

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

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## NH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### MEETING MINTUES

April 20, 2023

21 South Fruit Street, Room 100, Concord, NH and

### ZOOM Teleconference Meeting

**Attendees:** Lorrie Ripley, Dawn Breault, Andrea Kaneb, Jessica Brennan, Brandy Pappas, Ben Adams, Natalie Fortier, James Ziegler, Pamela Stiles, Heidi Duprey, Kelly Nye Lengerman

**Members Excused:** John Richards, Scott Lagios (due to communication issues with SRC mailing list), Maureen O'Donnell, Lisa Gerrard

**Staff:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz, Sue Roma, Ella McAllister

The meeting of the SRC was called to order at 1:00 pm.

A roll call was made of those present, and the agenda was reviewed. New council members, James Ziegler and Pamela Stiles were introduced and gave a brief synopsis of their backgrounds and interest in serving on the council.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the SRC meetings of September 22, 2022, were unanimously approved.

**Report of the Director:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz announced that Lorrie Ripley and Lisa Gerrard have agreed to serve as interim Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRC and thanked them both for stepping up. Per the SRC by-laws, the official vote of officers will occur at the September meeting. Both will serve as interim until that time.

Lisa is just back from the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), where they discussed the SRC's coming back from issues related to Covid. In New Hampshire, Lisa would like to take the following year to reassess ourselves, perhaps include training and technical assistance from the NCSRC on the roles of VR and the SRC.

Prior to the start of this meeting, Lisa Hinson-Hatz and Lorrie Ripley met to talk about the SRC in the coming year and what areas the SRC might focus on. Sharing of performance data was a priority. Both Lisa and Lorrie would like the SRC to review the quarterly policy data as was done in the past. As part of this, perhaps short ½ hour data information sessions could be held every few weeks focusing on the various data elements in the NH agency and trends compared to the national data to see how we are measuring up. These sessions could be in person or ZOOM meetings, depending on the available of interested council members. A thought behind these mini data sessions is instead of the SRC being a receiver of information, how can they develop action steps to assist the agency reach its goals?

Other ideas floated included sending letters to the regional offices from the SRC thanking them for the work they do as well as sharing of VR success stories. Lisa mentioned that the agency just contracted with a person to focus on developing success stories and feels they will be an excellent resource for this initiative.

Lorrie is looking to the council members to share any suggestions of what they would like to focus on in the coming year. Please feel free to contact her or Lisa Hinson-Hatz directly with any additional ideas you may have.

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Lisa noted that there has been an 80% turnover in VR State Administrators nationally in the past five years. Deputy Assistant Secretary of OSERS, Kate Neas, also shared concern about the current national program numbers. She indicated that it will be reevaluated in the fall so it is imperative that numbers begin to improve now. The good news is that it looks like it is trending in a positive direction.

**STAFFING:** Currently VRNH has the following vacancies:

- 1 Rehab Counselor and a Rehab Tech in Nashua
- 2 Rehab Counselors in Manchester
- 1 Rehab Counselor in Berlin
- 1 Rehab Counselor and a Rehab Tech in Portsmouth

The regional offices in Concord and Keene are fully staffed. For the Nashua and Portsmouth offices, no candidates responded to external recruitment efforts, most likely due to the pay scales in the neighboring states. The good news is that a 10% pay increase is planned for July. Hopefully this will improve recruitment and retention in state government positions, which is currently experiencing a 21% vacancy rate. The SRC is encouraged to get involved in recruitment efforts and to send any candidates who may be interested our way. One way to help is to support efforts to increase the amount of money the state pays for tuition assistance for the rehab master's program, currently capped at \$3,000.

**VR Audit Update:** VRNH is in the last steps of resolution of the audit findings. This has been a four-year process and the 2<sup>nd</sup> year we are working with *The Stephen Group*. There is some additional work to be done. The Vendor Management RFP was sent out, but the responses received were not what we were looking for. We expect work around this issue to continue into the fall and winter.

**Quality Assurance:** Chantel Hogan has been hired as the QA lead. She will be working with *The Stephen Group* and Commissioners office to formulate the internal controls we need to have in place to have a robust system. The struggle is having the people in place to do the work.

The final report from *The Stephen Group* is being put together. Copies will be shared with the SRC when available.

The SRC viewed the SRC Training Video "Historical Perspective of State Rehabilitation Councils" on the website of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils: <http://www.ncsrc.us>. There are several free modules under the SRC Member Training series on this website that Lisa encourages members to take advantage of.

**CAP Update:** Lorrie Ripley noted that cases referred to her office are down. It seems people are getting the information they need so major issues have not come to the surface. There are no fair hearings and no major problems currently. The quarterly meetings with CAP agencies in the NE states has been interesting. There are common themes amongst all – self-employment, transition age youth and staff shortages are examples. Summer is expected to be a low time. Other topics discussed at this meeting were staff shortages, the CAP role in RSA monitoring, remote challenges and advantages in working with customers, vehicle mods, post-secondary reimbursement rates, customers with mental health challenges and training needed as numbers in this disability category are increasing across the county.

Lorrie reported that there are 830 Stable accounts active now.

**COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:** One of Lorrie's priorities for the coming year is to get the SRC committees staffed and active. Each committee charge and current members assigned were reviewed. As the Membership Committee is unstaffed due to former members terming out, Lorrie volunteered to be part of that committee. Additions to the Policy Committee include Pam Stiles, James Ziegra, Natalie Fortier and Andrea Kaneb. Kelly Nye Lengerman and James Ziegler volunteered to be part of the State Plan Committee.

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Lisa would like anyone not currently assigned to a committee to again review their charges and feel free to reach out to the chairs to get more info on the committee's work and commitment that interest them.

Regarding the **State Plan Committee**, Ella McAllister said the SRC had been very active in the development of the state plan in the past. She gave an overview of the process --- the first part is pre-print, second part is narrative and the CSPD is done every four years, updated at the two-year mark. As we are due for an update in 2024, the process needs to begin in this fall to make deadline.

**Policy Committee:** Ella mentioned that several new policies are going out for public comment, as well as revisions/procedure amendment to existing policy. It is hoped to have these implemented in June of this year, so timelines are quick. They are:

## New Policy

- Internal Controls
- Professional Development
- Security Awareness & Training Policy

## Revision and/or Amendments

- Comprehensive Transition Programs
- Amendment to Waiver Procedure
- Updates on Cost Containment (hearing aid and post-secondary)

**Old Business/New Business:** The Institute on Disability is sponsoring an event on "Strengthening Meaningful Person-Centered Supports" at the Holliday Inn in Concord on May 31<sup>st</sup>. The day is geared towards individuals with disabilities, family members, advocates, professionals, and policy makers. The seminar will be run twice, once in the afternoon and again in the evening with virtual options available. The event is free, but registration is required.

VRNH is having an all-day staff meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup> at the National Guard Training Center in Pembroke. SRC members are invited to attend if interested. We are hoping to have a barbeque potluck lunch with team building exercises during the noon hour.

As no further business was left to discuss a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 pm.

The next meeting of the SRC will be:

**June 22, 2023 (rescheduled to July 13, 2023)**

**1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**

**Room 100 Walker Building & ZOOM option**

**21 South Fruit Street, Concord, NH, 03301**