



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

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
Center For People In Need
May 14, 2013**

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: Sharon Bloechle, Jaime Galloway, Sue Gieschen, Gayle Hahn, April Isaacs, Seamus Kelly, Tim Kolb, Vicki Newman, Leslie Novacek, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Joni Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lisa Alexa, Mitch Arnold, Barb Benes, Robert Danner, Sherri Kelley

VR STAFF PRESENT: Angela Fujan

VISITORS: Kathy Hoell and Brad Muerrens, NESILC; Christine Hess and Carol Blood, Abilities Fund

The meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) commenced at 10:00 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 Meetings Law was posted on the back table.

Joni Thomas will be representing the Council at the National State Rehabilitation Council Forum in June.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Kipp Ransom moved and Seamus Kelly seconded a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 5, 2013 MINUTES

Jaime Galloway moved and April Isaacs seconded a motion to approve the February 5, 2013 meeting minutes as submitted. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent**

NEBRASKA STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (NESILC)

Kathy Hoell, from NESILC, presented information about the draft State Plan for Independent Living. Brad Muerrens was also present and will be filling Tim Kolb's seat on the SRC when his term expires in August.

NESILC would like to work with other groups and organizations to make life better for persons with disabilities in the state. It was suggested the plan be sent to the members so they can provide feedback to Kathy prior to the plan being submitted in June.

BUSINESS SURVEY OF WHY EMPLOYERS DO NOT WANT TO WORK WITH VR

Joyce Schmeckle was given a contract to conduct interviews with businesses that have not partnered with VR. She provided an Executive Summary of the report that was previously sent out and went through the findings. It was surprising for some that Goodwill was not an organization that works with VR. The results aren't perfect science but give VR a sense of the perceptions in the community and what VR can do to change false impressions. It may be that many employers are afraid of ADA consequences if an employee needs to be let go. Potential action items are: help companies get a frame of reference of the process with success stories; personal relationship building will be important; educate businesses on the disabilities that job seekers may have and what types of accommodations might be necessary; marketing and branding is going to be critical; and breaking down stereo-types is important. Additional discussion was held around tax credits not being a strong incentive to hiring an individual with disabilities due to the paperwork necessary and that it's not the reason you hire someone. Mark shared that VR needs to work harder on marketing to businesses and selling itself. The practice has been to highlight the skills and not the disability but it may alleviate some businesses fears if they are educated about the disabilities and types of accommodations that might be needed. It will be important to track contacts with businesses so that the same business is not repeatedly contacted by the different VR offices. It was suggested a meeting could be held to talk with many employers who have had success working with VR and ask them specific questions about how to reach out to other businesses.

FY14 STATE PLAN

Mark Schultz shared that the VR State Plan is lengthy and is available on the VR website for review. Input that's been gathered from the SRC over the year has been very valuable. Several items included in the Plan have been discussed at VR during the year: Starting to develop some outreach efforts to the Latino population; CFPIN will be a partner when possible; Businesses have been surveyed; Project SEARCH continues, and Entrepreneur of the year awards will be given. Mark asked for input on the priorities:

- *Increase the rehab rate and meet or exceed the standards.* It seems there are many other factors that should indicate success beyond the outcome report. Conversations need to take place around this topic to institute change at the federal level.
- *Increasing quality and timeliness of services.* VR staff handles many services in-house which allows for control of timeliness and quality. Timeliness is being addressed with staff iPads, and the database that is available online. Transparency of case status for supervisors will be a priority for next year. Cell phones are being issued to more staff. My VR is an app that will help with communication between VR and the client. It will also show each part of the case plan. Motivational interviewing training continues for staff. Engaging businesses will continue with the aid of the plan that Joyce Schmeckle has developed.
- *Developing effective community partnerships.* Community college programs are being offered to train clients in the areas of: electrician, welding, child care, and mechanics. These have all been successful programs.

Other thoughts and ideas on the Plan should be submitted to Mark in the next couple of weeks. The Plan will go to the State Board and then be sent to the federal office.

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON VR

April Isaacs reported that the Project SEACH graduation is taking place May 17, with seven students graduating. The group will be bigger next year.

CAP REPORT

Vicki Rasmussen shared information on the CAP report that was in the packet. Item #1, the client should not have been identified eligible for VR. Item #3, the client was not ready to work again. Mark pointed out that the report has been shrinking over time. He is hoping that the motivational interviewing process is helping to alleviate some issues.

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON WRITTEN REPORTS

No comments were made.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mark Schultz provided a VR Director's Report

- Reauthorization was passed by the House but is sitting in the Senate and is unlikely to move forward.
- Federal funds are being cut due to sequestration. The cut is coming out to about 1.6% due to an increase received for the cost of living. At the state level VR received full support from the Governor and legislature. Services will not be reduced and staff will not be laid off.
- The marketing process has been delayed due to staff changes. A statewide blitz will start in the fall. Advertising will be done on t.v., radio and in the newspaper. In the metro areas, advertising will take place on buses. Signage has been updated and the website will be updated by fall. The brochures are being reviewed and reconsidered for their usefulness. Marketing to the Hispanic population will be delayed until services are in place to better serve them when they arrive. They are working on an interpreting service that is available when dialed up rather than needing to schedule ahead. Comments given were that the American Classified newspaper, that is free at grocery stores, is a cheap way to advertise and would reach a lot of people. Several newsletters from varying agencies would provide a chance for free advertising.
- The federal Corrective Action Plan has required a report on the procedures used for monitoring funds. Once the report is submitted the office will be in compliance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Client Services Committee

Vicki Rasmussen reported.

- The Committee worked with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on recommending individuals for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Focus Group. The group reported that they hear about services mainly through the grapevine. A bad experience in one place spreads to others and the real message gets lost. Would recommend that a refresher on the Bridges Out of Poverty be done frequently as there are reasons for peoples behavior.

Vicki Rasmussen moved and Tim Kolb seconded a motion that VR review and consider the recommendations from the focus group, prioritize the items that might work and report back to the SRC. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

- The Latino Focus Group was held in Lincoln and they are waiting for the final report. A group is yet to be held in Lexington. Six individuals participated in Lincoln. Their comments were that VR lacks bilingual staff, the application is complicated, and many need assistance completing employment applications. They recommended places that VR can go to reach out to the Latino population.

A motion was made by Vicki Rasmussen and seconded by April Isaacs for VR to review and consider the recommendations from the focus group, prioritize the items that might work and report back to the SRC. There were no objections to the motion. **The motion carried by unanimous consent.**

- The Consumer Input Committee did a forum on the My VR app and magnets. Focus groups were held in Lincoln, Omaha and Kearney.
- In a survey of clients that had successful closures, they found that several had lost their jobs already and several said that they were not making enough money. Supported employment cases need to be looked at separately.

Employer Services Committee

April Isaacs reported.

- The Employer Services Committee reviewed the six candidates for the Entrepreneur of the Year awards and made their top three recommendations. There will also be one Alumni Award. The Awards Ceremony will be held on July 18 and the Governor is invited to attend.

Transition Services Committee

Seamus Kelly reported.

- Mark Mason has been shadowing staff around the state to see how the transition process is working. Contact with students every 30 days is challenging. They are trying to determine how long a case stays open if the parent is not responding. It is also important to share the information in a way that is understood. They discussed having a recent graduate share his success story with the high school students.
- Increasing relationships between VR and the school staff is important. The contact may be someone different in each school.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement that was created with Don Fritz at the last meeting was,

The SRC is an independent advisory council representing Nebraskans with disabilities that recommends and advises Nebraska VR for the purpose of insuring quality employment services.

It was recommend everything be spelled out and that VR staff wordsmith the statement so it is prepared for a vote at the next meeting.

UPCOMING CONFERENCE

Two VR staff will learn about fiscal policy at the 2013 National Fiscal Management Training Conference in August.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.