

NH State Rehabilitation Council

NH State Rehabilitation Council Minutes

June 26, 2018

21 South Fruit Street, Room 100, Concord, NH

Attendance: Nancy Rollins, Chair, Charles Saia, Vice Chair, Holly Rioux, Peter Darling, Kimm Phillips, Lorrie Ripley, David Morgan, Theresa Willkomm, Courtney Lockwood, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Michael Rudis, Maureen Tracey, Darren Beattie

Prospective Member: Dawn Breault

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

Interpreters: Laurie Meyer, Shawna Chrostowski

PCA: Kate Kanney

Guests: Frank Edelblut, Commissioner of Education, Christine Brennan, Deputy Commissioner

The meeting began at 9:00 am. Introductions were made.

The Commissioner of Education wants an ongoing relationship with the SRC in order to serve our constituents in New Hampshire. He is invited to this meeting today to update the SRC on how the Department of Education is working through the reorganization process and its effect on the VR Bureau.

Since the last Council meeting, the Commissioner has met with the SRC leadership and other interested parties to open up dialogue and deal with issues identified over the past several months. He recapped the funding issues of earlier in the year that has brought us to this point. Since the Council last met, twenty VR staff have been laid off. The good news is that most of the staff affected by the reduction in force have found employment elsewhere in the state with the help of the DOE HR personnel.

The Bureau is working to find a balance between resources and serving the needs of its customers with the ultimate goal of serving all customers and exiting out of the order of selection. Due to a model that was developed by staff of the Bureau and the Department's Business Office, we can see some progress as more persons who are categorized as MSD will be opened up for service on October 1, 2018. It is hoped that those customers within Categories 2 will be released within 2 or 3 months following October 1st. Release of level 3 will be more difficult to accomplish. The Commissioner welcomes feedback by the Council for ideas in ways of serving level 3 customers in a more timely fashion.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR: Lisa Hinson-Hatz reviewed the information contained within member's packets. Included at this meeting are Binders containing Vocational Rehabilitation's Financial and Operational Plan for 2018, along with supporting documentation that will change over time. Lisa hopes the information contained within these binders will be a living document that the SRC members will find helpful while serving on the Council. Lisa mentioned that the Council will be looking at the information in more depth at future meetings. The goal is to keep the SRC informed and the agency as open and transparent as possible.

Lisa reviewed the OOS model that was developed by VR staff in concert with the DOE business office. The model works by data changes and "levers" being pulled, such as number of filled caseload carrying positions, persons served (application date and SD category), and allocation changes. The data is updated each week so the information will always be current. Lisa has also shared this tool with other VR agencies currently in an OOS as nothing like this exists in other states. The model will be updated and sent out monthly to Council members so we can see the changes that occur.

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The Pre-ETS Plan was reviewed. The agency has 3 ways pre-ets services are provided in the state by GSIL and Strafford Learning Center. The plan details how this will change in the months ahead. Since the financial crises NHVR took a look at how these services could be provided via an internal model vs. externally. Five Student Transition Specialists will be hired to cover the state and provide pre-ets services to potentially eligible students. Also, current VR counselors will allocate a percentage of their time to working with students.

Regarding a concern that was raised relative to the number of schools covered by the Transition Specialists, it was suggested that the agency pay careful attention to the number of students served in each of the areas by the five counselors and recognize the need to be flexible should changes be warranted.

Lisa gave an in-depth presentation on what has occurred in the agency since 5/1/18 (highlights are included in the power point presentation within Member's packets). Lisa was pleased to report that 12 of the staff members affected by the reduction in force have found employment. The agency continues to be in contact with the staff members still seeking employment to help them with job leads, references, etc.

A motion was made that the SRC recommend to the Commissioner of Education, via letter, that the Department maintain the vacated positions in the budget until such time as funding is available. **This motion was approved unanimously.**

CAP UPDATE: Lorrie Ripley reported that CAP has seen a large up tic in calls since the OOS letter went out to VR customers. As of this date the calls are leveling off a bit but her office is still fairly busy. As well, she reports that there are substantial fair hearings in process and an increase in general disgruntledness with clients going to CAP. VR needs to be aware that customers will not hesitate to call the Governor's office and stressed the importance of transparency from VR at all stages of the VR process. It is important that customers know about CAP at the onset of services and not wait to be given information on CAP until there is a problem.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Policy – The Policy Committee last met on June 12th where it reviewed the agency data current as of June 6, 2018. The new data for the period April 1 through May 31 on the master budget was reviewed at this meeting as well. Due to the agency entering into an OOS, the Policy Committee is requesting additional program and fiscal reports each month. It was agreed that these reports would be forwarded to committee members by the 12 of each month.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee – Dee Clanton reported that this committee met recently and discussed the OOS. It was noted that there is a lot of misinformation within the D&HH community regarding OOS. Lisa Hatz agreed to attend the September meeting of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee and provide more in depth information on OOS.

Services for Blind & Visually Impaired: Bill Finn reported that this committee last met on April 18th. The committee was updated on a variety of issues, including State & Federal Legislation, the Business Enterprise Program, SSIL and happenings within VR, including the OOS.

SILC: The agency liaison to the State Independent Living Council has retired and Bill Finn will be taking over this responsibility. The next meeting of this Committee is scheduled for June 27th.

David Morgan from Future in Site spoke relative to service provision to customers of VR who find themselves in delayed status after applying for services. His thoughts are that the VR OOS situation can be an excellent opportunity for agencies to share resources between each other to help individuals so they don't fall through the cracks. He encourages the members of this committee to reach out to VR and each other in order to help fill the gap so services to those in need do not stop.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the October 31, 2017 meeting. This motion passed unanimously. Nancy Rollins asks that members of the committee review the minutes of both the May

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1st and May 4th meetings of the SRC prior to the next meeting. Approval of these minutes will be sought at the September retreat.

The SRC Retreat is scheduled for September 27th in Room 100 of the Walker Building at 21 South Fruit Street in Concord.

The Governance Committee will meet in August to come up with a slate of officers for Chair and Vice-Chair. If interested in running for offices, please email Nancy Rollins or Lisa Hinson-Hatz to be added to the slate. It is noted that in 2019, about 1/3 of the membership of this committee will be going off this committee. The membership committee will present further information about SRC membership at the retreat.

A motion was made and approved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 11:45 a.m.