

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2021

Members Present

Scott Lindbloom, Chair
Adam Robson
Dave Cheesman
Jill Pleasant
Melissa Wojtak
Judith Castro
Kristen Mackey
Kathy McDonald
Paula Seanez
Lisa Livesay
Diana Meza

Members Absent

John Gutierrez
Twyla Bowman

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez

Call to Order and Introductions

Scott Lindbloom, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of February 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Lisa Livesay moved to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 SRC Full Council meeting. Kathy McDonald seconded the motion. The council approved the meeting minutes by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

Scott Lindbloom stated that he contacted the Office of Boards and Commissions requesting assistance in filling the Workforce Investment Board Representative position. Scott Lindbloom stated he spoke to a flight attendant instructor in Minnesota, that worked with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and inquired whether AZ Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) could develop a similar program. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA could explore that as a potential opportunity. Jill Pleasant inquired whether the program would include other positions within the airlines. Scott Lindbloom stated the program taught individuals with disabilities to be flight attendants.

Mr. Lindbloom stated he was also interested in involving airports and restaurants in hiring individuals with disabilities. Kristen Mackey stated that Employment Engagement within the Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS) could potentially work with prospective employers or programs.

RSA Administrator's Report

Mathew Nevarez, Ombudsman, stated the RSA Ombudsman Unit offered workshops in March to three regions, as well as quarterly updates to the Leadership team. Mr. Nevarez stated he also provided more information to clients regarding the next steps in the Fair Hearing process. Mathew Nevarez stated that most services continued to be provided telephonically or via Zoom. Lisa Livesay inquired whether RSA had any materials available to the public regarding educating staff through the appeals process. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had not posted that information online, although maybe RSA could develop a flow chart of the process. Mathew Nevarez stated he did have a template and could create a visual of that process.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to modernize the VR process and were discussing potentially allowing some staff members to return to the office in June by appointment only, while still adhering to social distancing and sanitizing standards. Kristen Mackey stated she was encouraging staff to "think outside the office" and to meet clients in the community if they were comfortable or to continue to offer virtual services. Ms. Mackey stated RSA would continue to transition some offices into a more business-centered approach. She noted that the offices in the DES building had been reduced to three offices, several cubicles, and hoteling stations so that staff could perform work in the offices. Kristen Mackey stated that each field office would still have confidential meeting rooms to meet clients, although those spaces would need to be reserved.

Kristen Mackey stated VR was serving about 20-40% fewer clients compared to two years prior. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was receiving a slight increase in new clients as well. Ms. Mackey stated the supplemental unemployment insurance programs would be ending May 15th and noted there would be initiatives for individuals to obtain employment, which would impact the numbers of individuals applying for VR services. Adam Robson stated that several RSA staff members had been helping to process the unemployment claims and inquired whether they continued to provide that assistance. Kristen Mackey stated that most of the staff had been transitioned back to their original duties, and the Unemployment Insurance Unit also added many temporary hires. Scott Lindbloom suggested that RSA staff use the Change Point facility in northern Arizona. Adam Robson stated that Change Point did allow behavioral health staff to use their facility to meet clients.

Kristen Mackey stated that at the beginning of the pandemic, she encouraged counselors to pause on closing client cases and to continue to engage with them. Kristen Mackey stated that counselors were starting to re-engage with clients for them to actively seek employment. Ms. Mackey noted that as counselors reached out to clients, they would also begin to close cases as needed. She stated that staff would continue to offer virtual services such as career exploration, online tutorials, and assistance with using virtual platforms. Kristen Mackey stated RSA kept the same benchmark goals and noted that job placement was down about 11% compared to the previous year, and exits was

employment was down about 18%, which did coincide with the reduced VR services. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had distributed the Voice of the Customer surveys, in which 100 clients agreed to participate in focus groups in June of about 8-10 each. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was interested in learning what the agency was doing well, what the agency could do better, and how clients would like to access services. Adam Robson inquired whether RSA had sent surveys to open and closed clients. Kristen Mackey stated the surveys had been distributed to all clients with open and closed cases and statewide. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether RSA would be able to distribute brochures about VR, to help with outreach efforts. Kristen Mackey stated RSA did have an employer outreach flyer, although RSA would be reviewing the marketing materials as part of a Strategic Plan. She noted that DES did have an internal marketing department as well, and RSA could look at the industries to target.

Ms. Mackey stated the VR State Rules was in the process of being updated, and she would inform the SRC when the rules would be available for review. Kristen Mackey stated she anticipated the new budget to include the same level of funding. Kristen Mackey noted the Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) program would undergo some modernization and RSA would continue to support the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) operators, who were impacted greatly by the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had success in placing 14 individuals with significant disabilities in competitive employment. Jill Pleasant stated the Arizona Technology Access Program (AZTAP)/Institute for Human Development (IHD) Conference would be held July 7-9, which would include a session on the partnership between STARS, VR, and the DDD Planning Council. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether RSA was able to work with blind and visually impaired individuals and deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH) individuals. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had counselors that worked with the blind and visually impaired and DHOH clients and were able to communicate through Assistive Technology (AT) or sign language interpreters. Adam Robson inquired whether RSA would be able to offer more information regarding placing the 14 individuals into competitive employment. Kristen Mackey suggested that Adam Robson reach out to Janice Bradford regarding that process. Lisa Livesay inquired whether RSA would be shifting staff to other offices or regions. Kristen Mackey stated RSA would not be relocating staff, although staff members were encouraged to remain flexible in meeting clients in the community or the nearest office if convenient. Lisa Livesay inquired whether there was an update regarding RSA's efforts to streamline processes. Kristen Mackey stated that would be part of RSA's Strategic Plan and the VR Advisory Panel would review those processes as well. Lisa Livesay inquired whether there were any employment trends of clients placed in employment. Kristen Mackey stated that many clients were placed into customer service and order filling positions. Lisa Livesay inquired whether clients were relocating to obtain employment. Kristen Mackey stated clients were able to obtain employment where they lived.

NCSRC Updates

Adam Robson stated that he and Lindsey Powers attended the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) calls, which were held quarterly when they were able to and would be able to provide quarterly updates regarding any pertinent information. Scott Lindbloom stated that many VR counselors attended the National Council on Independent Living (NICL) conference and inquired whether AZ RSA staff could attend

those events. Kristen Mackey stated VR funds could not be spent on an Independent Living (IL) conference and would not be able to send staff to attend.

Council Recruitment and Membership Discussion

Adam Robson stated the council currently had membership vacancies such as the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) position. Mr. Robson noted that Scott Lindbloom's term would end on SILC, and the council would need to obtain updates from another council member until a SILC representative was appointed. Scott Lindbloom stated he spoke to Melissa Ann Santora regarding SILC representation. Kristen Mackey stated she would follow up with Ms. Santora regarding SILC representation as well. Adam Robson stated the council also had three open positions for a representative of Business, Industry and Labor and noted that Scott Lindbloom had been in contact with several employers in recruitment efforts. Mr. Lindbloom stated that employers could participate on the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee as well. Adam Robson agreed, although the council should focus on recruiting individuals to serve on the council, and then participate on committees also. Scott Lindbloom stated that council members would benefit from having a brochure to send to employers to recruit members. Adam Robson inquired whether the RSA Employment Coordinators would be able to promote the need for employer participation on the SRC during their conversations with employers. Kristen Mackey stated she could inquire whether the Employment Coordinators would be able to assist in that recruitment effort. Adam Robson stated the council was also required to have a member that was a current or former recipient of VR services, although individuals would not be required to disclose that information to the full council. Lisa Livesay stated the Community of Practice specific to Transition had the initiative of listening to the voice of youth with disabilities and could be an avenue for recruitment. David Cheesman stated that counselors could also encourage clients to participate on the SRC if they showed interest. Kristen Mackey stated that she could share a brief message to RSA if the council could send her some information. David Cheesman stated he would develop a brief message that could be shared with RSA staff. Kristen Mackey noted the information could mention that prospective council members would need to undergo background checks, which might deter some individuals. Adam Robson stated the Executive Committee would meet a couple of weeks prior to each Full Council meeting and could discuss the message then or meet earlier if necessary. Adam Robson stated the council was also looking to fill the State Workforce Investment Board position. Mr. Robson noted the majority of council members should also be individuals with disabilities and could be something to think about when recruiting members.

Adam Robson stated that part of his duties as the Vice Chair, was to Chair a Membership and Recruitment Committee, and inquired whether the council should have a separate committee dedicated to recruitment, or whether those duties should fall under the Executive Committee. Lisa Livesay suggested those duties fall under the Executive Committee due to the lower number of council members. Adam Robson agreed and noted that the Executive Committee could handle the duties if the council did not receive a significant number of applications. David Cheesman stated that all council members could be responsible for recruitment efforts and could discuss any updates during meetings. Kristen Mackey noted the council had previously discussed reviewing the

activities of the committees such as reviewing the data, identifying what businesses were looking for in employees, or to develop those connections with employers. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the SRC Employment and Community Partnerships Committee activities were overlapping with the Employer Engagement activities. Kristen Mackey stated there was not an overlapping of activities because Employer Engagement activities focused on statewide employment efforts.

Committee Reports

Lisa Livesay inquired whether each committee had identified assignments or activities they would focus on. Adam Robson stated the council could discuss the descriptions of the committees and different activities of each committee. He noted that council members could also volunteer to be the Chairs of those committees. Lindsey Powers agreed to send out the descriptions of the committees to council members prior to the next council meeting.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

Scott Lindbloom stated the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) was working on Emergency Preparedness and had received applications for new members that would begin July 1st. Mr. Lindbloom stated his term would end in June, and he would not be able to provide the SILC reports after that date. Scott Lindbloom stated he was working with New Horizons to provide transportation to IL clients in northern Arizona.

American Indian VR Projects

Paula Seanez stated The US Department of Education/RSA 2021 Application Kit for new grants under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (CFDA 84.250N) closed April 22, 2021. Ms. Seanez stated the Navajo Nation, Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Tohono O'odham Nation and Hopi Tribe submitted grant applications to begin October 1, 2021 for a five-year grant period. She noted that when funded, AIVRS programs would be renegotiating Memorandum of Agreement/ Understanding (MOU) with Arizona RSA which was a requirement of the grant administration.

Paula Seanez stated that NAU/IHD administered the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC), which was in its final year of funding. Federal RSA released the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center - 84.250Z, and applications were due June 14, 2021. She added that NAU/IHD and San Diego State University were preparing grant applications separately and were incorporating Northwest Indian College. Paula Seanez stated a conference call was held with Federal RSA on March 25, 2021, and there were many new federal RSA staff who are assigned to AIVRS programs. Ms. Seanez stated Corrine Weidenthal was the Project Officer assigned to the Navajo OSERS program. She noted that Federal RSA anticipated that 50 applications will be submitted by tribes and there may be the capacity to fund 46. The Navajo Nation moved to the third tier (Yellow Code-Moderate to Low Restrictions) of reopening the Navajo Nation effective April 26, 2021. She added the Navajo Nation VR program staff had

returned to their offices and VR services continued to be provided with limited face-to-face contact. Paula Seanez stated that due to the low referral and service numbers, the Navajo Nation would be conducting outreach, and would work with the Behavioral Health department on supporting staff and consumer's mental health and wellness. Ms. Seanez stated the Tribal VR programs continued to receive professional development, technical assistance and training from the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTC). She noted the Navajo Nation OSERS program along with 3 other AIVRS programs was participating in a nine-month session on employment development and placement strategies, which created an opportunity for capacity-building among the 86 AIVRS programs. The Northwest Indian College (NWIC) in Washington State continued to provide college classes in rehabilitation. The Navajo OSERS Director continued to serve as an advisor to the University of Montana, Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities on developing a self-employment tool kit.

AzTAP

Jill Pleasant stated the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP)/Institute for Human Development (IHD) Conference would be held virtually again July 7-9th. Jill Pleasant stated the conference would be \$50 for the event and would include a virtual exhibit hall as well as concurrent breakout sessions. Jill Pleasant stated attendees would be eligible to receive CRC credits and all information would be available on the website soon. Jill Pleasant stated the IHD received a grant to assist individuals in obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine or to educate individuals about the vaccine.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on August 12, 2021 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

- Committee Description/Activities Discussion
- Department of Education Updates

Announcements

Scott Lindbloom stated he had been in contact with the Administrator of the Division of Developmental Disabilities regarding participation on the SRC.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

Adam Robson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kathy McDonald seconded the motion. The meeting stood adjourned at 3:42 pm.

Vocational Rehabilitation Scorecard – April 25, 2021 – May 1, 2021

The total number of individuals in VR program was 12,514

The average number of days from eligibility was 27 days

The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 96.9%

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 93 days

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 87%

The total number of individuals in OOS Priority 2 and 3 was 0

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 \$13.87

The number of job placements was 57

The number of clients closed with employment was 31

The average days to obtain employment was 710

The average days from referral to application was 59

The average days from job-ready to placement was 81

The average cost of closure with placement was \$13,887.14

The average cost of closure without placement was \$11,188.05