



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 May Breakfast Meeting May 8, 2018**  
**Salve Regina University, Warwick, RI**  
**8:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.**

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC (Program Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program at [Salve Regina University](#))  
Margaret 'Peggy' Benz, Vice-Chair SRC (Adult Education and Workforce Training)  
Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC (Co-Coordinator of [Cross Disabilities Coalition](#))  
Community members/CRP members: Rocco Bruno (Retired Head of Medicare Program in Rhode Island)  
Nina Fiasconaro (Parent Advocate for a Child with Disabilities)  
Joan Fino ([Rhode Island Parents Support Network](#))  
Elizabeth Graves (Retired Special Education Teacher & Member of the [Governor's Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#))  
Dr. Gail Lawson (Past Chair SRC)  
Sergio Lopez-Ruiz (Behavioral Specialist at [North American Family Institute](#))  
[Office of Rehabilitation Services](#): Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Linda Deschenes (Assistant Administrator of Operations), Sharon DiPinto (Sr. Human Services Policy & Systems Specialist), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor), John Valentine (Strategic Planning Supervisor)  
[Department of BHDDH](#): Christine Botts  
[Department of Education](#): Jane Slade  
[Department of Labor and Training](#): Vincent Rossi (Program Manager for SSA Ticket to Work & Manage Disability Employment Initiative Grant for DLT)  
[Disability Law Center](#): Catherine Sansonetti  
[Goodwill Industries of RI](#): Christine Yankee  
[The RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#): Christina Battista  
[The RI Parent Information Network](#): Anne Fartura  
[Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#): Lea Colardo, Maryellen T. Hagerty (Disabilities Advocate Program)  
Guests: Melissa Brusso & Leann Heath, Administrative Education Manager, [Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island](#)  
Linda Hurley, President/CEO., [CODAC Behavioral Healthcare](#)  
Kevin Nerney, Director, [RI Developmental Disability Council](#)  
Darleen Castonguay

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

**2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – None.**

**3. Acceptance of Minutes from March 6, 2018**

*Motion – Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Gail Lawson and unanimously approved to accept the March 6, 2018 Minutes (Vote – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Rocco Bruno, Peggy Benz, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Dr. Gail Lawson, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, and Christine Yankee)*

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

\* N. Baker will meet with Governor's office and discuss membership and ethics requirements for the SRC. Report to Council in fall.

**5. Linda Hurley, President/CEO., CODAC – The State of the Opioid Crisis in RI: Challenges and Possibilities**

\* CODAC Behavioral Healthcare is the largest non-profit, outpatient provider for opioid treatment in Rhode Island. They are committed to our mission, and collaborating with other organizations. CODAC counselors work closely with their patients to achieve individual goals and or meet the requirements of the referring authority. The programs are designed to assist individuals to develop and integrate a recovery-oriented lifestyle that includes family, friends, health, wellness, joy and productivity. All CODAC programs emphasize the value recovery oriented lifestyle benefits and strongly encourage the integration of family members into the treatment and recovery process.

\* RI has the third highest rate of overdose deaths in the US trending towards misuse of prescription drugs away from 'street drugs'. To combat this, there have been recent changes in requirements for doctors to keep records with the State for

prescription drugs, thus less misuse of these drugs, and less people initiating addiction due to the prescription drugs. Downside, people seeking heroin as a substitute for prescription drugs.

\* In August 2015, Governor Raimondo created [Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force](#) with [four strategies for addiction and overdose](#), Treatment, Rescue, Prevention and Recovery. The task force four-point plan creates better prescription monitoring, more access to the overdose-reversing drug naloxone, more peer-recovery programs and more medication-assisted treatment, in prison and across the State. CODAC is actively working with the task force with the focus primarily on prevention.

*“Prevention is key, but for those who are already addicted there has to be a complete system of services ready to assist them.”* Linda Hurley

\* [Substance Use Disorder Services](#) utilize Medication Assisted Treatment, The Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) and General Outpatient Services.

\* [Mental Health Services](#)

\* [CODAC at the RI Adult Correctional Institutions](#) In partnership with Department of Corrections RI has, the first in the nation, medicated treatment program in the prisons. The prison MAT program has achieved a 61% decrease in overdoses for this population.

\* [Health & Wellness](#)

\*Updates on CODAC since May meeting

[RI Congressional Delegates Convene at CODAC to Announce \\$12.55 Million Grant to Fight Opioid Epidemic](#) July 5, 2018

[How the Smallest State is Defeating America’s Biggest Addiction Crisis](#) August 25, 2018 Insightful article in Politico Magazine

[CODAC President Linda Hurley Joins Providence Business News for its Five Questions with Series](#) September 10, 2018

## **6. Presentation of Awards – Jack Ringland**

\* Catherine Sansonetti received a special award for her years of service with the Council.

\* [Tom Nerney](#) was posthumously given the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council Outstanding Service Award for his service and dedication, regionally and nationally from 1966 to 2018 in the Field of Developmental Disabilities for self-determination by all. Kevin Nerney, Director of The Developmental Disability Council, accepted the award with a few words; *“My Father’s vision was simple; every person has intrinsic value and should be treated with dignity and respect.”*

\* Willa Truelove received a certificate of appreciation for her 6 years of service on the Council.

\* The former members not in attendance received certificates of appreciation for their work on the Council. Danial Pieroni, Lori Norris, Diana Marcotte.

## **7. [Office of Rehabilitation Services](#) Director’s Report – Ron Racine**

Thanked the Council for its feedback and support over the last year. *“This has been one of the most challenging years since I have started working with ORS.”* Ron Racine

\* Waitlist has been a challenge for ORS this year. It has been difficult for our consumers, partners, and the school systems.

Feedback on the adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities on the Waitlist - [Rehabilitation Service Administration](#) (RSA) ruled that ORS cannot give anyone preference.

Because of Order of Selection, people eligible and using Pre-Employment Transition Services, are often not getting that next step towards employment. RSA seemed surprised by this national trend and they may be more flexible moving forward with guidelines of funding.

\* Two Public Hearings related to Order of Selection this past year.

\* Policy Manual was overhauled due to changes in regulations.

\* RSA is coming at the end of June for a site visit. The SRC will be contacted for this visit.

## **8. [State Rehabilitation Council](#) Chair’s Report – Dr. Judith Drew**

\* Conflict of Interest – The Council wanted to get further information regarding this so Nancy will have clarification after meeting with the Governor’s office this summer.

\* Elimination of Training money for Rehabilitation Counselor Training – Rehabilitation Services Administration is exploring the relevancy and the long-term effectiveness of grant money for training of Rehabilitation Counselors. They are exploring downsizing, or getting rid of entirely, the programs the colleges have for training Rehabilitation Counselors. *The RSA wants feedback for the grant training programs by July 3, 2018.*

\* Elimination of Master’s Degree for Rehabilitation Counselors – Under the Workforce Innovations & Opportunity Act, there is a clause that says state agencies do not have to hire people with Master’s Degrees for Rehabilitation Counselors positions. The Council should be concerned about this watering down of requirement for Counselors.

## **9. Committee Reports**

\* Membership Training – Lea Colardo & Maryellen Hagerty

Lea and Maryellen will be in touch with the new candidates. The committee will work to set up a training event in the fall.

\* State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance – Gail Lawson & Joan Fino

Policy Manual changes, advocacy, and insisting that the consumer information remain in the regulations. Keeping the language in there that says what the law actually is, the content, not just to give a link for researching the law. ORS, with the help of this committee, worked successfully to keep the language in the new manual.

**10. Correspondence** – April 13, 2018 letter from ORS, Re: Two-Year Modifications for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Portion of the WIOA Unified or Combined State Plan.

## **11. New Business**

Melissa Brusso is coming onto the SRC. She has a background in disability advocacy and sees a gap with adult GED students who are coming to DORCAS with undiagnosed disabilities.

***Motion** – Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Gail Lawson and unanimously approved to send Melissa Brusso’s appointment to the Governor’s office for confirmation. (Vote – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Rocco Bruno, Peggy Benz, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Dr. Gail Lawson, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, and Christine Yankee)*

**12. Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 10:50 A.M.

*To all the members of the Council and our partners at ORS, thank you for your time, energy, thoughtfulness and hard work and have a great summer.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Nancy Baker*  
 Nancy Baker, RISRC Facilitator