

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

Crowne Plaza, October 15, 2007

Minutes

Present from State Rehabilitation Council: Raymond Carroll, Rick Costa, Linda Deschenes, Domenic DiOrio, Susan Donovan, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Dr. Judi Drew, Joseph Ferreira, Steven Florio, Jeanne Giroux, Alexandra LaPlant, Anne LeClerc, Gary Levine, Lucille Massimino, Lorna Ricci, Catherine Sansonetti, David Sienko, Vincent Rossi, Herbert Weiss

Present from VR Agency: Micaela Black, Stephen Brunero, Kat Grygiel, Sharon DiPinto, Laurie DiOrio, Wheeler Clemons, Dorian Havers, Ronald Racine

Guests: Meribeth Anderson, Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Shelly Deming, Michael Hazard, Silvermoon Mars, Elizabeth Nadolski, Juan Troncoso, Mary E. Wambach

1. Call to Order and Introductions – The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:50 A.M. He welcomed all new and returning members and

thanked ORS for coming to assist with the orientation.

D.DiOrio and L. Massimino, Co-chairs of the Nominating and Leadership committee, introduced the new candidates to the Council.

(Any member wishing a copy of a new candidate resume can get it from N. Baker)

2. New ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Staff Presentation (Steve Brunero, Dorian Havers, Wheeler Clemons, Micaela Black)

S. Brunero, Deputy Administrator of ORS, introduced the new counselors to the membership and said that it's beneficial to have them tell you what it is like to be a Rehabilitation Counselor. Last year, some of you may recall we had one of the staff from ORS give a presentation. In previous years folks have talked about their areas of responsibilities. So every year, at these breakfast meetings, we like to have a presentation from ORS. I recall back in 1994 when I was a new counselor, I was invite to speak to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and talk about what it was like as a new counselor. I think it was beneficial to the Council members and to myself to talk about my experiences serving people with disabilities in Rhode Island. So we thought we would try something like that this year and have invited three (3) of the newest ORS Rehabilitation Counselors to

speak today.

Micaela Black was studying Physical Therapy when she had to take a class that was a total change of pace, focusing on the how a disability affects the personality of someone. It was something she loved so much that she changed her major and went on to get her Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling in 2003. She started out working in the private sector but ultimately wanted to be part of an Agency that had more impact and was involved with services that could really make a difference. That is how she ended up working for ORS as a Transition Counselor. She works with high school students and their families. And finds it enjoyable and busy working with the students, families, and all the providers. It is a great partnership, transitioning students from high school into the larger world. She appreciates the relationship the State does have with different agencies to help parents get connected with providers. Looking forward to learning more about ORS and getting more involved with the agencies that are out there, she wants to make a difference. She thanked the Council for having her there.

Wheeler Clemons moved here from Florida a year and a half ago. He came into Rehabilitation Counseling by circumstance, having had a spinal cord injury in 1996. He was going to school part-time and working full-time but wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Once he finished physical therapy and had stabilized his medical situation he got in contact with vocational rehabilitation services and it became a

part of his life. From that moment on, he realized this was what he wanted to do. He went back to school and got his Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling before moving to Rhode Island. After working for a time as a vendor with VR services he realized there was a need for better placement of consumers to meet their needs. He decided working for the Agency would allow him to better serve consumers and help them reach their goals. He works with adults, mostly with mental health situations, however his consumer-base does have a diverse range of disabilities. What he enjoys the most about his work is matching people with a career for life.

Dorian Havers grew up in Rhode Island and toured the country, living in various states. She did her graduate work in Illinois before coming back home to Rhode Island a year ago. Up until that point all her consumers have been deaf or deaf-blind. She worked at the Helen Keller Institute as a Case Manager and helped clients work through living skills and transition into independence. It was a great experience working there because she was able to see and work with the different VR system throughout the country. After working with ORS for some time she feels it is one of the top VR agencies in the nation. Because she is required to help clients find a job, as apposed to all the living skills she had to manage at the Helen Keller Institute, it offers the ability for creativity. Coordinating with the different services she can make things happen for an individual. It is just a matter of working with someone and determining what their career path and goals will be. She is primarily a Transition Counselor,

working with a whole range of disabilities not exclusively deaf clients.

After six (6) months worth of work at ORS, it is very rewarding and inspiring to her.

Question to the Counselors: From your assessments, what's the most desired job now? What jobs do most ORS clients want these days?

Remarks: Medical field and computer technology.

3. SRC/CSAVR Orientation, "History of VR" and, "The Role of SRC's" Training Modules (R. Carroll)

D. Sienko introduced R. Carroll and the next part of the meeting. R. Carroll will take us through the orientation part of our agenda. This is something the Executive Committee has decided to do on an annual basis because, even those of us involved for a period of time on the Council, need the opportunity to refocus on our goals and mission.

R. Carroll: It is a good idea to go back to basics just to reinforce information, and for our new Council members. This presentation will give you a flavor of what the responsibilities of the SRC are. Some background, the National organization that I am a member of is called The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). We promote and advocate legislation for the VR Program. Going back to 1992, the (CSAVR) thought it would be a good idea to

have a citizen advocacy group working with the public VR Program. This group would be comprised mostly of people with disabilities and would have an opportunity to educate and advocate for increased resources in ways that we as bureaucrats cannot. So in 1992, the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, established the SRCs.

We, who work in this field, find it takes a while to get comfortable with the VR Program. And you heard this morning from some of our newer counselors who, while coming very well experienced and educated, have to learn a lot of the particulars of the Program. The same situation arises for citizens who are new to the Council. A baseline of knowledge and understanding needs to be established so that you can carry out your roles and responsibilities on the Council. A couple years back, then Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Joe Anne Wilson, decided that there should be a National training for the SRCs. And I had the good fortune of being on the agenda planning committee to come up with some tools that could be used across the country as an orientation to the role and responsibilities of the SRC members. This first Power Point module is a quick introduction to some of the brief history of the VR Program, and the second module talks about your responsibilities as SRC members.

(Any member wishing a written copy of the presentation can get it from N. Baker)

4. Old business

D. Sienko spoke to the members about the RSA's new direct communication to the SRCs. They are very interested in creating a national network and are working with SRC Chairs to do this.

He also reminded the membership of their commitment to the Council and the need for quorums at the meetings to get business accomplished.

1. Approval of Minutes

Motion

L. Massimino made a motion seconded by D. DiOrio and unanimously accepted, to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2007 meeting.

2. Update on letter to Providence Journal

H. Weiss, R. Carroll and D. Sienko have spoken and are working towards an op-ed piece but want to wait for the Governor's proposal tomorrow. We can use this as an opportunity to help shield the Agency from some of the Governor's proposed cuts.

5. New Business

1. Committee Breakouts – Committees met to update on events and plan for this year's strategies.

(Committee Reports are attached)

2. Nominating and Leadership Development (Appointments) D. DiOrio and L. Massimino

The committee recommends the appointments of the following to their first full term;

Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Michael Hazard, Silvermoon Mars, Juan Troncoso, Mary E. Wambach.

The committee recommends the re-appointment of D. DiOrio to a second term.

The committee recommends the re-appointment of hiatus members, Margaret Hoye and Janice Belasco to resume full membership and start a new term.

Motion

S. Florio made a motion seconded by H. Weiss and unanimously accepted, to approve all appointments/reappointments for consideration by the Governor.

The committee recommends the following Slate of Officers for the

ballot at the November 19th meeting.

Chair – J. David Sienko

Vice-chair – Joseph Ferreira,

Secretary - Catherine Sansonetti

Any other members wishing to nominate someone may do so at the meeting in November.

Motion

D. DiOrio made a motion seconded by S. Donavon and unanimously accepted, to approve the recommendation for the Slate of Officers to be placed on the ballot at the Annual SRC meeting in November.

3. ORS Director's Report / Updated on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (R. Carroll)

Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) Visit – Comprehensive Monitoring Report. At you leisure please take a look at this report, there is an executive summary. It provides ORS a blue print of goals and objectives to work out. Since the report we have had a teleconference with the RSA in a quest to improve quality assurance. Karen Davis in our office is working on quality assurance. We are so busy that rarely do we have the opportunity to step back and look at how well we are doing or how we can improve our quality in providing

services to our consumers. This report as well as other outside analysis helps ORS greatly improve our services.

(Link) Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) web address for the Federal 107 Monitoring Report for Rhode Island.

<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/rehab/107-reports/2007/index.html>

(Link) RSA web address for the "Promising Practices" which identifies two Rhode Island programs for transitioning Youth.

<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/rehab/promising-practices/index.html>

We recommend SRC members become more familiar with the reports as the 107 Monitoring report in particular will be followed up with a Technical Assistance guide from the RSA for the Rhode Island VR Program which will coincide with our State Plan and be a guide for our program over the coming years.

The State Plan - Was approved by our Federal Partner. We want to thank the SRC for all its feedback and help with the Plan.

(Link to State Plan) [http://www.ors.state.ri.us/copied/2008 State Plan Final.pdf](http://www.ors.state.ri.us/copied/2008%20State%20Plan%20Final.pdf)

Productivity Report (S. Brunero)

Some of you may remember we talked about Standards and Indicators that the Federal government has, which oversees the VR Program. One Standard Indicator is called Successful Outcomes, more commonly referred to as Status 26. The requirement for ORS is to at least meet or exceed the number we had in the previous year. As of September 30th, the end of Federal fiscal year 2007, we have all of our data completed.

(Any member wishing a copy of the reports can get it from N. Baker)

You all have this in front of you so we will only touch on the highlights.

The 2003 to 2007 statistical comparison chart show the number of new applications that come into the Agency. We talk about dwindling resources and possible potential cuts; the point I want to make is people come for services no matter what our staff situation is at the Agency.

We had a 21% increase in the number of New Applicants from 2003 to September 30, 2007. Each of these years we have increased this number, this past year we had 2239 new applicants, which is a record.

Another item we look at is the number of Individual Plans for

Employment Developed (IPE). Once a consumer is found eligible, an IPE is developed. We had 1504 last year with a 32% increase in the last five (5) years.

Most importantly, the last section of this chart shows the Successful Closures. We had 745 in this past year, last year 736, and a 19% increase in five (5) years.

Budget

Every year since 2002, ORS has had to cut staff and resources. Once again we need to reduce, per the Governor's instructions. This afternoon as depicted in the press, the Governor will be holding a press conference providing some detail relative to the savings of twenty million (200) dollars, which means cutbacks in staff, in state employee benefits, and a cutback in resources available, mostly to what he calls the Social Services Program.

During the last month, we have been enmeshed in budget roll back exercises, both our business office and our leadership team have been responding to targets of cutbacks for the Department of Human Services, which we're part of. This is over laid on a cutback and cutout trend of the last three (3) or four (4) years. And although this information is currently confidential, we had to provide a listing of existing filled positions that could be made available for cutouts. And in addition to that, we have thirteen (13) existing vacancies. We don't

know any more details than what has been depicted in the press. Therefore we have been working to make these hard decisions relative to areas that could be reduced with the least impact. We may require this Council's advocacy efforts as we move through this particular exercise.

Annual SRC/ORS Report

We are obligated to do an annual report. Maybe this year, the SRC can come up with some different strategies for deployment of the report. We present it in person to the Governor. His office gets it and many others do as well. Many other times we get acknowledgment from the community but over time we have never really gotten any kind of reaction from the Governor's Office so this may be an opportunity for us to do the report quicker and explore alternative means of presenting it.

Acknowledgment of Success

I want to acknowledge S. Brunero's work in the last couple of years. We have had great increases in positive numbers, we have met the Indicators, and we have educated our own staff. Quick communication and unanticipated requirements have made things very tentative and we have tried very hard to stay on our mission and goals. S. Brunero has been doing a great job keeping our people on track.

R.Racine has also, since taking over the Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, been instrumental in our success.

They are both deserving of thanks for doing a great job.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker, Staff

State Rehabilitation Council