



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 February 4, 2020**  
**Salve Regina University, Warwick**  
**144 Metro Center Blvd, Warwick, RI 02886**  
**4:00 P.M. – 5:45 P.M.**

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC and Program Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program at [Salve Regina University](#)  
Catherine Sansonetti, Vice-Chair SRC, Attorney [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)  
Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC, Co-Coordinator of the [RI Cross Disability Coalition](#)  
Community members/CRP members:  
Christina Battista, representing the [RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#)  
Barbara Fernandez, Legal Advocate for Disability Rights Rhode Island  
Nina Fiasconaro, a Parent Advocate for a child with disabilities  
Anne Fartura, Peer Support Coordinator/Special Education at [RI Parent Information Network](#)  
Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services of [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)  
Nicole Rico Serrano, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)  
Jane Slade, State Transition Coordinator [Department of Education](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services:

Linda Deschenes (Assistant Administrator of Operations), Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation), John Valentine (Strategic Planning Supervisor)

Absent: Christine Botts, Melissa Brusso, Joan Fino and Paul Harden

Guests: Jennifer Doucette, Director of Regional transition, [West Bay Collaborative](#)

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

**2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions** – Tabled minutes for quorum requirements later in meeting.

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

- Meetings will be planned to start working on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.
- Nancy Baker will send out a link to, [Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program](#).
- Dr. Drew will meet with Rona Racine to discuss the Chrisann Schiro-Geist study and the implications of cost and manageability, after the new data system is set at ORS.

**4. The Office of Rehabilitation Services Director's Report** – Ron Racine

- ORS is currently recruiting for the following positions: VR – (3) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II positions, (1) Chief Human Services Business Officer (CFO), (1) Senior Word Processing Typist (support staff) position. SBVI – (1) Orientation and Mobility Specialist. In DDS – (1) Administrator, (4) Rehabilitation Counselors and (1) Senior Word Processing Typist (support position).
- ORS has been tracking the budget, and during the first several months had a surplus of 200k per month, which allowed for additional consumers to be taken off the Waitlist.
- Waitlist - Category 1 is down from roughly 550 to 125 consumers. ORS needs to be certain they can fiscally and programmatically sustain having it open, otherwise the Waitlist will keep opening and closing. Once Category 1 is open, ORS can take consumers off the Waitlist as money is available. If ORS is able to lower the number of consumers in Category 1 to zero and sustain it at that level, they can open up Category 2.
- The Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) – The Monitoring Report is final, and ORS is working on a corrective action plan, which they will share with the SRC once completed.

Note: Ron Racine advised the SRC that he would like to invite Carol Mattson to the annual May Breakfast meeting to receive a service award. Ron Racine will check to see if she is available.

***Motion** Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Christina Battista and unanimously approved to honor Carol Mattson at the May SRC meeting. (Voting Members – Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Barbara Fernandez, Anne Fartura, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee).*

**5. Update on Consumer Satisfaction Monthly Surveys** – John Valentine (Copies of the survey in English and Spanish were provided to the Council via email before the meeting and again as hard copies at the time of the meeting).

- ORS is finishing up a year's worth of the new surveys and will be reaching out to Dr. Drew to coordinate a meeting to revise and update the surveys. This will allow ORS to make any adjustments necessary to help obtain data to better help consumers.
- The response rate has been over 16% for the year as of April. This is an increase in response rate from the previous years.
- There was a trend of fewer responses to each question as consumers went further along in the survey. John Valentine advised this is something ORS wants to improve by; moving some questions to different locations in the survey to increase response rates.

Some questions arose regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and eligibility. Joseph Murphy explained that in RI 14 to 22 year olds are eligible for Pre-ETS. In general, once they leave high school they are no longer eligible. However, an 18 year old student with a disability leaving high school and going on to a recognized certificate program or college would be eligible to age 22. And a youth with a disability designation would be eligible through age 24, but Pre-ETS would still end at 22. Full details about Pre-Employment Transition Services are available [HERE](#).

**6. Vehicle Modifications Presentation** - Ron Racine (Motor Vehicle Modification Services documents were passed out the Council). This is a brief summary of the highlights of the process but does not include all steps.

- Motor Vehicle Modification Services (MVMS), are changes to privately-owned motor vehicles that are provided only when necessary to remove impairment-related transportation barriers for an eligible individual to achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome.
- Evaluation of Need for (MVMS), occurs when the individual with a disability indicates a need for a vehicle modification or driving evaluation to determine ability to drive and prior to the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor initiating any services related to a vehicle modifications.
- The vehicle must be new, and individuals who are planning to purchase a vehicle are to be advised to wait until the required evaluation is completed before making the purchase.
- Evaluation of Modifications determine low tech versus high tech modifications for a vehicle. After completion of structural modifications to automobiles or installation of equipment in vans, the installed equipment belongs to the client.
- Training with Motor Vehicle Modifications. In all cases where motor vehicle modifications are provided by the agency to an individual with a disability, who will also be the driver, the counselor will ensure that proper training is provided concurrently with the provision of motor vehicle modifications. The counselor will select a vendor licensed to provide driver training, who is familiar with the motor vehicle technologies that enables the person with a disability to drive. The only exception to this procedure is when replacement equipment is provided and the person with a disability is a licensed driver already using the provided adaptive driving equipment.

## **7. Approval of Minutes**

***Motion** Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Nina Fiasconaro and unanimously approved to accept the October 8, 2019 minutes. (Voting Members – Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Barbara Fernandez, Anne Fartura, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee).*

***Motion** Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Christine Yankee and unanimously approved to accept the December 3, 2019 minutes. (Voting Members – Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Barbara Fernandez, Anne Fartura, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee).*

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

- Officers Update – Both the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance and the Training Membership committees need Co-chairs. Please consider volunteering for this and let Nancy Baker know if you are interested.
- 30 by 2030 Campaign. Dr. Drew reminded the SRC to continue to let colleagues and constituents know about this campaign, which is to have 30% employment of people with disabilities by 2030. The name has been trademarked and the website is under development. Groups and people who are part of the coalition include, the National Council of Rehabilitation Educators, the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association, and Stephen A Wooderson the CEO of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). As of April there are 9 national organizations on the coalition who represent people with disabilities.
- Updates on a research project being conducted by Chrisann Schiro-Geist from the University of Memphis was provided. After clarifying with Ms. Schiro-Geist that RI only has Rehabilitation Counselors with Masters Degrees, she still would like RI to participate in the study and would collect the relationship between Master's Degrees and outcomes for clients. It would not cost RI anything to participate, but would require time for collaboration with the grant to install the software on the part of the state IT staff. The software needed for the study is being provided for free.
- This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, the first federally-funded program to assist people with disabilities who had not acquired their disabilities due to serving in the military.

In June 1920, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Fess Act of 1920, (known as the Industrial Rehabilitation Act) and referred to is as, The National Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act. "The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) plays a key leadership role through its resources and technical assistance to state vocational rehabilitation programs and others and delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of the Assistant Secretary for Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS). Those 100 years of experience bring a responsibility of leadership on issues that impact the ability of individuals with disabilities to be employed and live independently." said Mark Schultz, RSA Commissioner.

- 1) The RSA will celebrate 100 Years of VR throughout 2020. Click [this page](#) for more information about the anniversary celebration.
  - 2) The Rehabilitation Services Administration invites you to celebrate 100 Years of Vocational Rehabilitation by clicking on this link [historical perspective of the VR program](#).
- Member Recruitment – Follow-ups from the December meeting. The SRC is seeking more representation in the following categories: employers who have hired people with disabilities, underserved populations, veteran's community, developmental disabilities, adult education and higher education, people with disabilities, a member of the Governor's Workforce Board and someone from the Department of Labor and Training.
    - 1) Dr. Drew is still trying to touch base with Scott Greco, for required representative from the Department of labor and Training. Dr. Drew will also contact Leslie Milner, Employment and Training Principal at DLT.
    - 2) Ron Racine had not heard back from an Intern at DHS that had expressed interest. He will reach out again.
    - 3) Jane Slade did reach out to Jennifer Doucette, the Director of Regional transition, who is in attendance, and to Allison Hitte Robinson who is the Program Coordinator Office of Disability Services at CCRI Knight Campus. She wishes to be on the Council but was unable to attend this meeting.
    - 4) Melissa Brusso will reach out to Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island. (She was not present at this meeting).
    - 5) Natalia Montoya will speak with Jane Coatis, the workforce and development person at Amos House.
    - 6) Christine Yankee will contact Bernice Morris the Director of Education & Employment Services at Crossroads. Ms. Morris also sits on the Providence Workforce Board. Christine Yankee also reached out to representatives of the hospitality business but has not heard back.
    - 7) Jack Ringland did speak to Oliva Williams, who is getting settled in her Master's Program here in RI, but has not heard back.

We will follow up on this at the May Breakfast meeting. Nancy Baker will send out materials for people to share with possible new members. Anyone interested should be invited to the first fall meeting. (Date to be set at May Breakfast).

**7. Public Comment – There was none.**

**8. Correspondence – There were none.**

**19. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

**Motion** – *Jane Slade made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland, and unanimously approved, to adjourn the February 4, 2020 meeting. (Voting Members – Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Barbara Fernandez, Anne Fartura, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade and Christine Yankee)*

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