



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Vocational Rehabilitation Office August 12, 2014

Meeting Minutes

Public notice of upcoming meetings will be available on the Department of Education website under "Master Calendar" at least 5 days prior to each meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barb Benes, Robert Danner, Jaime Galloway, Gayle Hahn, April Isaacs, Brad Meurrens, Leslie Novacek, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, JD Simmons, Joni Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sharon Bloechle, Rita Hammitt, Seamus Kelly, Sherri Kelley, Vicki Newman

VR STAFF PRESENT: Angela Fujan, Mark Schultz, Mark Mason, Ashley Hernandez

The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:05 a.m. public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education web site.

PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

No public comment was given.

The meeting was an open meeting and the Open Meeting Law was posted on the back table.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jaime Galloway moved and April Isaacs seconded the motion to approve the agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

APPROVAL OF MAY 13, 2014 MINUTES

Jaime Galloway moved and JD Simmons seconded a motion to approve the May 13, 2014 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

END OF TERM

Barb Benes was recognized for completing her first three year term and decided to continue on a second term.

SRC MEETING DATES

Kipp Ransom reported the upcoming meeting dates for 2015:

- October 14, 2014
- February 10, 2015

- May 12, 2015
- August 11, 2015
- October 13, 2015

No opposition to the new meeting dates was given.

SRC MEMBERS NEEDED

Kipp Ransom reported that the council is in need of new members with disabilities. Angela Fujan reported they will be interviewing a prospective new member, David Scott, next week. Angela also stated they have reached out to former VR clients that are self-employed for those persons to apply for the council. Jaime Galloway inquired if the council bi-laws stated how many meetings must be held a year. Kipp stated the quarterly meeting schedule was voted on by the council due to members' business commitments and time necessary to complete the work of the council. Jaime stated that he feels four meetings a year is too much and that possibly three would be a better amount to maintain members. Joni Thomas stated she feels if there are too few meetings there is not enough continuity and not enough personal buy in of members who feel less involved. Mark Schultz stated the direction of the council has been fairly well set and the council has done well in staying on that path. Joni Thomas inquired if there was a way to incorporate into meetings more of the state and national impact of the state rehabilitation councils. Kipp Ransom stated he receives regular emails from the national level keeping him up to date on what is happening on the national level which could be forwarded onto council members to keep members in the know of what is happening at the federal level. Kipp stated it would be nice if the agency or council could create an orientation DVD which would assist informing and preparing new members. Mark mentioned that there are orientation modules available online and Angela Fujan said those links could be directly sent to members. Vicki Rasmussen stated she feels it would be very important to continue to increase the use of the talents of council members as VR staff are creating new committees and have different needs in the community. The council decided the orientation links would be shared in October for new members as well as holding a meeting prior to new member's first council meeting so they are welcomed and given an orientation. Angela Fujan stated that work force development will also be having a representative joining the council soon.

30 DAY CLIENT CONTACT STANDARD

Angela Fujan reported the VR currently has a standard of contacting clients of the agency at least every 30 days, and asked for council feedback on this standard. Mark Schultz stated a concern has been the schedules of those clients who are college students. It was discussed if contact with clients enrolled in college might be best based off of quarters or midterms or another school based schedule. April Isaacs inquired what qualifies as a client contact. JD Simmons reported contact usually entails at least a 15 minute meeting discussing their grades, progress and plans for the future. April Isaacs stated she thought if just a basic touch base contact would be feasible for clients and staff if it could be contact via text messaging or an email on a regular basis. Angela stated she feels the need for a standard is there and this standard was setup to insure clients don't "fall through the cracks". Vicki Rasmussen stated she feels the standard is necessary and important to keep staff accountable and maintaining a connection and feeling of caring with clients. Leslie Novacek asked what occurs when clients do not respond to messages or make any contact in response to attempts by staff. JD reported staff will continue to attempt to contact the client and letters will be sent if after a duration of time the client does not respond to any contact the client will be notified that their case will be closed. Mark reported that the standard came from the VR leadership council whom thought a 30 day standard is something they wanted to keep themselves accountable to. Mark stated client contact does need to be based off of the individual needs of the client some clients may need much more frequent contact while others may state they do not need much contact. The council was

asked, is a 30 day standard of contact useful and reasonable to have in place. April Isaacs stated that yes she supports the standard but those staff who are contacting clients should be consulted as to what best practice is and what their case load and client needs are like. Robert Danner stated he is with the consensus that yes the minimum follow up every 30 day contact is a good standard.

The council supports the 30 day client contact standard and this standard should be added to the case review checklist including documented exceptions of client needs. April Isaacs moved for council approval of this standard Robert Danner seconded. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON VR

Kipp Ransom asked the council for any additional feedback. No additional feedback was given. Kipp stated he felt the feedback and input given so far in today's meeting has been great.

CAP REPORT

Vicki Rasmussen submitted a written report to the council. Vicki reported she has been working with The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to discuss the memorandum the VR has with them. The memorandum states that if a client contacts VR with blindness or visual impairments they are to contact The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired first for eligibility. If clients qualify for The Commission's services they should be the agency serving them and VR can offer technical support. If a perspective client is not eligible with The Commission for the Blind they may be eligible for VR services with another disability. There are possible occurrences that both agencies may have an open case as long as services are not duplicated. Angela Fujan stated that both The Commission and VR are vocational rehabilitation service providers while The Commission specializes in serving those with blindness and visual impairments. Vicki stated they are currently working on the Disability Hotline and making that compatible with using JAWs. Vicki stated the VR has a policy that they will purchase vehicles only if necessary for a client's self employment. A Nebraska VR client disagreed with the VR's decision to not purchase her a van to attend school this decision went to impartial review and the case was decided in favor with the VR's decision to not purchase a vehicle in this case.

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN REPORTS

Kipp Ransom stated he felt the Youth Leadership report was very interesting regarding their latest meeting.

Brad Muerrens reported they are working on reaching out to those not necessarily in independent living, reaching out to those with mental health issues for example. Brad reported currently there is a lot of work occurring with LR400, a more stream lined approach to access and application for Access Nebraska services. For example, there have been difficulties with this system having extremely long phone wait times and often when reaching a staff member they are not familiar or knowledgeable with clients case and needs. Brad stated LR 400 commissions a special investigative committee to evaluate and investigate to improve and streamline Access Nebraska.

REVIEW OF PROJECT SEARCH

Mark Mason shared that he attended the Project Search conference. The national conference was a week long and was held in Omaha, Nebraska at the Project Search site, Embassy Suites. A video about Project Search was viewed by the council. Mark shared that speaking with representatives from other states was wonderful and energizing. Mark stated he attended sessions regarding utilizing technology and Project Search 101. Mark shared he feels Nebraska is on the cutting edge

regarding implementation of ATP (Assistive Technology Program). Just fewer than 600 people attended the conference and representatives from 7 different countries were in attendance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Employment Services Committee

Barb Benes reported. Winners were selected for The October Entrepreneurs of Distinction. Charlene Potter, Lee Krum and Dan Rhomus were chosen as this year's winners of the Entrepreneurs of Distinction award. Charlene Potter is an artist out of Omaha who does hand formed sculpture as well as oil and water color. Lee Krum is from Lincoln Midwest Auto Salvage. Dan Rhomus raises chicken and sells eggs from Prarie Pride Poultry. The alumni award will be awarded to Jessica Gordon whom has been running her pet grooming business, Healthy Paws, since 2009. Nathan Chandler will also be receiving the alumni award; Nathan is a photo journalist in Lincoln.

Transition Services Committee

Robert Danner reported. The committee discussed while looking for new council members they hope there is a focus on finding members from the education field. Robert stated they feel the education community needs to be saturated with the information and availability of VR services so all students who need services would be able to utilize them. Mark Schultz stated the VR is in the door with special education staff, but there is a gap with just education in general for those who may not be receiving obvious special education services.

Client Services Committee

Joni Thomas reported. The committee has been targeting outreach with the Latino population as well as the deaf and hard of hearing. Joni shared both groups felt they needed someone to act as a liaison between their groups and the VR. Jaime Galloway shared he feels the transition between the groups is the biggest need. Mark Schultz shared the position of liaison is changing as previously one liaison served both Lincoln and Omaha and there is now a new position that will only serve one community to allow them to be more involved and build stronger relationships with the groups. Joni shared the Latino group reported there are strong negative stereotypes within the culture regarding disabilities. Joni also stated there is a need to also highlight success stories of persons from those communities who have received services. The committee discussed working or collaborating with the Centro de Americanos as additional outreach to the Latino community.

INFORMATION

October is Disability Awareness Month. Kipp Ransom state they are hoping to hold the October SRC meeting the same day as the Entrepreneurs of Distinction Awards to have more SRC representation at the awards. The council members discussed the combination and members supported having both on the same day with no opposition.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

WIOA REAUTHORIZATION

The president signed the workforce innovation opportunities act. Mark Schultz reported the act revised the indicators for youth and adults focusing on businesses as the customer. Mark stated the act adds terms around customized employment as well as competitive integrative employment. The act changes guidelines for supportive employment for length of support from 18 months to 24 months. Mark stated the act asks VR to address the need of how to develop partnerships with local employers as well as state and national businesses. The act requires further collaboration with One Stops. If funds are low there is an allotment of needs, the law now states if someone enters the

program and they need assistance to keep employment they are put as the top priority. It changes the requirements of what defines a qualified rehabilitative counselor, as it broadens the degrees and experience that would be accepted. CSAVR is advocating for changes that will maintain the requirement for master's level education for counselors. Final rules and regulations will not be out until January 2016 and the first draft will be available for review January 2015. Mark reported the act includes a requirement for greater collaboration with the Medicaid waiver programs in our state. There is an emphasis on transition service and 15% of expenditures must be for transition services. The act requires the development of pre-employment transition coordinators to work with students in work based learning experiences (i.e. volunteering, internship opportunities), counseling from school to work or secondary education, soft skills, and self advocacy. The school to work transition is a high priority. Centers for Independent Living and schools also share the responsibility to be a part of the process. Mark stated that this will be a huge change for some states, but he does not feel it will be a big change for Nebraska as we have already been implementing and utilizing most of these methods. Under services to groups there are changes to how VR can use some funds to support ATP programs. VR can provide training to employers on the ADA (Americans with Disability Act) and must educate the employer on working with individuals with disabilities. Mark stated he believes the act is looking for a change in the unemployment rate for people with disabilities. There is a requirement that large businesses with federal contracts work towards a goal of 7% employment of their work force being individuals with disabilities. VR has a responsibility to work with employers to meet these goals. VR also needs to focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) careers and support those interested in those areas by helping them attain higher education and training in these areas. Mark reported the act also moves some programs to Health and Human Services. Independent Living will move to HHS at the federal level. Mark stated the question that may come to the council is, "Would we want to be the lead entity for the independent living grant?". Mark stated services to businesses and transition are the main focuses. Changes in the standards are clear that there is a huge focus on numbers and production of how many people are getting jobs.

Mark asked, "How do we accomplish this"? Mark stated he supports taking more of a tiered approach. Tiers could be utilized simultaneously.

Tier 1: Work ready individuals who have skills and experience necessary for employment. Only need assistance with placement.

Tier 2: Individuals who are uncertain what they want to do or what their career goals are. These individuals receive more formal evaluation. Discovery of what the individual wants and will like occurs. Some individuals are post secondary, do they have the skills necessary to be successful in additional schooling.

Tier 3: Those that are ready for post secondary or training requiring a particular degree or certification and VR assists them to attain that necessary training.

Tier 4: Progressive Employment, individuals work with job carving or customized employment this tier takes the most time but is a smaller percent of individuals.

Mark reported this is the model being discussed for Nebraska for the future.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:25p.m.