

Commonwealth Council on Aging  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farm Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229

September 10, 2025  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Quarterly Meeting

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Members Present:** In-Person: Dr. Tracey Gendron, Dr. Andrea Buck, Carla Hesseltine, Ellen Nau, Vickie Runk, Roland Winston, Joshua Myers, Donna Smith, Dr. Yolanda Stevens, Dr. Yolanda Stevens (Zoom), Paige Wilson (Zoom) and Jo-Ann Chase (Zoom) and Ex-Officio Members: Ron Boyd (Zoom), Kathy Hayfield, Tara Ragland, and Courtney Richter

**Members Absent:** Senator Christopher Head and Delegate Patrick Hope

**Guests & Presenters:** In-Person: Martina James, Eric Beasley, Adrienne Johnson, Kristopher Drew, and Daniella Halbleib; Via Zoom: Latrice Vinson, A. Foley, Samantha Fogt, Dana Parsons,

**Staff Present:** In-Person: Charlotte Arbogast, Kiersten Ware, Catherine Harrison, George Worthington (Zoom), and Joyce Haskins-McKune (Zoom)

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**Welcome and Member Introductions**

**Carla Hesseltine, *Chair***

Chair Carla Hesseltine called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and welcomed members, guests, staff, and presenters.

Carla Hesseltine reminded members that Council meeting is being livestreamed for the public. Members of the public can register to listen to the meeting. Council members participating electronically have joined the meeting as “Panelists” as have our presenters for the meeting.

Several council members are joining the meeting via Zoom as permitted by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and those members and their reasons were announced with no objections received for their participation electronically.

Carla Hesseltine also reminded members about the Council’s purpose in the Code of Virginia and about opportunities to get involved in promoting the Council’s work and supporting the Council’s efforts.

Carla Hesseltine called for a Roll Call for attendance and for members to introduce themselves. Sara Stowe confirmed that a quorum was present.

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DARS staff, guests, and the presenters for the meeting also introduced themselves.

**Review Proposed Agenda**

**Carla Hesseltine, *Chair***

Carla Hesseltine presented the proposed agenda. Roland Winston made a motion to approve the proposed meeting agenda as presented and Dr. Tracey Gendron seconded. The proposed meeting agenda was approved by unanimous consensus.

**Review of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**Sara Stowe, *Secretary***

Sara Stowe presented the draft July 15, 2025 meeting minutes for consideration and approval. There were no edits or changes. No changes were made to the draft meeting minutes and they were approved by unanimous consensus.

**Public Comment Period**

**Carla Hesseltine, *Chair***

Carla Hesseltine opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were made during this time.

**DARS Agency Updates**

**Kathy Hayfield, *Commissioner***

Commissioner Kathy Hayfield welcomed members and guests and provided a brief update on DARS, which include updates on the Governor's budget process, a brief federal update, and Executive Order #52. She highlighted that the newly formed Advisory Board for Nursing Home Oversight created as part of Executive Order #52 will meet on Monday, September 15.

**DARS Division for Aging Services Update**

**Kiersten Ware, *Deputy Commissioner***

Deputy Commissioner Kiersten Ware provided an update on the Division for Aging Services (DAS). Her updates focused on the following activities:

- DAS recently hired a new Director of Programs for Aging Services, Dr. Jodi Winship
- 2025 Aging Innovations and Achievement Awards at USAging, which featured several Virginia area agencies on aging (AAAs)
- 2025 Home and Community-Based Services Conference
- Dementia and Alzheimer's in Virginia Summit held on September 9, 2025
- Upcoming Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) Conference in Savannah, GA this month. Next year, this will be held in Williamsburg, VA on September 20-23
- Upcoming Sovereign Nations of Virginia Conference on September 18, 2025
- Older Americans Act (OAA) new regulations implementation
- Next State Plan for Aging Services and the start of the statewide needs assessment survey—National Core Indicators for Aging and Disabilities (NCI-AD) Adult Consumer Survey in partnership with the VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities
- Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program

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- Older Adults Home Modifications Program funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Senior Cool Care Program
- No Wrong Door staff visits to AAAs

**Regulatory Update**

**Charlotte Arbogast, Senior Policy Analyst**

Charlotte Arbogast, Senior Policy Analyst with DARS provided an update on recent state regulatory activities. Her handout identified regulatory actions that had experienced a change in status since the last Council meeting. Charlotte also shared about Executive Order #51: *First-in-the-nation Agentic Artificial Intelligence (AI) Empowered Statewide Regulatory Review*.

**Legislative & Budget Updates**

***Proposed Action: Adopt 2026 Recommendations***

**Josh Myers, Legislative Committee Chair**

Josh Myers reminded members about the *How to Talk to Legislators* guidance and shared the timeline for the 2026 General Assembly. Josh walked through each legislative priority adopted by The Council at the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting requesting members to volunteer to champion the legislative priority:

1. Donna Smith and Ellen Nau will champion: Increase funding for Home & Community-based Services through the AAA's
2. Carla Hesseltine will champion: Strengthen Nursing Home Transparency, Data, and Oversight
3. Carla Hesseltine will champion: Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board
4. Carla Hesseltine will champion: Support Nursing Home Inspection and Enforcement Process
5. Vickie Runk will champion: Increase Funding to the Statewide Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
6. Josh Myers will champion: Increase Funding for Public Guardianship Slots
7. Josh Myers will champion: Provide State General Funds for the ongoing operations of the Virginia Memory Project
8. Josh Myers will champion: Extend the Sunset for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission
9. Carla Hesseltine and Josh Myers will champion: Increase funding for No Wrong Door's Statewide Resource Database

Dr. Tracey Gendron stated that it may be advantageous to share the Council's legislative priorities with the public and offered for the Virginia Center on Aging to help host a webinar in January. CCOA staff indicated they would connect with her on that opportunity.

Sara Stowe shared the *CCOA 2026 Legislative Priorities* postcard designed to be a leave behind for legislators and an opportunity to easily reference CCOA priorities. Carla and Sara worked closely to design it. Carla shared that the backside has been left intentionally blank for legislators

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or members to write notes. A motion to approve the postcard's use was made by Roland Winston and seconded by Josh Myers. The motion was carried unanimously.

Sara Stowe shared about Executive Order #52 which aligned with The Council's priority to *Strengthen the Nursing Home Inspection and Enforcement Process*. Executive Order #52 also established the *Advisory Board on Nursing Home Oversight and Accountability* to advise the State Health Commissioner on quality oversight initiatives that elevate standards across nursing homes and offer recommendations on policies and practices that improve resident well-being and quality of care. Carla Hesselstine was appointed to this Advisory Board in her role as Chair of the Commonwealth Council on Aging. Carla shared briefly about a letter from the CCOA that has been drafted to offer the Council's appreciation for Executive Order #52 and inclusion on the Advisory Board. Josh Myers made a motion to approve sending the letter and Jo-Ann Chase seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Discuss and Approved the 2025 CCOA Annual Report**

***Proposed Action: Approved 2025 CCOA Annual Report***

**Carla Hesselstine, Chair**

**Sara Stowe, Executive Director, CCOA**

Sara Stowe shared the draft 2025 Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA) Annual Report. The draft Annual Report includes a letter from the Chair, report out on the 2025 Best Practice Awards, a summary of the Council's 2025 activities and initiatives, a listing of the Council's membership, and the 2026 Legislative Recommendations. She indicated that following the adoption of the report, DARS staff will ensure it is delivered to the appropriate entities, posted on the CCOA's webpage, and posted on the Division of Legislative Services website.

Dr. Tracey Gendron made the motion to approve the 2025 CCOA Annual Report as presented. Josh Myers seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

**Presentation: Overview of VirginiaNavigator**

**Adrienne Johnson, Executive Director, VirginiaNavigator**

Adrienne Johnson, Executive Director of VirginiaNavigator shared an overview presentation of the organization's programs and services. The presentation covered the following topics:

- The VirginiaNavigator family of websites, including their new look
- Comprehensive Options: Public/Private/Non-profit
- VirginiaNavigator's partnership with No Wrong Door
- VirginiaNavigator's Resource Director of over 26,000 listings of programs and services
- The family of websites' insight data on visitor demographics and interests
- A walkthrough of searching for programs and services on the websites
- DirectConnect tool
- Widgets such as the Caregiver Tech Tool, Brain Injury Service Finder, Social Engagement Service Finder, and Long-Term Care Ombudsman Service Finder
- VirginiaNavigator Navigator Centers and outreach efforts

Members had the opportunity to ask questions about VirginiaNavigator.

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**2026 Best Practice Awards: Updates**

**Sara Stowe, *Executive Director, CCOA***

Sara Stowe shared an update for the Best Practice Awards. The current Committee members include: Dr. Tracey Gendron, Shannon Arnette serving in the Virginia Center on Aging slot, Paige Wilson, and the two newest members: Donna Smith and Yolanda Stevens.

Sara shared a tentative timeline that generally follows the historical process for the Best Practice Awards. She noted that the Committee is scheduled to meet in late October to revamp and reinvigorate the process for 2026. Sara will reach out to current funders, Dominion Energy and AARP Virginia, with updates on the Best Practice Awards and typically we have affirmed their support by November to begin to request nominations for the Best Practice Awards by January.

The Best Practice Awards celebrated 20 years of the awards this year and a survey of award winners was created and currently in progress. Eighty-two programs have won awards over the past 20 years. Forty-three of those received monetary prizes through our Dominion Energy and AARP sponsorships. The survey includes questions to obtain information about winners':

- Organizational Information
- Program Overview
- Replicability and Scalability
- Challenges and Lessons Learned; and
- Impacts and Outcomes

Sara Stowe shared a tentative timeline for the survey and will plan for the Best Practice Awards Committee Members to review the survey results at the October Committee meeting.

**Presentation: Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Assisted Living Inspections Overview**

**Tara Ragland, *Division Director, Office of Licensing Programs*; Kristopher Drew, *Field Operations Manager*; Daniella Halbleib, *Licensing Consultant***

Daniella Halbleib kicked off the presentation sharing updates and information about the regulatory side of the Office of Licensing Programs (OLP) for Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) as well as framing the state of the OLP. The Office previously utilized a system that was shut down a few years ago due to security issues with the system and the inspection process is now more manual. The team has seen an uptick in complaint inspections many due to workforce challenges in the industry. Daniella Halbleib shared about the regulatory actions such as the reduction of regulatory guidance that will still maintain safety in ALFs.

Kristopher Drew shared an overview of the inspection process to include an entrance conference, facility tour, observations, interviews, document reviews, preliminary review of findings, exit meeting, violations cited, plan of correction, and problem solving. Kristopher shared that the inspections are conducted at random and typically can vary in start time and day of the week. While inspections are unannounced, there is still a level of preparation the facility can expect. There is a tool available online for ALFs to use to help self-assess and licenses are granted on one-, two- or three-year timeframes meaning an inspection would need to take place within that timeframe.

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Council members posed questions. Through their questions, the Council members engaged DSS on:

- Enforcement (including fines) and accountability for ALF quality or noncompliance
- Interface with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Adult Protective Services
- How DSS' process differed from the Virginia Department of Health's process for nursing home oversight
- Participation by ALFs in the Auxiliary Grant (AG) Program and care quality differences between AG ALFs and non-AG ALFs
- Ownership trends in ALFs and potential for more stringent oversight

Council Member Vickie Runk shared her appreciation for OLP as an LTC provider owner and operator of an ALF. She indicated that she knows DSS staff are out doing their jobs and her company tries to work ahead and provide increased standards above what is required.

**2026 Meeting Dates**

***Proposed Action: Approve 2026 Meeting Dates***

**Carla Hesseltine, Chair**

**Sara Stowe, *Executive Director, CCOA***

The proposed 2026 meeting dates are as follows:

- December 18, 2025
- March 18, 2026
- July 15, 2026
- September 16, 2026

The December meeting date was chosen specifically to take place the day following when the Governor's budget bill will be released to allow the Council time to take action and plan more appropriately for the 2026 General Assembly session.

Roland Winston motioned to approve the 2026 meeting dates as presented. Dr. Andy Buck seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

**Member Announcements**

**Carla Hesseltine**

Carla asked Ron Boyd, Ex-Officio representing the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A) if he had any updates from V4A. Ron Boyd shared about the AAAs budget request for \$10 million in additional funding and he also reiterated the upcoming SE4A conference which Kiersten Ware, Deputy Commissioner shared about earlier in the meeting.

**Public Comment Period**

**Carla Hesseltine**

Carla Hesseltine opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were offered during this time.

**Meeting Adjournment**

**Carla Hesseltine**

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Carla Hesseltine noted that the next Council meeting is planned for December 18, 2025 in DARS' new office location, 5620 Cox Road in Glen Allen, VA. Agenda items generally include:

- Legislative and Budget Updates
- Updates on any recent reports to the General Assembly
- Update on the 2026 Best Practices Awards plan and share the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Survey Report

Having completed the meeting agenda, Carla Hesseltine adjourned the meeting at 1:44 p.m.

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**Members Participating Electronically:**

- Jo-Ann Chase, Caregiving provision, from Brambleton, VA
- Ron Boyd, 60+ Miles away provision, Roanoke, VA
- Dr. Yolanda Stevens, 60+ Miles away provision, Ashburn, VA
- Paige Wilson, Personal Matter provision due to a new puppy, from Richmond, VA

**Meeting Handouts:**

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda for September 10, 2025
2. Draft Meeting Minutes for July 15, 2025
3. CCOA Regulation Update
4. 2025 CCOA Annual Report Draft
5. Executive Order #52
6. How to Talk to Legislators Handout
7. 2026 CCOA Legislative Recommendations Postcard
8. Draft thank you letter to Governor regarding Executive Order #52
9. VirginiaNavigator Overview Presentation
10. 2026 Best Practice Awards Timeline Draft
11. 20 Years of Best Practice Awards Survey
12. VDSS The ALF Inspection Process
13. 2026 Advisory Board Meeting Dates Tentative