



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 7, 2019
New England Institute of Technology Hall of Fame Room

8:00 A.M. – 10:30 AM.

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC, Program Director, Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Programs at ([Salve Regina University](#))

Catherine Sansonetti, Vice-Chair SRC, Attorney at [RI Disability Law Center](#)

Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC, Co-Coordinator of [Cross Disabilities Coalition](#), and Commissioner on [Governor's Commission of Disabilities](#)

Community members/CRP members:

Christina Battista - [RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#)

Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate - [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)

Nina Fiasconaro, - Parent Advocate for a child with disabilities

Natalia Montoya (ORS, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor)

Vincent Rossi, Statewide Coordinator Employment & Training Programs - [Department of Labor and Training](#)

Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services - [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services:

Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Linda Deschenes (Assistant Administrator of Operations), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation), John Valentine (Strategic Planning Supervisor), Sharon DiPinto (Sr. Human Services Policy & Systems Specialist)

Guests: Peggy Benz, Faculty Senate Coordinator - [University of Rhode Island](#), Rosa Cruz, Maryellen Hagerty, Educational Advocate - [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#), Morna Murray, Executive Director - [the Rhode Island Disability Law Center](#) and Justin Oakley, owner - [Oakley Home Access](#)

Absent: Christine Botts, Lea Colardo, Anne Fartura, Joan Fino, Gail Lawson, Sergio Lopez-Ruiz, Nicole Rico Serrano and Jane Slade

1. Meeting Called to Order as a quorum was present.
2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – There were no additions or changes.
3. Approval of Minutes from March 5, 2019

Motion – *Christine Yankee made a motion seconded by Catherine Sansonetti and unanimously approved, to accept the March 5, 2019 Minutes. (Voting Members, Christina Battista, Melissa Brusso, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Natalia Montoya, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Vincent Rossi and Christine Yankee)*

4. Introductions of Guests, ORS, and SRC - All members and guest gave brief introductions. Some extra time was given to the new Executive Director of the Rhode Island Disability Law Center (RIDLC), Morna Murray. Ms. Murray briefly discussed her coming to RIDLC and her plans for the Center. RIDLC will be focusing more on large groups of people with disabilities and representation of these groups in the State. Ms. Murray emphasized and recommitted to the importance of the RIDLC/ SRC partnership.

5. Council Appreciation Awards – Jack Ringland

The following members received awards for service to all Rhode Islanders and their unwavering commitment to the Mission of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Rocco Bruno 2008 – 2018

Co-chaired the Nomination and Leadership Development Committee

Co-chair the ad-hoc Communication Committee with the National Coalition of Rehabilitation Councils

Served on the Membership Training Committee

Cynthia M. Cote 2008 – 2018

Co-chaired the Nomination and Leadership Development Committee

Served on Membership Training Committee

Margaret “Peggy” Benz 2013 –2018

Served as Vice-chair to the SRC Council

Served on State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee

Served on Transportation Committee

Maryellen T. Hagerty 2012 –2018

Co-chaired the Membership Training Committee

Served on the Transition Committee

Served on State Plan, Policy and Quality assurance Committee

6. Office of Rehabilitation Services Director’s Report – Ronald Racine

- a) The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) spring conference promoted the [‘Vision 2020 Four Principles’](#) that are driven by a commitment to people with disabilities and businesses at the intersection of ability and the demand for talent.
 - Principle 1: *Innovating Solutions* to achieve greater access to and use of vocational rehabilitation services. The goal is to achieve the most effective outcomes for our customers.
 - Principle 2: *Building careers and retaining talent in America’s workforce* by investing expertise and resources to benefit our customers.
 - Principle 3: *Customizing Services and Expertise* that provide flexible supports and services. Accomplish this through specialized strategies to meet the workforce goals of customers.
 - Principle 4: *Leading and Engaging in Collaborative Strategies* with our partners who are working with us to achieve greater collective impact at all system levels (national, state, and local).
- b) Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) Power Point; Review of National Trends in the VR Program Post Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Program Data

- Number of Applications for VR dropped 30% from 2010 – 2018 but especially in the last two years.
- Eligibility for VR dropped 33% from 2010 – 2018 but especially in the last two years.
- Those people who are eligible and have received services has also dropped 9% over the last 4 years, especially in 2018.

Employment Outcomes

- Employment rate for people with a disability dropped from 56.9% in early 2016 to 48.3% at end of 2018.
- Individual outcomes of people exiting without employment increased by 35% from 2016 to 2018.

Order of Selection

- Increase in Order of Selection (OOS). More states also increased one or more categories closed. And there was an increase in states with all categories closed.

Fiscal Data

- Federal Allocations have increased from 2010 – 2019 by 200 million.
- Re-allotment relinquished funds have dropped 31% from 2011 – 2018. More request for these funds but less funds available.
- VR nonfederal VR funds has increased 7% from 2010 – 2017.

Reasons for national trends (This is not a comprehensive list)

- Pre-Employment Services are often being accessed by people who have not applied for VR. 15% of VR funds go to these services.
- Increases in Order of Selection.
- Funds relinquished in Re-allotment. Essentially until 2010 all states got what they requested in re-allotment funds, but since then the requests far exceed the availability of the funds.
- VR Funds Unexpended at Closeout: 281 million in allotted grant award funding was not expended for direct VR purposes from 2010 – 2018.

7. SRC Chair's Report – Dr. Judith Drew

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey recently went to clients for feedback. At the fall SRC meeting, ORS will present an update on the collected data.

- a) Professionals providing services and job training to clients with mental health or developmental disabilities in Rhode Island have a high work turnover rate of 40%, with an average duration of work retention of only two years. Compounding this difficulty; the wages are low. Because of these factors, mental health centers have experienced a drop off in the number of people working for them, and have reduced the educational qualifications for new hires.

Question: How do we encourage/increase long-term job retention of these employees?

Ideas: Utilize an accreditation program implementing licensed people into clinical rehabilitation instead of hiring applicants with only human services UG backgrounds. Additionally, human service degree curriculums should open up students to this type of consulting program.

8. Sub-committee Reports

Training - Melissa Brusso

- The committee is finalizing all materials for the training event on June 18, 2019.

State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance - Catherine Sansonetti

- While the committee's state workload is lighter, it will focus efforts on some of the national trends. The committee would like to engage more in-depth work on the presented Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Power Point data. Additionally, when the RSA monitoring visit report is ready, there will be areas the committee can collaborate on with ORS to further better outcomes.

9. Public Comment

Justin Oakley, co - owners of Oakley Home Access, LLC.

The Council invited Mr. Oakley to speak about his company. Oakley Home Access has a home safety team of experts that include a registered and licensed Occupational Therapist. Their team of Rhode Island contractors work to achieve fall-prevention, increased accessibility, and aging-in-place models. The company's main goal is modifying homes to allow people to remain in them in safety and comfort (aging in place).

Mr. Oakley and his business partner, Michael Vieira, received the 2019 Small Business Persons of the Year in April for their demonstrated success and potential for future growth.

Website: [Oakley Home Access, LLC](http://OakleyHomeAccess.LLC)

10. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 A.M.

Motion – *Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Melissa Brusso and unanimously approved, to adjourn the Meeting. (Voting Members, Christina Battista, Melissa Brusso, Dr. Judith Drew, Nina Fiasconaro, Natalia Montoya, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Vincent Rossi and Christine Yankee)*

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Baker

Nancy Baker, RISRC Facilitator