



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Department of Human Services

Office of Rehabilitation Services

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

To work with the ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

Full Council Minutes March 8, 2016

4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

Department of Labor and Training ~ 1151 Pontiac Avenue ~ Cranston, RI 02920

Present: Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Linda Deschenes, Laurie DiOrio, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Kathleen Grygiel, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Diana Marcotte, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Ronald Racine, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, John Valentine and Alexandria Birmingham

Absent: Peggy Benz, Christine Botts, Lea Colardo, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Liz Graves, Barbara Henry, Diana Kriner, Lori Norris, Marilyn Walaska Mr. Kim Wennermark

1. Call to Order: Dr. Lawson called the meeting to order at 4 P.M. Quorum met
2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda: None
3. Approval of Minutes

Motion

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Catherine Sansonetti and unanimously approved to accept the January 19, 2016 minutes. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

4. SRC Chair's Report - Dr. Lawson

Discussion on the drafted membership award letter. Changes made after recommendations from K. Wennermark. With no further discussion, a motion was made.

Motion

Catherine Sansonetti made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland and unanimously approved to establish the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council Outstanding Service Award each year, but does not have to be every year, and to have ad hoc committee select possible candidates for the award. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, and Willa Truelove)

5. ORS Report - Ron Racine

ORS Success Story-Alex and Ani - In partnership with Community Enterprises and ORS, Alex and Ani have hired several of our clients, and want to hire more, in all aspects of their warehouse division. There is a potential for more hires and a national level of hiring. One of the things we are vigilant about is making sure these positions are not an enclaved environment, so we are collaborating with RI Works to help.

Department of Justice (DoJ) - The Justice Department lawyer, Victoria Thomas, and a Court monitor, Charles Moseley were in Rhode Island and critical of progress, so ORS is ramping up our efforts to show compliance with the judicial order. It requires a lot of documentation and extensive staff time; it is labor intensive for ORS. ORS has enough people working in Service Delivery, having created more position to work with that population. It is more difficult with student populations because ORS Counselors are embedded throughout the different school systems, making it harder to compile the numbers.

Auditors - Are looking at ORS programs, looking closely at pre-employment transition services. In the past ORS counted clients as pre-employment transition until they were 24 years old but now we can only count them up to 21. Fifteen percent of the allotted funds must go into pre-employment transition services and the funds cannot be to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.

[For More information on Rhode Island Federal Judge Holds First Hearing on Olmstead Consent Decree:](#)

Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) - Linda Deschenes & John Valentine

Additional Documentation: CNA Statement of purpose, WIOA Regulations regarding CAN, Draft Timeline form

The data from the CNA helps ORS develop the goals and objectives for the agency; look at resources venders need; it guides strategic planning for delivery of service to clients; can be used for staff training; and it can show gaps in ORS processes.

The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted by the designated State unit and the State Rehabilitation Council every three years. There are five assessments.

- Individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this part;
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system as identified by those individuals and personnel assisting those individuals through the components of the system; and
- Youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including, **(NEW)**
 - Their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services; and
 - An assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services and pre-employment transition service, and the extent to which such services provided under this part are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities
- An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

ORS is looking for SRC members who want to work with ORS on this. There will be several meetings and we will have subgroups to work on each community that is decided for surveys or even focus groups. Then SRC members can help us look at the results and decipher them.

All of the past CNA surveys as well as the RI Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP) Jan 2016, and any materials added as the ad hoc committee moves forward, are available for the members on the SRC Google Drive.

J. Valentine has been looking at the Governor's Comprehensive System Improvement Plan, Workforce Board, veteran's studies, department of labor and training numbers, and collecting data on partnership between government agencies, trends and directions of the RI workforce, barriers to an effective workforce network, accessibility to job-seeking, and wrap-around services related to the CNA categories.

One main topic recurring in the CSIP in the education system was a need for people to have better skill-sets to seek employment for the jobs coming into the state in the next five to ten years. There is a concern that RI/ORS students do not have the soft skills to communicate and use tech as well as face to face interviewing. There needs to be a focus on increased technology education according to the CSIP. Looking at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) five-year strategic plan put out in 2015, they identify this focus on increased technology education. The plan also highlights the need to increase student retention rates and lower dropout rates by increasing the retention of quality educators with a goal of keeping educators on for a minimum of three years.

6. Transportation Initiative- Dr. Judith Drew

RIPTA has a [new initiative](#) with providers through Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, Department of (BHDDH). It is quasi-modeled after the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority. She will be speaking with RIPTA next week to discuss this program to learn more about how it will work and how it was developed.

Have the Director of the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority speak at may breakfast. J. Drew will confirm with her ND LET Executive leadership know. Link to [Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority](#)

7. Subcommittee Reports

Training Committee – Maryellen Hagerty

The committee has not nailed down a date for the training meeting. At our next committee meeting, plans are to review YouTube videos specific to Rhode Islander's and disabilities; review membership binder, and VR materials. The committee wants someone

from ORS to work with the committee to teach SRC what ORS does. WIOA is a big part of what we need to focus on. For the training meeting the plans are to break up the session into several parts; training videos, history of the VR program, role of the SRC, role of the VR agency, and combined partnership. With each committee meeting, there is a clearer agenda forming for the training meeting.

Motion

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Jeffrey Machado and unanimously approved to accept the Membership Training committee report. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee - Catherine Sansonetti

ORS State Plan

The Chair of the SRC and the Chair of the Policy Committee received a written response from ORS on February 22, 2016 in response to the SRC's comments regarding the State Plan. This document was placed in the Google drive on February 24, 2016 so that the entire membership could review it at their discretion. If anyone has any problems accessing the document, please contact Nancy Baker for assistance.

As the membership is aware, we provided input to the state plan via meetings with ORS, by writing two letters dated January 19, 2016 and February 4, 2016, and by providing testimony at the public hearing on February 4, 2016. In our letters, we expressed some disappointment that ORS had not addressed all of our comments.

In the February 22, 2016 response from ORS, the agency noted that it did not intend to ignore some of the concerns from the membership regarding the state plan but that there was simply a misunderstanding as to the actual content being submitted as the 4.2(c) attachment. The SRC policy committee does not disagree that the short time line in which to respond to the state plan attachments, along with the changes that have come from WIOA, may have contributed to some confusion. To clarify for the future, any and all input from the policy committee that is provided in the form of formal written correspondence signed by the Chair or his/her designee as well as testimony at public hearings should be considered as input given to fulfil the 4.2(c) attachment of the state plan. The policy committee will duly note the confusion of the agency as to our input and in the future will incorporate by reference prior formal correspondence in its final comments.

Despite the misunderstandings, ORS reassured the policy committee and the council that all input provided by the SRC is debated and considered by ORS, regardless of the agency's decision to implement our suggestions. One area of concern that the SRC has commented on a number of times in policy matters and in this year's state plan is the agency's removal of client rights and dispute resolution information from its policies. The SRC has consistently stated that it strongly disfavors the removal of client rights information from conspicuous places in policy documents. In its February 22, 2016 letter, ORS stated that that the agency previously responded to this issue (by disagreeing with our position) and so would not continue to repeat its position. While ORS may choose to not repeat its position, we feel strongly that ORS be transparent in advising clients of their rights by including this information in its policies, and the SRC will continue to advocate that ORS reconsider its position.

ORS did incorporate many of our suggestions and invited the SRC to further discussion on a number of topics including the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Business Engagement, and Marketing. The SRC looks forward to continued work with ORS in these and other areas.

Order of Selection and Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Policies

The SRC provided written comments to ORS on these two policies on January 29, 2016 within the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) comment period. The SRC appreciates the timely response of ORS, which was received on February 3, 2016. The SRC again reiterates that the ORS decision to remove client rights information from policy documents is not going to be helpful to clients as ORS contends. We will continue to advocate for client rights information to be transparent and placed conspicuously within ORS policy and other documents provided to or otherwise available to clients in their dealings with ORS.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The SRC Policy Committee is seeking volunteers to work on the CNA. If you are interested in working on this project, please send an email to Nancy Baker who will forward it to me.

Motion

Dr. Judith Drew made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland and unanimously approved to accept the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee report. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

8. New Business

ORS would like to use May breakfast to recognize Alex and Ani, the ORS employees and other organization that worked on this project. This will help us do a better job engaging employers; each year we could honor an employer who was outstanding working with ORS clients or in the underserved populations. It is good PR for both the Agency and the SRC.

Motion

Catherine Sansonetti made a motion seconded by Joan Fino and unanimously approved to have ORS invite the Alex and Ani team to the May breakfast to honor their work with ORS clients. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

9. Correspondence – Dr. Gail Lawson

There were three correspondences

Jack Ringland – Regarding notice of public hearing. It was discussed at executive meeting and resolved. Posted on SRC Google Drive.

Willa Truelove – Regarding concerns with state plan process. Resolved through communication with C. Sansonetti.

ORS Letter to Council's letter - ORS will work with the SRC to resolve any concerns and streamline process moving forward. Posted on Google Drive.

10. Public comment – None**11. Adjournment***Motion*

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Jeff Machado and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 8, 2016 SRC meetings. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker

Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator
RI SRC