

**Draft**

# **Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

## **Full Council Meeting Minutes**

August 8, 2024

### **Attendance**

#### **Members Present**

Ceci Hartke, Vice Chair

David Carey

Diana Gomez Reyes

Paula Seanez

Kristen Mackey

#### **Members Absent**

Adam Robson

Melissa Wojtak

#### **Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

#### **Guests Present**

Linda Fischer

Mathew Nevarez

Crystal Poetz

Stephanie Johnson

### **Minutes**

#### **Call to Order and Introductions**

## **Approval of May 6, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Lisa Livesay moved to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2024 SRC Full Council meeting. David Carey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

## **SRC Chairperson's Report**

Lisa Livesay stated the Utah Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program had been under scrutiny recently for not providing adequate Transition services to youth and for not adhering to competitive integrated employment requirements. She noted it highlighted that Transition services and Employment First services were being reviewed at a national level and it the SRC should be aware of those efforts.

## **RSA Administrator's Report**

Kristen Mackey stated that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was still under a head count cap, although the Department of Economic Security (DES) had authorized RSA to hire 3 VRCs a month. She noted the agency had about 40 vacancies in other positions, and she had been in discussions regarding how to expand the program. Ms. Mackey stated the Centralized Purchasing Unit had launched and had developed a standard work, which allowed for better tracking and distribution of workloads. Kristen Mackey stated she had not received the Federal monitoring report, although the agency was still working on modifying policies to align with Federal language and would likely need to modify contract language as well. Kristen Mackey stated she did not anticipate a reallocation of funds as the agency had used the 15% set aside for Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS). She noted that as of 2024, many states VR programs would be flat funded, which meant that states would be given a flat amount of money each year. Ms. Mackey stated that Arizona was one of the few states to be on a formula grant, which allowed for a slight increase each year to account for the cost of living. Lisa Livesay inquired whether it would be appropriate for the SRC or partners to advocate for VR funding. Kristen Mackey stated the SRC could

develop a letter to be shared with the Governor's Office about the impact of funding on VR services. David Carey inquired whether RSA performed exit interviews when staff left the agency. Kristen Mackey stated that HR performed exit interviews, and most staff left due to personal reasons, or they were relocating to another state. She noted that some staff did leave for other or better positions, but not as many.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to move forward with the new case management system, although there had been some delays on the vendor side, and RSA would likely have to push back the launch date. Ms. Mackey stated the customized employment pilot was going great, and 3 providers had gone through training, and she anticipated about 1-2 clients would be assigned to a CRP. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was planning for the All-Staff Conference on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the Talking Stick Resort and was working on finalizing the agenda. Ceci Hartke inquired regarding the average case load of VRCs. Kristen Mackey stated that VRCs did have higher caseloads recently, including VRCs that worked with specialty populations. Linda Fischer inquired whether VRCs were permitted to work from other states. Kristen Mackey stated that some staff were permitted to work from other states temporarily if they had extenuating circumstances. Lisa Livesay inquired whether it would be beneficial for the SRC to develop an impact statement regarding the need for more VR staff. Kristen Mackey stated an impact statement regarding the need for more staff could be helpful. She noted that RSA had submitted the SRC recruitment flyer to the Public Information Officer to update the form and graphics.

Mr. Nevarez stated that he had the final quarter report for the council, and he would provide a more comprehensive report at the next Full Council meeting. Mathew Nevarez stated there had been 21 informal reviews with 11 cases upheld, 9 overturned and 1 was pending. He noted there were 14 mediations, with 8 written, 2 pending, and 4 resolved prior. Mathew Nevarez stated there was typically a 50/50 split and he did not have any concerns with the number of mediations. Ceci Hartke inquired whether there were other ways for clients to be notified about their appeals rather than letters. Kristen Mackey stated VR staff would attempt to email and/or call clients prior to sending letters although the letters were required as documentation. Lisa Livesay inquired whether clients could give their preferred method for

contact of their referral form. Kristen Mackey stated the referral form did ask for a client's preferred form of contact. She noted that often clients' emails or addresses would change, and VR staff would attempt to get their updated information from other organizations or vendors if possible. Linda Fischer noted that some clients indicated that secure emails could be difficult to open and inquired if those were always necessary. Kristen Mackey stated that it was not recommended due to any personal information that could be shared. She noted that she could review the types of information that were considered private, so VR staff could potentially send information without using secure email. Paula Seanez inquired whether the Ombudsman's Unit noticed any trends in mediations. Mathew Nevarez stated the fair hearings tended to be more diverse. Mr. Nevarez stated there had been 8 fair hearings, 3 had been resolved prior, 1 was pending, 2 were in the favor of the client, and one Director's review had been upheld. He noted that fair hearings had been scheduled quickly, likely due to the ALJ office being fully staffed. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman's Unit continued to attend region level meetings, provide appeals updates, respond to DES Ombudsman's complaints, and provide appeals workshops. Linda Fischer inquired how the DES Ombudsman received complaints. Mathew Nevarez stated the DES Ombudsman was a centralized email, and they would be distributed to the appropriate program.

## **VR Client Survey Report**

Lindsey Powers provided a VR Client Satisfaction Survey report on Program Year 2023 and would provide a quarterly report at upcoming meetings. Linda Fischer inquired whether the client satisfaction survey results were shared with Federal partners. Kristen Mackey stated the survey results were shared with Federal RSA as part of the SRC Annual Report. David Carey inquired how the survey was distributed to VR clients. Lindsey Powers stated the survey was distributed electronically through Survey Monkey. Linda Fischer inquired whether the number of clients that responded was typical. Lindsey Powers stated the number of clients that responded was typically about the same each quarter. Kristen Mackey noted that nationally, the number of clients that responded to the client satisfaction surveys was somewhat low, and a 15% response rate was considered good.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Program Review Committee**

Linda Fischer stated the Program Review Committee reviewed the most recent fair hearing decisions and a lot of the cases were withdrawn or upheld. Ms. Fischer noted that one ALJ used terms incorrectly, such as IEP and DES Family Assistance program, which likely indicated he did not understand the programs. Kristen Mackey stated that she could share that information with the ALJ office.

## **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 had attended the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Conference in June and noted it had been a great collaborative event. She noted that she also attended the IHD Conference, and thanked RSA for their sponsorship of the event, which provided networking and professional development opportunities. Ms. Seanez stated that VR programs had previously needed prior approval for services over \$5000 and it had been increased to \$10,000. Paula Seanez stated the International Project Search had 2 programs in New Mexico and would potentially be in Arizona also. She noted that some tribes were waiting for funding notifications if they were in their 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> award years.

She added that tribal VR continued to work with UCEED to provide Transition services and work-based learning services to individuals with disabilities.

## **CAP**

Linda Fischer stated that CAP had participated in 4 mediations, which had been successful. Ms. Fischer stated the recent African American Disability Conference had been successful, with many sessions that could have been beneficial to VR staff. She noted that CAP would be hiring additional staff, and VR would be notified of any staff changes.

## **Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on November 7, 2024 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

- New Member Resources
- Customized Employment Update

## **Announcements**

Lisa Livesay thanked RSA for all of their support on the IHD Conference, which had been a successful event.

## **Public Comment**

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

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

David Carey motioned to adjourn the meeting. Paula Seanez seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.