



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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

## State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Nebraska VR Office May 12, 2015

### 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:** Gayle Hahn, Rita Hammitt, April Isaacs, Brad Meurrens, Leslie Novacek, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Susan Williams

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Pam Baltzer, Robert Danner, Nancy Drevo, Seamus Kelly, John McNally, Jonathan Moeller, Vicki Newman, David Scott, JD Simmons, Joni Thomas

**VR STAFF PRESENT:** Sarah Chapin, Janet Drudik, Lindy Foley, Angela Fujan, Ashley Hernandez

*The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:11 a.m. public notification of this meeting was made on the Nebraska Department of Education web site.*

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Gayle Hahn shared a thank you note she received to the Nebraska VR for the services a client had received.

No other public comment or announcements were given.

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Gayle Hahn moved and Brad Meurrens seconded the motion to approve the agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

#### **APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 10, 2015 MINUTES**

April Isaacs moved and Vicki Rasmussen seconded a motion to approve the February 10, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

#### **SRC SUBCOMMITTEES**

Kipp Ransom reported a few changes were made to the SRC subcommittees. Janet Drudik introduced herself and shared her role and experience with the Nebraska VR. Janet will be the VR

representative of the Client Services Committee. Angela Fujan will be working with the Transition Services Committee and Lindy Foley will be working with the Employer Services Committee. ***Any new members whom have not yet chosen a subcommittee are encouraged to discuss the different aspects of these committees with these advisors and choose a committee to participate in.***

### **MEMBER FEEDBACK ON VR**

Kipp Ransom asked council members if any feedback was brought to council members. Vicki Rasmussen stated she was concerned about meeting attendance. Kipp discussed how new members were added to the council to assist with this, and stated that the possibility of additional members is being considered.

Angela Fujan shared an email message from council member David Scott, whom suggested that any action items that are brought up during the meeting be highlighted in the minutes and that a specific action item list be created that can be referred back to for follow-up in future meetings. Kipp stated there will be a slight change to the appearance of the minutes to include this. Action items will now appear in the text of minutes italicized and bolded, as well as a summarized action item list will be included at the conclusion of the minutes.

### **CAP REPORT**

A written CAP report was provided to members. Kipp Ransom inquired regarding item number six on the written CAP report. Vicki Rasmussen summarized the client concern as written. Vicki shared that this case was unique as the client had reached age of majority and has the right to decide how involved they want their foster parent to be with their services. Vicki shared in conclusion the foster parent pulled the client from VR services and was looking into Goodwill services.

Vicki reported she has a meeting this week regarding client accountability to work on tightening guidelines regarding purchases, a service dog committee meeting, as well as meetings on counselor ethics regarding gifting.

Angela Fujan shared that she is currently working with a team to create a code of conduct for VR employees, as there is currently not a written policy in place. ***Vicki Rasmussen stated she would recommend that VR counselors have a code of ethics and staff are trained on this code of ethics regularly. Members discussed and shared their feeling that strong guidelines are very important. SRC supports the importance of a code of conduct being established.***

### **MEMBER FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN REPORTS**

Members were provided with written reports from ATP, CAP, VR Statistics and NSILC. Members did not share any feedback.

### **FEBRUARY SRC SENATOR OUTREACH**

Kipp Ransom shared with members that this year at the February meeting instead of having a lunch at the State Capitol with the Senators, members went to meet with Senators in their offices individually. Angela Fujan shared the reason the SRC does this outreach to the state legislature is because the VR's funding comes from state budgeting and it is important that state dollars are matched to ensure the program is fully funded. Angela stated due to changes in regulations regarding providing lunches, nor having a sponsor for the lunch the format needed to be changed to reach out to the Senators. Kipp stated when he went to the Capitol for the meetings with his group. He was not able to meet any of the Senators and instead only briefly spoke with their aides. Brad Meurrens shared that he also only met with aides which is not out of the norm in his experience.

Brad shared that in his opinion this visit was fine for what he wanted to accomplish. Brad agreed he could see how these meetings could be out of some council members comfort zones. Kipp questioned if it is the role of SRC to advocate for the VR to state representatives and was the message of members fully heard in the short meetings. Angela Fujan questioned if the time commitment asked of members to be at the Capitol to do the visits is too much for the SRC. Kipp shared that in past years when a lunch was provided there did seem to be a lower number of Senators present and more aides. Sarah Chapin shared she feels that meeting with Senators only once a year is not enough. Sarah suggested setting up a booth in the Capitol with useful, well put together materials about the VR could be effective. April Isaacs suggested including VR information with those stories shared during Disability Awareness Month in the media. Mark Shultz agreed that moving Capitol outreach to October could be useful to get the message across more clearly while the legislature is not in session. April suggested tie-ins with media stories for Mother's Day, Father's Day or Fourth of July that would pertain to client's who received VR services. Sarah stated that currently the Nebraska VR does have a public service announcement and they are working on creating radio advertisements in areas where the new business account managers will be working. Sarah shared that working with the media can be challenging as there can be errors or miscommunications in what is released by outside parties. Gayle Hahn shared she feels that personal stories of client experiences are more impactful than a sheet with statistics. Sarah suggested a series of constant contact email messages any time the SRC or Nebraska VR is presented in the media that could be packaged and sent to Senators. Sarah also noted, as part of the constant contact emails there could be a message prior to visits stating, "Expect a visit from a SRC member." Council discussion of Senator outreach asked if it is the job or place of SRC to promote the VR. Mark shared this outreach developed in the past because Department of Education staff were not able to talk directly with Senators, but that is changing. Brad stated he believes the most impactful conversation with a Senator would not be with a SRC member, but with an individual who has been employed and succeeded with VR services. Brad suggested that instead of attempting to educate all Senators at one time to target the Senators on the Appropriations Committee who would be most impacted by the dollar match information. ***SRC members concluded to continue the discussion of the council's role in VR advocacy at a future meeting.***

### **CONSTANT CONTACT AND MY VR**

Sarah Chapin presented a tour of the constant contact system utilized by the Nebraska VR. Examples of constant contact email messages that have been sent to Senators on SRC's behalf were shared. Sarah reported that the constant contact system can not send emails to individuals who have not agreed to receive them. Sarah stated the advantage of using the constant contact system versus standard email is the ability to track who has opened the messages and opened any links included in the messages. Sarah stated currently there is a 72% open rate of the SRC messages. Sarah stated currently the only addresses used are the Senators' themselves and currently does not include aides. Brad Meurrens stated getting a list of Senator's aides' email addresses is something he could assist with. Sarah stated using the system is very important for measurement purposes and is very user friendly.

Sarah shared with the council new VR posters and flyers promoting My VR. The My VR application went live in March and is currently on version two. Throughout the trial process clients and team members have been able to offer feedback to improve the app. Sarah reported that there are 87 users at this point including, 61 open cases and 26 closed cases. Mark Schultz stated this number is good as a pilot number, but more buy in and encouragement from VR staff needs to happen to increase the use of the application. Sarah presented a tour of the My VR application. When logged in to the system a small "?" on each page is always present which takes users to instructional videos on how to use My VR. The client/counselor messaging system was

demonstrated. If a client has a text enabled phone these messages can be seen directly on the client's phone. Sarah shared that group messages can also be sent to clients. Angela Fujan stated that this system could really be a time saver for staff, especially utilizing group messaging. Sarah also shared there is an appointment feature that sends text or email reminders 24 hours in advance of appointments to reduce no show meetings with counselors. The feature of group appointments was also discussed. The My VR account shows client contact information that can be updated by the client to help maintain accurate client contact information. The My VR system is set up with a password for clients and clients can use the system with security questions to reset their passwords themselves if a password is forgotten, VR staff will not have client passwords for client confidentiality and security. Gayle Hahn shared that she feels it would be good for her task notes in QE2 to be able to be seen by clients for transparency. The My VR application can also generate a job application, resume and cover letter with client information input through QE2. The resume document created through My VR can be edited, downloaded and uploaded by staff and clients. Clients can turn text messaging notification on or off from My VR within the application. Clients can also view their planned services in the application. SRC members shared their support and encouragement for the My VR application.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Employer Services

Lindy Foley reported the Nebraska VR Employment Committee meets every 6 weeks and that information will be brought back to SRC meetings to provide updates. Lindy stated that the job driven VR technical assistance program is been a great opportunity to network with other states and to share what Nebraska and other states are doing. Lindy shared the ICI grant is working for the progressive employment model and discussed how business account managers can play into that. Lindy reported that three business account managers have been hired serving the Columbus/Norfolk area, Kearney/Grand Island area and Omaha.

### Client Services

Vicki Rasmussen shared the client satisfaction survey was completed and a few changes are needed. Vicki reported that on question #3 of the survey, which asks why a person's employment has ended, 74% of responses chose "other" from the options provided. ***The committee recommends question #3 of the survey is clarified to require a written response to define the "other" reason.*** Vicki stated question #7 of the survey asks clients to choose from a list, what was the most helpful service used? Gayle Hahn stated that in many cases clients list several categories that were used. ***The committee recommends the VR considers tracking multiple responses to question #7 instead of only one reply.*** Vicki also shared that on the question, what needs are not being met by your job? 59.2% replied not enough pay. The council discussed possible revision and stated will wait for clarification on the definition of being economically self sufficient.

Vicki reported the VR is working with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee and Latino Committee to increase outreach and services to these groups. The council discussed these committees' functions and activities.

### Transition Services

Angela Fujan shared the committee reviewed the most recent pamphlet created for high school students regarding VR services, "Transition and Career Planning for High School Students". The committee's opinion was that there was too much information that would be overwhelming and unclear to the high school parents. ***The committee recommends the brochure be edited and***

*streamlined to better appeal to parents.* Susan Williams shared she feels there are a lot of questions that parents have regarding what VR does and what it has available.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT & WIOA**

Mark Schultz reported that Nebraska VR's standards and indicators are ahead of pace already this year. Mark stated the stronger the focus on the people served, the greater the accountability and success of the program. Mark stated that Sarah & Bridget were a great representation with CSAVR, presenting regarding social media. Mark reported there is discussion regarding the potential of an early intervention pilot for those applying for social security benefits. The National Council on Disability, which guides the president on disability issues, has asked Nebraska to be included in their upcoming report regarding business outreach and services, including My VR. Nebraska is a unique state in regards to work and is doing great. Mark reported a lot of success on the meet you where you are model. The model aims to move more towards community based vocational assessments rather than in-house assessments. Mark reported that satisfaction surveys are high and things seem to be going in the right direction.

## **WIOA**

Mark Schultz reported the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will require a number of changes. Mark stated Nebraska has been moving that way for awhile, and as a state this is positive and Nebraska is in support of those changes. The objective is to help get clients into the work force and to become economically self-sufficient. Everyone is capable of work. Mark reported that pre-employment transition services (PETS) require at least 15% of funds to be used to reach out to students in transition, ages 16-21. Currently, approximately \$1.5 million has been spent on PETS and that needs to increase to approximately \$2.5 million. Mark stated collaboration with other organizations to increase pre-employment transition services maybe needed to educate parents and students. Project SEARCH is an example of a PETS. Mark reported schools can no longer contract with sheltered workshops or subminimum wage jobs. VR must determine an individual's ability to work in a competitive integrated employment setting prior to an individual being allowed to work in a sub minimum wage job (sheltered workshop). VR's goal will be to prepare as many individuals as possible for the competitive integrated workplace. The certificate and assessment requirement will go in to effect in July 2016. Mark reported that with WIOA business services are of a greater emphasis creating a dual customer approach, employers are customers, as well as VR clients wanting employment. A survey will be developed with SRC input to assess satisfaction of business partners. Mark reported bachelor degree holders with one year experience are now accepted under the act as qualified vocational counselors versus the previous requirement of a master's degree. Mark stated council input will be sought regarding the possibility of revising Nebraska VR's qualification requirements for counselors. Mark stated a unified state plan is required with core partners including the department of labor requiring more alignment. The VR portion of the plan requires SRC input.

Mark reviewed with the council the updated SRC Operational Procedures regarding the requirements of council membership. Mark stated work needs to be done in regards to maintaining a minimum of 15 members and the council is currently deficient in the areas of business industry and labor, American Indian representation, and disability advocacy groups. Mark also noted that 51% of the council must be individuals with disabilities.

Mark reviewed the functions of SRC. The SRC is to review, analyze and advise VR on eligibility, effectiveness and scope of services and the functions of the state agency. Other SRC functions include: reviewing state goals and priorities, evaluating the effectiveness of the program, advising the development and activities of the state plan, consumer satisfaction, provide an annual report, coordination of activities with other councils, and to provide coordination of SILC and the Independent Living Centers. Mark noted that currently the SRC is lacking DD council input. Mark stated advocacy is not part of the written function of the SRC. More guidance will be needed for this area if that should still be a role of the SRC. The question of, “*Are the committee structures in place sufficient to meet the functions of the SRC?*” is to be considered by council members for future discussion.

Vicki Rasmussen stated based on Mark’s report it is important *to share with all VR members the importance of the busy time coming for the council and the input needed by all council members.*

#### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 2:28pm.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- New member subcommittee selection (new members, John McNally)
- Establishment of Nebraska VR code of conduct (Angela Fujan)
- SRC’s role in advocacy
- Revision of questions #3 & #7 of client satisfaction survey (Vicki Rasmussen/Client Services Committee)
- Transition and Career Planning for High School Students pamphlet improvement (Angela Fujan/Transitions Committee)
- Council Membership
- How can the SRC meet its required functions?
- Email reminder to members of importance of upcoming attendance needs (Angela/Kipp)