



## State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Department of Human Services

Office of Rehabilitation Services

### STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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

**Full Council Minutes February 12, 2013**

**4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.**

**Department of Labor and Training ~ 1151 Pontiac Avenue ~ Cranston, RI 02920**

**Present:** Bryant Berganza, Stephen Brunero, Rocco Bruno, Thomas (Wheeler) Clemons, Kelley Conti, Cynthia M. Cote, Linda Deschenes, Dominic DiOrio, Laurie DiOrio, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Dr. Judith L. Drew, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Kathleen Grygiel, Maryellen Hagerty, Paul Harden, Margaret Hoye, Diana Kriner, Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, JoAnn Nannig, Dan Pieroni, Ronald Racine, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Kim Wennermark

**Guests:** Jack Ringland, Lynn St. Louis, Steiner St. Louis

**Excused:** Christine Botts, Lea Colardo, Cory Allard, Dorothy Furlong, Micheal Hazard, Roger Andrew Iannetta, Jeffrey D. Machado, Aracelis Maria, Juan Troncoso, Willa Truelove

- 1. Call to Order:** Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 4 P.M. Quorum met.
- 2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda:** None.
- 3. Approval of Minutes:** Motion to accept the December 11, 2012 meeting minutes was unanimously approved.

#### **4. Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) Report:** Stephen Brunero Reports

\* Spoke briefly about the blizzard and the concerns for people with disabilities getting around on the streets to ORS for appointments. ORS offices remained open despite the Governor telling State Employees they could stay home. He thanked the ORS staff for their dedication.

\* Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI): ORS is going to hold off on the RTAC Learning Collaborative grant for another year because we have several other initiatives we are currently committed to.

\* Personnel: Staffing at ORS VR and SBVI is in pretty good shape. Disability Determination Services (DDS) is still under-staffed due to federal hiring freezes.

\* State Budget Finance Hearing going on now for Medicaid and Health and Human Services programs. We have concerns for programs that have been eliminated or cut in the 2014 budget; Elder Care for Blind, Home Modifications, and Personal Care Attendants have been targeted. These programs are not Medicaid eligible but ORS still provides them for our consumers. The cost to have these services cut is higher than keeping them; most clients would have to relocate into nursing home facilities if these programs are cut. We are trying to get the programs reinstated through education and advocacy. There are strong arguments to keep these programs funded.

\* Last week senior staff at DHS met with the Governor, the Director of Human Services. We talked about the programs at ORS; the Governor is interested in disability issues; he included in his budget extra positions two years ago for DDS because of the high numbers of people applying for benefits. We had a nice discussion and he may come and visit with us at ORS at some point in the near future.

\* ADA Investigation in RI: The United States Department of Justice (DoJ) is looking at possible violations of The Americans with Disabilities Act, primarily with sheltered workshops and supportive employment programs for people with intellectual and developmentally disabilities. The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals have been involved in meetings with the DoJ over the past week to work on a response to this. There will be another meeting this week with DoJ, at that time we will learn more about the situation. There may be findings about the types of assessments and evaluations for folks in sheltered workshops.

\* Annual Report: This is the first year we did not do a hard copy to try and save money. There are eight success stories highlighting this year in the report. It already has gone out to the SRC.

\* 107 Monitoring: We are actively working on the Corrective Action Plan/Technical Assistance Plan from the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA). We did quite well with the visit; they pointed out areas for improvement that will help us better our services.

\* Recognized Kim Wennermark from Veteran's Affairs: ORS is doing succession planning and peer mentoring to help our staff move forward as folks retire. Kim was helpful in getting Federal and State Veterans Affairs together at our office to work on peer mentoring and employment initiatives. <http://www.ors.ri.gov/Veterans%20Initiatives.html>

- \* Employment First: Initiative to help primarily folks with supported employment needs get services.
- \* Transition Conference at Roger Williams University: ORS is co-sponsoring on March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. If you want more information see me after the meeting.
- \* Call from Providence Journal doing an article for the Thrive Section; it's a health and wellness section. They are doing a follow-up sequel to the latest inventions in wheelchairs and technology and wanted ORS to help with that.
- \* Workplace Safety Training: We are expanding our offices on 40 Fountain Street pm the first floor with another reception area and meeting rooms to increase visibility and security. There is also a new tenant in the building, Year Up Providence, which is a one-year, intensive training program that provides low-income young adults, ages 18-24, with a combination of hands-on skill development, college credits, and corporate internships.
- \* March 27<sup>th</sup>: Independent Living Council will hold an open house at the Warwick Library to get input for the SILC State Plan.
- \* TASH Conference: Supportive Employment Transition Conference for youth with significant disabilities to adult life on April 12<sup>th</sup> at Rhode Island College Facility Center. ORS is partnering with the Sherlock Center.
- \* The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit on Vocational Rehabilitation Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance 9/16/2013-9/17/2013.
- \* Dan Pieroni is the keynote speaker at the 9th Annual College Planning Forum on March 9<sup>th</sup> at Providence College.

#### **5. Chair's Report: Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett Reports**

- \* Thanked everyone for working on the Annual Report. NCSRC, Nancy will get our Annual Report up on their site. [http://www.ncsrc.net/resources-for-sracs#annual\\_reports\\_csna\\_css\\_state\\_plan](http://www.ncsrc.net/resources-for-sracs#annual_reports_csna_css_state_plan)
- \* The subcommittee scheduling for work in-between full Council meetings is working well so we will keep this format moving forward.
- \* National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils Forum: June 24-25, 2013, it would be great if we could get someone there. <http://www.ncsrc.net/national-state-rehabilitation-council-forum>
- \* Next NCSRC Teleconference Meeting is on 05/21/2013 @ 2:30 Eastern
- \* A letter on the handicap parking in front of ORS would be something we can do so Steve please keep us in the loop on what is needed.

#### **6. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) - Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett**

We are going to talk a little about what FEMA is doing in the state and nationally and a brief dialogue on what we see as needs coming out of the community. FEMA is based in DC with ten local offices nationally. After Katrina, FEMA started to work on preparations for the elderly and people with disabilities. FEMA was not focusing enough attention on these populations. In order to meet these needs FEMA needed to commit to working with state agencies and organizations like the Independent Living centers. So they laid out a plan to have someone specialize just in this area. They hired one person for each region; not realizing how big the regions were. Then they set up Instant Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Teams that arrive first on the ground before or after a disaster. We recognized that the biggest issues happen right at the beginning of a disaster. We no longer look at special needs of individuals, we focused a lot on inclusion and integrations; a plan, that across the board, meets everyone's needs.

- \* RI Emergency Management has a statewide management list that is self-identified. RI is recognized nationally for this list for leading in efforts to recognize people at greatest need.
- \* RI is looking at alerts and warnings that will do additional outreach.
- \* RI is working with shelters; we have stopped doing special needs shelters, every shelter will be for everyone. That shift came about with The Department of Health linking up with FEMA's Medical Alert Core to set up functional service teams that support agencies like Red Cross and help people who need added support to stay in an independent environment.
- \* There are five areas RI is focused on right now; communications, maintain health and independence, what is available for supports and supervision, transportation, and the independence factor.
- \* In RI one of the things we did with ORS, which is recognized nationally, FEMA comes in when a state cannot handle it. We come in and open a joint field office. We always do 10% local hires. We worked with Steve to figure out how we can link employment with ORS clients. When a job posting opened we sent it directly to ORS to give the clients opportunities for jobs. We wanted to increase our opportunities to reach a larger population.
- \* Lastly FEMA is starting a cadre of people who are specialists in the needs for people who need additional services.

#### **7. Subcommittee Reports**

Transition: Judi Drew Reports

3 targets areas:

1. Increase the presence of ORS at state, regional and local transition related events for students with disabilities, families and professionals. (Kate, could we track this so we know when materials are put out. It would be good for the annual report).
2. Advise and assist ORS in developing outreach strategies targeted for transition age youth (18-24) that may not be receiving special education services (ie students on 504 plans).
3. Assist ORS in identifying barriers and challenges for transition aged youth in order to strategize effective interventions.

Nominations and Leadership Development: Rocco Bruno Reports

1. We are setting up interviews with Margaret “Peggy” Benz, Jessica Mowry, Nicole McCarthy, and Gail Lawson. Candidates who have not yet been vetted: Steven Richard - due to scheduling and other conflicts may or may not be joining the group this term, that decision is pending per Domenic’s recent correspondence with him; Christina Battista - has not yet been interviewed but plans to attend the SRC breakfast meeting at which time we will engage her in an informal interview; Marilyn Walaska - will also be interviewed at the May meeting; Christine Rancourt-Bruzzi who will be interviewed this summer.

2. Approval for the website of the information flyer.

Outreach: Kim Wennermark Reports

1. Reported getting more timely information on meeting scheduling; setting up a schedule.
2. We are going in the direction to identify who is underserved.
3. More discussions with other languages.
4. Aware of groups that are not open with government.
5. Collaboration with Transition subcommittee.

State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance: Linda Deschenes will get Nancy the finalized Plan Timeline so it can go out to all members. When the Plan comes out we want feedback. We will send out recommended strategies. Catherine can bullet point a few items to look for.

Kelley Conti: Operation Stand Down for Veterans - Food Pantry needs to be filled. Asks all members to bring nonperishable and personal hygiene items to the May breakfast. Nancy will remind folks about this as time gets closer.

**8. Public Comments:** None

**9. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Nancy L. Baker*

Nancy L. Baker, SRC Facilitator