

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

**Minutes May 13, 2008**

**9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.**

**Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Ave Warwick, RI 02886**

**Present from State Rehabilitation Council: Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett,  
Janice Belasco, Stephen Brunero,  
Rocco Bruno, Linda L. Deschenes, Susan Donovan, Dr. Mona  
Dorsinville-Phanor, Joseph Ferreira,  
Margaret Hoye, Anne LeClerc, Lucille Massemino, Vincent Rossi,  
Catherine Sansonetti,  
J. David Sienko, Mary E. Wambach**

**Present from Agency: Laurie DiOrio, Sharon DiPinto, Kathleen  
Grygiel, Ronald Racine**

**Guests: Cindy Cote, Lori Norris, Sandy Lupovitz**

**1. Call to Order and Introductions - The Chair called the meeting  
to order at 9:00 A.M.**

**2. Additions or deletions to the Agenda – none.**

**3. Approval of Minutes –the minutes were not approved but will be done at the June 10, 2008 meeting.**

**4. Guest Speaker - Lori Norris - Youth Workforce Development System.**

**L. Norris is the Chief of Statewide Youth Services for the Rhode Island Dept. of Labor and Training**

**In 2005 the Governor's Workforce Board's Youth Development Committee charged Rhode Island's two Local Workforce Investment Boards to work collaboratively to support the Committee's statewide youth vision to serve all youth in the most effective and efficient manner. Through that vision, the Youth Development Committee supported a summer work pilot program in 2006 that provided training and employment to over 600 youth across the state.**

**Expanding on the success of the pilot, the Committee further grew their investment in Rhode Island's youth by leveraging the Local Workforce Investment Board's federal youth allocation with an additional two million dollars. In return, each Local Workforce Investment Board agreed to align with the youth vision as well as create and implement a joint Request for Proposal for the 2007 - 2008 program year. The results of the newly combined Request for**

**Proposal yielded a 400% increase in the number of proposals received, an additional \$700,000 dollar investment from the Rhode Island Office of Adult Basic Education and a new youth delivery system. Additionally, community based organizations that were awarded funding expanded the total investment in youth by contributing close to \$5 million dollars in leveraged and in-kind services thus providing an investment of over \$8 million dollars in Rhode Island's youth. Through this public / private partnership Rhode Island's Local Workforce Investment Boards experienced a net gain of 2,400 youth to be served, with 42% to be directed towards youth in foster care, youth offenders, disabled youth, pregnant and parenting teens and homeless and/or runaway youth.**

**In 2007 under the leadership of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and in collaboration with the Governor's Workforce Board, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and the Local Workforce Investment Boards, Rhode Island's youth vision became grounded within the workforce delivery system as part of the Department's strategic investment in the development of youth and their preparedness for the contemporary labor market. Consequently, the state increased the number of Youth Centers from one to seven spanning from Woonsocket to Westerly and worked with over 30 organizations providing services to youth ages 14 – 24 years.**

**This unprecedented approach was a first for Rhode Island state agencies committed to meeting the needs of the state's future**

**workforce. Through this collaborative effort, the strategic direction for youth development called for growth of the youth vision to include cross-departmental leveraging of funds, expanding effective and efficient services for all youth, creating multiple points of entry into the youth service delivery system, gathering input from those served and obtaining successful outcomes for multiple stakeholders.**

**In June 2008, Rhode Island's new youth service delivery model will complete its first full year of operation. While it is still too early to examine the data in full, the results of the first two quarters show that close to 5,000 units of service were provided to almost 1,300 youth. Of the 1,300 youth served, 610 earned stipends or wages. Preliminary data supports that the new model is indeed successful and as a result the Governor's Workforce Board increased their commitment for the 2008 – 2009 program year by one million dollars bringing their total allocation to three million dollars. As in PY 2007 – 2008, that investment has been further leveraged with the federal WIA allocation and monies from the RI Department of Education's Adult Education Office.**

**It is anticipated that through the increased funds and leveraging of dollars Rhode Island will serve over 4,000 youth in the 2008 – 2009 program year of which 45% are neediest youth. Additionally Rhode Island's Youth Center's will grow from seven to thirteen with connections to over 45 funded programs. This will be possible through continued partnerships and linkages to other youth serving**

**organizations that leverage Rhode Island's public investment with their resources. To further demonstrate the achievement Rhode Island recently awarded \$2.5 million dollars for the 2008-2009 program year (an additional \$1.4 million will be awarded in September 2008), which returned an additional \$6.5 million in leveraged and in-kind contributions. This results in an approximate \$9 million dollar investment in youth statewide. It is expected that once the remaining monies are awarded, the total investment in youth will exceed \$10 million dollars.**

**While the new service delivery model has allowed for a significant increase in the number of youth served, particularly the neediest youth, Rhode Island is also mindful that quality services are of equal importance therefore during PY 2008 – 2009 Rhode Island will focus on building capacity, increasing the quality of programs and building a skilled workforce to ensure both efficient and effective outcomes. To do this Rhode Island seeks to build a continuum of services that allow youth with varying skills and abilities to enter the system, access training and increase their skills to their highest potential so they may successfully enter the labor market as a skilled worker.**

**Question - Is there a referral source?**

**Part of that shared youth vision is to get all youth involved thus there will most likely be a referral system.**

**Question – There is a lot of money in the Correction and Judicial system that could be used to help this program out. Where are they in this shared youth vision?**

**The Shared Youth Vision goal is to blend our money and resources. Let the different organizations work together without duplicating them. Right now there is so much duplication, red tape and bureaucracy their exact status isn't clear.**

**Question - How do you monitor the progress?**

**ISS – Service Strategy is how we map out the steps that make it happen.**

**Question – Have the budget cuts had an effect on your program?**

**I can't say that we have seen an impact on our system yet. But we are seeing an impact from the new graduation requirements. And we are expecting a larger influx in the fall.**

**D. Sienko added a footnote: If you look at the amount of money the Education Department put into this in the past; the money they were using was being used to pay for kids to go back and get their GED but now we get the benefits of all the program's package. The challenge is still how does a youth walk into any center and say, here is what I need and want and get help right then and there at the**

center. And how do we get through the bureaucracy for all the partners to be able to at least say yes let's get you into the system? We are all are in agreement on what needs to be done it is the 'how' part that we need to work on. It's encouraging to see this program making such productive strides. Our challenge is to get our federal partner to understand that the bureaucratic barriers need to be dropped.

## **5. Announcements**

### **State Plan Hearing**

**Location: Warwick Library, Large Meeting Room (Rm 101)**

**Date: June 5, 2008**

**Time: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.**

**All Council members are strongly urged to attend.**

**State Independent Living Council - How to be heard and influence change. An interactive workshop on self-advocacy and system-advocacy**

**Location: Warwick Public Library**

**Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2008**

**Time: 12:30 – 3:30 pm**

## **6. ORS Director's Report – S. Brunero**

**Rhode Island budget impacting our programs - Reduction of**

retirement benefits may lead to some 2000 State employees leaving. We have already lost three (3); one who was our driver for the blind. That position was one of the Governor's cutbacks. A number of other people have announced retirements due to the future cutbacks; one is Paul Autote our Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist. Currently we have thirty (30) vacancies and have not hired since June of last year. Ray Gauvin will be the eighth counselor to leave in the past twenty (20) months. As of now none of those positions have been filled. However, we finally have some vacancies that are on the critical replacement list but we haven't gotten the approval from fiscal.

In addition to the State employees that are not being replaced, we were also hit very hard in our contractor positions. We have lost so many already and we are losing another Benefits Specialist. The annual funding by the State for this position is only five thousand (5,000) dollars but with the loss of this contractor we stand to lose one hundred (100,000) thousand dollars in federal money. This is the type of cutback that make no sense and what we have been working hard to point out to the Governor's office but with little effect.

There are also contracts with OCIL and PARI to provide PCAs that are at threat due to ten (10%) cutbacks.

We have been advocating very strongly fighting for funding. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the head of the

**Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) are going to write letters to the Governor stressing the importance of funding and the need to maintain funding for the program.**

**I urge anyone who is concerned about cutbacks to contact your legislator.**

**The Chair thought that it might be worth establishing a list of talking points to give to the membership along with a list of legislators they could call or email/write.**

**Still doing great work - In spite of all the cutbacks and departures of staff, our numbers are up. We don't know for how long this trend will be sustained but I can't say enough about the staff and how hard they are working. I can see how difficult it is for them. We are providing training to them to help prepare for the possibility of more people leaving.**

**Self-Employment – We are going to be having an outside team coming to provide our staff with new ideas for self-employment for our consumers.**

**Transition Program - K. Grygiel told the Council that approximately one-third (1/3) of our consumers are in this program. We want all of you to know that ORS has had a long-standing history with the transition program. We have nineteen (19) counselor positions**

involved in this program; unfortunately not all are currently filled. However we have counselors that go throughout the State to engage students and parents before they graduate. We had a transition conference that over exceeded our expectations of two hundred (200) with two hundred and sixty (260) attending. We will do it next year and are expecting an even larger turnout.

**Gerald B. Shapiro Endowment** - In February 2008, the Office of Rehabilitation Services lost one of our own in an unexpected tragedy. Gerry, as his family, friends, co-workers, and clients knew him, passed away in a tragic fire in his home. Gerry had worked for the State of Rhode Island at Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired as a Rehabilitation Counselor for 29 years, where he had helped thousands of individuals with disabilities gain employment.

An Endowment at the University of Rhode Island has been set up in Gerry's honor. The recipient of this Endowment will be someone with a visual impairment. If you would be interested in making a donation, checks can be mailed directly to:

**The Gerald Shapiro Memorial Endowment  
University of Rhode Island Foundation  
79 Upper College Road  
Kingston, RI 02881-2023**

**There was a break and then the Subcommittees caucused**

**7. Subcommittee Debriefings - available upon request.**

**8. Public Comment - None**

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

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Nancy L. Baker, Staff**

**State Rehabilitation Council**