

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2022

Attendance

Members Present

Lisa Livesay, Chair
Adam Robson
Dave Cheesman
Ceci Hartke
Judith Castro
David Carey
Paula Seanez

Members Absent

Melissa Wojtak
Diana Meza

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez
Crystal Poetz
Jami Parente
Brandi Coffland
Zane Lambros
Christie Kelly
Debbie Hanlon-CART

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Lisa Livesay, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of August 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Adam Robson moved to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2022 SRC Full Council meeting. Paula Seanez seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

Lisa Livesay stated the council continued to focus on recruiting additional council members and had offered final suggestions regarding the SRC recruitment document. Lisa Livesay stated that once that document had been finalized and checked for accessibility, it would go out to the council members to begin distributing. Ms. Livesay encouraged council members to distribute the information during any events or to post to social media sites if appropriate. Adam Robson suggested the document be sent to Tim Stump, Employment Coordinator, and any other individuals working with employers and businesses.

RSA Administrator's Report

Brandi Coffland stated RSA chose a new case management system, CM Suite, Informed, which would replace System 7. Brandi Coffland stated RSA would be implementing the new case management system for the next 24 months for VR and Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB), and BEP would be implemented later. Ms. Coffland stated the Department of Economic Security (DES) was in the process of developing a Transition document for when the new Governor was elected. Brandi Coffland noted that RSA had a 20% vacancy rate for staff, and RSA continued to work with HR to increase pay to recruit and retain staff as well as posting jobs outside of the state HR system. Brandi Coffland stated that she and Kristen Mackey attended the CSAVR and NCSRV Conferences, which discussed that approximately 336 million in Federal funds were returned nationally and what were the barriers to spending the funds. Ms. Coffland stated that RSA was required to spend 15% of funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), and the

Transition Team was providing outreach to schools and families on increasing those services. Ceci Hartke inquired regarding the marketing of Pre-ETS services. Brandi Coffland stated Transition Counselors had information that they could share with schools and families, and staff were able to provide in-person services in schools, which would hopefully increase Pre-ETS services. Lisa Livesay stated the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) was working closely with the Transition Team to identify the current understanding of Pre-ETS. She noted that ADE would be establishing a focus group to explore the current materials and to provide professional development training at conferences and events. Paula Seanez inquired whether other states used the new case management system and whether there were any challenges in using the system. Brandi Coffland stated that other states were using the case management system, and that several IT consultants would be aiding in implementing the system. Lisa Livesay inquired whether there would be a decrease in the Federal funds due to having to return previous Federal funding. Brandi Coffland stated she was unaware of a decrease in funds, although she would request that information from Kristen Mackey.

Jami Parente stated the Policy Unit had received a decrease in inquiries compared to the previous quarter, and she would provide an update on that data. Ms. Parente noted the Policy Unit had distributed a survey to all RSA staff, regarding the usability of the Policy Manual, and had also welcomed a new Policy Specialist. Jami Parente stated the Policy Unit continued to identify gaps and any information that was not included in the Policy Manual. Jami Parente stated the most popular inquiries were regarding post-secondary education and training, general services, and about SharePoint. Ms. Parente stated that inquiries regarding post-secondary education and training remained high, and the Policy Unit tried to break down the inquiries to train staff. She noted the upcoming changes to the Policy Manual would be the removal of the post-employment services policy on December 30th. Jami Parente stated the quarterly updates for Quarter Two would launch on December 30th also, although there were no major changes. Jami Parente stated the upcoming projects would include providing technical assistance to the field offices, the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Policy Manual would be updated, the Policy Unit would begin cross training for the development of training materials and monthly touchpoints with the Ombudsman's Office.

Adam Robson inquired whether a client would need to reapply for VR services if they required additional assistance after they had been successfully closed. Jami Parente stated that WIOA changed the regulations, although RSA was educating staff that 90 days was the minimum period. Judith Castro stated that staff struggled to understand post-employment service and interpreting the policy. Jami Parente stated that post-employment services did not refer to services included on an IPE. Adam Robson inquired whether the services could be extended past 90 days. Jami Parente stated the Federal regulations stated that 90 days was the minimum so that cases were not closed too soon. Lisa Livesay inquired whether there was a mechanism for removing the focus on the 90 days and not to pressure staff to close cases within 90 days. Jami Parente stated RSA was required to maintain numbers, although she agreed that staff should look at clients holistically and to review the cases case by case. Adam Robson inquired whether the Policy Unit would consider developing an educational document for community partners to understand the process. Jami Parente stated that RSA could consider developing information for the community. Lisa Livesay inquired whether the Policy Unit had reviewed the inquiry statistics and the reasons for the decrease in overall inquiries. Jami Parente stated the Policy Unit could review that information, and that one reason for the decrease could be that staff were able to locate the information within the Policy Manual. Lisa Livesay inquired whether the Policy Unit had looked further into the inquiries regarding post-secondary education and training. Jami Parente stated the Policy Unit was currently reviewing that information, which included inquiries regarding the FAFSA, client responsibilities, and if a client wants to attend a private college. Lisa Livesay inquired whether the WIOA related updates were posted where the SRC could review the information. Jami Parente stated she could share that information.

Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman's Office continued to track the number of informal reviews, mediations, Fair hearings, and Director's reviews. Mr. Nevarez noted that over the past years, the overall numbers had decreased, which could have been due to continued staff training. Ceci Hartke inquired regarding the steps for initiating the appeals process. Mathew Nevarez stated that when a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) makes a decision, they send a formal letter with an appeals form that clients could email or fax back to the office. Ceci Hartke inquired whether the appeals form came with a return envelope. Mathew Nevarez stated the appeals letter had the address that clients could fax or email the letter back

to the office. Ms. Hartke stated that she heard from families that had challenges navigating the VR and appeals process. Mathew Nevarez stated that VRCs should be discussing their decisions with the clients before sending the letter, and should let clients know about their options to appeal decisions. Paula Seanez inquired whether the Ombudsman's Office had identified any trends regarding the appeals. Mathew Nevarez stated there were more appeals due to post-secondary education and eligibility, although the removal of the Order of Selection (OOS) had reduced the eligibility appeals. Mr. Nevarez noted the overall numbers had decreased, which made it difficult to identify trends, although the Ombudsman's Office did compare information with the Policy Unit to compare reports. Lisa Livesay inquired whether there was any qualitative data from the Client Satisfaction Surveys or conversations with the Client Assistance Program (CAP) that would offer a more holistic data. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman's Office compared data to the Policy Unit, and would encourage VRCs to notify clients of their decisions early so the clients did not need to wait for a decision. Paula Seanez inquired whether CAP was involved in the appeals process. Mathew Nevarez stated that CAP would be involved in some mediations, although there had not been many Fair Hearings in 2022.

State Plan Update

Brandi Coffland stated that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was beginning to plan for the next Arizona State Plan, which was developed every four years. Ms. Coffland stated the State Plan would be due in March of 2024, and RSA was developing a contract for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) requirement for the State Plan, which was an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities within the state. Brandi Coffland noted that once RSA received the information from the CSNA, the agency would likely begin drafting the State Plan in July of 2023. Brandi Coffland stated the SRC would be asked to partner with RSA to review the State Plan results and to identify areas to focus on. Paula Seanez inquired whether Federal RSA changed how the data would be collected. Brandi Coffland stated the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) required that RSA report the common performance measures.

SRC Annual Report

Lisa Livesay stated the SRC Annual Report had gone out to all council members and inquired whether anyone had any suggestions or feedback regarding the report. Ms. Livesay stated she reviewed Nevada's Annual Report, which included more stories and inquired whether that would be appropriate. Ceci Hartke stated she liked the idea of a more personable approach for the report. Adam Robson stated that when the council was able to recruit more members, the council could highlight more activities. Lisa Livesay agreed and stated the council could potentially contact previous council members to see if they would be interested in rejoining the council or knew of other individuals that would like to participate.

Paula Seanez motioned for the SRC to approve the SRC Annual Report. David Carey seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Officer Elections

Lisa Livesay stated the Officer positions up for election were the Chair, Vice Chair, and Sergeant-at-Arms. Ms. Livesay stated that she would be willing to continue as the Chair of the council, although the council would welcome any nominations for Chair. There were no additional nominations from the council.

Adam Robson motioned that Lisa Livesay be re-elected as the Chair of the SRC. Paula Seanez seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Lisa Livesay inquired whether there were any nominations for the Vice Chair position. Dave Cheesman motioned that Adam Robson be elected as Vice Chair. Lisa Livesay seconded the motion. Adam Robson stated that unfortunately he would decline the nomination for the upcoming year, but would consider the position for the following year.

Paula Seanez motioned that Ceci Hartke be nominated as the Vice Chair. Dave Cheesman seconded the motion. Ceci Hartke stated that she would accept the nomination for the Vice Chair position. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Lisa Livesay suggested the council inquire whether Linda Fischer would be interested in serving as the Sergeant-at-Arms position and motioned that Ms. Fischer be elected in the Sergeant-at-Arms position. Paula Seanez seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. Adam Robson stated that if Linda Fischer was not interested in the position, he would be willing to serve as the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

David Carey stated that Dr. Max Ryser had been appointed as the new State Administrator to SILC. Mr. Carey stated SILC continued to provide Emergency Preparedness training across the state and provided monthly webinars. Mr. Carey stated SILC received the Health Equity Grant and was working with the rural communities to bring in partners and individuals with disabilities to discuss different topics such as transportation and access to services. David Carey stated that if any council members knew anyone in a rural community that wanted to provide feedback, they were welcome to contact him.

American Indian VR Program

Paula Seanez stated that many of the AIVRS programs were in the second year of funding. Ms. Seanez stated the programs met with Federal RSA and some had carryover funding. Paula Seanez stated the Navajo Nation was working with Sonoran UCEDD on some work-based learning initiatives for Transition youth. Ms. Seanez stated that she sent the MOU to RSA, which was a required agreement with RSA. Paula Seanez stated the Navajo Nation had a new President and Vice President, and would be working to fill staff vacancies. Paula Seanez stated the Hopi Nation also struggled to fill vacancies. She noted the Annual Conference similar to the CSAVR would take place in Oklahoma in person. Paula Seanez stated the Native American Center had hired staff that would be providing Transition services, although some schools were already providing Transition and work-based learning services.

ADE Updates

Lisa Livesay stated the ADE had several initiatives and was partnering with RSA and other organizations. Ms. Livesay stated the ADE team had been focusing on the understanding and delivery of Pre-ETS services and was working with the RSA Transition Team regarding the current services. Lisa Livesay stated ADE continued to try to dispel myths surrounding Pre-ETS and to educate schools and families regarding those services. She noted the ADE continued to provide presentations to a variety of audiences and would be establishing a focus group of about 25 individuals and would discuss the barriers and misunderstandings regarding Transition services. Lisa Livesay stated that ADE would work with Diversibility Inc. on a pilot program of 50 students on a student-led IPE peer-mentor program.

Raising Special Kids

Ceci Hartke stated Raising Special Kids continued to train families and to assist in navigating programs. Ms. Hartke stated the organization was also offering new training to help them to understand the opportunities for employment to youth. Ceci Hartke stated the organization also held training for Spanish speaking families, and she hoped to offer the same event in Tucson as well.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on February 9, 2023 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

Christie Kelly stated that she worked for the National Center for Disabilities with UCEDD, and she wanted to attend the meeting and to hopefully visit with the tribal nations.

Adjournment of Meeting

Adam Robson motioned to adjourn the meeting. David Carey seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.