



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 March 7, 2017
New England Institute of Technology Warwick, RI
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

Present: Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Kathleen Grygiel (ORS), Gail Lawson PhD, Diana Marcotte (ORS), Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Ronald Racine (ORS), Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove

Absent: Cynthia Cote, Jack Ringland, Maryellen T. Hagerty and Diana Kriner

Guests: Christine Yankee (Pending appointment)

1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, SRC - Dr. Gail Lawson

Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions -None

Acceptance of Minutes from November 15, 2016

Motion

Lori Norris made a motion seconded by Rocco Bruno and unanimously approved to accept the November 15, 2016 Minutes. (Vote Approved - Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

2. State Rehabilitation Council Chair's Report – Gail Lawson

* Appointment Letter Verifications - Have been returned to the Secretary of State's office. At this time Christine Yankee's appointment letter is pending the Governor's approval.

* Membership – Council has lost two individuals who have not been able to attend meetings. As per the By-laws, they will be removed from the Council. Nancy Baker will reach out to them and the Governor's Office regarding these removals. The Council is actively seeking a representative from the RI Independent Living Council, the Governor's Workforce Board and the business, industry and labor community.

* Language in By-laws Related to Liability – Council did not have liability insurance. ORS has gotten guidance from legal. The language has been sent to Nancy Baker and will be given to the ad-hoc By-laws Committee once formed.

* May Breakfast Planning – Council input for locations and ideas for this coming year. Membership liked the facility from last year and would like to hold May meeting at the same location.

* Guest Speaker for Upcoming Meetings – Council discussed transportation, Rhode Island Business Leadership Network, (David Goldman), consumer services, consumers or agencies, topics specific to barriers identified by CNA. Members will make suggestion to Chair.

* SRC Award – Please let Jack Ringland know if you have anyone in mind.

3. Sub-committee Reports

* Membership Training – Lea Colardo

There are two meetings planned for training, one on April 20th and the other May 25th. Both meetings at the Sherlock Center. The April meeting may have to be rescheduled. The actual training meeting for the entire Council will be in the fall. The RSA still has not gotten updated materials for the SRC training on their website.

* State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance – Catherine Sansonetti,

This Committee needs a Co-chair. The Committee cannot continue to function without a Co-chair. Members are urged to speak with Catherine Sansonetti regarding this.

Committee reviewed four policies from ORS. Supported Employment was previously reviewed and commented on in May 2016; ORS then sent an update in November 2016 and the Committee commented on that. On February 3, 2017 the Committee met to review the following policies; 115.2 Eligibility/ Ineligibility/ Trial Work Periods, 115.23 Motor Vehicle Modification, and 115.26 Adaptive Housing. Comments submitted to ORS on February 21, 2017. Waiting for response from ORS.

Committee requests a longer turnaround time for policy reviews. Forty-five days would be helpful instead of thirty. ORS did not think it would be a problem to have a longer turnaround time; forty-five days or sixty if needed. The Committee is trying to get more meaningful remarks and active participation from its members. There is a process of review where the Committee goes back to see comments from previous revisions on the policies and also seeks outside input as well as gets as many comments as possible from the Council. More time would be helpful for this review process to enable the Committee to thoroughly respond to policies.

State Plan and Periodic Review of the Goals and Objectives – Gail Lawson and Catherine Sansonetti had spoken about this at a meeting and wanted to bring it up to the membership and ORS for discussion. The Policy Committee comments on goals and objectives in the State Plan but rarely takes the time to talk in detail about the different goals and objective updates with ORS. It may make sense for the Council to add a new agenda item for the meetings to spend time reviewing the State Plan goals and objectives.

Catherine Sansonetti felt it might be beneficial to have a separate, initial meeting with ORS to set the tone before bringing this to the Full Council for periodic updates.

Ron Racine agreed it is a good idea, generally, to revisit the State Plan to see where things stand but was concerned about time for additional committees and meetings outside of the regular Council meetings. Also ORS is still waiting for feedback and the parameters on the State Plan from the [Rehabilitation Service Administration](#) (RSA), which is in flux as to what direction the State Plan will take moving forward. Philosophically ORS needs to provide the information, but it is a matter of how much time ORS has to allocate to it and what the parameters are.

Willa Truelove commented that the goals and objectives are constantly adapted as the needs change, and moving forward we should be able to communicate about this. Time is a factor, but there is no point in the Council rubberstamping our approval. The Council needs to elaborate on our thoughts and be better updated by ORS. The Council asking for more information on one specific area on the goals and objectives, as needed, seems reasonable.

Catherine Sansonetti offered that picking one issue at a time might work best. As an example; Business Development; ORS' interfacing with employers and developing more expertise with that aspect, could be a better way to go. The Council could work with ORS relating to concerns like, how is ORS doing with that goal? Or, are the objectives being met? Are they flopping or needing help? Cooperatively the Council and ORS picks a topic and works on it. That is why an initial meeting might be good. ORS can tell us what they need help with.

Ron Racine liked the idea of breaking it up to individual objectives, so it is not overwhelming.

Council could revisit this after the CNA is finished.

4. [Office of Rehabilitation Services](#) (ORS) Director's Report – Ronald Racine

* Personnel – Two vacancies out of one hundred and forty.

* [Transition Institute Conference at Rhode Island Collage](#) – ORS has done a lot of work in setting this up over the past few years. The fifth annual RI Transition Institute Conference will included various content sessions with national, regional and local experts providing an array of topics to assist in developing district transition plans. The goal of the transition plans is to provide better opportunity for the future of youth with disabilities.

* Department of Justice (DoJ) - Friday March 10th is the DoJ court date; the thought is that ORS is in good shape right now with its compliance. It is a relative calm period between the State agencies and the DoJ. They have specific court mandates and, for now, the State agencies are reacting to these mandates versus looking at the entire scope of the decree.

* [National Conference in DC](#) – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will be the main focus.

* [State Plan](#) - RSA does not know what the State Plan will look like in future years.

* ORS has established an employment cadre made up of Rehabilitation Counselors who want to directly engage with employers. Expectations for this cadre are for the Counselors to be ambassadors for their region, working more directly with employers.

* Ron Racine has been going to different regions and looking at the field-level goings-on of the VR Program in RI. Finding many Rehabilitation Counselors reporting that adults have been left a bit behind. ORS is trying to outreach to more adult people with physical disabilities.

Question for ORS - Judi Drew referenced the Needs Assessment numbers for services for deaf and visually impaired having declined. Wondering if that is part of what ORS referenced with decline in adults being served. Could the Council get more data around the percentage of people in RI, who have problems with vision and hearing that would be employable? And what percent of that population ORS is serving?

ORS Response: Referrals have been down for visually impaired, partly because there have been less incidence of blindness in younger populations due to the treatments available. However, in RI we have the biggest numbers in the country for macular degeneration, but those people are typically not working age. ORS strategically looks at schools and transition in our children's unit, for feeders for services. There have been less referrals for visually impaired and we are not sure if we can increase referrals significantly. One of the two vacancies we have is in Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired we would like to fill it, but may not be able to if the need is not there when we have such a greater need for Counselors in the general population.

5. New Business – Gail Lawson

Need to open ad hoc committee for By-laws revisions. Judi Drew will Chair, anyone interested in working on this committee contact Judi Drew or Nancy Baker.

Motion

Dan Pieroni made a motion seconded by Elizabeth Graves and unanimously approved to form the ad-hoc By-laws committee to review and make needed changes. (Vote Approved - Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

6. Correspondence – [Letter to Rhode Island Independent Living Council](#) (SILC) seeking one of their members to sit on the SRC, and offering to work on getting one of the SRC members to sit on the SILC.

7. Public Comment - Willa Truelove asked if ORS could put together some packages to be given to the 211 Van. She will give information to Nancy Baker.

9. Adjournment – Council adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Motion

Vincent Rossi made a motion seconded by Joan Fino and unanimously approved to adjourn (Vote Approved - Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Elizabeth Graves, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker

Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator
RI State Rehabilitation Council