

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
Draft Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2007

A meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on March 12, 2007, at the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside, Norfolk, Virginia.

Members Present: Chester Avery, Karen Baugh, Daniel DeBoer, Kenneth Holloway, Hiawatha Nicely, Michael Organ, Philip Sieck, Sam Simon, Cherie Takemoto, Roy Ward

Members Absent: Sandra Cook, William Hall, Marianne Moore, Dana Nelson, Jim Rothrock, Florence Watt

Others Present: Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst, Liz Smith, Policy and Planning Director, Barbara Tyson, SRC Staff Support, Ernie Steidle, Chief Operations Officer

Call to Order: Council Chairperson Hiawatha Nicely called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2007 meeting.

Matters of Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Introduction of Members and Guests: Cherie Takemoto introduced her son, Pete, who is attending the Transition Forum and has attended the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and the Youth Leadership Forum sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.

Chairperson's Report:

- Mr. Nicely commended the SRC members for their advocacy during the 2007 General Assembly.
- The Secretary of the Commonwealth contacted Mr. Nicely about his letter regarding the need for appointments to the SRC and indicated that these appointments would be forthcoming. Commissioner Rothrock is trying to set up a meeting with staff from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth to discuss the composition of the SRC and new member appointments.
- Mr. Nicely and Daniel DeBoer will represent the SRC at the Spring Conference of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation to be held in Bethesda, Maryland.

Council Roundtable

Workforce Investment Act Council: Mr. Nicely reported that the Council will meet during the week of March 19 with Governor Kaine to discuss the Council's Strategic Plan. Discussions continue regarding the possible consolidation of workforce development programs to save funds and increase efficiency. Mr. Nicely recently attended a meeting in Washington, D.C. where the top five states for workforce training met and discussed, among other items, the difficulty of employing people with disabilities.

Statewide Independent Living Council: Mr. Sieck had no report since the Council has not met since the last SRC meeting.

Virginia Assistive Technology System Advisory Council: Mr. Avery reported that the Council will meet on March 21 in Charlottesville and will focus on recycling centers across the Commonwealth to provide persons with disabilities, free of charge, adaptive equipment. The Council also is researching the rules about students being able to keep assistive technology equipment provided to them during high school after finishing high school. Ms. Takemoto agreed to provide information on these rules.

Parent Education Advocacy Training Center: Ms. Takemoto asked that PEATC be added to future agendas under Council Roundtable Reports. Their office has moved from Springfield to 100 North Washington Street, Suite 234, Falls Church, VA 22046. The Richmond Office also moved and is now located at Broad Street and Boulevard. They will be opening a recycling site with two computers and software. This facility is funded by Parent Resource Centers for all children and training for the "chip and healthy program" is being conducted. Dr. Paul Wehman, with Virginia Commonwealth University, will help disseminate training information to the public.

Committee Reports and Working Lunch

Internal Affairs Committee – Karen Baugh, acting chair, made the following report.

- The Committee would like to invite Rick Sizemore, WWRC Director, to attend future SRC meetings to provide an update on current activities and offer ways the SRC can support WWRC. Mr. Nicely mentioned that he has been appointed to the WWRC Foundation Board.
- The Committee began reviewing three attachments from the 2007 State Plan in preparation for the development of the 2008 attachments. Suggestions included maintaining a focus on consumers with Limited English Proficiency and transition consumers whose cases are closed without achieving an employment outcome. The Committee established a timeline for the review of the attachments leading up to the May, 2007 meeting. Mary Lutkenhaus will provide another draft to the Committee by March 26, with Committee members providing their input to Ms. Lutkenhaus by April 16.
- The Committee received information on the performance of the Field Rehabilitation Services Division for the period of October, 2006-February, 2007. There has been a significant increase in development of Employment Plans as

compared to the same time last fiscal year and successful employment outcomes have increased as well. Average weekly earnings also have increased to \$298 and the rehabilitation rate has increased to 59.6%. The increase in production (i.e. more Employment Plans developed) has taken its toll on the VR case services budget. As of the end of February, 2007, for direct client services in the vocational rehabilitation program, 62% of the budget has been expended to provide services to clients. To stay within budget in State Fiscal Year 2007, DRS added more money to the case services budget and has taken many administrative actions to conserve funds. These actions, however, will not be sufficient to alleviate the budget situation for State Fiscal Year 2008. Therefore, effective April 1, 2007, DRS will close two more categories under "Order of Selection". This means that only the top category (clients with most significant disabilities) will be open.

- The Committee was informed about the Performance Improvement Plan that DRS has submitted to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). This Plan was required because DRS did not successfully pass the RSA Standards and Indicators in 2005.

External Affairs – Chet Avery reported on the following:

- The 2007 General Assembly included \$500,000 in the budget for the vocational rehabilitation program, which is the first time in many years that the program has received additional State funds. In addition, the Assembly members provided funding for Centers for Independent Living and brain injury services. The Assembly members, however, removed the \$6.7 million capital fund allotment for Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) asbestos abatement renovation. A motion was made by Roy Ward, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to send a letter to Governor Kaine requesting that when reviewing the biennial budget, he attempt to restore this funding to WWRC in order to ensure a safe environment for Virginians with disabilities who receive services at the Center. The Committee would like to begin focusing on possible legislation and budget amendments for the 2008 General Assembly Session at their August meeting. Any ideas that Council members have should be sent to Liz Smith to later be shared with the members.
- Philip Sieck, Kenneth Holloway, and Samuel Simon have been appointed by Governor Kaine to serve a second term on the SRC and Sandra Cook has been appointed as a new member. Ms. Cook is a member of the Disability Commission. Ms. Smith will forward a copy of the application form for gubernatorial appointments to the SRC members for them to provide to individuals who may be interested in applying to become members of the SRC. Ms. Smith emphasized that all new appointments need to be persons with disabilities to ensure compliance with the Rehabilitation Act requirements.
- Danny DeBoer agreed to provide DRS staff with assistance on the development of the 2007 SRC Annual Report. At the August meeting, the Committee would like to hear about events planned for October's Disability Employment

Awareness activities for possible inclusion in the next Annual Report. The Council's picture for the 2008 report will be taken at the August meeting.

Old Business

Chet Avery and Roy Ward held a conference call with Patricia Beattie, Chair of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired SRC, to discuss collaboration between the two Councils. Items discussed included support of legislation affecting people with disabilities, exchanging meeting minutes, and having a representative from each Council attend the other Council's meeting. A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded, and passed unanimously that the two SRCs work together on collaboration, communication, and coordination by sharing meeting minutes and Mr. Ward will attend the DBVI SRC meetings and report back to the DRS SRC.

At the November 20, 2006 SRC meeting, a motion was passed that the SRC create a Chairperson's Award to recognize DRS employees for innovative and remarkable performance. Mr. Avery will work with DRS staff to develop the criteria for this award to be discussed at the May meeting.

New Business

Mr. Simon informed the Council members about the Governor's Executive Order establishing the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance within the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. In addition, the Executive Order creates a Board consisting of the Secretaries of Administration, Commerce and Trade, Finance, Technology, and Transportation, as well as citizen members. A discussion was held about lack of broadband level telecommunication services in the Commonwealth, particularly in rural areas, and the importance of telework as an option to assist people with disabilities in employment and alleviating transportation as a barrier to employment. Mr. Simon expressed his interest in volunteering to find out more about the Board and how the SRC can be involved in advocating for more broadband level telecommunication services across the State to afford more telework options for people with disabilities. A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote for the SRC Chair to communicate with the Secretary of Transportation about Mr. Simon's interest.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held on May 14, 2007 at the DRS Central Office.