

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

**Meeting Minutes June 9, 2009
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.**

Department of Labor and Training ~ 1511 Pontiac Avenue ~ Cranston, RI 02920

Present from the Council: Janice Belasco, Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Rocco Bruno, Kelley Conti, Linda Deschenes, Domenic DiOrio, Dr. Judith Drew, Jeanne Giroux, Roger Andrew Iannetta, Anne LeClerc, Sandy Lupovitz, Lucille Massemino, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Joan Vendetti, Mary Wambach

Present from the VR Agency: Laurie DiOrio, Kathleen Grygiel, Ronald Racine

1. Call to Order - The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. Introductions of membership and guests followed.

2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda - There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes - The minutes were approved.

Motion

V. Rossi made a motion seconded by C. Sansonetti and unanimously approved to accept the minutes from the May 12, 2009 meeting.

4. Chair's Report - K. McCarthy-Barnett (Vice-Chair)

There was not much to report since our last meeting.

The proposal to merge departments under the Department of Human Services and have one Director has stalled. The State Plan is done and ORS and our Policy and State Plan Committee will report on this later in the meeting. Our other committees will be reporting later so we will defer to them for updates. The National Coalition of Rehabilitation Councils also seems to be quiet of late.

5. The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) Director's Report - R. Racine gave a brief summary of events at ORS since the last meeting on May 12, 2009. R. Racine is the Deputy Administrator for Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

There is no new news regarding the consolidation issue; as it comes to us we will keep you informed. Director Alexander did meet with us here at ORS last week. We got together with him to explain our programs in detail. He approved of our hard efforts to keep things going in these difficult times and he will continue to support our efforts.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) - Stimulus Funding is starting to come through. We had a teleconference concerning the funding and we are starting to get approvals so that by September we might be able to start spending some of the money.

State Plan hearing was held and we will be responding to the Disability Law Center's comments.

Funding at the State level is getting tighter. Most of our spending expenses must now go through drawn-out spending procedures. But there is some good news to report; N. Baker's contract was extended for one (1) year. Our Purchasing Department got the extension. We look forward to working with N. Baker at least for one (1) more year and we will be proactive next year in vetting this contract through the RFP process.

J. Belasco: I speak as a member of the Council and for many I have spoken with when I say we should do whatever we need to do to keep N. Baker as our Facilitator and Secretary. We cannot possibly get the work done that we are mandated to do without a competent, experienced person working for us and N. Baker is all these things. She knows how to get the work done. She has always done such an outstanding job for our Council.

D. DiOrio: I agree with J. Belasco and speak for my Committee, the need for an ongoing Secretary is so very important for this Council. My Committee would be lost without having her experience. With that in mind, the Nomination and Leadership Development Committee sent a letter to S. Brunero sharing our concerns should this position not be filled.

6. Sub-Committee Progress Reports

Transportation - J. Drew

We have finished our survey and are working on the data and getting it ready for October.

We have given input into the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. We provided questions for the assessment, which is on hold right now but once it is completed we will look at the data and see what more is needed for transportation. This is the first time the Needs Assessment will ask specific data on transportation issues.

Updating Info-Databases - One of our struggles in trying to get this survey done was that databases maintained by Crossroads, The Point, Ask Rhody, and United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island, are not accurate. We are finding that many of the organizations' information are not up to date and we are concerned about that. So we want to recruit researchers to work on this and refine the goals.

Advocacy Activities - We want to find a way to become more active with advocacy; however what we are aware of is that no one really knows what other groups are out there working on the transportation issue. We propose that college students, who need to do research projects, come up with a database of human service agencies out there and what they provide for transportation. Then we would like to find an employer who would donate time to keep the database maintained. And then we would like students to determine what advocacy agencies are out there and which of these agencies are dealing with transportation.

Consumer Based Business for setting up a Driving Program - We would like to recruit another student to look at what it would cost to set up a business like this.

We would like to work with the Employment Committee to talk to employers to find out how much of a barrier transportation is for hiring individuals. And we will make it not disability specific and see if people are not hiring folks because they do not have their own transportation to get to work.

State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance Committee - C. Sansonetti

Since the breakfast meeting we have finished helping with the drafting of the Customer Satisfaction Survey and broke it down into two (2) target groups; successful closures, and people who did not complete their goal of getting to work. We thought that would be good to figure out what was successful and what went wrong, what were the biggest barriers. We want this to be a model for a longitudinal study and have offered full details in our spring update.

We prepared written comments for the State Plan. A draft sent to D. Sienko who made minor changes and signed off on it. Our committee typically does the groundwork for the discussion by the Council.

We did get word at the breakfast meeting that there would be new policies so we are waiting to see on that.

Nominations and leadership Development - D. DiOrio

We will meet on June 16th to interview four (4) new candidates.

Secondly, our search for new members goes on and we are looking for more people from the marketplace in industry and business. We would appreciate all the members' efforts to help us with this. Because the economy is in such bad shape, we have this additional barrier to contend with. We still need to have more people from the hiring community.

Thirdly we are in the on-going process of reviewing the membership cycles. I am sorry to say that Gary Levine will not be able to return this fall because of his job responsibilities. I think as a Council we should also send a letter to him to thank him for his work on the Council.

Lastly we are working on establishing the next year's calendar.

M. Wambach recommended Craig Stenning from MHRH as a possible new member. D. DiOrio asked her if she could contact him to follow-up on this.

Employment - S. Lupovitz

This Committee needs a Co-Chair and some direction from the Executive Leadership. I want to know what this Council wants this committee to do. Once you give us a task then you will see action.

D. DiOrio offered to help saying, I was the Chair but Susan Donavon took over and I stepped back due to health issues. As a suggestion I would be willing to help you.

S. Lupovitz said he appreciated the offer but it was upside down since he'd been asked to help D. DiOrio when he was convinced to come on the Employment Committee as a Co-Chair. The job needs to have two (2) people working on it, not one. We must have a Co-Chair.

K. McCarthy-Barnett said we have contacted Slvermoon Mars and are waiting to hear from her. If nothing comes of this we will set to resolve this at the next Executive Leadership meeting.

7. Guest Speaker - Joan Vendetti from The Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN)

J. Vendetti is the Parent Involvement Coordinator, Special Education - West Bay.

Our mission is to inform, educate, support, and empower all families to be equal partners in advocacy for the education, health, and socio-economic well being of their children and families; and achieve family centered systems changes, which are culturally competent, and community based by partnering with, collaborating with, and educating key stakeholders at Community, State and National levels.

RIPIN's vision is to serve and support all families in Rhode Island utilizing the principles of family centered care by: focusing on the strengths of the child and family; supporting relationship building and community membership; fostering mutual trust and respect between families and program staff and/or administration; promoting family choice and control; offering families good information and access to information; and including families in policy decisions and program planning.

Transition Program – We have a strong program. How do we support families in transition? We have a resource center, workshops such as Packing for the Future, Parent Mentor Program, and information materials like a parents guide, employment handouts.

Our collaborative partners in the NR Regional Transition Center

Provide events and activities such as informational outreach nights, student events, collage forums, local district technical assistance in conjunction with the RTC's and RVC.

And advocacy work through the State Rehabilitation Council and the RI Transition Council.

We promote personal-centered planning with an emphasis on building self-determination especially for youth in transition. We believe in informed choice and supporting families and individuals in identifying possible options for the best possible personal outcomes.

8. ORS Speakers - Linda Deschenes, the Strategic Planning Supervisor and Kathleen Grygiel, the Deputy Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation.

K. Grygiel - As you all know every year we do an update to the State Plan, and at three (3) year increments we are expected to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment to identify the VR needs of individuals with disabilities. We have areas of concentration; the underserved, and identifying where we need to provide improvements on design with job development and training opportunities. Today we are sharing the Customer Satisfaction Survey that we want to develop as part of our Comprehensive Needs Assessment. As we have worked with the SRC subcommittees, we concluded that we would like to institutionalize this process on a regular basis so we can accumulate longitudinal data over the long haul. The development and planning of this to be done regularly has kind of been an evolutionary process. We originally planned to just send a generic survey out to the targeted consumers but as we work with the SRC the idea to have something more than just meeting the requirements came into focus. We really want to get some valuable feedback from the customers we work with so we are looking at designing surveys based on the different customers outcomes. We want to look at those people who developed an Employment Plan and then we lost them. We want to find out why we lost them and how to prevent it in the future. Today, we are looking at two (2) populations and L. Deschenes will describe them to you.

L. Deschenes - What we have passed around are the end results of hard work from our staff and the SRC. We want to thank the SRC Committee for working with us. These questionnaires will continue to evolve. In the past the RSA monitoring report noted that we did a great job with closures but we had no formal way to get feedback from our consumers. The two (2) cover letters and questionnaires are targeted at consumers who have become successfully employed, Status 22, and those who came in but for some reason did not make it through, Status 28. The intent is to send the survey out on a quarterly basis to get feedback. So we will be covering from January 1st to March 1st for the first quarter. The SRC offered some great feedback and we are very appreciative.

This is going to be a good gathering tool and when the information comes in we will be able to bring the results back to the SRC. This is the first step to looking at this as a continuous component of feedback.

9. Public Comment - There was none.

10. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nancy L. Baker, Staff
State Rehabilitation Council