



## 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 January 19, 2016**

**4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.**

**Office of Rehabilitation Services ~ 40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903**

Present: Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Cynthia Cote, Linda Deschenes, Laurie DiOrio, Joan Fino, Kathleen Grygiel, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Diana Kriner, Gail Lawson PhD, Diana Marcotte, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Ronald Racine, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, and Marilyn Walaska

Absent: Christina Battista, Christine Botts, Dr. Judith Drew, Paul C. Harden, Barbara Henry, Jeffrey Machado, Vincent Rossi, 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 November 17, 2015 minutes. (Vote – approved – Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Cynthia Cote, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Diana Kriner, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, and Marilyn Walaska)*

#### **4. State Rehabilitation Council Report (SRC) - Dr. Lawson Reporting**

- \* Dr. G. Lawson acknowledged the team that worked on the draft State Plan Attachments; Dr. J. Drew, W. Truelove, L. Norris, C. Sansonetti, D. Pieroni and N. Baker who developed a protocol for editing and reviewing, in real time, the work without sending out numerous email attachments. The team worked well with this method that N. Baker originally set up with Peggy Benz for the Training committee. (Note-Dr. Lawson also worked on this team).
- \* Revisiting Tabled Item: Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Outstanding Service Award was approved as a draft by the Council at the May 12, 2015 meeting. It is presented to membership for a motion to accept the draft and have further discussion and action at the March 8, 2016 meeting. Membership is asked to review this draft and be prepared to offer comments and suggestion at the March 8, 2016 meeting. (*Draft available upon request*)

#### *Motion*

*Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Joan Fino and unanimously approved to accept the draft of the RI SRC Outstanding Service Award for further discussion and action at the March 8, 2016 meeting. (Vote – approved – Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Cynthia Cote, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Diana Kriner, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, and Marilyn Walaska)*

- \* State Plan Development Collaboration: was an informative and helpful process to understand the work of The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and the needs of their clients. The SRC acknowledged the hard work that everyone at the ORS and on the SRC did in development attachments of the Sate Plan.
- \* Annual SRC/ORS Report: the Chair asked for a motion to accept the Annual report as a final document. The RISRC/ORS report will be posted on the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) page, along with other states. Members are asked to review other state reports on the NCSRC page. In this year's report the Client Success Stories were highlighted as was the addition of the Raymond A. Carroll Award, which was presented to Teresa Scaramuzzo-DiMattia for 2014 and Rosemary Feeney for 2015. The SRC and R. Racine thanked the ORS personnel, especially Sharon DiPinto, for their work on this report.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the SRC/ORS Annual Report.

#### *Motion*

*Jane Slade made a motion seconded by Cynthia Cote and unanimously approved to accept the SRC/ORS Annual Report as completed. (Vote – approved – Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Cynthia Cote, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Diana Kriner, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, and Marilyn Walaska)*

## 5. The Office of Rehabilitation Services Report - Ronald Racine Reporting

- \* WIOA Update: R. Racine will attend the Regional Director's meeting tomorrow to compare the progress of New England states on WIOA especially how they are working with the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) offices in the different states. Some states, like Maine, have a natural relationship because their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program because it is set up under the DLT. R. Racine and K. Grygiel will meet this week with the Director of the DLT to discuss the next steps with them to partner and move the WIOA unified plan forward in RI. Next week there is a convening meeting that the Human Services Director and the DLT Director will attend in DC to receive further guidance on the WIOA.

The Office of Rehabilitation Services had a conversation with the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) to update them on the slow work with the State partnership; the ORS and the DLT have not had much productive partnering on the WIOA. The RSA assured the ORS that this was not unusual, and that it is also new for the RSA to work with the DLTs nationally on the review process of the WIOA. At this time the RSA does not know how the review process will be done; through committee, or vetted through departments. The ORS will submit the State Plan and wait and see what the RSA advises. Funding could be at risk if there is an unacceptable Plan. It is unlikely that funding will be cut off, instead models will be presented and the RSA will offer critical feedback.

- \* Public Hearing for the State Plan VR Section: is February 4, 2016, 2 PM – 4PM in the large public meeting room at the [Warwick Public Library](#). The chair passed out a sign-up sheet for membership attendance to the public hearing. The following members signed up to attend; Dr. G. Lawson, W. Truelove, L. Colardo, P. Benz, M. Hagerty, J. Fino, J. Slade, J. Ringland, J. Machado, B. Henry, and C. Sansonetti. This hearing is for the VR piece of the Plan required by the RSA. It might be that the ORS does a combined State Plan rather than a unified one. The DLT may ask for an extension on their Plan.
- \* Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA): The WIOA mandates the Department of Human Services and the ORS, in partnership with the SRC complete a statewide assessment every three years of the rehabilitation needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. The survey (which includes a Community Provider component, as well as Staff and Customer components) assists ORS and the SRC with strategic planning and identification of goals and objectives for annual State Plan development to assist people with disabilities in entering, returning and/or maintaining employment. Transition Services and business relationship have been highlighted for a more extensive looks in the upcoming survey. R. Racine will electronically send information regarding (CNA) to N. Baker, and it will be covered in more detail at the March SRC meeting.
- \* The State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance committee works on the (CNA) but any members of the Council can be involved and is invited to help.

## 6. Reflections on WIOA Collaboration with SRC – K. Grygiel & C. Sansonetti

This was a very challenging year for everyone involved with the State Plan. The ORS was pressured to get attachments out and get responses and feedback from the SRC. In the past, when working with the SRC on the State Plan, having the opportunity to sit down together and read through attachments that were already written made it smoother and allowed for more dialogue and better communication about the meaning of the attachments and changes that might be needed. The ORS felt this method was more effective in creating an avenue for conversation than what was done this year.

The part that was not done before this year, and ended up being incredibly helpful, was for the ORS to identify a few critical foundation attachments and further developed them together with the ORS staff and the SRC. The ORS feels that moving forward and utilizing that model, where the ORS identifies key attachments, will be successful. It is unrealistic to develop all seventeen attachments together, but there are some attachments that provide foundations and philosophical guidance. For those attachment, the ORS and the SRC developing them together and then working within that model, in-person, until there is a final version makes sense. There are benefits to each method, but having the direct input from the SRC, working together with the ORS as a team, developing general goals and objective was so much more helpful for the ORS.

C. Sansonetti generally agreed that both methods have merit and were successful. Pulling out the critical pieces and working in-person with the ORS was a good way to do it even though there was a tight time-line. Moving forward, the Policy committee could meet separately regarding all the other attachments, after we have identified the ones we would sit down with the ORS to work on, rather than try to divvy them up. It would have been helpful if the Policy committee had done that together. There were questions we had that if there had been more time to ask the ORS for clarification, it would have been helpful. Time was definitely an issue for the SRC this year.

G. Lawson added that one of the most important things the SRC does is this input to the State Plan. It is clearly something we need to focus on because the Council is the voice of the consumer with insight that professional staff may never have because of who we represent and our backgrounds. This was a difficult process, with calls over the holiday break, lasting for three and a half hours. People worked incredibly hard to get this work done. The Chair again thanked C. Sansonetti for her leadership role on the SRC Policy

committee, and everyone who took time to give thoughtful, valuable feedback. The SRC is also grateful to K. Grygiel, L. Deschenes and R. Racine for all their help and time working with the SRC.

### **7. State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance Committee – C. Sansonetti Reporting**

The ORS State Plan: The Policy committee met with the ORS over two dates to review and assist the agency with its portion of the combined State Plan. The committee members spent several hours at each meeting discussing the agency's goals on each attachment. During this process, the SRC made substantive and editorial comments about the State Plan content. The agency revised these early State Plan attachment documents and provided a final draft to us for further comments. Today, we are submitting these additional comments to the agency. A copy of the letter with comments has been provided electronically to the membership. The public hearing on the State Plan is being held on February 4, 2016. If any other members wish to provide further comment, please direct the comments to the policy committee co-chair, C. Sansonetti. The committee thanks, L. Norris, Dr. G. Lawson, Dr. J. Drew, W. Truelove, D. Pieroni and N. Baker for their hard work during this process.

We should expect a response to these comments from the ORS.

Postsecondary Education and Order of Selection Policies: The ORS has provided us with notice that the agency has gone to formal rule making under the Administrative Procedures Act for the policies we reviewed in October, 2015. These were the two policies Order of Selection and Postsecondary Education and Vocational Training. The SRC comments made to the agency were, in part, incorporated into the policy revision. However, the agency declined to consider some of our comments that we feel are important. As such, the SRC may making further formal written comments during this public comment period which ends January 27, 2016. A copy of any comments will be provided electronically to the membership.

Business Enterprises Program, ORS Policy 115.13: The ORS also provided us with a proposed policy revision to the Business Enterprises Program. This program is established pursuant to both federal vocational rehabilitation law as well as the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Under the Business Enterprises Program, the ORS establishes vending facilities on state and federal property to blind individuals in order to increase their economic opportunities. Under the program, the ORS's VR program and its Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) work in tandem to identify and certify applicants who are qualified to operate a vending facility.

There have already been some comments on this policy from the SRC members. Today, the Policy committee will work on reviewing this policy, and provide formal written comments to the ORS within a reasonable time.

*The Council makes note to thank C. Sansonetti for her ongoing work on the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance committee providing guidance, leadership and exceptional efforts on all Policy and State Plan related work over many years.*

### **Training Committee - Lea Colardo Reporting**

Maryellen Hagerty has been elected by the Training committee as the Co-chair with Lea Colardo. Congratulations Maryellen! The committee decided that additional materials would be provided by N. Baker. The co-chairs will sort through the materials and have a consolidated list for the March meeting.

**8. New Business** – The Council will continue to carry the transportation initiative that Dr. J. Drew brought to our attention at the last meeting.

### **9. Public Comment – None**

### **10. Adjournment**

#### *Motion*

*(Jack Ringland made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Cynthia Cote, and was unanimously approved. (Vote – approved – Peggy Benz, Rocco Bruno, Lea Colardo, Cynthia Cote, Joan Fino, Maryellen T. Hagerty, Diana Kriner, Gail Lawson PhD, Lori Norris, Dan Pieroni, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Willa Truelove, and Marilyn Walaska)*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Nancy L. Baker*

Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator  
RI SRC