



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

Modification of Virginia's Combined State Plan 2018 Public Hearings

The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council invite your attendance at a Public Hearing to receive comment on the DARS Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs. This year, DARS is modifying the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Portion of the Virginia Combined State Plan pursuant to the *Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act* (WIOA). After careful review and evaluation, DARS is seeking to amend the portion of the Combined State Plan which pertains to personnel standards for fully qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors. Currently, minimum qualifications for fully qualified VR Counselors include a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and/or eligibility to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) examination. Possession of the CRC credential is a preferred qualification but not required. As a result of the passage of WIOA, a master's degree is no longer mandated for practice. Prospective VR counselors are only required to possess "a baccalaureate in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation... such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, economics or another field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with consumers and employers." (34 C.F.R. § 361.18 (c)(1)(ii)(A)(1)).

The new language in WIOA expands the qualified applicant pool during a time when public VR counselors are in high demand. In recent years, recruitment of fully qualified applicants has been extremely challenging, particularly in more rural regions of the Commonwealth. Further, trainees hired during the past year have had a wide range of backgrounds and graduate coursework while others have been hired from non-master's level programs, requiring them to complete a master's program. DARS is proposing an internal tiered system for VR Counselors to better meet the increasing demand for VR counselors and provide avenues of professional growth for DARS VR staff.

The amendments to the VR section of the WIOA Combined State Plan will be posted in January on the DARS website at www.vadars.org or the State Rehabilitation Council website at www.va-src.org. The current Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan is also available on the DARS website or the State Rehabilitation Council website.

The following Public Hearings will be held:

Roanoke

Friday, January 5 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Goodwill Industries of the Valleys- Board Room
2502 Melrose Avenue, NW
Roanoke, VA 24017

INCLEMENT WEATHER DATE: Tuesday, January 23 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Fairfax

Tuesday, January 9 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

DARS Fairfax Office
11150 Fairfax Blvd. Suite 300
Fairfax, VA 22030

INCLEMENT WEATHER DATE: Thursday, January 18 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Portsmouth

Thursday, January 11 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

DARS Portsmouth Office
3248 Academy Avenue Suites 22-26
Portsmouth, VA 23703

INCLEMENT WEATHER DATE: Tuesday, January 16 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

If you cannot attend one of the hearings in person, please send your comments to:

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For comments to be considered they must be received by Friday, February 2, 2018. However, public input to the Department's planning efforts is welcome at any time. Sign language interpreters will be provided at the public hearings. If you require any other form of accommodation, please contact Leah Mills.