

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2022

Members Present

Lisa Livesay, Chair
Adam Robson
Paula Seanez
Ceci Hartke
Judith Castro
Diana Meza
David Carey

Members Absent

Melissa Wojtak
Dave Cheesman
Twyla Bowman
Kristen Mackey

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez
Crystal Poetz
Linda Fischer
Shin Perez-Shorter

Call to Order and Introductions

Lisa Livesay, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of February 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Paula Seanez moved to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2022 SRC Full Council meeting. Ceci Hartke seconded the motion. Linda Fischer requested the minutes be amended to indicate that the Ombudsman's Office was impartial, and that Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) participation was appreciated during the process. The amended minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

Lisa Livesay stated the SRC members should continue to try to recruit additional individuals to join the SRC. Ms. Livesay noted that several council members were also waiting for reappointment to the council as well.

SRC Officer Elections

Lisa Livesay stated the Chair and Sergeant at Arms positions had been filled at the previous meeting and noted the Vice Chair position was still open if anyone was interested in filling that position. Ms. Livesay stated that she would like to nominate Linda Fischer as the Vice Chair of the council. Lisa Livesay noted the Vice Chair should be present at Full Council meetings, potentially fill in for the Chair during meetings, and assist in any recruitment and nominating activities. Linda Fischer thanked Lisa Livesay for the nomination although she had not been officially appointed as a council member yet. Ms. Fischer noted the Client Assistance Program (CAP) had recently hired a new advocate, and that individual or Ms. Fischer would be happy to serve on the SRC. Lisa Livesay stated that if any council member was interested in serving in the Vice Chair position, to let her know.

RSA Administrator's Report

Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman Office anticipated more activity and decision letters in the future. Mr. Nevarez stated that Ombudsman staff reiterated to VR staff that the Ombudsman's Office advocated for the appeals process and that staff and clients understood the process and all of their options. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman staff offered a workshop, which included a panel. He noted that Ombudsman staff was also invited to attend regional meetings to provide additional training to staff, and he wanted to ensure that staff were fully aware of the process. Linda Fischer noted the numbers had reduced by about half, which was great information. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman Office did discuss trends with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Leadership and identified any topics that should be addressed during trainings.

Shin Perez-Shorter stated the RSA Policy Unit had recently updated the RSA Policy Manual, which was available on the public facing website and RSA's Share Point. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the RSA Policy Unit received 289 questions for the quarter, compared to 190 the previous quarter. Ms. Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Unit kept track of the types of questions received and placed them under categories to identify the most frequently asked questions. She noted the Policy Unit often received a lot of questions regarding Post-Secondary Education and Training, and referrals to other departments. Shin Perez-Shorter stated that many of the questions would be addressed in the Policy Manual or on Share Point, although it could be difficult to navigate the information included on Share Point, and staff would then ask the Policy Unit. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Unit had started countermeasures such as attending regional huddles and to learn how best to address any questions. Ceci Hartke inquired why staff would have more questions regarding Post-Secondary Education and Training. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the policy was quite lengthy at 8 pages, and many questions were scenario specific, which would not be specifically addressed in the policy. Ms. Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Unit tried to encourage staff to use their critical thinking to answer their questions. Lisa Livesay inquired whether the Policy Unit could employ additional measures to circumvent the increase in questions to the unit. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Unit did try to remain available to staff, and staff might feel more comfortable asking their questions, although some questions should be directed to other departments such as Contracts or the Data Unit. Linda Fischer stated the Policy

Manual was available on the public facing website, which was great. Ms. Fischer stated the Policy Unit could also consider including more information on the website regarding the changes that had been made to the Policy Manual. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Manual format was updated to be consistent with all DES policies. She noted the previous Policy Manual was also not as clear, and some policies had been updated to provide a better understanding of the policies. Shin Perez-Shorter stated the information on Share Point was for internal staff only, although individuals accessing the information from the public facing website could benefit from seeing the tracked changes as well. Lisa Livesay stated that Jami Parente had mentioned projects for 2022 and inquired whether the Policy Unit would still work with the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and to develop Computer Based Trainings (CBT). Shin Perez-Shorter stated the Policy Unit would work with BEP and was in the process of collaborating with RSA to develop CBTs that would provide a good overall training of Self-Employment and Post-Secondary Training.

Committee Updates

Lisa Livesay stated her understanding that the committees had not met recently due to a lack of Chairs on the Employment and Community Partnerships and Program Review Committee. Lisa Livesay stated that all council members were encouraged to participate on one of the committees and that Lindsey Powers could distribute the committee descriptions to council members prior to the next Full Council meeting. Ms. Livesay stated that council members could identify a committee that they would be interested in and notify Ms. Powers that they would like to participate on that committee.

Membership Recruitment

Lisa Livesay stated the SRC had developed a recruitment flyer that could be used to help recruit individuals to join the council. Adam Robson stated that he had developed a draft recruitment flyer that had been submitted to the Department of Economic Security (DES) Graphics and Design Unit. Lindsey Powers stated that she would check on the progress of that flyer and provide an update to the council. Ceci Hartke stated that when the flyer was complete, she could share it on the Raising Special Kids website, which included parents and youth that might be interested in learning more about the council. Lisa Livesay agreed that council members could share the recruitment flyer with their contacts.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

David Carey stated that 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. Mr. Carey stated that SILC wanted to continue to prepare for any future emergencies. He noted SILC was offering webinars to address concerns such as access to services. David Carey noted that many individuals expressed challenges during COVID and other issues which had become more apparent during the pandemic. David Carey stated that many Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOH) experienced challenges also when trying to communicate with medical staff in

offices. He noted that many disasters were not large scale, but were smaller, and SILC sought to address those issues also. David Carey stated that if any council members knew of anyone that would be interested in participating in the rural communities, to let him know.

American Indian VR Program

Paula Seanez stated a Federal Request for Proposal (RFP) had closed, and she had not heard whether new grants had been funded. Ms. Seanez stated they continued to work with Federal RSA and discuss key changes and the Annual Reports that were submitted every 6 months. Paula Seanez stated that some tribes had requested use of carryover funds from the previous grants, and the Tuba City office was being renovated to be more accessible for community needs. She noted they were also working with schools on Transition efforts and the Sonoran Center for Excellence on Disabilities. Paula Seanez stated that American Indian VR Program continued to work with the Northern Arizona University and the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center, which would be hosting a rehabilitation academy in June, as well as the IHD Conference in Scottsdale. Paula Seanez stated there were 3 counselor vacancies, although all staff were back in the offices while adhering to all safety procedures. Paula Seanez stated the CANAR Conference was planned to be held in person in 2023.

Client Assistance Program

Linda Fischer stated that Mathew Nevarez and Crystal Poetz held a Meet and Greet with CAP representatives, and it was great to connect with new staff. Linda Fischer stated CAP was required to meet with RSA regularly to discuss any challenges to clients. She noted the main issues were that clients experienced a delay in receiving services or authorizations. Linda Fischer noted that many individuals in school had to pay for their own tuition or books because they did not receive services in a timely manner. Linda Fischer noted that many clients also experienced challenges with self-employment plans, and CAP would discuss those issues with the Ombudsman's staff.

ADE Updates

Lisa Livesay stated the ADE website had information about all the upcoming events and programs and she encouraged individuals to refer to that. Ms. Livesay stated the AZ IDEA Conference would be returning in person in September, which would include an array of topics. Lisa Livesay stated there would be 80 sessions on legal issues, Transition and service delivery, trends, and other hot topics, as well as an emphasis on social learning. Lisa Livesay stated there were much evidence-based planning practices that showed that youth had a better experience when they were part of the planning. She noted the ADE would be working with Diversity Inc. on a pilot project serving 50 students, and that any student that was interested should complete the Google form. Lisa Livesay stated the ADE was trying to reach teens where they were, and to be in the communities where the youth were. She stated the Secondary Transition Team also worked closely with VR and other agencies to expand capacity in Arizona for serving and supporting students in secondary education. Ms. Livesay stated the ADE was working with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative

(NTACT:C) to home in on areas for capacity building and to bridge the gap for students receiving services. Lisa Livesay stated the ADE was also doing work with students with significant needs, whom were not always readily referred to VR, and identifying those barriers. She stated the ADE was also interested in identifying the gaps in education retention and to remain cognizant in meeting educators, students, and families where they were to make the process smoother.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on August 11, 2022 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Council members were encouraged to make suggestions regarding future agenda items.

Announcements

Ceci Hartke announced that Raising Special Kids would be holding a Transition Institute in July, where the youth would have the opportunity to discuss their employment plans with their families.

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 stood adjourned at 2:45 pm.