



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services  
**STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**



*To work with the ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.*

**SRC Meeting October 13, 2020**

**Zoom Conference**

**3:30 PM – 5:30 PM**

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC and Program Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program at [Salve Regina University](#)  
Catherine Sansonetti, Vice-Chair SRC, Attorney at [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)  
Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC, Co-Coordinator of [RI Cross Disability Coalition](#)

Community members/CRP members:

Christina Battista, representing the [RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#)

Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate for the [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)

Jennifer Doucette, Director of Regional Transition, for [West Bay Collaborative](#)

Anne Fartura, Peer Support Coordinator/Special Education at [RI Parent Information Network \(RIPIN\)](#)

Nina Fiasconaro, a Parent Advocate for a child with Disabilities

Paul Harden, Director of the [RI Small Business Development Center](#), at URI

Nicole Rico Serrano, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, for the [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)

Jane Slade, State Transition Coordinator at the [Department of Education](#)

Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services at [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services:

Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation), John Valentine (Quality Assurance Supervisor)

Guest: Cathy Andreozzi, [Tori Lynn Andreozzi Foundation](#)

**1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, and SRC – Quorum met.**

**2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions**

**3. Approval of Minutes from May 5, 2020**

**Motion** *Paul Harden made a motion seconded by Christine Yankee and unanimously approved to accept the May 5, 2020 minutes. (Voting Members – Christina Battista, Melissa Brusso, Jennifer Doucette, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Paul Harden, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee)*

**4. Summary of Follow-ups from Meeting**

- The SRC team will get together and work on CRP Survey results. (CRP Committee)
- Formulate notice of membership recruitment for the SRC. (Nancy)

**5. ORS Director's Report – Ronald Racine**

- There are no more people on the Category I Waitlist. ORS is working with clients in Category II of the Waitlist to get them off in the next three to four months. This is a big difference from where ORS was just two year ago when the Waitlist had all categories closed.

Clients are served in the following order as funding allows:

- Priority Group 1- Individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Priority Group 2- Individuals with significant disabilities
- Priority Group 3- All other eligible individuals

Individuals within each group are served in order of application date.

- Reallotment Funds – ORS has received five million in reallotment funds partially due to other states not being able to match state to federal funding. Out of this five million, ORS is required to spend at least 15% on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The State has pushed off the budget process, waiting to see if they can utilize COVID-19 relief money to help alleviate the deficit. ORS is guaranteed funding for this fiscal year but will have to be careful not to exceed our state matching funds once the new budget is finalized.

## 6. Chair's Report – Dr. Judith Drew

- Update on the Community Rehabilitation Providers section of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for 2020. The SRC sub-committee has been working since August on the survey. The response rate was roughly 35%. We are working on analyzing the data and our report should be ready in December. Judi thanked everyone who has been working on this project; Catherine, Malissa, Christine, Barbara, Nina and Nancy.
  - Remind that this is still the 100 Anniversary year of the Rehabilitation Program. There is information and updated anniversary content at, [VR100/Vocational Rehabilitation 100th Anniversary](#).
  - Governor's Coaching Coalition their enthuces is on helping anyone in RI who needs a job to get carrier coaching. It is a professional development program for career coaches in RI.
- Council voted unanimously to nominate Cathy Andreozzi to the Council.

## 7. Let's Get Back to Work and COVID-19 - Joe Murphy

In 2018 the Let's Get Back to Work Initiative began. It was formed to eliminate the Silo Effect in the rehabilitation and employment communities in RI by having all state agencies and provider networks linked together. Since COVID-19, there is a new initiative called Back to Work RI, which is very similar to the Let's Get to Work Imitative.

Back to Work RI will focus on those receiving unemployment benefits and the state's more vulnerable communities, with the objective of assisting those in need and ensuring that the economic comeback leaves no one behind.

- Participants will work with a career coach who provides job counseling and connects them with resources.
- The coaches will receive training from the nonprofit Markle Foundation's Skillful Initiative and Operation HOPE, an Atlanta-based organization.
- Back to Work RI intends to offer several pathways for people to quickly get back to work while gaining the skills needed to establish sustainable, successful careers in areas such as health care, financial services and IT.

ORS wants to ensure that this newly named program works with people with disabilities, and has an avenue to work with students in high school and then move onto adult services.

- ORS worked with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), to help provide technical assistance on a wide variety of subjects including customized employment, supportive employment and an integrated resource team model, which is in use at the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) in the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). The DEI is a person-centered plan that aims to improve education, training and employment opportunities and outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits. Person-centered plans examine the obstacles to work while the Governor's newer program enthuces help for those who have lost work or businesses due to COVID-19.
- This Governor Coaching Coalition will be facilitated by an out-of-state group that will be training the 30 – 35 Navigators (career coaches) using The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act money. ORS involvement is important to help make sure the navigators have a focus on people with disabilities.

COVID-19 - ORS is still working lobby free and not allowing a lot of community-based services. We are working with providers to make sure they have COVID-19 plans in place.

## 8. Preliminary Review of CRP Survey- John Valentine

- Noted difference from the last CRP survey; there were far more open-ended questions.
- The response rate was about 38%, which is a strong number, one higher than most states I have looked at.
- Optimistic we will have good data as we break it down.

**9. Review of Meeting Schedule and Recording of Meetings – Nancy Baker**

Members were asked if they had any difficulty/conflicts with this year's schedule, and no one did. The schedule was solidified and has been posted to the Secretary of State's Website.

**10. Review of Membership - Nancy Baker**

The following positions, required by federal regulations, need to be filled on the Council.

- Business, industry and labor (3 representatives)
- State Workforce Investment Board (1 representative)
- Individuals with disabilities
- Former clients of ORS

Suggestions for outreaching to candidates for the Council

- Outreach should be targeted
- ORS has counselors that can reach out/best employment teams and to clients
- Reach out to organization that serve people with disabilities with a membership recruitment letter from the Council
  - Dorcus International Institute
  - Progresso Latino
  - Greater Providence YMCA (Cathy Andreozzi could reach out to Kobi Dennis, the Diversity and Inclusion Manager)
  - Paul can send Nancy contact information for the Chambers of Commerce
  - ARCS
  - Easter Seals
  - Reach out to the chambers Paul can get me contacts for chambers.

**11. New Business** - Christina Battista spoke about Circles of Connections - Now more than ever, people are looking for ways to connect with each other. Join the Arc Rhode Island for a safe and easy way to do this with Circles of Connections! Circles can provide:

New friends and an online circle of support, a way to learn new things, a listening ear, advice, or help navigating complicated systems and so much more.

Link for further information [on Circles of Connections!](#)

**12. Public Comments – There were None.**

**13. Correspondence – There were none.**

**14. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

**Motion** – *Nina Fiasconaro made a motion seconded by Judi Drew, and unanimously approved, to adjourn the May 5, 2020 meeting. (Voting Members - Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Melissa Brusso, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Barbara Fernandez, Nina Fiasconaro, Joan Fino, Paul Harden, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee).*

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Nancy Baker*  
Nancy Baker, Staff, RISRC