

**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
State Rehabilitation Council**

**March 14, 2006
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

**RI Department of Labor and Training
Center General Complex 73 (Main Conference Room)
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920**

Meeting Minutes

Present from State Rehabilitation Council: Janice Belasco, Raymond Carroll, Edward Costa, Domenic Di Orio, Susan Donovan, Linda Deschenes, Joseph Ferreira, Jeanne Giroux, Margaret Hoye, Lucille Massemينو, Rev. Robert A. Shaldone, J. David Sienko,

Present from Agency: Stephen Brunero

Guests: Rocco Bruno, Michael Hazard, Anne LeClerc, Gary J. Levine

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS - The Chair called meeting to order at 4:05 P.M.

2. OLD BUSINESS – J. David Sienko

1. Additions or deletions to the Agenda - none
2. Approval of minutes

Motion

L. Deschenes made a motion seconded by D. Di Orio and unanimously accepted to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2006 meeting.

3. SRC Annual Meeting Schedule - the Chair reviewed the finalized schedule explaining how each meeting would have a focus and also would feature one of the subcommittees. The Council had already approved this schedule and it will begin in September 2006.

4. Letter to Secretary Spellings – in November 2005 the Council debated this letter and came to common ground as to what message it wanted the letter to emphasize. It was agreed the letter would be firm, stating our position clearly, but also respectful. J. Drew did an outstanding job reworking B. Anderson's originally letter.

Motion

D. Di Orio made a motion seconded by J. Ferreira and unanimously accepted to send the letter to Secretary Spellings, the Governor, and the Congressional Delegation for Rhode Island.

5. SRC Annual Report – is in the final stages and will be sent to the membership once it is completed.

3. NEW BUSINESS – J. David Sienko

1. Mission Statement – in January the Nomination and Leadership committee recommended reading the Mission statement at each meeting to help keep the focus of the Council. At the February Executive meeting the Leadership team proposed to bring an alternative idea before the Council that might better address this need.

It was proposed that the Mission statement replace the former statement on the SRC letterhead and at the time of new candidate interviews, the Nomination and Leadership committee will read a prepared statement outlining the mission and goals of the SRC.

The Council agreed to make these changes.

2. Time Limitations - Imposing time limits on individuals was based on past events but it is felt that imposing general limits on the discussion will be sufficient. In the future, if there is a need to implement more rigorous limits, then it will be readdressed.
3. State Plan – the Public Hearing was held this morning. Members attending from the SRC; S. Donovan, L. Deschenes, M. Hoye, L. Massemينو, and J. David Sienko. The theme was encouraging and forward focused. The Strategic Plan was brief and to the point; very helpful.

4. ORS DIRECTOR'S REPORT – R. Carroll

The State Plan Hearing: ORS has tried to engage the public in many different ways to get them to weigh in on our Plan. There have been times when we have small attendance at the hearing and others when we have overflow. I don't think it is a disinterest in our Program rather; it is that over time we have had a multi-faceted approach that better reaches out to the community and informs them of the Program. This and other changes in communication have helped ORS better our services.

This Hearing was productive, allowing ORS to speak about our Program. We are off to a good start and look forward to working with the committee (State and Policy) to tweak the Plan.

Budget: Has not reduced, in fact ORS has received increases. Other programs in Human Services have sustained large budget cuts. The proposed State Budget for 2007 has a shortfall of around three hundred (300) million dollars, fifty (50) million of it in our Human Services Department. The programs are growing faster than the cost of living increases. Human Service tends to be at the end of the chain for resources. We have a model that works and if we could just get more funding we could put so many more people to work.

Personnel: There are several people on Family Leave. The regional managers and other staff are filling in until they return. G. Wier and S. Shapiro have retired, their positions have not been filled. One of the positions we are filling is a Social Caseworker II, to work in early intervention, providing services to students who are visually impaired in high schools. We have been able to hire someone to dedicate to that one specific factor.

SRC Annual Report and ORS Program Report: Are in the final stages and should go out soon.

Workforce Investment Act: Will not be reauthorized this year. Therefore ORS is doing a one (1) year reauthorization.

RSA: Has sent ORS the results from last year's review. ORS is required to do an Action Plan. However, overall the results were good. The RSA will be coming June 5, 2006-June 9, 2005. The ORS liaison teams have been put together.

One year ago it was announced that the Government would be closing the regional offices for the RSA and laying off numerous employees, of which many had disabilities. There was a wave of letter writing, which was unsuccessful in stopping the closures. But Jack Reed and Committee have put wording into the Reauthorization Act to assure that Secretary Spellings is working with a staff to adequately be able to run oversight on the Human Service Program. However the downsizing and shrinkage of funding is something that is of major concern. To address this, the Council of State Administrators, a national group, are trying to redesign the Program so that it meets the expectations of our customers and comes on line with the 21st century, analyzing the needs, and satisfying Congress with an end result of upgrading the Program.

Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning - S. Brunero

The Needs Assessments was handed out to members and guests. This report is actually a combination of six (6) reports. ORS surveyed their partners, community rehabilitation providers, and counselors, and the response was very good with more than half those surveyed responding. One of the telling questions was number three (3); what services do people with disabilities need most to reach employment goals? And the next question focused on the availability of those services. Transportation proved to be a critical issue.

Several strategic planning sessions came from this assessment. The idea to have these sessions was suggested by the SRC. One session was with members from the SRC and the other was for ORS staff. At the sessions eight different target areas were addressed and the following were the highest needs.

1. Transportation was number one.
2. Training grant process for individuals who go to post-secondary education.
3. Reducing paperwork. The reduction of paperwork really means timeliness. ORS needs to improve presumptive-eligibility. We are at about eighty five percent (85%) compliance but need to be at ninety percent (90%).
4. Marketing and Public Relations. The SRC being a critical part of this. We would like to bring the energy together to develop some symmetry.

Now that we have measurable targets over time, the Chair encouraged members to look at these two reports, the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, so that when September comes around we will be ready to take an active roll.

The question for the SRC is how do we more strategically align our work with ORS's Plan?

S. Brunero also asked the Council for assistance to develop several new policies.

D. Di Orio: Suggested that delegates from the Council should also meet with the ORS internal teams to go over key topics on the Strategic Plan.

S. Brunero: Suggested that ORS representative sit in on some Committee meetings to enhance communication of needs.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports were disseminated to the Council from the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council.

Nomination and Leadership – presented for Council approval two new applicants, Rocco Bruno and Gary J. Levine.

Motion

J. Belasco made a motion seconded by M. Hoye and unanimously approved to submit both candidates to the Governor for his approval of appointment to the SRC.

The Chair thanked the Nomination committee for its significant contribution and hard work over the past year.

Employment – D. Di Orio will be the new Chair for this committee. The committee is beginning the planning for the Employer Honor Roll 10th Annual Breakfast to be held in October. All members are invited to this special event.

Policy and State Plan – will be meeting to review the State Plan.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

7. ADJOURNMENT – The Chair thanked everyone for participating. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nancy L. Baker, Staff
State Rehabilitation Council