

State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2014

A meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on March 10, 2014 at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Headquarters in Henrico, Virginia.

Members Present: Dack Axelle, Suzanne Bowers, Audie Gaddis, Toney Lineberry, Ellen McIlhenny, Romy Mohta, Lauren Snyder-Roche, James Rothrock, Julie Triplett

Members Absent: Kate Broderick, John Eisenberg, Thalia Simpson-Clement, Richard Keene, Sally J. Thompson

Others Present: Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Scott Fraley, Vocational Rehabilitation Quality Assurance Analyst; Doug James, NOVA Regional Director; Rick Sizemore, WWRC Director; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support, Becky Bowers-Lanier, VRA Legislative Liaison.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November 19, 2013 meeting were approved as corrected.

Matters of Public comment: There were no comments for the public.

Chairperson's Report

- Ms. McIlhenny read the SRC Mission Statement and mentioned the form that Ms. Smith sent out regarding SRC members' commitment.
- Ms. McIlhenny suggested visiting some facilities for future meetings, and the SRC members agreed to meet at WWRC for their August 11 meeting. They asked Rick Sizemore to provide a tour directly following the meeting.
- The November Retreat and Quarterly meeting will be held on November 17th and 18th in Richmond, with the Retreat being held at the DRS Maywill Office.
- On April 22, 2014 from 10am to 3pm the DARS New Board Member Training Day will be held at the Virginia State Capitol, Senate Room 3 in the Capitol extension; a working lunch will be provided. Please email Liz Smith as soon as possible if you would like to attend. Ms. McIlhenny noted that this is not just for new members – but any member that would like a refresher.
- On April 5-6, 2014, Ms. McIlhenny will attend the Spring Training Sessions for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils to be held at the Hyatt Regency, Bethesda, MD.
- A motion was made by Suzanne Bowers, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to elect Dack Axelle as the Vice-Chair of the SRC for 2014 year.

Commissioner's Report

- The agency fared very well in Governor McDonnell's proposed budget, receiving budget amendments of :
 - \$1.2m per year to replace cuts in nutrition programs for our Area Agencies on Aging realized due to federal sequestration;
 - \$150,000 per year for increased case management for our Brain Injury programs;
 - \$99,773 per year for stabilization of the Public Guardian and Conservator Program.
- The General Assembly added in the Senate budget:
 - \$350,000 per year for Brain Injury Services to expand access in un-served and underserved regions of the Commonwealth to enable individuals to work or live independently in the community;
 - \$500,000 per year for Long-term Employment Support Services to support individuals with disabilities who are working in supportive competitive employment and receiving at least the minimum wage;
 - \$306,866 per year for Centers for Independent Living for peer monitoring, independent living skills training, information and referral services, and advocacy;
 - \$100,000 for Didlake, a provider of extended employment and long-term employment support services for people with disabilities.
- The House report added an additional:
 - \$316,126 per year for Public Guardian and Conservator Program to help stabilize services in the existing programs and allow the programs to serve additional individuals.
- Delegate Robert D. Orrock, Sr. sent a letter to Commissioner Rothrock regarding HJR 39 requesting the study of adult abuse in the Commonwealth.
- On February 14, 2014 DARS opened Priority Category II under our order of selection. Category II is individuals with significant disabilities with two serious functional limitations. Priority Category I (most significantly disabled) remains open. This is the first time since 2009 that we've had both Category I and Category II open. The wait list now stands at 928, and there are still individuals to come off the Category II wait list. This will happen with time. The only "closed" categories are Category III - individuals with one serious functional limitation - and Category IV - non-significantly disabled.
- DRS is currently serving 17,582 clients in application through post employment status. This is slightly fewer clients than we were serving this time in 2013. Our waiting list is now at 928, substantially less than last year at this time. We are doing far better this performance year compared to last in all four regions. Statewide the number of employments has increased by 28.3%. Statewide we have found employment for 1,275 clients compared to 835 this time last year. The competitive employment rate has increased from 96% in 2013 to 98% this federal fiscal year. We emphasized this metric last year and have been successfully improving our performance. The rehab rate has increased from 50% to 56%. Average hourly earnings have decreased from \$10.25 to \$9.56. This decrease in wages has been seen in every region of the state and is something we are monitoring. It is shaping up to be a good year for our Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

- Skills for Leadership training is being held for VR mid-managers to have staff ready for succession planning as many staff are retirement age. Leon Scales, Disability Determination Services Director, is also holding this type training for his staff.
- On March 14th a Quality Assurance/Monitoring Mini-Summit will be held at DARS to share information about QA/monitoring activities, to learn more about colleagues' approaches to QA/monitoring, and to discuss ways to enhance QA/monitoring work.
- A link to the Richmond Times Dispatch article on Justin Spurlock "Car show to raise money for wheelchair-accessible car" will be forwarded to the SRC members. The article mentions that he discovered hand-operated vehicles at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville.

Working Lunch and Council Roundtable Reports: Lauren Snyder-Roche provided an overview of the last SILC meeting and Ken Jessup provided an overview of the last DBVI SRC meeting. Complete minutes from the SILC and the DBVI SRC meetings may be reviewed at <http://townhall.virginia.gov>.

Program Reports

Doug James reviewed some of the current performance indicators for the DRS Northern Region. NOVA serves two of the largest school systems – Fairfax and Prince William. There has been a drop in adult referrals and an increase in school referrals. The average wage is \$19.28 per hour. He noted that 37% of the NOVA vocational rehabilitation counselors have less than two years on the job experience. He stated that the partnership with Tracy Topolosky, WWRC Rehabilitation Counselor, Medical Therapy Services, where she works with hospitals, doctors, etc. and creates referrals to WWRC to see if they can benefit and move back into their community is very successful. Seventy-five percent have been determined eligible for services and when employed, the average wage is \$20.30 per hour. The Business Development Managers in Harrisonburg and Northern Virginia have been working with large employers, i.e. Hershey, CVS, etc. to provide job opportunities. All four clients sent to Hershey who received training at WWRC, were hired.

Rick Sizemore highlighted the WWRC Director's Report sent previously to SRC members. He noted that DRS has successfully closed 1,934 cases year to date and 378 clients received services from WWRC. Approximately one in every five successful agency closures this year was served by WWRC; that is the highest service level, percentage wise, in the past five years and up 2% from last year. The other exciting news is that WWRC's training graduate rehabilitation rate is 82% so far this year, the highest percentage in many years, as compared to 69% last year. The Center's overall rehabilitation rate is at 59%, up from 48% last year. The rehabilitation rate equals the total number of consumers achieving an employment outcome divided by the total number of consumer cases closed. He meets with an advisory group monthly which consists for all levels and Toney Lineberry serves on this advisory group. He mentioned that the wait time for driver's education continues to be a challenge; however, funds were provided by the WWRC Foundation to purchase a vehicle and a driving instruction was hired. The Career Readiness Certificates is still in great demand. He asked member to go to the <http://www.wwrc.virginia.gov> to review the Blueprint for Direction for additional information.

Committee Reports

Internal Affairs: Scott Fraley reviewed the responsibilities of the Internal Affairs Committee pointing out the timetable for recommendations for the selection and hiring of impartial hearing officers and the state plan.

The committee reviewed the 2015 State Plan attachments, Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation that provides information on how DARS did on our Goals and Priorities performance measures and the RSA Standards and Indicators; Attachment 4.11(c)(1) Goals and Priorities; and Attachment 4.2(c) Recommendations for the State Rehabilitation Council. A motion was made by Toney Lineberry, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to accept the changes as presented.

Scott Fraley reviewed the proposed changes to the SRC By-Laws which were distributed to the full council prior to the meeting. A motion was made by Toney Lineberry, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to accept the changes as presented.

External Affairs: Suzanne Bowers noted the SRC currently has two vacant appointments (1) Business, Labor and Industry and (2) Advocate. The council needs to have more persons with disabilities. She encouraged members to have persons who have an interest to apply on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Website and to let Liz Smith know for her tracking. She also stated that John Eisenberg, Romy Mohta, Thalia Simpson-Clement and Sally Thompson are eligible for reappointments; however, each needs to reapply on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website and let Ms. Smith know of their interest as soon as possible.

Ms. Smith sent out the 2014 Public Hearings which will be held on March 24th 2:00 to 3:00 at the DARS Alexandria Office; April 2nd 3:00 to 4:00 at the DARS Portsmouth Office, and April 7th 3:00 to 4:00 at the DARS Roanoke Office. Members are encouraged to attend and if you have additional questions, please contact Ms. Smith.

The External Affairs Committee reviewed the seven nominations received for the Roy J. Ward State Rehabilitation Council Employee Leadership Award. The following five individuals were recommended for the award: Sandy Gearhart, Kristen Chesser, Wendy Cullen-Lawhorne, Tracy Topolosky, and Doug Eads. A motion was made by Toney Lineberry, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept these five recommended award recipients. The awards will be presented at the June SRC meeting.

Suzanne Bowers requested that members look over the SRC website and make recommendations to the committee for its revision.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: Julie Triplett announced that friends of the disAbility Law Center will gather at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens to recognize this dramatic "Season of Change." This is a unique opportunity for you to support people with disabilities as they seek full inclusion in all aspects of today's society. Tickets are \$60 in advance and \$65 at the door. The Gala is from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm. Should you have additional questions, please visit their website at www.dlcv.org.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm. The next meeting will be held on June 9, 2014. Location to be determined.