



*State Rehabilitation Council
to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services*

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

March 9, 2016

Office of Protection and Advocacy

60 B Weston Street, Hartford

1 PM – 3:30 PM

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

SRC Members: Tom Boudreau, Vice Chair; Marisel DeCardova, Chair; Jan Hasenjager; Patrick Melfi; David Morgana, Jr.; Bruce Stovall; Kate Travis; Joe Wendover; Kristen Winkle, Secretary;

Non-Voting Members: David Doukas

BRS Staff, Kerri Fradette; Evelyn Oliver Knight; Kathleen Marchione

Volunteers: Shannon McCann

Absent: Jim Quick; Gary Prushko; Warren Stamp

SRC Leadership: Marisel DeCordova, Chairperson

- By-laws Revision: Recommendations, Motion was made to accept.

Introductions: Marisel DeCordova welcomed everyone and introductions were completed.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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Minutes: Meeting Minutes from January 13, 2016: Motion was made to accept the minutes.

Budget: Same as last report, no fees to address, no changes.

SRC Leadership: Marisel DeCordova, Chairperson

- By-laws Revision: Recommendations, Motion was made to accept.

BRS Update: David F. Doukas, Director

- State Plan Recommendations: Staffing, Offices, Signage, Website Updates, Collaborative Projects (DMHAS, DDS, BESB), Training Updates, BRS Brochure, WIOA, Business Engagement:

It was noted that transfer cases have been handled well. Regional transfers have gotten resolved in the last couple of years, in regards to consumers not being contacted for BRS in the new area. Kathleen said that due to turnover and open positions, people can keep their BRS Counselor that may not be in their catchment area anymore (ie. If consumer moves to a different catchment area.) There are continued collaborative projects close to an agreement; Ellen Econs started filled the vacant position for both BRS/DMHAS that will be underway. DDS and WIOA are required to aim to have people earn a competitive wage. There is a technical assistance grant. Dave and Kathleen need to come up with a way of collaborating together for the subminimum wage issue. There is a concern about how they are going to help them forever due to funding cuts. Bruce mentioned that there is no funding for students after 18 years old (Education/Work Program). Dave works with BESB.

Regarding SRC recommendations from the previous State Plan, signage continues to be addressed. New Haven has a nice beautiful office, Kerri reported, and they are trying to figure out the signage. Reviewed that making sure the logo is consistent. Also, recommended, taking pictures of sites to put on the website or maybe a technology connection to incorporate and be up to date online. Signage at some sites have been done including, Windsor. It is in the process of getting done (codes/requirements) in New Haven, Torrington and Middletown.

Kerri is putting a lot of work into the state website, www.ct.gov/dors. It will change within the next six to eight months. In regards to the recommendations for the parking in the Waterbury

office, they are looking for an alteration to the building or look to move if parking continues to be an issue.

BRS plans to send a few Transition workers to an Autism Conference in Virginia.

In regards to the brochure, BRS is active with the Chamber of Commerce. Kerri is the lead marketing communication person. A lot is going to be involved in changing; Evelyn has been involved in this process. They are going to be offering more than they have in the past. All state agencies are in a spending freeze and they want to maximize the ability to use federal funding.

Patrick Melfi mentioned WIOA shift to career, instead of placement and to consider different ways to measure things. David responded that there will be qualitative measures to report on. Once regulations are in they can figure how to measure the performance.

Similar to what was done 15 years ago. There is going to be a little bit of a process involved. Tracking education and advancement of people will be a requirement. WIOA positions BRS to respond to local labor market and career counseling. Counselors will be trained to where locations are.

In regards to Incentives for employers, there is a Work Opportunities Tax Credit to hire BRS Consumers and others. Assistance for employers includes Working Interviews to see if an individual will fit the job before they are hired. BRS will pay for On-the-Job Training. A video was made that included employers who have worked with BRS to share how it all has worked out for them; it is a great marketing tool for a Chamber Event. A suggestion was made to may be show the video during an SRC Meeting.

- **VR Monthly Report (from D. Johnson):** Reviewed Monthly BRS Report, Production/Outcomes, Employment Maintained, Successful Closures: 485, Total Assisted: 6,131. New Applicants: 1,176, Plans Developed: 855. BRS is trying to meet the 90 day threshold. A few years ago BRS was more cautious before writing the plans for consumers, this delayed people to get to plans sometimes. The 90 day plan and BRS taking chances with people are showing up in the numbers. Currently the Minority Indicator is at .82. Currently, the

Federal Goals Summary FFY 2016 is right below the threshold. Currently, everyone went into competitive employment. Consumers are above the threshold for the income they earning. The numbers are showing people come into services already working (client self-support), having an income or being supported by a spouse. BRS is the same as prior to lifting the order of selection. Dave has been working with DOL to get the data needed to see how BRS is doing monthly. They are going to struggle with the education tracking. It will come up about how they advanced their consumers educationally, “where are they now”, it has required them to think about developing a plan to report this and they are waiting to hear what to do next.

Embedded in voc. rehab, distribution of state funding, they are funded 78% to 22 % distribution for state required from Federal Grant. Base grant in CT is about \$18 million; a \$4 million state match is required. BRS is in a huge budget crisis. They are light on state side and heavy on the federal. A priority would be made for the match program.

The question is whether the state money will remain as is due to a lot of the state money is serving blind individuals and there will be a harder hit to the service due to that.

Other: Marisel inquired about PETS, David said that it is a process and it has been going on for the past five months. BRS Counselors assigned to the PETS program have been building relationships with the schools. Work-based readiness; Youth Employment Program was put out to providers to apply to provide a comprehensive summer program for consumers. Twenty rehabilitation community providers applied, all were vetted, and seventeen were given contracts. They are ready to announce to staff to promote these providers for the students to work with the programs for the program. BRS is working on advancing the reporting. Communication was developed to explain what their program is to alleviate confusion. There has been a program name change from PETS to Level Up. There were mixed opinions about the new program name. BRS ran a survey for the name, most people liked it. Ten BRS counselors were assigned to Level Up. Each one has a catchment area of school districts. They have created Focus Groups that include Special Ed teachers and Superintendents to determine what BRS can add to services that are already being provided by the schools. There will be a request for qualifications of the services, vendor responding to RFQ, 36 vendors

said they would like to be involved with the program. The goal is to have them under contract in May 2016. This will allow students to participate in the fall. It will be a fee for service type of contract.

This is a CT initiative for this approach but, all states have to do something, they share with other states, New England, they are closely aligned with Vermont. Vendors don't have to be non-profit.

It was noted that Community Colleges look at labor market trends and not all students are eligible for Pell Grants.

SRC Update: Evelyn Oliver Knight, Liason:

- **SRC Annual Reports:** It was due in December but it hasn't been completed due to the work required for the WIOA State Plan. Evelyn had difficulty opening up Miriam's report from the Intercouncil/Nominations Committee. She said that the Annual Report will be finished by the next SRC Meeting. Evelyn is almost finished with the layout and will send it out when it is done. It was noted that only Oklahoma was the only state that had sent a report to Connecticut.
- **State Plan:** DOL is reviewing for final comments. State Plan has to be submitted to a portal.
- **NCSRC/CSAVR:** Marisel and she are attending this conference in April. Evelyn is helping to develop training that weekend.
- **Other:** Evelyn said that there is a webinar coming up. She handed out mileage sheets and noted that the rate has changed.

Committee Reports:

Business Partnership – Kate Travis, Chair: Mark Henry from BRS attended the Business Committee meeting today. BRS is monitoring business relations and tracking data, the Business Committee will follow up with him on a quarterly basis. In regards to goals, Joe Wendover is the President of CTBLN and is involved with a Business Advisory Council that presents cases to employers. Companies discussed included Walgreens, Sudexho and Travelers.

Consumer Satisfaction/Call Meeting 2-10-16 (Meeting Minutes were provided in meeting packet today) – Jim Quick, Chair:

Question from the meeting: are action plans (next steps) reviewed with consumers at the end of a BRS appointment. It was noted that this practice is done by some counselors and it needs to be reinforced.

Inter Council Nominations: Miriam Torres-Thorburn: Evelyn said that Miriam did let her know that she would be resigning from the SRC due to she obtained a job. Also, Evelyn reported that four people have expressed interest in the SRC including, Andrea Richardson, Melita Arms, Shannon McCann and Lisa Abbey James. Lisa is currently in the hospital and will be a member representing the State Independent Living Council (SILC). David Morgana needs a change of category as he is no longer representing SILC; he has completed his six year term. It was noted that we need to look at recruiting and where we need to add members due to SRC requirements.

Legislation, Policy & Planning Committee, Tom Boudreau:
BESB SRC: They contacted the Chair Person of BESB to open up the lines of communication and communication will continue. BESB used Diana Cohen to conduct its SRC survey. In regards to vending bills, BESB has a contract with the state to operate vending machines. A potential bill would require that nutritional facts be posted on the machines. BESB is not in favor of this bill. BESB is going to be supporting the Summer Youth Program at UCONN 15 % more to meets the PETS requirements. They are working with individuals in pre-employment training, designing internships.

- **SB 274 – Wheelchair Repairs:** Brought up rate setting for wheelchairs repaired and the question of how larger companies are managing recommendations. Wheelchairs allow individuals to be productive in the work place. David Morgana shared his previous experience with a wheelchair repair issue. Per David, vendors are saying that they aren't going to work with individuals with state benefits and they don't care if the wheelchair breaks.

Consumer Issues: Independent Living Centers were cut from the budget. The state makes 20% back and is being asked to put money back in.

**Next Meeting Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 1 PM to 3 PM,
CHR 153 Hazard Avenue, Enfield**

Meeting was closed at 2:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen L. Winkle – SRC Secretary