



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.

Full Council Minutes March 8, 2016

4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

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

Present: Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Linda Deschenes, Laurie DiOrio, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Kathleen Grygiel, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Diana Marcotte, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Ronald Racine, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, John Valentine and Alexandria Birmingham

Absent: Peggy Benz, Christine Botts, Lea Colardo, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Liz Graves, Barbara Henry, Diana Kriner, Lori Norris, Marilyn Walaska and Mr. Kim Wennermark

1. Call to Order: Dr. Lawson called the meeting to order at 4 P.M. Quorum met.
2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda: None.
3. Approval of Minutes

Motion

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Catherine Sansonetti and unanimously approved to accept the January 19, 2016 minutes. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

4. SRC Chair's Report - Dr. Lawson

Discussion on the drafted membership award letter. Changes made after recommendations from K. Wennermark. With no further discussion, a motion was made.

Motion

Catherine Sansonetti made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland and unanimously approved to establish the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council Outstanding Service Award each year, but does not have to be every year, and to have ad hoc committee select possible candidates for the award. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, and Willa Truelove)

5. ORS Report - Ron Racine

ORS Success Story - Alex and Ani in partnership with Community Enterprises and ORS have hired several ORS clients, and want to hire more. Clients are working in all aspects of Alex and Ani warehouse division. In addition for the potential of more hires, the program is moving into a national level of hiring. ORS is vigilant about monitoring new hiring programs and is making sure these positions are not an enclaved environment.

Department of Justice (DoJ) - The Department of Justice lawyer, Victoria Thomas, and a Court monitor, Charles Moseley were in Rhode Island and noted some early progress in the implementation of the consent decree but said the State had failed to meet the interim steps necessary to achieve the long-range goal in a decade's time. In response to this ORS is ramping up efforts to show compliance with the judicial order. It requires a lot of documentation and extensive staff time; it is labor intensive for ORS. ORS has enough people working in Service Delivery, having created more positions to work with that population. It is proving more difficult with student populations because ORS Counselors are embedded throughout the different school systems, making it harder to compile the numbers.

Auditors - Are looking at ORS programs, looking closely at pre-employment transition services. In the past ORS counted clients as pre-employment transition until they were 24 years old but since implementing WIOA changes, ORS can only count them up to 21

years of age. Fifteen percent of the allotted VR funds must go into pre-employment transition services and the funds cannot be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.

[For More information on Rhode Island Federal Judge Holds First Hearing on Olmstead Consent Decree:](#)

Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) - Linda Deschenes & John Valentine

Additional Documentation: CNA Statement of purpose, WIOA Regulations regarding CNA, Draft Timeline form

The data from the CNA helps ORS develop the goals and objectives for the Agency; look at resources vendors need; it guides strategic planning for delivery of service to clients; is used for staff training; and it can show gaps in ORS processes.

The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted by the designated State unit and the State Rehabilitation Council every three years. There are five assessments areas.

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this part;
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system as identified by those individuals and personnel assisting those individuals through the components of the system;
- Youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including, **(NEW)**
 - Their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services; and
 - An assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services and pre-employment transition service, and the extent to which such services provided under this part are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) in order to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; and
- An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

ORS is looking for SRC members who want to work with in an ad hoc committee on this CNA. There will be several meetings and subgroups to work on each community that is decided for surveys or focus groups. The SRC members can help in all stages of development, delivery and deciphering the results.

Several of the past CNA surveys as well as the RI Comprehensive System Improvement Plan (CSIP) Jan 2016, and any materials added as the ad hoc committee moves forward, are available for the members on the SRC Google Drive.

J. Valentine has been looking at the Governor's Comprehensive System Improvement Plan, Workforce Board, Veteran's studies, the Department of Labor and Training numbers, and collecting data on partnerships between government agencies, trends and directions of the RI workforce, barriers to an effective workforce network, accessibility to job-seeking, and wrap-around services related to the CNA categories.

One recurring topic in the CSIP, in the education system, was a need for people to have better skill-sets to seek employment for the jobs coming into the State in the next five to ten years. There is a concern that many RI/ORS students do not have the soft skills to communicate and use technology as well as face to face interviewing. There needs to be a focus on increased technology education according to the CSIP. Looking at the Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE) five-year strategic plan put out in 2015, it also identify this focus on the need for increased technology education. The RIDE plan also highlights the need to increase student retention rates and lower dropout rates by increasing the retention of quality educators with a goal of keeping educators on for a minimum of three years. All of this data plus more from other states will be utilized in formulating our CNA.

6. Transportation Initiative- Dr. Judith Drew

RIPTA has a [new initiative](#) with providers through Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, Department of (BHDDH). It is quasi-modeled after the [Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority](#). Dr. Drew will be meeting with RIPTA next week to learn more about how the initiative will work and how it was developed.

Dr. Drew will ask the Director of the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority to speak at the SRC May breakfast once the Executive Leadership meet on the topic.

7. Subcommittee Reports

Training Committee – Maryellen Hagerty

The committee has not nailed down an exact date for the training meeting but looking at late August as a possible time. At the next committee meeting, plans are to review YouTube videos specific to Rhode Islander's and disabilities; review membership binder, and VR materials. The committee wants someone from ORS to work with them in training SRC members about the role of ORS. For the training meeting the plans are to break up the session into several parts; training videos, history of the VR program, role of the SRC, role of the VR agency, and combined partnership and WIOA training. With each committee meeting, there is a clearer agenda forming for the training meeting.

Motion

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Jeffrey Machado and unanimously approved to accept the Membership Training committee report. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee - Catherine Sansonetti

ORS State Plan

The Chair of the SRC and the Chair of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee received a written response from ORS on February 22, 2016 in response to the SRC's comments regarding the State Plan. This document was placed in the Google Drive on February 24, 2016 so that the entire membership could review it at their discretion. If anyone has any problems accessing the document, please contact Nancy Baker for assistance.

As the membership is aware, the SRC provided input to the State Plan via meetings with ORS, by writing two letters dated January 19, 2016 and February 4, 2016, and by providing testimony at the public hearing on February 4, 2016. In our letters, the Council expressed some disappointment that ORS had not addressed all of our comments.

In the February 22, 2016 response from ORS, the Agency noted that it did not intend to ignore some of the concerns from the membership regarding the State Plan but that there was simply a misunderstanding as to the actual content being submitted as the 4.2(c) attachment. The SRC State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee does not disagree that the short time line in which to respond to the State Plan attachments, along with the changes that have come from WIOA, may have contributed to some confusion. To clarify for the future, any and all input from the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee that is provided in the form of formal written correspondence signed by the Chair or his/her designee as well as testimony at public hearings should be considered as input given to fulfil the 4.2(c) attachment of the State Plan. The State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee will duly note the confusion of the Agency as to our input and in the future will incorporate by reference prior formal correspondence in its final comments.

Despite the misunderstandings, ORS reassured the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee and the Council that all input provided by the SRC is debated and considered by ORS, regardless of the Agency's decision to implement our suggestions. One area of concern that the SRC has commented on a number of times in policy matters and in this year's State Plan is the Agency's removal of client rights and dispute resolution information from its policies. The SRC has consistently stated that it strongly disfavors the removal of client rights information from conspicuous places in policy documents. In its February 22, 2016 letter, ORS stated that the Agency previously responded to this issue (by disagreeing with our position) and so would not continue to repeat its position. While ORS may choose to not repeat its position, we feel strongly that ORS be transparent in advising clients of their rights by including this information in its policies, and the SRC will continue to advocate that ORS reconsider its position.

ORS did incorporate many of our suggestions and invited the SRC to further discussion on a number of topics including the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Business Engagement, and Marketing. The SRC looks forward to continued work with ORS in these and other areas.

Order of Selection and Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Policies

The SRC provided written comments to ORS on these two policies on January 29, 2016 within the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) comment period. The SRC appreciates the timely response of ORS, which was received on February 3, 2016. The SRC again reiterates that the ORS decision to remove client rights information from policy documents is not going to be helpful to clients as ORS contends. We will continue to advocate for client rights information to be transparent and placed conspicuously within ORS policy and other documents provided to or otherwise available to clients in their dealings with ORS.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The SRC State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee is seeking volunteers to work on the CNA. If you are interested in working on this project, please send an email to Nancy Baker who will forward it to me.

Motion

Dr. Judith Drew made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland and unanimously approved to accept the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee report. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

8. New Business

ORS would like to use the SRC May breakfast to recognize Alex and Ani, ORS employees, and Community Enterprises, which partnered in an employment program at Alex and Ani for ORS clients. This will help the SRC and ORS do a better job engaging employers; if each year are partnership honors an employer who has done outstanding work with ORS clients or in the underserved populations of Rhode Island. It is good PR for both the Agency and the SRC.

Motion

Catherine Sansonetti made a motion seconded by Joan Fino and unanimously approved to have ORS invite the Alex and Ani team to the May breakfast to honor their work with ORS clients. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

9. Correspondence – Dr. Gail Lawson

There were three correspondences.

Jack Ringland – Regarding notice of public hearing on the State Plan. It was discussed at Executive meeting and resolved. Posted on SRC Google Drive.

Willa Truelove – Regarding concerns with State Plan process. Resolved through communication with C. Sansonetti.

ORS Letter to Council's letter - ORS will work with the SRC to resolve any concerns and streamline process moving forward. Posted on Google Drive.

10. Public comment – None

11. Adjournment

Motion

Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Jeff Machado and unanimously approved to adjourn the March 8, 2016 SRC meeting. (Vote – approved – Christina Battista, Rocco Bruno, Cynthia Cote, Dr. Judith Drew, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Paul C. Harden, Gail Lawson PhD, Jeffrey Machado, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade and Willa Truelove)

Respectfully Submitted,



Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator
RI SRC