

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2007

The quarterly meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on May 14, 2007, at the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present: Chet Avery, Karen Baugh, Charles Benagh, Sandra Cook, Daniel DeBoer, Donna Kay Graff, Kenneth Holloway, Kathleen Maybee, Marianne Moore, Dana Nelson, Hiawatha Nicely, Michael Organ, James Rothrock, Philip Sieck, Samuel Simon, Cherie Takemoto, Roy Ward, Florence Watt

Members Absent: William Hall

Others Present: John Phelps, Field Rehabilitative Services Director; Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Ernie Steidle, Chief Operations Officer; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst; Carla Sankey, Internal Auditor, Jim Roberts, Information Systems Director, Rick Sizemore, WWRC Director, and Kurt Sprenger, WWRC Lead Analyst; and Cat Clough and Bernadette Mayhall, Interpreters.

Call to Order: Council Chairperson Hiawatha Nicely called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Roy Ward, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2007 meeting as distributed.

Welcome and Introductions: Mr. Nicely welcomed the new members, Charles Benagh, Sandra Cook, Donna Kay Graff, and Kathy Maybee.

Matters of Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Chairperson's Report

Mr. Nicely reported that due to illness, he was unable to attend the sessions at the Spring Conference of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). He has begun serving as a member of the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Foundation Board.

A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adopt a resolution, signed by the SRC Chair, recognizing Jane S. Smith, a former DRS Board Member who recently passed away. The resolution commends Ms. Smith for her many

contributions to DRS and Virginians with disabilities and will be forwarded to her husband, Lacy Smith.

Commissioner's Report

The Commissioner introduced Jim Roberts, the new Information Systems Director; Carla Sankey, the new Internal Audit Director; and Rick Sizemore, the new Director of WWRC.

He welcomed the new members and stated that an orientation for them will be scheduled in the near future. He encouraged the members to visit Centers for Independent Living, Employment Services Organizations, DRS Field Offices, and WWRC to learn more about services to Virginians with disabilities.

He also notified members of the following upcoming events:

- June 12, 2007 - a one-day workshop on Universal Design: Concepts for Community and Workplace Integration to be held at WWRC. This program will highlight universal design principals and their application to employment, housing, and urban planning.
- June 10, 2007 – Positive Vibe Café, Stratford Hills Shopping Center, 2825 Hathaway Road, Richmond, Virginia 23225, will host a fund raiser in their parking lot.
- June 19, 2007 –Joint Leadership Summit for the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of DRS' boards and councils to be held at DRS Central Office.
- October 23, 2007 – Second Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards event. This year it will be a luncheon to recognize employers and businesses for their efforts to employ DRS' vocational rehabilitation consumers.

Commissioner Rothrock reported that he was encouraged while attending the CSAVR conference by DRS' exceptional services, particularly in the area of transition-to-work for youth. Assistant Secretary John Hager, U. S. Department of Education, is very committed to transition services and is providing federal funding to replicate transition forums in other states. In addition, Secretary Hager has cited Virginia's efforts in developing an assistive technology recycling network around the Commonwealth.

The increase in production in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program is significantly impacting the financial situation. Accordingly, effective April 1, 2007, two more categories were closed under order of selection, leaving only the top category (most significant disabilities) open. While DRS will be receiving \$500,000 in new funding on July 1, 2007, this will not be sufficient to alleviate the financial situation. The Commissioner will be meeting with the Governor's staff to talk about additional funding for the program.

Commissioner Rothrock is checking on Sam Simon's interest in serving on the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance within the Office for the Secretary of Transportation and will contact Mr. Simon in the near future.

Council Roundtable

Workforce Investment Act Council

Mr. Nicely reported that the Council is preparing for the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, which hopefully will occur in October. The Council also is looking at the possibility of merging the 16 workforce areas in the State possibly into 8 areas; this issue will be addressed at the June meeting. The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) needs to close offices due to a reduction in federal funding caused by the low unemployment rate in Virginia. This is particularly problematic in Southwest Virginia because there are no private companies to provide management services for the One-Stop Centers. The VEC will be holding public meetings across the State to discuss the office closings. Mr. Nicely will provide talking points on the issue of the federal funding formula to the SRC members in case they have an interest in contacting their representatives in Congress about the issue.

Statewide Independent Living Council

No report.

Virginia Assistive Technology Systems (VATS) Advisory Council

Mr. Avery reported that the Council will meet on June 6 and will focus on: (1) developing recommendations for state funding for VATS; and (2) recycling initiatives that include persons with hearing and visual disabilities in addition to persons with mobility disabilities. Mr. Avery mentioned that because his term on the SRC expires September 30, 2007, the SRC will need to appoint another member to serve as a representative to VATS Council.

PEATC

Ms. Takemoto reported that VATS will be providing a computer for individuals to practice utilizing assistive technology in the Northern Virginia Office. Pierre Ames is heading up the new office in Richmond. She noted that they are very interested in doing the NEXT STEPS training and with Commissioner Rothrock's support, applied for Parent Education training for the Information Center for Rehab Services to help with transition for adult and youth leaving high school.

Committee Reports

Internal Affairs Committee

Marianne Moore, Chair, reported on the following:

The Committee completed their work on the development of the State Plan attachments. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed to approve the 5/14/07 draft Attachment 4.2(c) "Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council" with the deletion of draft recommendation #5 regarding the public hearing process.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to approve the 5/09/07 draft Attachment 4.12(c)(1) "State's Goals and Priorities" with the recommended change from the External Affairs Committee to the wording in Goal 10 to read: Address the unique needs of consumers in special populations. The Committee also asked that for Attachment 4.12(e), DRS add targets that are specific to DRS in addition to the targets established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The Committee reviewed the status of the contracts with the hearing officers for the VR program. The Committee considered the comments submitted by letter from a former client asking that the contract for the hearing officer who conducted her hearing not be renewed. A motion was made by Ms. Moore, seconded and approved unanimously to renew the three hearing officer contracts for another 12 months.

John Phelps distributed the Field Rehabilitation Services Division Performance Measures for Federal Fiscal Year 2007, Month ending April 2007. He noted for FY 05/07, a 42.7% increase in the development of new Employment Plans and a 13.5% increase in successful cases closed.

External Affairs Committee

Chet Avery reported on the following:

The Committee discussed the order of selection and believes that the highest budget priority of the agency should be to seek new funds to eliminate order of selection so that no person with a disability in Virginia will be excluded from receiving services. The SRC Chair and Vice Chair will be representing the SRC at the Joint Leadership Council Summit and it is suggested they recommend this as a legislative priority at the upcoming summit. In informing legislators about the need for additional funding for the VR program, it might be effective to specifically identify individuals with disabilities in their district who have been denied services due to the need for order of selection. The Committee also would like DRS to issue a press release to local papers after each SRC meeting regarding the activities of the SRC to raise public awareness about the SRC and the agency.

The SRC still needs a member from the Client Assistance Program of the Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy. Commissioner Rothrock agreed to look into this matter. The Committee recommends that members start recruiting for the following SRC vacancies which will occur on September 30, 2007:

- Disability Advocate representative who is a person with a disability to succeed Chet Avery.
- Business, Industry, Labor representative who is a person with a disability to succeed Dana Nelson.

Marianne Moore recommended that a youth in transition be recruited to serve on the SRC.

Old Business

Recognition Awards - Mr. Avery recommended that the SRC adopt the following recognition awards:

- SRC Chairperson's Award – to be given by the SRC Chairperson to one or more members of the SRC for distinguished service to the SRC and/or to the disability community during that person's tenure on the SRC. The award shall be presented annually at the August meeting. Recipients of the award will receive a recognition plaque, with a picture and notice in the next edition of the *DRScovery* (the DRS employee newsletter) and the SRC Annual Report.
- SRC Employee Leadership Recognition Award – to be given by the SRC to up to five employees of DRS' vocational rehabilitation program, to include WWRC. The award recognizes employees who have distinguished themselves in service to vocational rehabilitation consumers and the disability community. Nominations for this award will be made by the DRS Commissioner and the SRC and reviewed by the External Affairs Committee and voted on by the full SRC at the January meeting. Awards will be presented at the March meeting to coincide with Rehabilitation Counselor Month. Recipients of the award will receive a recognition plaque, with a picture and notification in the next edition of the *DRScovery* and the SRC Annual Report. It was recommended that this award be named in honor of Roy J. Ward in recognition of his life-long advocacy for persons with disabilities.

A motion was made by Cherie Takemoto, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to approve these recognition awards.

Fiscal Report

Ernie Steidle reported on the status of the budget 10 months through the State Fiscal year. Overall, the agency has expended 83% of the budget, which is on target for the year. The VR program case services budget has been supplemented throughout 2007 with administrative funds that would not be expended. The VR program will experience a significant financial impact in the 2008 State Fiscal Year.

New Business

The report on the 2006 Consumer Satisfaction Survey was tabled until the August, 2007 meeting.

Mr. Sizemore made a presentation on the WWRC Centers for Excellence, which included Neuro-Rehabilitation Services, Assistive Technology Services, Comprehensive Evaluation and Assessment Services, and Services for Youth in Transition. Mr. Sizemore will be attending future meetings of the SRC to provide a WWRC update. The SRC requested that Dr. Joseph Ashley attend the next SRC meeting to report on the advancements in telecommunications and information technology.

It was decided by members that the August 13 SRC meeting will be held in Richmond at the DRS Central Office. In November, there will be a one-half day retreat on November 13 followed by the SRC meeting on November 14 at WWRC.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.