

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2021

Members Present

Scott Lindbloom, Chair
Dave Cheesman
Jill Pleasant
John Gutierrez
Melissa Wojtak
Judith Castro
Adam Robson
Twyla Bowman
Kristen Mackey
Kathy McDonald
Paula Seanez
Lisa Livesay

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez
Brandi Coffland
Linda Fischer
Abel Young

Call to Order and Introductions

Scott Lindbloom, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of November 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Jill Pleasant moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2020 SRC Full Council meeting. Twyla Bowman seconded the motion. The council approved the meeting minutes by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

Scott Lindbloom stated that he would be participating in ADA training on March 1st in partnership with the Arizona Center for Disability Law and all council members were welcome to attend the virtual training.

Transition Committee Discussion

Scott Lindbloom stated he would like the council to develop a Transition Committee that could identify different topics to discuss. Kristen Mackey inquired regarding the current committees. Lindsey Powers stated the SRC currently had a Program Review and an Employment and Community Partnerships Committee, and both would need new Chairs. Twyla Bowman inquired whether a Transition Committee would focus on the transition between unemployment as a disabled individual into employment. Kristen Mackey stated Transition referred to youth age children between 14-24 years and noted the emphasis in Federal law to assist youth with obtaining employment. Lisa Livesay stated there were many efforts currently connected to Transition, although the council could connect with other agencies and focus on initiatives already in place. Dave Cheesman suggested the council focus on revising the current committees before developing new committees. Jill Pleasant stated that Northern Arizona University had a current Transition Planning Grant in progress, which was a statewide effort and representation from many agencies. Kristen Mackey stated that she could include Transition updates in her Administrator Report and continue that conversation. Adam Robson stated his understanding that Scott Lindbloom's initial goal was to focus on ADA education and training and suggested the Employment and Community Partnerships consider focusing on that issue. Twyla Bowman stated the importance on focusing on youth Transition age children as well as discussing the challenges for older individuals interested in transitioning back to work. Kristen Mackey inquired whether the council was required to have an Employment and Community Partnerships Committee and a Program Review Committee and suggested potentially revising the scope and function of the committees. Scott Lindbloom stated the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee could focus on Transition and other issues. Jill Pleasant stated the issue of employment of older adults could fall under the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee, whereas the Transition age youth issues included many challenges in addition to employment. Twyla Bowman agreed and stated that older individuals seeking employment did face different challenges such as updating one's office and computer skills. Kristen Mackey stated she and other council members that worked with Transition students could provide updates at future meetings.

Employment and Transportation Barriers Discussion

Scott Lindbloom stated he knew an individual in Show Low that was unable to obtain transportation to get to work. Mr. Lindbloom inquired how individuals living in rural areas could obtain transportation and whether Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) could assist individuals with transportation to employment. Adam Robson inquired regarding the current VR policy regarding transportation. Kristen Mackey stated VR provided transportation assistance to clients to be able to participate in VR services or training. Ms. Mackey noted that once an individual was employed, transportation was considered part of the cost of living and the VR program could support short term support but would not provide long term support to the individual. Dave Cheesman stated counselors could assist clients with obtaining ADA transportation, although that was more difficult to obtain in rural areas. Scott Lindbloom stated that individuals living in rural areas did not have access to ADA transportation and inquired whether VR could support transportation assistance for 90 days. Judith Castro stated she lived in a rural area, and there was limited public transportation. Ms. Castro stated she tried to advocate for the installation of sidewalks in certain areas to make them more accessible, although she was informed that something drastic would need to occur before sidewalks could be installed. Linda

Fischer stated that RSA staff could refer clients to the Client Assistance Program (CAP) if they required additional advocacy efforts as well.

RSA Administrator's Report

Mathew Nevarez, Ombudsman, stated the RSA Ombudsman Unit had been assisting clients with the steps involved in the appeals process. Mathew Nevarez stated there had been more postponement requests due to the pandemic and the Office of Appeals had been accommodating to those requests. Mathew Nevarez stated that staff used Web Ex for mediations, unless the client requested additional accommodations, in which staff would use Zoom. Mathew Nevarez stated the Office of Appeals would allow the client to attend the meetings in person, although the Ombudsman staff would participate remotely. Mathew Nevarez stated there were 11 mediations the prior year, and 3 during the current year. He noted there were 26 Fair Hearings the previous year and there were 5 currently. Mathew Nevarez stated that counselors and support staff had been helpful by educating clients on the appeals process. Adam Robson inquired whether Mathew Nevarez attributed the lower numbers due to the pandemic or any other issues. Mathew Nevarez stated that COVID-19 had affected the number of appeals, although RSA staff had been proactive by educating clients also. Kristen Mackey stated that Mathew Nevarez had provided additional information such as flow charts, tip sheets and trainings on the informal review, Fair Hearings, and mediation processes to help staff make better decisions. Lisa Livesay inquired whether Mathew Nevarez's team noticed any trends with the mediations and Fair Hearings. Mathew Nevarez stated it was more difficult to identify trends due to the lower number of appeals, although his team did continue to review the reasons for appeals.

Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was evaluating the value stream, which was the processes that clients had to go through to receive the value of services. Ms. Mackey stated the program was reviewing all the processes and whether they were necessary or whether some processes could be streamlined to reduce the burden to staff and clients. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether clients could obtain paper forms as well. Kristen Mackey stated that staff were meeting with individuals remotely and would provide documents electronically unless the individual required a physical copy. Dave Cheesman stated that VR would send a pre-stamped envelop to individuals also. Scott Lindbloom suggested that offices have a box by the front door of an office so individuals could drop off documents. Kristen Mackey agreed and noted that offices did have those processes in place so that staff could check the mail and scan documents as needed. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had been using the current case management system, System 7 or Libera since 2009 and would be transitioning to a new system. Ms. Mackey stated RSA had extended the agreement with Libera but would develop a solicitation for a new case management system, which would likely be a 2-year project.

Kristen Mackey stated VR was serving about 20-40% fewer clients than the previous year, although the agency was about 51% of the proposed benchmarks. She noted the number of job placements remained about the same as the previous year. Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to distribute Client Satisfaction Surveys to open and closed clients and had shifted the data collection reporting period to align with the program year. Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to receive a low return rate of surveys, although open clients were overall positive, while closed case clients did report

dissatisfaction with the timeliness of services. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the VR client numbers were down in Navajo and Apache Counties. Kristen Mackey stated that VR participation was down statewide. Scott Lindbloom inquired how RSA could increase VR participation. Kristen Mackey stated that once more individuals were able to obtain vaccinations or became more comfortable leaving their homes, they might be interested in pursuing more activities outside of the home.

Committee Reports

Program Review Committee

Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the Program Review Committee should continue meeting. Dave Cheesman stated the previous Chair of the committee was not a council member anymore, and the policies the committee was reviewing followed Federal regulation language closely. Adam Robson inquired whether the committee should remain, but only meet when necessary. Kristen Mackey inquired whether the council bylaws required the council to have a Program Review Committee. Lindsey Powers stated the Bylaws only required the council to have an Executive Committee and the council could establish other committees as needed. Kristen Mackey noted the council had the opportunity to review and make suggestions regarding any policy changes 30 days prior to the public comment meetings. Dave Cheesman agreed and noted that most policies followed the Federal language so closely. Adam Robson suggested the council put the committee on hold until needed. John Gutierrez stated the committee was useful to VR, and he would not want to see the committee be discontinued. Lisa Livesay inquired whether a council member could serve on more than one committee, or whether she could obtain more information regarding the focus of each committee. Adam Robson suggested the council review descriptions of the current committees and read the description of the Program Review Committee. Mr. Robson stated the committee would need a new Chair and council members that would be willing to serve on committee. Judith Castro inquired whether council members could change the committees that they participated on and suggested that Dave Cheesman participate on the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee. Adam Robson stated council members could switch committees or participate on both. John Gutierrez suggested that Lindsey Powers send out the information regarding the committees to council members and they could indicate which committee they wanted to participate on. John Gutierrez stated his understanding that all council members needed to participate on at least one committee. Adam Robson stated his recollection that the council had discussed that requirement, although he was unsure whether that had been finalized.

Judith Castro inquired regarding the role that she could perform as VR staff as she did not want to overstep her role. Kristen Mackey stated Lindsey Powers had revised the SRC Handbook for Members, which could provide more information on how the council would move forward and provide information back to the program.

Employment and Community Partnerships Committee

Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the council would like to keep the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee. Mr. Lindbloom stated the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee could focus on topics such as Transition and the

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Adam Robson suggested that council members draft a description of the committee and its activities and review at the next council meeting. Kristen Mackey stated she would be willing to meet with council or committee members to develop committee descriptions that could be reviewed at the next council meeting. John Gutierrez stated the committee members should be invited to that meeting to be able to provide input regarding the direction of the committee. Adam Robson suggested that Kristen Mackey and Lindsey Powers review the current descriptions of the committees and bring any suggestions to the council. Kristen Mackey stated that any council members that were interested could participate in a meeting to discuss the goals of the committees.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

Scott Lindbloom stated that Shawnique Cotton was the new Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Chair and that SILC hired 2 individuals to work on emergency preparedness. Scott Lindbloom stated that his term on SILC would be ending and he would no longer be giving the SILC reports, although he would invite a SILC member to attend future meetings and to potentially provide those reports.

American Indian VR Projects

Paula Seanez stated that many tribes would be applying for VR grants, which were due April 2nd. Ms. Seanez stated she was in the process of applying for a grant as well and would appreciate a letter of support from RSA. Paula Seanez stated that about 50 tribes would be applying for grants, although there was only funding for about 45. She noted that she continued to list the Arizona Center for Disability Law as the CAP, although she had been contacted by the Native American Center for Disability Law in Farmington, NM. John Gutierrez stated he had spoken to that organization and had instructed them that they would be part of New Mexico. Paula Seanez stated all Navajo Nations employees that wanted to receive vaccinations, had received the first vaccinations and VR continued to provide most services remotely.

Client Assistance Program

John Gutierrez stated the number of appeals were lower, and he expressed this gratitude to Mathew Nevarez for all his assistance in working with clients.

AzTAP

Jill Pleasant stated the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP)/Institute for Human Development (IHD) Conference would be held virtually again July 7-9th. Kristen Mackey stated that staff would be eligible to receive CRC credits for attending the conference but would need to submit the paperwork 30 days prior to the conference. Ms. Mackey stated that Natalie Guzman would be the contact for requesting CRC credits.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on May 13, 2021 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

Lisa Livesay motioned to adjourn the meeting. John Gutierrez seconded the motion. The meeting stood adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Vocational Rehabilitation Scorecard – January 24, 2021 – January 30, 2021

The total number of individuals in VR program was 12,304

The average number of days from eligibility was 24 days

The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 95.4%

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 131 days

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 70.4%

The total number of individuals in OOS Priority 2 and 3 was 1267

The total number of individuals in Priority 2 was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 3 was 0

The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.34

The number of job placements was 30

The number of clients closed with employment was 36

The average days to obtain employment was 897

The average days from referral to application was 54

The average days from job-ready to placement was 68

The average cost of closure with placement was \$19,272.89

The average cost of closure without placement was \$8,591.77