

**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
State Rehabilitation Council**

September 19, 2005

4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

**RI Department of Labor and Training
Center General Complex 73 (Main Conference Room)
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920**

Meeting Minutes

Present from State Rehabilitation Council: Janice Belasco, Raymond Carroll, Domenic Di Orio, Robin Dolan, Susan Donovan, Joseph Ferreira, Steven A. Florio, Elizabeth Graves, Margaret Hoye, Catherine Sansonetti, David Sienko, Michaela Stannard

Present from Agency: Stephen Brunero, Gary Wier

Honored Guests: Judith L. Drew, Lucille Massemino

1. Call to Order and Introductions - the Vice-chair called the meeting to order at 4:15 P.M.

2. Old Business

- a. Additions or deletions to agenda - none**
- b. Revue and approval of meeting minutes**

Motion

S. Di Orio made a motion seconded by L. Graves and unanimously accepted to approve the minutes from the March 7, 2005 meeting.

A notation was made for N. Baker contact with the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority. A letter will be drafted for the Chair to review and approve, to go to the Department of Labor and Training.

1. New Business:

Subcommittee Reports

Nominations and Leadership

- J. Ferreira's first term is ending. The committee asked the council for approval for his reappointment.**
- The interview with E. Costa went well. He would like to serve on the State Plan and Policy Committee. The committee requested the**

Council approve his appointment.

- E. Costa's Resume will be mailed out to all members.**
- Copies of the last committee meeting will be sent to all members.**

Motion

D. Di Orio made a motion seconded by M. Hoye and unanimously approved to submit for approval by the Governor, the reappointment and appointment, respectfully, of J. Ferreira and E. Costa.

- Nomination for Officers. The committee submitted the names of its candidates to the Council. Voting for Officers shall take place at the Annual meeting on November 7, 2005. J. Belasco reminded the Council that anyone is welcome to submit additional nominees, now, or at the time of the vote at the Annual meeting.**

Chairperson: J. David Sienko

Vice-chair: J. Ferreira

Secretary: M. Hoye

- Status of non-attending members. A letter went out to S. Greco and there has been no response. If no response comes by the next meeting the Nominations and Leaders committee will take appropriate action seeking the Council approval to send a letter to the Governor asking for S. Greco to be removed from the SRC.**

By-Laws

- There are no current actions needed by this committee.**
- Recruitment for this committee is critical.**

Employment

- Upcoming Event. A strategic meeting with the purpose to help ORS do a better job with employment in Rhode Island is planned for October 24th. Members from the SRC will get together with key personnel from ORS and formulate ideas and plan for the future needs. The information from this meeting will then be disseminated to the Agency Staff.**
- The results of a Needs Assessment are done and should be coming out in a few weeks.**
- Input from all Council members is sought for new ideas and suggestions for the upcoming year, for the Employment committee.**

Quality Assurance

- At the previous Executive meeting, R. Carroll brought up the fact that round two of the New England Customer Satisfaction Survey is being planned. The Quality Assurance committee will be working**

closely with ORS on this. Any member wishing to assist with this is welcome.

Policy Committee

- The committee had the summer off.**
- Recruitment of new members will be a key issue for the committee since we are losing three (3) key members; B. Anderson, M. Stannard. And C. Enos. J. Ferreira acknowledged his committee's hard work and expressed his gratitude. "These members will be missed. It will be difficult to replace them."**

Cooperating Committees

- The Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council will be meeting in October. L. Graves will be leaving the SILC.**
- The Governor's Commission for the Blind has not met.**

D. Sienko asked L. Graves to share with SILC that he had a chance to attend a luncheon regarding the Youth Leadership Forum. "The Youth Forum is in its third year, and we are seeing the alumni coming back to raise funds to support the Forum. I think it is very indicative of the status for our future leadership. Liz, please thank the SILC for

their support on this initiative."

For the next meeting, an updated roster of committee members and needs will be disseminated to the Council.

ORS Administrator's Report – R. Carroll

§ State Plan Update - ORS received formal approval of the State Plan Update for Federal Fiscal Year 2006, which begins October 6th.

- Assistive Technology Plan - ORS has also completed a three (3) year Plan for Assistive Technology. It was submitted at the end of August 2005; approval is still pending.

- 2005 goals and objectives - ORS is cautiously optimistic regarding the number of new applicants. Successful Employment outcomes are good. The Federal Indicator states that ORS's numbers need to be better than the last year and at this time, ORS is very close to exceeding last year's numbers. At the November meeting we should have finalized numbers for the Council.

- 2006 Plan - ORS wants to work even closer with the Council to formulate our state plan.

- 2007 Budget –The proposed budget was done during August and September. ORS has cut programs and now the proposals are moving through a budget rollback. The Governor wants to reduce the Budget by ten (10%) percent. The impact of these reductions are

being examined and between now and January the Governor's office will review all the data and then present their budget to the State Legislature and Finance committees. It has become apparent to ORS that we will not be receiving any additional resources. Rebalancing of resources to incorporate them into the budget will be necessary.

- Personnel – G. Wier and S. Shapiro will both be retiring towards the end of this year.

- Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired – On September 15th SBVI celebrated its 75th Anniversary.

- Special Legislative Commission related to children with visual impairments. A copy of the pamphlet that was distributed will be provided to the Council members.

- Special Legislative Commission Report – The Committee issued an interim report, a year ago, containing a lot of suggestions concerning visual services for student. One of the major recommendations at that time was to move the services which at that time were housed at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, into an adult environment at the Sherlock Center. That allowed for a Program Coordinator who really could concentrate on the gaps in services for that population and work with the LEA's to provide them with support and consultation that they lacked. Because the location is outside of a State Department, there is more flexibility in terms of hiring and putting resources in the right places. This has moved things in the right direction. Other agencies and partners around that program are looking at how they can improve as well.

- The 4th Annual Youth Leadership Forum – It is critical that we keep generating new advocates in youth leadership so that there is not a lull.

- RSA - The RSA is closing its regional offices and losing fifty-six (56) members of its personnel many of which are persons with disabilities. This reduction of RSA as ORS's Federal Partner bodes ill of the future of things to come and adds to the continuing degradation of the Rehabilitation Program. Losing the RSA personnel means the loss of seasoned individuals that have been readily available to ORS as a technical resource, but more importantly as a quick-strike resource when issues came up in different states regarding consolidations of mergers that evaporated the integrity and resources of the Program. The RSA has always been a Federal Partner, available to come in and remind the Agency about the laws. These positive aspects will be lost as the RSA tries to provide monitoring and technical assistance from the central office in Washington.

- Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act (as part of the Workforce Investment Act) – There is no timetable for this authorization. There is a House Bill - HR27, and a Senate Committee Bill – S1021, that has to be passed by the Senate, and they are very different in language.

Questions came up regarding the RSA cutbacks and how it would affect Quality Assurance and Oversight of the Program.

Action

- Proposal to draft a letter to our Legislative Delegation impressing our concern about the RSA closures with the understanding there is little they can do about it at this point, however our greater concern is with the Reauthorization Act and where the Rehabilitation Program goes from here. This is a way for the SRC to try and head off further disintegration of the Rehabilitation System.
- Get other SRCs involved. D. Di Orio was charged with getting the contacts of the other New England Chairs so our letter can be cc to them.
- L. Grave will encourage SILC to also write a letter.

Motion

D. Sienko made a motion seconded by J. Ferreira and unanimously approved to draft a letter from the Chair regarding our concerns about the closing of the RSA Regional Offices and express our concern for the future of the Rehabilitation Program.

5. Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Baker, Staff

State Rehabilitation Council