



## 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 May 8, 2012

8:30 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

Radisson Hotel Warwick 2081 Post Road, Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

**Present:** Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Bryant Lemus Berganza, Christine Botts, Rocco Bruno, Stephen Brunero, Wheeler Clemmons, Kelley Conti, Linda Deschenes, Dr. Judith Drew, Jeanne Giroux, Liz Graves, Sharon DiPinto, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Joan Fino, Paul Harden, Micheal Hazard, Anne LeClerc, Jeffrey D. Machado, Aracelis Maria, Doreen McConaghy, JoAnn Nanning, Lynn Paola, Dorothy Pizzarelli, Ronald Racine, Catherine Sansonetti, Juan Troncoso, Willa Truelove, Rachel Vieux, Herbert Weiss, Roberta Greene-Whittemore, Kim Wennermark and Nancy Baker

1. **Call to Order** - Kate McCarthy-Barnett, called the meeting to order. Quorum met.
2. **Additions/Deletions to Agenda** - There were none. *Announcement that Jeffrey D. Machado has accepted the Vice-chairs position*
3. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion to accept the February 28, 2012 minutes unanimously approved.

#### 4. Introductions and thinking about the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) - Kate McCarthy-Barnett & Stephen Brunero

The membership described the core principles of SRC as advocacy, maximization for employment, training and jobs. Our mission, “To work with ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.” SRC strength is working with ORS in partnership, and feedback is one of our strongest characteristics. This teamwork brings diversity. We stand out among other states as having this strong partnership.

Stephen Brunero - Gave a brief history of the SRC and emphasized the agency’s excellent working relationship with the Council. About 6 years ago the name of the Council changed, from the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council to the current name, dropping advisory out of the title. This change came about because the Council is not here simply to advise ORS but to be a regulatory unit helping develop the State Plan and programs.

Kate McCarthy-Barnett - We are seeing changes moving forward based on keeping current with what is needed. The first change was to move to quarterly meetings, which work better for the subcommittees to do their work and then report out at the Council meetings. We are also refocusing the subcommittees, reviewing the work done by transportation and employment committees and merging their efforts and results with the need for two new subcommittees based on identified goals of the State Plan and Needs Assessments.

\* Public Awareness Committee /Outreach Committee - reaching out to underserved populations. We need to step up with our educational and advocacy skills to help ORS reach the underserved populations to communicate the ORS mission.

\* Transition Committee - increasing knowledge and education of the ORS transition services to youth to influence outcomes (.)

Additional plans for moving forward.

- Focus on an orientation of new members
- Outreach to communities of other languages
- Rewarding counselors for their work. ORS reconsiders, within their program, how they rate and assess their counselors. This gives the agency a chance to take credit for the work they actually do.
- Transition increased collaboration with employers. Increased review of the State Plan/more specific goals
- Increased training from the Nomination and Leadership Development
- Increase relationship with businesses
- Transition and outreach to underserved targeted, employment identify- new sectors of employment (this came out of the RSA on site visit)
- Recruiting members and a viable mentoring program for new and existing members
- We need to know what other states are doing in more detail so we can compare ourselves
- When reaching out to under severed populations make it important that stressing learning English is important to function in this country.

## 5. ORS Report - Steve Brunero Reports:

\* Federal Level - House of Representatives Bill 4297 reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act. Some of the changes proposed will shrink the Rehabilitation Program (VR) by changing the Commissioner from a Presidential Appointee to a lesser role, eliminating cost of living, take away requirement that (VR) be a mandated partner in workforces investment boards. The Rhode Island delegation is supporting the VR Program and is doing what they can for us.

Social Security - There is a danger Social Security will run out of money in 20 -30 years, and Medicare possibly even sooner. There are concerns about sustaining these programs driving much of the political gridlock in Washington. There are many concerns about the future of these programs and Human Services related to them.

Employment First - A partnership between the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to advance a proposal for early intervention that would build on the mutual goal of the SSA and VR Programs to increase employment outcomes and self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities through the provision of appropriate services and supports. Under the Employment First program the intent is to provide working age individuals with disabilities applying for SSI or SSDI the voluntary opportunity to learn about “work” as an option. Many individuals with disabilities do not understand their employment potential, and may not fully comprehend the vocational options available to them. The Employment First program provides a new avenue for addressing this issue early in the process for a person applying for Social Security benefits.

\*Rehabilitation Service Administration - Came for a 4 day visit and looked at our cooperative agreements with cooperative education and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH). The RSA highlighted several areas for further improvement.

- Monitor more specifically the contracts. We will wait to get the specifics from RSA.
- Program Income Funds
- Transition
- Order of Selection
- Quality and types of outcomes
- Contracts and Cooperative agreements

\*State level - PCA Bill - The Attorney General decided ORS would be the agency to oversee the Personal Care Program. We are not a regulatory authority nor do we have the personnel or budget to do this. We have had numerous meetings with the Governor’s office and different legislators; our professional advice was to have the Department of Health take the regulatory authority over.

Disabilities Enterprise Bill – The Governor’s commission on Disabilities has re-proposed this bill.

Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Bill - Cell phones to be added to this.

Governor and Department of Administration – Performance Management Initiative requires ORS to set up a new standard of performance tools in addition to what the federal government already requires of us. We are spending a lot of time looking at specific performance measuring tools and putting it into a database for all three programs we have at ORS.

Example of ORS partnering - Brown University and Miriam Hospital did a study with ORS. They are evaluating people with ambulatory difficulties who smoke and are working to try and decrease the instances of smoking. Learn more about the ABLE Program (<http://www.ors.ri.gov/ABLE%20Program.html#>)

### \*Upcoming Events

May 17<sup>th</sup> @ 3 pm @ Warwick Public Library. We have our State Plan Hearing. We invite testimony from the public and the SRC.

May 22<sup>nd</sup> is the Dare to Dream conference @ URI. Empowerment conference for middle and high school students with diverse learning and special needs. Youth who are or are becoming leaders share their experience in fun and engaging ways. They will present: personal stories, role-play, hands on activities, video presentations, group discussions, spoken word, music and more. They learn that they are not alone, their voice matters, their personal learning style, they have choices, what it means to be a leader, how school can help you reach your dreams, self-esteem, value of teamwork, communication skills, sense of purpose, new friends.

May 23<sup>rd</sup> Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair for veterans. Sponsored by the American Legion and the Chambers of Commerce.

## 6. Recognition of SRC Members

The following SRC members were presented certificates of appreciation, Dr. Judith Drew, Jeanne M. Giroux, Lucille Massemينو and Mary Wambach. Their hard work is what makes this Council so effective. They will be dearly missed and we are forever grateful to them for their service.

**7. Committee Structure/Breakouts** -Vice Chair Jeffrey D. Machado Reports:

The structure itself allows us to specifically get things done. New committee structures and purposes that we are introducing this year after review from the Leadership are: Executive, Nomination and Leadership Development, State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance, Public Awareness, Transition, and By-laws. (See attachment for committee details /SRC-Facts Sheet-The Purpose of the SRC). We would like to establish co-chairs for these committees if they do not already have them; anyone is welcome to join whatever committee they want.

**State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance**

\*Review Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Currently under 2011 CNA required by law every three years that the Agency does a CAN. Our committee will begin to brainstorm activities in 2013 in collaboration with ORS and tie it in with RSA 107 Monitoring findings and see how the findings are integrated into the State Plan, and how ORS is implementing data collections so we can comment on it.

\*Review ORS proposed changes to policies and procedures - this is ongoing.

\*Monitor and comment on ORS Corrective Action Plan in response to RSA 107 Monitoring findings. Review reports – integrate into new State Plan as ORS implements data collection – this is ongoing.

\*Report summary findings of RSA to Full Council – review the data on employment outcomes, etc., - educate Council on findings – review every summer and present to Council at the fall meeting.

We thought that since our work is broken off from the Council we would like to share it in a more cohesive way by bringing summaries to the meetings.

**Public Awareness /Outreach** - Identify the fact that no matter how good your product is if no one knows about it you can't sell it. Two main groups to reach out for, first, non-speaking English, cracking into that community getting pastors of religious organizations to get involved with the committee. Second, employers, how do we market to employers in general what we do. We need to educate employers hopefully trying to attract a few employers to the committee.

**Transition** - We are in assessment stage, where can we go with the gaps in transition and highlight that there is not enough transition around work study and internships.

The other committees did not report out.

**6. Adjournment** - Meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nancy L. Baker, Facilitator, SRC