



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

To work with ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

Full Council Minutes October 18, 2011

4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

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

Present from Council: Rocco Bruno, Stephen Brunero, Wheeler Clemmons, Kelley Conti, Cynthia M. Cote, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Dr. Judith Drew, Jeanne Giroux, Anne LeClerc, Sandy Lupovitz, Jeffrey D. Machado, Aracelis Maria, Lucille Massimino, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Juan Troncoso, Herbert Weiss, Nancy Baker, Laurie DiOrio, Liz graves

Guests: Bryant Lemus Berganza, Christine Botts, Danielle A. Williams

Call to Order - Judi Drew, the Vice Chair, called the meeting to order. Quorum met.

Additions/Deletions to Agenda - There were none.

Approval of Minutes - May 17, 2011 Motion, Jeff Machado seconded by Herb Weiss and unanimously approved.

1. **Chair's Report** – Dr. Judith Drew reports:

- Members leaving the Council will be honored at our annual May breakfast. We will elect a Vice-chair at the next meeting.
- At the executive meeting we discussed the State Plan and how it relates to the subcommittee's work. During breakout we will look at the focus of the committees and see how we can fine-tune them to work with the Plan, and then report back at the next meeting with new ideas.
- Mary Wambach has left for Corpus Christi and we want to recognize her work on this Council and dedication to consumers in Rhode Island especially those with hearing impairments. The executive committee will recognize her hard work; we'll follow through and let you all know.
- The Governors Committee for Disabilities, The State Independent Living Council and other commissions have sent a letter to the Governor asking him to reestablish funding for assistive living programs. We encourage you to write and call your representatives in support for this critical funding. It is 300 thousand dollars that serves approximately 50 people. Without this money many of these people will end up in nursing homes and actually increase the costs to the State.

2. **Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) Administrator's Report** – Stephen Brunero reports:

- **Welcome** - Recognized the new candidates and welcomed them to the Council. Also thanked those who were leaving for working so diligently over the years supporting people with disabilities and the work that ORS does. He invited them to attend the annual May breakfast meeting.
 - **Personnel** - We have lost 13 people and have not filled any vacancies. Many departments are facing cutbacks, losing funding for services as the need keeps growing within the difficult economy. Federal freeze on hiring is in effect. SSA is not able to fill positions in Disability Determination even though the Governor approved them.
 - **Budget** - We have received an increase in funding this year due to the fact that other states were unable to make their state match thus forfeiting their funding and allowing the RSA to distribute it to states that are able to make the extra match. The additional funding cannot be used for personnel however it will provide services in areas where there currently are gaps. We are trying to be creative in working with our sister agencies to provide services in new and innovative ways.
 - RIWORKS (Rhode Island Works Program) - ORS has received so many new applicants from this program. DHS is hard pressed to handle the volume particularly those applicants with disabilities. I think we can help DHS out with Innovation and Expansion Activities and programs like work participation. We may not be able to get State employee positions to do this but there are other contractors and nonprofits that have the expertise to help folks on RIWORKS.
 - Department of Education/ Central Falls Transition Program, ORS might be able to help with school to work activities using our staff expertise and outside providers.
 - Asperger's Syndrome - The Groden Center is closing its doors for Asperger's Social Skills group due to a lack of funding, ORS can provide assistance for a focus group and also a resource guide for families and people with Asperger's Syndrome.
- ORS's funding comes primarily from the United States Department of Education. Congress and the Senate are working on a continuing resolution to keep the funding but it is likely there will be significant reductions across the Human Services Programs. We need to be prepared for this and the SRC needs to strike while the iron is hot, advocating for continued funding in the future.
- **Standards and Performance Indicators** - Last year ORS had a decrease in Successful Outcomes (568), this year we are back (727) up even though we have less staff and an increase in applicants. Even though we have less staff they are younger, tech savvy, and armed with Masters Degrees and a great deal of dedication and energy. Add this to the new MIS secure web-based system linking them to records and statistic wherever they are, and a flexible, competent support staff, and we expect more efficacy and better results for the future.

- **ORS Location** - ORS continues to negotiate to keep our lease on Fountain Street. We have been negotiating to stay at the Fountain Street location because it is easily accessible to our consumers and because we have already devoted a lot of time and money to make our offices accessible for our employees. At this time we are not sure what the final decision is and until we have approval to stay here there is always the risk we might have to move. The retirement and treasurers offices are leaving.
- **The Sherlock Center** - Wants to disseminate information statewide strategic plan to distribute information for post-secondary options focusing on career goals for people with developmental disabilities.

3. State Plan and the SRC – Catherine Sansonetti reports:

In order for ORS to receive funding they must submit a State Plan to the Secretary of the RSA. The other integral piece is this Council; the law says we are here to approve and be in partnership with their Plan. RSA looks to see if we think ORS is doing its job. The Plan is what guides this Council and we have the opportunity to shape change with input from the Council.

Reference to REHABILITATION ACT REGULATIONS ON THE STATE PLAN

34 CFR § 361.10 and 34 CFR § 361.29,

34 CFR § 361.10 – Submission, approval and disapproval of the state plan

4 requirements must be met to approve Plan

- Purpose: state must have a plan describing the state’s VR system and the plans and policies to be followed in carrying out the program
- Public Participation is required (public hearing)
- Duration of Plan: remains in effect until modified and every year it is usually modified
- Approval by RSA: Submitted to RSA for approval on an annual basis (RSA can reject it or ask for changes before they approve it)

34 CFR § 361.29 – Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports

ORS must meet certain legal criteria in developing the State Plan

1. Comprehensive Needs Assessment: results of every-three-year must be included in State Plan. The agency must review the comprehensive needs assessment to determine things they want to do.
2. Annual Estimates: State Plan must include estimates of
 - Number of individuals eligible for services
 - Number of individuals who will receive services if state follows OOS
 - Costs of services for eligible individuals
3. Goals and priorities
 - State Plan must identify goals and priorities of the state in carrying out VR program
 - Council: goals and priorities must be jointly developed, agreed to, reviewed annually, and revised as necessary by the SRC
 - Submission: RSA
 - Basis for Goals and Priorities: ORS’ goals
 - Service and Outcome goals for Categories in Order of Selection. Improving performance (that is the guidelines Steve talked about).
4. Strategies
 - State plan must describe strategies the state will use to address needs identified in the CNA including
 - Methods to expand and improve services including AT services/devices
 - Outreach to unserved and underserved individuals
 - Plan for improving community rehab programs
 - Plan for improving the performance pursuant to Section 106 monitoring standards and indicators
 - Strategies for assisting other components of statewide workforce investment system
5. Evaluation and reports of progress
 - State Plan must include
 - Results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the VR program
 - Joint report by ORS and SRC on how progress has been made in past year which must include
 - Evaluation of the extent of how goals and priorities were achieved
 - Description of strategies that contributed to the achievement of goals and priorities
 - Extent to which goals and priorities were not achieved and why
 - Assessment of performance on Section 106 standards and indicators
 - State (ORS) and SRC must jointly submit annual report on evaluation and progress to RSA.

5. Sub Committee Reports

Transportation - Dr. Judith Drew reports: We have worked on trying to consolidate all the transportation methods and now that cuts in funding have happened, agencies do not want to think about transportation. The committee should merge with employment since transportation is key to employment.

Nomination and Leadership Development - Lucille Massimino reports: Reviewing current membership and seeking new members (ongoing). Continue to meet in collaboration to facilitate public awareness program with ORS. We will be interviewing over the summer break. Placed two names in for appointment; Bryant Lemus Berganze and Christine Botts both were unanimously approved for submission to the Governor’s office for his appointment.

Employment - Sandy Lupovitz reports: They are looking for a better method of reaching out to employers. The committee needs to meet (set a date) and put together a plan before the next Council meeting. We may merge our efforts with transportation committee.

State Plan, Policy & Quality Control - Catherine Sansonetti reports: At this time I am reviewing one new policy.

6. Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker

Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator, SRC