

Draft
Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes
May 6, 2024

Attendance

Members Present

Ceci Hartke, Vice Chair
Adam Robson
David Carey
Melissa Wojtak
Paula Seanez
Kristen Mackey

Members Absent

Lisa Livesay
Diana Meza

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Linda Fischer
Mathew Nevarez
Crystal Poetz
Stephanie Johnson

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Ceci Hartke, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of March 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Adam Robson moved to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2024 SRC Full Council meeting. Melissa Wojtak seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

This item was tabled.

RSA Administrator's Report

Kristen Mackey stated that RSA had negotiated the new performance indicators of employment (second year after exit), employment (fourth quarter after exit), median earnings (second quarter after exit), credential attainment rate, measurable skills gain, and retention with same employer. David Carey inquired whether RSA was able to capture whether a client was employed several years after leaving VR. Kristen Mackey stated RSA only tracked client employment data up to 6 quarters after exiting VR.

Kristen Mackey stated the VR State Plan was in the process of being updated and finalized and she would offer updates on RSA's activities surrounding the council's input and recommendations to the State Plan. Ms. Mackey stated the council had recommended that RSA increase awareness of the VR program and to increase outreach. She noted that RSA had increased outreach efforts at events and had seen an increase in referrals. She added that RSA had also identified a marketing company that would be developing marketing materials for the VR, Business Enterprise Program (BEP), and the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) programs. Kristen Mackey stated the council had recommended RSA identify any barriers to VR services, to which RSA was providing services to clients on a hybrid basis and offered vendors a distance rate if they needed to travel more than 50 miles to meet a client. Ceci Hartke inquired whether VR was seeing an increase in younger clients. Kristen Mackey stated that with the implementation of the Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), RSA did see an increase in younger VR clients, although currently about 49% were under 25. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was working with the University of Arizona Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities (UCEED) on a pilot program to provide customized employment to 2-3 clients that were DDD and VR clients in June.

Kristen Mackey stated that due to budget constraints, all state programs

were given the directive that they would be allowed to fill open positions, but they could not grow programs. She added that RSA would also have to reduce spending by 4% for the year and by 2% for the following 2 years. Kristen Mackey stated RSA received a Federal monitoring visit in February, in which the areas of concern were Federal management, data integrity, TSW contracts and the distinction between Transition services and Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) services. She noted that she did not anticipate receiving the report soon, although she would share the results with the council. Ms. Mackey stated that RSA was able to hire a supervisor for the Employment Specialist Unit, although they would have to wait to hire more Employment Specialists. She added that RSA would also be holding an RSA staff conference in October as part of National Disabilities Awareness month. Adam Robson stated that when RSA was working with the marketing company, to please consider marketing to the behavioral health population as well. Mr. Robson inquired whether RSA had to remain at a certain number of staff, or the number of positions. Kristen Mackey stated RSA could not hire above the current number of staff. Adam Robson stated that if RSA received an increase in referrals due to increased marketing, would the program be able to hire additional staff. Kristen Mackey stated that in the past, RSA could make a special request for additional staff, although she was unsure regarding the current process.

Mr. Nevarez stated the Ombudsman's Unit continued to review the appeals and fair hearings and to track any carryover cases, new cases, if cases were resolved and the outcomes of the cases. He noted that currently, there were 17 informal reviews, 11 mediations, 7 fair hearings, and 1 Director's review. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman's Unit continued to meet with RSA leadership and to identify ways to support staff in the appeals process. Ceci Hartke inquired whether there were any trends in the appeals process. Mathew Nevarez stated the overall number was low, although there were some cases regarding self-employment and service delays. He added that when the Ombudsman's Unit met with RSA leadership, they discussed any trends and any ways to support staff or provide additional training.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Adam Robson stated that Lisa Livesay had previously invited a Federal RSA representative to attend an SRC meeting during Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) Federal monitoring visit, but they were not able to meet at that time.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

David Carey stated SILC continued to provide Emergency Preparedness training across the state and provided monthly webinars. Mr. Carey stated SILC members would be planning for next year's SPIL and council members were welcome to attend the planning meeting or participate in any upcoming SILC activities.

American Indian VR Project

Paula Seanez stated that she would be attending the upcoming Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Conference in June, in which 6 tribes would be speaking and performing. She noted that council members were welcome to attend and could visit the website <https://canarinc.org/> for more information. Paula Seanez the Commissioner visited New Mexico and met with tribal VR programs. She noted that tribal VR program staff expressed their concern with the grant requirements and deadlines, which were difficult to complete. Paula Seanez stated that some tribes would be moving into a general VR program, although there was the need to retain services to disabled individuals. Ms. Seanez stated that when the Commissioner met with the Hopi, they expressed their concern with expending funds while case numbers were high, and it was difficult to retain staff.

She added that tribal VR would be working with UCEED to provide Transition services and work-based learning services to individuals with disabilities. She noted that Project Search had not started offering services in Arizona, although they were providing services in New Mexico. Linda Fischer inquired regarding the Commissioner's response regarding the grant funding challenges. Paula Seanez stated the Commissioner listened and took comments but did not offer additional feedback.

CAP

Linda Fischer stated that CAP had received clients concerned with the self-employment process and had to present them to the Self-Employment Committee. She noted the committee did not meet often and some clients would have to wait to hear back from the committee or to provide more information. Ms. Fischer added that some clients had expressed concerns

with the appeals process and inquired whether the Program Review Committee could continue to review the redacted Fair Hearing decisions. Adam Robson noted that he and Linda Fischer could work on reviewing the Fair Hearing decisions in preparation for the next meeting.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on August 8, 2024 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Adam Robson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Paula Seanez seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.