

# NH State Rehabilitation Council

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## NH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### MEETING MINTUES

April 22, 2021

#### ZOOM Teleconference Meeting

**Attendees:** Christopher Purington, Chair, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Vice-Chair, Lorrie Ripley, Holly Cadwallader, Dawn Breault, Kristin McGraw, Courtney Lockwood, Brent Cote, David Morgan, Lauri Jean Pevear, Kimm Phillips, Carrie Dudley, Ben Adams, Lisa Gerrard, Brandy Pappas

**Staff:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz, Sue Roma Ella McAllister, Karen Martin-Brown, Dan Frye, Tina Greco, Scott Vittner, Amy Clark. Dee Clanton

**Interpreters:** Laurie Meyer, Jola Lindstron

The meeting of the SRC was called to order by Chair Purington at 1:03 pm. The Covid-19 continuing pandemic necessitated today's meeting occur remotely via Zoom.

A roll call was made of those present and the agenda sent out to members previously was reviewed.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the SRC meeting of January 22, 2021 were approved unanimously.

In terms of announcements, Chris Purington stated that he has left GSIL and is now the Chief Operating Officer of Greater Nashua Mental Health overseeing many service areas, including marketing.

**New Member Introduction:** Brandy Pappas and Lisa Gerrard are in attendance today. Brandy is representing the State Department of Education, Special Education Bureau, where she works as their NHSEIS Coordinator. Prior to moving to Special Education, she was a Rehabilitation Counselor in NHVR's Concord Regional Office. She has a history of advocacy of persons with disabilities and has a M.Ed. both in Education and in Behavioral Health.

Lisa Gerrard comes to us from the Work Opportunities Council where she works as the WIOA Program Administrator where she began this position in October. Prior to her current position, she spent 17 years in DDHS in program development/implantation. Her background includes a Master's Degree in Organizational Psychology. She looks forward to serving on the Council.

Both representatives of the WOC and Special Ed are required roles of the Council.

For the benefit of the new members, Council members introduced themselves and gave a brief bio on their backgrounds.

**Member Appointment:** Maureen O'Donnell's name has been put forth for membership by GSIL. Maureen has more than 25 years' experience in human services and has a lot of relevant experience for council membership including a role in GSIL's "Earn & Learn" program.

A motion was made to accept the nomination of Maureen O'Donnell and forward her name to the Governor's office for official appointment. This motion passed unanimously.

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Jo Moncher has retired from her position at DHHS so her seat on the SRC is vacant. Vacancies also exist from the Advisory Councils on Deafness and Hard of Hearing and the Blind & Visually Impaired. Work is underway to identify a representative from both these committees for SRC non-voting membership.

**Report of the Director:** For the past several months, Lisa Hinson-Hatz has been sending out a monthly SRC briefing and is looking for feedback from members to see if it is a helpful resource for them to keep updated on agency matters. The last briefing highlighted the state audit, including a link to the full report. Today Lisa is sending out a “cheat sheet” to use when reviewing the report. She notes that 6 of the 46 observations have been completed. The remaining will be managed by a quality assurance vendor that will be helping the VR administrative team to develop internal controls around those observations. The contract for the QA vendor is being developed and is expected to go to Governor and Council in early June. An update of the vendor and what they will be tasked with will be given at the SRC June meeting.

Along with the agency becoming paperless, Lisa pleased to announce that the VR agency is almost fully staffed. There are less than a handful of positions remaining to be filled. Consequently, there is a lot of new staff training being conducted.

Work continues on approximately 20 contracts right now, 10 of which are with Area Agencies to hire either a Work Incentives Counselor or Job Developer, depending on need. It is hoped to have them all approved by G&C in late May/early June. Lisa is very excited to get together a community of practice for these statewide. The goal of the program is to increase work incentives and choose employment.

Lisa is writing the 2 year contract this week for the CSNA. She will make sure that the SRC is part of the kick off meeting.

The contract for the customer satisfaction survey is scheduled for the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of Governor and Council. Once approved, a meeting will be scheduled with the vendor to go over logistics and begin working on development of the survey instrument. As noted in previous Council meetings, several members have indicated an interest in being part of this project.

The Marketing Group is working on some videos on how to reach out to CAP and what the CAP does for VR. The idea is to send a link out to our customers for viewing, play them on social media as well as having them imbedded on VR’s website after the website update. All videos will be captioned.

**SBVI Presentation:** Daniel Frye, Administrator of NH’s Services for Blind & Visually Impaired (SBVI) program was in attendance today, along with Scott Vittner, Deputy Administrator of SBVI and Amy Clark, Program Coordinator for Sight Services for Independent Living to give the SRC an in-depth overview of services available through their program. Dan noted that studies have shown that visually impaired persons that go through a program of services specific to the blind have better results.

In New Hampshire, Vocational Rehabilitation is a combined agency. SBVI has 3 specific VR Counselors that cover all cases throughout the state where an individual’s primary disability is blindness or vision impairment. Services provided to this population include adjustment to blindness/vision loss counseling, low vision evaluations and trainings, orientation and mobility evaluations and training, vision rehab evaluations and training as well as assistive technology evaluations and training. Blindness specific training also allow the recipients to live independently.

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Sight Services for Independent Living is a program designed to provide independent living services to older (55 and older) individuals with severe visual impairments that make competitive employment difficult to obtain but where independent living goals are possible. Services provided to this population are low vision services and aids, communication skills training, O&M services, assistive tech services, counseling and peer support groups, information and referral, rehab teaching and daily living skills training.

The Business Enterprises Program was begun by federal law in 1936 and provides persons who are blind employment and self-support opportunities through the operation of vending on federal and other select properties. In NH, 7 Randolph Sheppard operators manage 7 vending routes, 1 cafeteria and 2 micro markets on several federal, state or county properties. This includes vending operations on all NH Welcome Rest Areas on highways. Licensed operators own their own businesses and the public has the opportunity to see visually impaired people to operate in responsible roles.

SBVI also operates a Registry for Legal Blindness for the state. Those on the registry are entitled to certain services such as free fishing licenses, property tax exemption and discounts for public transportation. A separate registry exists for those with visual impairments allowing for discounts on public transportation services.

Other newly approved contracts and grants managed by the SBVI unit include:

- Inter-disciplinary Collaborative Engagement (ICE-NH) (Pre-ETS)
- Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES-NH) (Pre-ETS)
- Two Access Technology Instruction programs, sponsored with Part B Independent Living Funds
- Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Access Technology workshops and Silver Retreats

SRC members who have questions about any of SBVI services are encouraged to reach out to Dan or any member of his staff.

## REPORT OUT FROM COMMITTEES:

- **Membership:** Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre and Kimm Phillips reported out from the Membership Committee, which meets each month on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Last month Membership reviewed the SRC membership list and what vacancies exist. The by-laws were reviewed to see if any changes need to be made. An orientation for new members is offered to anyone who would like to attend.
- **Policy:** Lisa Hinson-Hatz and Courtney Lockwood reported that the Policy Committee has not met since the last full SRC meeting. Updated part 1 and 2 policies will go live on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Courtney expects the committee will meet again before the June meeting to review other policies that are in need of updating/revision.

Lisa briefly reviewed the policy dashboard for the week ending April 18, 2021. Days to eligibility are now being tracked due to an audit finding. Lisa and her Leadership Team will watch this over time.

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- **State Plan:** Brent Cote reported that not much has occurred with this committee the past few months but expects more activity in the coming year as updates to the State Plan occur. Lisa Hinson-Hatz is working with her Leadership Team to development measureable data points. Once these data points are put into a usable format they will be forwarded to the committee. Brent thanked Lisa and the leadership committee for their work and feels the data points will help this committee in its work going forward.

**Old Business/New Business:** It was requested that an update on the CAP program return to future agendas as a standing item and to include a brief update on ongoing items, requests for fair hearings, resolutions, etc. Laurie Ripley asks that any specific questions about the program to be sent to her.

Final nominations for the Employer Leadership awards are open until April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Seeing no further business to discuss, a motion was made, and approved to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the SRC will be:

**June 24, 2021**

**Location: TBA**

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