

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

---

## NH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### MEETING MINTUES

June 23, 2022

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

**ZOOM Teleconference Meeting**

**Attendees:** Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Vice-Chair, Ben Adams, Lorrie Ripley, Holly Cadwallader, Dawn Breault, Courtney Lockwood, Brandy Pappas, Lisa Gerrard, Kimm Phillips, Natalie Fortier, Kelly Nye-Lengerman, Maureen O'Donnell, Dawn Breault, Heidi Duprey

**Members Excused:** Christopher Purington, Lauri Jean Pevear, Andrea Kanab

**Staff:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz, Sue Roma, Ella McAllister, Dee Clanton, Bill Gaffney

**Prospective Member:** Scott Lagos

**Interpreters:** Maura Fay and Rachel Farrell

The meeting of the SRC was called to order by Vice-Chair Rodriguez-Legendre at 1:03 pm. Chair Purington could not attend today as he is out of state on business.

A roll call was made of those present, and the agenda was reviewed. Scott Lagos, a prospective new member representing business and industry was introduced and welcomed to the SRC. He is Chief Operating Officer of Morgan Records Management in Manchester, NH and a 2022 winner of the New Hampshire Business Leadership Awards.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the SRC meeting of April 28, 2022, was approved with the following amendment offered by Kimm Phillips: On page three under the section "CSNA" add "PIC is offering to provide outreach effort in support of families to ICI as they seek participation to learn about their needs and experiences with VR".

**Report of the Director:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz gave a brief update on where the agency is with finances. We are focusing on expending our FY-21 grant, which needs to be fully expended before September 30<sup>th</sup>. We currently have our full FY-22 grant available as well. It is anticipated that we will be sending back approximately 2.5 million as overall spending is down. The good news is that we are researching ways to help our business partners through contract dollars. VR is on track to meet our match requirements.

In terms of personnel, last quarter 12 staff members were hired or promoted from within. Three rehab counselors have recently been hired in our Nashua, Portsmouth, and Manchester offices. As the State of NH has a 20% vacancy rate, we feel we are fortunate to get our vacant positions filled. We are still recruiting for supervisors for our Nashua and Manchester offices. Counselors in these offices are being supervised by other regional office staff in the interim. So far it is working out well, but we are looking forward to having a full slate on board, so staff are not stretched too thin when filling in the gaps.

Several strategies are being developed to help our counselors manage their caseloads as we deal with staff shortages. They include:

- Implementation of the virtual assistant software, SARA, which will connect with our caseload management system to reach out to customers taking care of routine tasks to free up counselor time.

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

---

- Development of a six-month pilot program with the University of STOUT for our Manchester, Portsmouth, and Nashua offices to assist with intake of new referrals for eligibility assessment. The Rehab Tech's in these offices will be sending referral information directly to STOUT. STOUT in turn will obtain the documentation necessary for eligibility determination including priority of service categorization. It is anticipated that we will have more consistent and timely eligibility determinations. STOUT averages 23 days versus the 60 days VRNH does currently.

- "VR 101 Training" for all staff in the agency. Lisa expects to put out an RFP during the next quarter to get this accomplished.

- Vendor Management: This was a large finding of our LBA audit and will be a large project to undertake here in NH. Staff are currently looking at the process followed in Texas and are looking to perhaps replicate it here in NH if feasible.

**OVERVIEW OF TSG WORK ON AUDIT:** Lisa introduced Bill Gaffney, who has been with VR since 2016 and working as a counselor in our Manchester office. He has recently been hired as the contract manager in Central Office but has continued to work both his counselor job and the contracts manager position until a replacement counselor is hired. He and Lisa gave an update on where we are with the work *The Stephen's Group* has accomplished to date to address the audit findings.

We are entering the last phase of the contract with TSG, having worked with them a full year. In the beginning of the contract, they did a complete assessment of the agency meeting with staff and stakeholders. The contract looked at six areas named in the audit:

- Governance: Overall structure of internal controls, is 60% complete
- Fiscal is 75% complete
- Eligibility – hard to put a percent on where we are but feels we are considerably complete
- Plan Development – 65% complete
- Authorization & Payment – 50% complete
- Case Closure – 70% complete.

The SRC will be included in the distribution of the overview of the final report once this contract wraps up.

**CAP Update:** Lorrie Ripley announced that there are currently 706 Stable accounts open in NH. For the benefit of new members, she explained that the Stable Program is the NH state version of the ABLE federal legislation that allows individuals with disabilities to establish tax advantaged savings accounts without jeopardizing their eligibility for public benefits. To be eligible individuals must have a disability onset before the age of 26, although there is some movement to increase that to 46 on the federal side.

CAP cases are down while calls to Lorrie's office are not. She is seeing an increase in calls specifically in the transition area.

Lorrie was very excited to be part of a meeting with Deb Robinson of the Philbrook Adult Transitional Housing program (PATH), a 16-bed transitional housing program for people coming out of New Hampshire Hospital. There was discussion of having VR going in to do a presentation of the benefits to those who may be eligible to get involved in the VR Program. Lorrie offered to assist with benefit counseling. Talks are preliminary but it is felt that we can have a large impact on the people in this program needing help living independently.

## REPORT OUT FROM COMMITTEES:

- **Membership:** Kimm Phillips reported that since the last full SRC meeting the Membership Committee has worked on a few revisions to the by-laws, a copy of which was included in today's meeting materials. It was felt that clarification was needed to the terms of appointment as well as suggesting that new

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

---

members participate in an orientation to the SRC and participate in at least one subcommittee during their tenure.

Due to the evolution of virtual meeting participation, telephone and virtual voting is included as an allowable alternative to being physically present at a meeting.

The membership committee did not meet the requirement to send out the revisions to the full council for their review ten days prior to having a vote, so the vote to accept will be taken at the September meeting.

Next year when the by-laws are reviewed for revisions the Membership Committee will be looking at parameters around unexcused absences.

Today is Kimm's last meeting so the committee will be looking to add members moving into the next year. Anyone interested please contact Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre or Sue Roma.

- **Policy Committee:** Courtney Lockwood reported that the Policy Committee has completed its review of the 6 sets of revision and comments have been sent to Ella McAllister. It has been a very active committee and will continue until the revisions to the VR Policy Manual are complete. Courtney noted that she is terming off the SRC and her SRC replacement from the Disability Rights Council, James Ziegra, will continue to work on policy. James has worked at the DRC for approximately 8 years and is an expert on employment discrimination and voting rights.
- **State Plan:** Ella McAllister reported as the State Plan Committee has no Chair since Brent Cote's exit. She is hoping to attract new members to this committee and especially one to step into the chair role.

VR's current plan is for three years covering 2020 through 2024. We are currently in the middle of the mid-term updates. VR submitted the 2022 update and things are expected to be quiet on this committee until it reviews the CSNA in the fall and begins planning for development of the next state plan cycle.

Since the last SRC meeting Ella did a training for persons who were interested in learning more about the VR State Plan. She sent the presentation out to the full SRC yesterday and encourages anyone who is interested in joining the committee to review it.

**NEW BUSINESS:** The SRC will hold its annual elections for Chair and Vice Chairs in November. Nominations for officers will be taken till then. If you are interested in serving on the SRC Leadership Committee, feel free to reach out to Isadora or Lisa Hinson-Hatz to get a feel for what it takes to be an officer.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 pm.

The next meeting of the SRC will be:

**September 22, 2022**

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

**Room 100 Walker Building & ZOOM option**

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