



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
301 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH • PO BOX 94987 • LINCOLN, NE 68509

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
Nebraska VR Office
3901 N 27th St. Lincoln, NE
August 9, 2016

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: Shari Bahensky, Brenda Chappell, Gina Geiger, Gayle Hahn, Rita Hammitt, April Isaacs, John McNally, Brad Meurrens, Jonathan Moeller, Vicki Newman, Tobias Orr, Kipp Ransom, Mark Schultz, David Scott, JD Simmons, Joni Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Hogue, Sandy Peterson

VR STAFF PRESENT: Lindy Foley, Angela Fujan, Brigid Griffin, Ashley Hernandez, Paige Rose

VISITORS: Amelis Long

The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:03 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.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jon Moeller 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 10, 2016 MINUTES

JD Simmons moved and Rita Hammit seconded a motion to approve the May 10, 2016 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

EXITING SRC MEMBERS

April Isaacs and Gayle Hahn were presented with a plaque as a token of appreciation from the council for their two, three year terms that are ending next month. April shared she really enjoyed her time with the council and stated it was a great opportunity. Gayle Hahn thanked the council.

MEETING DATES

Dates for the upcoming year's council meetings were discussed.

Meeting dates proposed were:

- October 11, 2016
- February 14, 2017
- May 9, 2017
- August 8, 2017
- October 10, 2017

David Scott moved to approve the dates as listed, Joni Thomas seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A ballot for nomination of officers and executive committee members was provided to members for voting. Votes were tabulated and announced; current officers and committee members were all re-elected. The executive committee for the 2016/2017 year is: Kipp Ransom, Chair; David Scott, Vice Chair; John McNally, Business Committee Representative on the Executive Committee; Jon Moeller, Client Services Committee Representative and Gina Geiger, Transitions Committee Representative.

ENABLE PROGRAM

Amelis Long shared she is the outreach specialist with First National Bank for the Enable Savings Plans. Amelis stated she is an available resource to present for organizations desiring information on the plans and is available evenings and weekends. Amelis summarized the Achieving Better Life Experience Act (ABLE). This is a national plan and individuals are eligible anywhere. Amelis shared that you do not need to be a current customer of First National Bank to participate. Eligible individuals must have onset of a disability prior to the age of 26. Amelis reported there is no tie to employment, stating those employed or unemployed are eligible. An eligible individual is the account owner at all times. Members were able to ask questions regarding the Enable Accounts. Amelis discussed representative payees can not manage the account and there are not secondary beneficiaries to these accounts. Examples and discussion of qualified disability expenses occurred. Impact to benefits and SSI exclusions were reviewed. Amelis reported the first \$100,000 of assets in an Enable Saving Plan account are exempt from the \$2,000 SSI resource limit. Account earnings are not considered income. Amelis shared that utilizing the Enable account protects Medicaid. Assets in an Enable Savings accounts are an excluded resource for Nebraska Medicaid. All withdrawals will be considered Qualified Disability Expenses. Amelis review the tax advantages of the plans. Investment Options were also summarized. Account fees were reviewed. Amelis shared the plans became live June 30 and they are nearing 100 accounts.

FOLLOW UP OF LAST MEETINGS ACTION ITEMS

Brad Meurrens reported he felt the Disability Awareness Month Breakfast held March 8th was successful and a much more effective method in reaching senators then the previous method of visiting senators offices. David Scott stated he agreed that the breakfast was effective and would be a great fit if there would continue to be a senator representative to organize the event. Brad stated he does feel it is possible to find a senator to support the event but he strongly suggests getting a date and reservation early as dates fill up extremely quickly. David Scott reported he is comfortable

reaching out to Senator Kate Bolz again to see if she would be willing to reserve a space. Brad stated he feels it would be better to work independently for a presentation instead of pairing with another organization where the message maybe lost. David Scott shared the benefit of working with additional organizations is the increased attendance and audience to receive the message as well as support in organizing the event. Mark Schultz stated it maybe best to table the current conversation as some of the information he has to share later in the meeting regarding WIOA may change the outlook on how the council chooses to address outreach. Council members discussed what time of year would be best to reach out to senators. John McNally suggested reaching out to the clerk's office to have the VR information provided with new senator briefing information. John reported he would be happy to check in with the clerk's office. Members discussed the marketing materials used in previous years could be provided for the packets. Brad Meurrens stated he believes sharing information regarding the importance of competitive integrated employment, benefits of employment and the capability of those with disabilities to work also needs to be shared.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS VIDEOS

David Scott moved to send the Pathways to Success employment videos to senators for outreach, Brad Meurrens seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

SELF EMPLOYMENT ANNUAL AWARDS

Angela Fujan shared that the way self employed individuals are served has change slightly. Angela reported that they do not currently have nominees for the Entrepreneur of Distinction Awards. Mark Schultz stated in order to hold the Entrepreneur of Distinction Awards the employment committee will need to meet with the self employment specialist in order to gather and review nominations. Angela stated she will work with Sarah to book a room for the awards. The possibility of holding the awards during the state staff training was discussed. David Scott asked if the Governor could be contacted to attend the awards this year as well.

NASRC CONFERENCE REPORT

April Isaacs attended the NASRC National Conference in April. April shared part two of her conference report. April shared she did feel Nebraska had a lot of best practices which others noted during the conference. April shared there was a lot of discussion regarding how other council's members are assigned. April shared the major take away regarding council composition was the need for diversity and that every member on a council is important and their voices need to be heard, as well as it is crucial to have business representatives at the table. April shared members discussed the importance of having technology resource centers available and involved in the council. The consensus at the conference was that the SRC should be reviewing the VR plan and that the whole council should have input as the council is a policy partner with VR. April reviewed what was discussed at the conference regarding VR budget. April also summarized the discussion of council involvement on the customer satisfaction survey. April reported needs assessments were also a big conversation during conference, stating her take away from that conversation was the need of the council to review the assessment and determine what needs are. April reported that Rehabilitation Service Administration presented at the conference sharing their mission. April stated they are a resource for councils needing assistance. April shared the RSA website and Mark Schultz added additional FAQs were recently added to the webpage. April stated she wanted to emphasize that if at all possible it is crucial to have representation from our council at these conferences. April shared she was very proud to represent Nebraska SRC at this conference.

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON VR

Kipp Ransom asked council members if any feedback was brought to council members. Members shared no new feedback.

CAP REPORT

Shari Bahensky shared she is officially the new Client Assistive Program Director. Shari shared that she will also still be working with the Disability Assistive Hotline. Shari shared that in April, May and June there were only two cases which shows that the motivational interview process is effective in meeting client's needs. A written CAP report was provided to members. Shari summarized some of the key topics of the report. Mark Schultz shared the change in how VR is serving individuals across the state has created significant turn around and wanted to applaud staff on their work. David Scott questioned if there are so few reports to CAP what is that indicative too, asking what maybe being missed? Mark Schultz shared that although not all complaints are submitted this change shows great improvement from past years.

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN REPORTS

Members were provided with written reports from VR Statistics, ATP, NYLC and NSILC. Brad Meurrens discussed the Nebraska Statewide Individual Living Council Report. Brad shared SILC has moved into a new office sharing space with the Arc of Nebraska, reporting the fax number has changed and will be provided to members via email. Brad shared he will be terming off the council, announcing the new SILC representative will be Jatoya McIntosh. Members did not share any additional feedback.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Employer Services

John McNally reported the committee is continuing to encourage council members to reach out to members of the business community to join the council. John reported they discussed Project Search and are working on creating employer awards. The committee discussed some upcoming measurable metrics for data and how that could be collected in the future. John McNally will be the new representative on the executive committee.

Transition Services

JD Simmons reported the committee discussed PETS (pre-employment transition services). JD stated there are currently 15 programs across the state including several cooperatives. The committee discussed the transition planner and JD stated those planners are in route to schools. JD reported the committee discussed the responsibilities of schools and VR representatives and how to keep up a good rapport with school districts.

Client Services

Joni Thomas reported the committee reviewed the client satisfaction surveys which were conducted by the Easter Seals. Joni stated the committee asked if Easter Seals can probe more with clients when asking questions needing more information. Gayle Hahn stated, yes there are questions on the survey they could probe into further. Joni reported that on some questions when clients reported "other" as an answer at times their description often could fit in a different category. For example, What needs are not being met? 51% replied "other" and a large amount of those responders replied not enough hours. The committee asked if a response category for "not enough hours" should be added to that survey question. Council members discussed options for updating category responses. David Scott asked if more than one category can be selected. Gayle Hahn replied that yes a respondent can select more than one category. Gayle stated she thinks that the hour's option should

be added as a response. Gayle Hahn and the council determined that the Easter Seals will probe further with clients when surveying and will work to categorize answers to the best of their ability to reduce the large number of “other” responses. Easter Seals will report back with the progress of survey responses.

Brad Meurrens motioned to add to Question 6 of the Client Satisfaction Survey a response category of “not enough hours”, Brenda Chappell seconded the motion. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Mark Schultz reported the rules and regulations final draft came out and there were several concerns with changes and their potential impact. Mark shared that the number of successful outcomes was below expectation and stated this will be more likely as he expects a reduction in successful outcomes over a period of time due to the changes. Mark discussed changes with expectations for transition services. Mark shared that 15% of VR budget must be utilized for pre-employment transition services; to meet this Mark reported they are working on focusing on the 20 largest school districts and employing individuals to be responsible solely for pre-employment transition services at those schools. Mark shared that interpretation also possibly jeopardizes funding for job coaches through Project Search as those are not currently considered pre-employment transition services and they are working on how to maintain that funding in order to keep these valuable resources. Mark shared that if funding can not be met individuals will be put onto a waiting list through priority Order of Selection process. Mark shared that VR is responsible for completing a skill assessment before an individual may work in a sheltered workshop, if they are eligible for competitive employment they need to receive VR services. Mark shared they will increase job carving and customized employment approaches. David Scott commented he envisions the increase of pre-employment transition services will eventually lead to less adults needing employment assistance; Mark stated that is the hope. Mark stated the biggest challenge is the possibility of not having enough resources to accommodate all those needing services and having to utilize priority selection causing a large number of individuals waiting to be served. Mark discussed the three priority categories and examples of what individuals will meet priority categories. Mark stated he is proposing to close priority category 2 and 3 which means approximately 2/3 of those requesting services will be on a waiting list. Mark reported individuals will be pulled off the waiting list in the order they are received once funds become available. Funds will only become available to serve those on the waiting list if all individuals in priority category one have been served. Mark discussed with the council, the need to establish an order of selection, priority categories, the criteria to determine most significant and how VR will administer order of selection. Mark reviewed and discussed with council members the VR budget and how funds need to be reallocated in comparison to this past year in order to meet the regulation of 15% of funding for pre-employment transition services. Mark shared he is looking to increase funds through legislature with DD services to hopefully acquire additional federal dollars. Mark reported that as of October 1st many individuals will no longer be able to receive services. Mark stated a critical part of priority selection will be utilizing a time stamp when applicants are received to properly order the priority wait list as well as, retraining staff on how they categorize applicants. Mark stated this change will also limit the involvement with business partners as this change will be limiting the applicant pool available. Mark reported it has been approximately six years since they have been under an order of selection but nearly 17 years since it was used widely. Mark shared his concern is they want VR to serve students with disabilities, but this change will be limiting VR’s ability to do that. Mark shared that when someone comes in to apply for services they are given an assessment to determine function limitations and based on those results they will be ranked as very low, low, or not an issue, if category 2 & 3 are closed only those considered very low will receive services and staff will need to improve connecting individuals with additional community resources. Vicki Newman stated she

does not agree with the idea of having to close priority categories two and three but will be in support of the decision as hands are tied preventing other alternatives. Rita Hammitt shared she is very disappointed in the lack of support for Project Search. After reviewing the need to establish an order of selection, priority categories, the criteria to determine most significant and how VR will administer order of selection:

David Scott moved and Jon Moeller seconded the motion for SRC to support Nebraska VR's decision to close priority categories 2 and 3 and enter order of selection. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

Mark shared that the commissioner of RSA is scheduled to visit Omaha. David Scott shared he believes it is important to share with the RSA that the council believes they are on the right track with the direction the law is aiming programs but the current interpretation is wrong. Members discussed the need for a resolution to be drafted to the RSA stating the SRC's dissatisfaction with their interpretation of the law. A council member will contact the NSRC for guidance in drafting the resolution.

INFORMATION

Fall SRC National Conference will be held November 5 & 6, 2016 in San Diego, CA. Members were asked if anyone is interested in attending the conference to please email Ashley at Hernandez.ash102@gmail.com by Monday, August 15th.

NEXT MEETING

October 11, 2016 at 10:00am

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:43pm.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Senator outreach event support – David Scott will contact Senator Kate Bolz
- VR materials for new senator briefing packets – John McNally will contact the Clerk's office
- Pathways to Success videos to be shared with senators – Ashley Hernandez
- Entrepreneurs of Distinction Awards nominees & reservation – Angela Fujan/Employment Committee
- Client Satisfaction Survey progress – Easter Seals/Client Services Committee
- Draft resolution to RSA regarding law interpretation – Kipp/Angela
- Registration for SRC National Conference by Monday, August 15th