the next year.

VI. Advisory Group Discussion

Deusdedi Merced, Esq., Managing Member, Special Education Solutions, LLC

Following the progress update. Mr. Merced led a discussion with the Advisory Group on the following topics:

- Facilitated IEPs and the use of IEP facilitators
- Promoting mediation
- Written state complain process
- Use of third-party neutrals during resolution meetings

VII. Public Comment

Public comment was received from the following meeting attendees: Wendy Little (parent), Cheryl Poe (Advocating 4 Kids, Inc), and Amber Brown (Virginia Education Association).

VIII. Next Steps and Adjournment

Amy Atkinson announced that the Advisory Group will be reconvening in the Spring. Ms. Atkinson also stated that if any members of the Advisory Group or the public have written comments to share, please email them to her, and those comments will be provided to the Commission's consultant.