



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 Meeting March 5, 2019
Salve Regina University, Warwick
144 Metro Center Blvd, Warwick, RI 02886
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 PM.

Present: Dr. Judith Drew, Chair SRC and Program Director, Rehabilitation Counseling Program at ([Salve Regina University](#))
Catherine Sansonetti, Vice-chair SRC, Attorney at Disability Law Center
Jack Ringland, Secretary SRC, Co-Coordinator of [Cross Disabilities Coalition](#)

Community members/CRP members:

Nina Fiasconaro, a Parent Advocate for a child with disabilities
Joan Fino, Social Worker and Patient Advocate at [Rhode Island Primary Care Physicians](#)
Jane Slade, State Transition Coordinator at [Department of Education](#)
Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services of [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)
Christina Battista, representing the [RI Statewide Independent Living Council](#)
Anne Fartura, Peer Support Coordinator/Special Education at [RI Parent Information Network](#)
Lea Colardo, & Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate at [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)
Nicole Rico Serrano, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services:

Ronald Racine (Associate Director), Linda Deschenes (Assistant Administrator of Operations), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation)

Absent: Christine Botts, Elizabeth Graves, Gail Lawson, Daniel C. Pieroni and Vincent Rossi and Sergio Lopez-Ruiz

1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, and SRC – Quorum met.

2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – There were none.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from December 18, 2018.

Motion – *Nina Fiasconaro made a motion seconded by Jack Ringland, and unanimously approved, to accept the December 18, 2018 Minutes. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Joan Fino, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

4. Summary of Follow-ups from Meeting

* Work on Power Point presentation for the training meeting. (Lea, Melissa, Judi and Nancy)

* Invite Rob Kakowski to talk about workforce initiatives. (Judi)

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

* The Training Committee will need more time to prepare for the SRC training event. There still needs to be further work done on the Power Point presentations as well as revamping the other materials and working out the agenda for the meeting.

* Consumer Satisfaction Survey - With the added input from the SRC, the Survey is in the final stages of completion. The Council members worked diligently to assist The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) with improving this version. Thanks go out to everyone who worked on the committee. The Council expects to see the final version from ORS soon.

6. The Office of Rehabilitation Services Director's Report – Ron Racine

* Waitlist - There are seven hundred and fifty-five people on the list. ORS is removing twenty five people a month, which has resulted in an average wait time of ten months for those on the list. An average of twenty-seven new Category I consumers are added to the waitlist per month. ORS would like to open up the waitlist for another twenty-five per month, to reach fifty. But this quarter ORS is restricted by a lack of money due to necessary technology expenditures. ORS will not have to close the list because of this expenditure, but we are unable to increase the consumers served at this time. ORS will look at opening up more spots next quarter.

* Technology Improvements - ORS has upgraded the computer system and hardware to support it. This necessary upgrade cost approximately \$400,000. The Agency had the funding but it depleted our cushion for the quarter.

Discussion

A question was asked about a former consumer who is not Category I and wished to reopen their case with ORS.

Answer - During the last State Plan cycle, ORS made changes regarding services to maintain employment or for post-employment services. At the time, there was some discrepancy as to what qualified as post-employment or electing to serve, and we could not get full clarification from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on these services.

Consequently, ORS elected not to offer those services because the spirit and intent of the waitlist is to serve Category I.

Comments – The Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services advocate for all people with disabilities to work. However, restricting to just Category I consumers, who are the most needy to go through the rehabilitation system, prevents others who require minimal support to get services for work. If ORS could include 25% of consumers in the other categories, the numbers would look so different for the RSA reviews. Why can't the VR community get the RSA and the Federal Government to understand that there are people out there who want to work but without VR services are unable? And by limiting to one category on the waitlist, everyone else is severely restrict or eliminated completely from participating in the system.

The regulations designed to help, are actually part of the problem. The laws are so strictly defined there isn't wiggle room for VR agencies to shift resources to work with percentages of categories other than Category I on the waitlist.

Could ORS work through the Workforce Development System? Could the Council or ORS invite someone from the board?

Plan - Invite Rob Kalaskowski to talk about workforce initiative. And Vincent Rossi to talk about DLT collaborative for another meeting.

* RSA Monitoring Visit – The monitoring visit report from last year is coming out this summer. One member from the RSA, who was out for the review, offered a look at the review findings. So ORS has a pretty good idea of areas that RSA feels more work needs to be done.

* Consumer Satisfaction Survey – The survey was redesigned with help from the SRC. ORS added one question to ask folks what their disabilities are, if they choose to disclose. ORS is also looking to develop the new survey in alternative formats. The SRC had concerns that rolling it out monthly might be difficult for the support staff, but ORS felt it is worth trying it monthly for now. The findings will be shared with the Council at meetings.

* **New Initiatives** - Joseph Murphy

The goal is to establish regional cross disability supported employment capacity by 2020.

One of the good things about the Concert Decree and the WIOA is they are requiring state agencies to work together. This is helping to break down problematic duplications in services. ORS has been working very closely with the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) on the developmental disabilities (DD) side with the Concert Decree. ORS is now collaborating with the Governor's Workforce Board and the Department of Labor and Training to set up initiatives promoting employment and training across the board.

There have been success in job placements on the (DD) side, but not with the behavioral health side. The numbers for employment on the behavioral health side are as low as two to three percent placement. There is a struggle on the behavioral health side for supported employment. This is a concern because there used to be very good placement rates on this side. The agencies wanted to figure out why these low hiring rates are now an issue and what can be done to increase the rate of employment.

To address the lower hiring rates and silo approach, on January 28th there was a state-wide cross-disability employment initiative with the DLT, BHDDH and ORS at the table. Presented was that 2019 would be the year to put all the obstacles that

inhibit higher employment outcomes on the table. Coming out of our work is the plan for **regional employment centers** where staff are trained on job development and placement. ORS would be there as expert consultants and trainers for the staff, in supportive employment and employment services. The regional employment centers would be responsible for business engagement, creating jobs for people, and then referring consumers to sister agencies for supports during employment.

Some funding for the centers would come from unused money from person-centered employment programs at BHDDH to help develop the collaborative so that anyone can use the services. Funding might also come from the Veterans Administration, and Rhode Island Works. In general, this is a new business model for these agencies, instead of using their funding for one particular set of consumers, they would open up to other users and funding sources. Rather than focused on one population like DD, they would open their doors to other funded individuals.

ORS is working to increase hiring goals by working with the BHDDH and the DLT to change the look of employment and trying to reengage Employment First as a topic area to address employment for everybody in the State.

7. Subcommittee Updates

* State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance - Catherine Sansonetti

At this time there is nothing new to report.

* Training Committee - Lea Colardo

Some of the committee will have a pre-meeting to work on streamlining the Power Point presentations. It will be presented to the full training committee to make final revisions before having the official training meeting in either late May or early June.

8. Correspondence - There were none.

9. New Business

Vote for Catherine Sansonetti for Vice-chair.

Motion – *Jack Ringland made a motion seconded by Joan Fino, and unanimously approved, to appoint Catherine Sansonetti to be Vice-chair of the Council. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Joan Fino, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

Jane Slade passed out flyers for the Collage Planning Forum on March 9th and for the Statewide Transition Resource Fair March 23rd.

10. Public Comment -There were none.

11. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Motion – *Jane Slade made a motion seconded by Christine Yankee, and unanimously approved, to adjourn the meeting. (Voting Members – Lea Colardo, Christina Battista, Dr. Judith Drew, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Joan Fino, Jack Ringland, Catherine Sansonetti, Jane Slade, Nicole Rico Serrano and Christine Yankee)*

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Baker
Nancy Baker, RISRC Facilitator