

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

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## NH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MINTUES

SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

21 SOUTH FRUIT STREET, ROOM 100, CONCORD, NH

**Attendees:** Charles Saia, Vice Chair, Dawn Breault, Kimm Phillips, Lorrie Ripley, Holly Cadwallader, Mike Rudis, Chris Purington, David Morgan, Cortney Lockwood, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Sandy Hunt, Nancy Rollins, Chair (arriving late).

**Prospective Member:** Santina Thibedeau

**Staff:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz, Ella McAllister, Bill Finn, Jim Piet, Michelle Lapointe, Dee Clanton

**Guest:** Christine Brennan, Deputy Commissioner of Education

**Interpreters:** Laurie Meyer, Patty, Stuart, Jola Leary

**PCA:** Debra Orman

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 am. Introductions were made.

**Update from the Department of Education:** Christine Brennan, Deputy Commissioner was present to address the Council. She is excited about what the team is going to present today. Since the last meeting the Commissioner of Education has met with members of the VR Central Office and asked that for purposes of transparency, a snapshot of data be created. This “Dashboard” contains critical agency milestones that will be tracked weekly to keep VR on course to its goals. An example of this draft dashboard is included in member’s packets for review. Items that will be tracked versus goal include applications, eligibility determinations, plan development, successful closures and rehabilitation rate. Also included within the Dashboard are numbers on the waitlist, including category and credential attainment. It was suggested to include Pre-Ets information on the Dashboard.

The Deputy Commissioner is pleased that Category One of the Waitlist has been opened, which will allow 100 people waiting for services to be served. She thanked staff for being responsive to these customers.

On another note, the VR Agency is currently undergoing a challenge relative to adequate staffing, especially in Rehabilitation Counselor positions. Lisa Hinson-Hatz will address this issue with the Council in her report.

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz welcomed new member, Dawn Breault, to the Council. Dawn, who has a strong background in vocational rehabilitation, comes to us from the public school system.

Lisa noted that the VR Agency is in a rebuilding phase due to downsizing and resignations of staff who are moving on. As a result, staffing is a real concern. Since the layoff of the 17 individuals in the spring, there are currently 5 counselor vacancies due to the hot job market. She is working with HR staff to post these positions ASAP. The vacancies are within the offices hardest hit with the layoffs (MRO, CRO, and PRO). Unfortunately, VR will not be able to open the waitlist to further customers until we have the staff to serve them. Lisa’s goal is to get the staffing levels back to where we can serve all customers.

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It was felt that committee work around OSS and stabilizing staff are important issues and cannot wait till October when the Committee meets again. Dawn Britten has volunteered to work with Lisa on an ad hoc committee on **recruitment and retention**. A Zoom meeting will be scheduled on this topic between Dawn and Lisa and any other person interested (including VR staff) before the next full SRC.

As noted earlier, the agency opened up 100 customers off the waitlist on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The list still has about 1,000 customers still waiting for services. Overall, the process to serve these 100 customers off the waitlist has been smooth. Lisa thanked Ella McAllister and Louise Belanger for providing staff the necessary support they needed in order to make it a seamless process.

The Institute on Disability is offering a new program called "Think College NH". It is an opportunity for individuals with cognitive and intellectual disabilities to engage in college situations. It will be piloted at UNH and Keene State College and participants will earn a certificate of completion at the end of their program. Individuals will be paired up with a mentor on a career pathway. VR has committed to assisting 5 customers to this program.

The budget for the FY 20 and FY 21 season has been completed. Lisa will present the VR side of the Department budget to the SRC on its October 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. She did note that the Commissioner of Education has been very supportive of the program and several line items within the budget have been increased from past years

**REALLOTMENT:** The VR agency put in a request to RSA for reallocation funds in August. The process was explained to the Council. (Detailed information relative to the process is included in members' packets.) In late August we were notified that NH would be receiving \$1.2 million. We have since learned that the Governor has made the decision to use a large portion of this money to fund the Impact Program. Lisa expressed that she had intended to utilize this additional funding to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities on the waitlist.

Nancy Rollins was concerned that the SRC was not consulted regarding the decision to use the reallocated monies to fund the Impact Program and not have the money go to the general VR program. She proposed that this Council consider drafting a letter to the Governor's office to remind him of the statutory role and responsibility that this Council holds. She further suggested that the letter include wording to indicate that the Council is concerned with the decision that was made especially in light of the issues VR faces with OOS and its mission to serve NH citizens with disabilities.

A **motion** was made that a letter be sent to the Governor and included the issues as stated above. This motion passed with three (3) members abstaining (Chris Purrington, Kimm Philips and Dawn Breault).

**FAIR HEARINGS:** This year we have had 8 fair hearing requests, which is more than we have had in a very long time. All 5 formal decisions that were made by the Hearings Officer were in favor of the agency (1 was a combo decision). Several cases were mediated before needing a decision from the hearings officer. All will be reported to RSA in late November via the 722 report.

**CAP Update:** Lorrie Ripley continued discussion about the fair hearings process and her experience from the Client Assistance Program side. She indicated that the process lends itself to constant negotiations and it is not unusual for negotiations to occur right until the time of the fair hearing. As with the VR 722 report submitted to RSA at the end of the year, the CAP is responsible for reporting as

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well. She finds the reporting process helpful in identifying trends that may be occurring in a particular point in time.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Policy & OOS:** This committee last met on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The members of this committee are a mix of agency staff (supervisors/counselors/central office staff) and SRC members in order to hear many perspectives. During the past meeting the waitlist and category numbers were discussed. The group discussed the planned release of the 100 individuals from the waitlist and concerns/expectations for agency staff relative to serving these additional customers. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for mid-October (date TBA).
- **SBVI:** Bill Finn reported in Peter Darling's absence. The counselor for the blind and visually impaired in the western part of the state retired in March before the OOS took effect. This position remains vacant. SBVI has used approximately \$30,000 in Nesmith fund account monies for support for persons in delayed status who are legally blind.
  - **BEP:** The program took a huge hit in the layoffs as there were only two staff members in the program. At the current time the program is looking at establishing a micro market for the cafeteria and vending locations within the Dept of Safety.
  - The secretary who managed the Registry for the Blind for the state has resigned.
  - Tim Hindman, Coordinator for Blind Services and considered an expert in his field, recently received an award in Utah for his services to persons who are blind and visually impaired. Unfortunately, he has accepted another job out of state working with guide dogs and will be leaving SBVI on November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **IL:** An RFP for services was put out during the summer for the coming year. Three agencies responded (NHD&HH, Brain Injury and GSILF). A decision will be made later this month on the award of this grant.
- **Deaf & Hard of Hearing:** Dee Clanton reported that this committee last met in June. Discussion centered on OOS and its impact on the deaf and hearing impaired community. The committee welcomed a new member and is currently looking for 2 more to recruit. The situation at Gallaudet College and NTID was discussed. The VR Director is scheduled to present at their next meeting in December.
- **Governance/Membership:** It was noted that in examining the current membership list, several members are nearing the end of their first term. The committee needs to know if those going off the first term are interested in serving a second term.
- **Membership:** Committee members Sandy Hunt, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Kim Phillips with Jim Piet as staff liaison have met recently. They are looking at increasing numbers represented in the various SRC composition groups. After indicating there was some confusion as to who is responsible for recruiting new members the Committee committed to work on the recruiting process including a succession plan. An orientation Power Point presentation has been drafted and the training plan for new members will include expectations for new members. A question was raised whether a person serving on the Council could represent more than one composition group at the same time. Lisa reached out to the national SRC organization during the meeting and was answered promptly. No, they cannot.

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**ELECTION RESULTS:** Elections, via paper ballot, for SRC Officers for the coming year were held with the following results:

Chuck Saia was elected Chair of the Committee;

Holly Cadwallader was elected First Vice Chair;

Chris Purington was elected Second Vice Chair.

Nancy Rollins expressed her willingness to continue to serve on the Executive Committee as Immediate Past Chair for the coming year.

**CSAVR:** Lisa gave an update of happenings within CSAVR as she was not able to set up a teleconference with the Washington office for today. Dues to CSAVR are in the upcoming budget. She would like to see the dues for the past year reinstated as it is of great benefit to NH to be able to get information from other states. She will reach out to CSAVR to see if a teleconference can be scheduled for the October SRC meeting in order to update the Council.

**NCAB:** Carol Pankow is the current President. This agency works very closely with CSAVR. Meetings are scheduled at the same time as CSAVR, overlapping by a day. Bill Finn gave an update and talked about the differences between combined VR agencies and separate Blind agencies/commissions within states (NH is a Combined State).

**Comprehensive State Needs Assessment (CSNA).** Ella Mcallister developed and presented a PowerPoint on the process New Hampshire follows in developing its comprehensive needs assessment. The CSNA drives the State Plan Process. Ella will get a copy of her presentation out to SRC members and is looking for volunteers if anyone is interested in assisting in the process and serving on the State Plan Committee.

**Goals & Priorities:** members are encouraged to review the most recent CSNA and State Plan and discuss at the SRC next meeting what the agency needs to focus on and how to organize and proceed.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes of the SRC meetings of May 1, May 4 and June 26, 2018 were reviewed and approved with the following correction: Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre's name is spelled incorrectly on the meeting minutes of May 4, 2018 and she asks it be corrected.

## **FUTURE SRC MEETINGS:**

The following dates have been scheduled for future dates:

Oct 30, 2018

January 24, 2019 (snow date January 31)

April 25, 2019

June 27, 2019

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Moving forward, the process for the future SRC meetings will be for the subcommittees to meet in the morning and then report out at the full SRC meeting at noon. Subcommittees will be scheduled to meet beginning at 10:30. If anyone wishes to see an issue discussed, please email it to Lisa, Chuck, Holly Cadwallader or Chris Purington for inclusion on the agenda.

Motion made to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting ended at 2:40 pm.