

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Full Council Meeting Minutes
August 12, 2021

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Twyla Bowman
Kathy McDonald

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez
Linda Fischer
Ceci Hartke

Call to Order and Introductions

Scott Lindbloom, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of May 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Scott Lindbloom moved to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2021 SRC Full Council meeting. Lisa Livesay seconded the motion. The council approved the meeting minutes by unanimous voice vote.

SRC Chairperson's Report

Scott Lindbloom stated the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) had a call center number which directed individuals to the correct staff member and inquired whether RSA would consider a similar system. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA had a significant number of staff in the system and would be difficult to manage, although RSA did have an 800 number that individual could call. Scott Lindbloom that he was working with Change Point and Behavioral Health to put a snack bar in the Show Low airport, which would give opportunities for individuals with disabilities to learn job training skills.

Mr. Lindbloom stated that RSA counselors would be welcome to visit the airport and learn about training opportunities for clients. Scott Lindbloom stated he recently attended a public forum with DDD and inquired whether RSA could hold a similar meeting to obtain feedback from the public. Kristen Mackey stated RSA recently held a public forum to obtain feedback from clients and could consider holding additional meetings in the future. Scott Lindbloom stated he was also working with the Show Low City Council and Amtrak to developing a light rail that would provide transportation in northern Arizona.

RSA Administrator's Report

Mathew Nevarez, Ombudsman, stated he had recently provided an update to the leadership team regarding methods for remaining proactive during the appeals process. Mr. Nevarez stated that he had developed a client version of a tip sheet, which council members could review and provide feedback. Mathew Nevarez stated that he was able to modify the tip sheet that would help the client to understand the fair hearing process. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman Unit would be providing a training to help staff to understand the appeals process sometime in the Fall as well. Linda Fischer inquired whether the tip sheet would offer guidance regarding fair hearings only or the whole process, including mediation. Mathew Nevarez stated the tip sheet provided guidance on the fair hearings only, although he intended to develop additional tip sheets. Kristen Mackey stated the Ombudsman Unit had provided several trainings for staff, which helped staff to feel more comfortable guiding clients through that process.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA did not have a timeline for staff to return to the office, although staff were able to go to the office as needed to print or pick up mail. Ms. Mackey stated staff were not meeting with clients in the office, although clients could choose to meet staff out in the community if they were comfortable. Kristen Mackey stated staff were encouraged to utilize virtual opportunities to meet with clients. She noted that any staff that were client facing, were required to wear masks, although staff in non-client facing offices could choose whether to wear a mask. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had about an 8% increase in referrals, although the number of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) applications were slightly lower.

Kristen Mackey stated the Federal Fiscal Year would be ending in September and the State Fiscal Year ended in June, and RSA decided to keep the same job placement and exits with employment goals. She noted that RSA would have increased activities such as building capacity around supported employment and potentially building a new case management system. Kristen Mackey stated RSA held a virtual focus group of approximately 20 individuals to identify how clients preferred to receive services. She noted there was a slight preference for in person services, although it was mostly split in thirds. Ms. Mackey stated clients also indicated the areas for improvement were staff response timeliness and timeliness for receiving VR services, although most individuals indicated that their counselors were genuine and helpful to the clients. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was given one year to spend the Federal grant and could potentially role portions of that grant to a second year, although that was challenging due to the decrease in client services. Ms. Mackey stated RSA was trying to identify how to expend as much of the funds as possible, although there were some potential bills that would include waivers. Kristen Mackey stated RSA developed a four-year State Plan and would

be updating the plan every two years. Ms. Mackey stated there was a portion of the VR plan that requested SRC feedback, and RSA would send out the council's previous recommendations and ask for any additional feedback.

Scott Lindbloom inquired whether VR staff were required to work in One Stops according to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements. Kristen Mackey stated the ARIZON@WORK locations were run by local counties and counselors were not currently in those sites due to the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated RSA sent out just over 900 client satisfaction surveys the previous year and received about 257 surveys back and most clients indicated the area for improvement was the timeliness of service provision. She noted that most clients continued to indicate that counselors treated them with respect. Linda Fischer inquired whether RSA had considered purchasing additional equipment for clients such as computers to assist them with virtual education or employment. Kristen Mackey stated the guidance was that RSA was seeking active participation from clients and were evaluating whether online learning was the best option for individuals. Adam Robson inquired whether RSA would consider purchasing computers to help expend some of the Federal funds. Kristen Mackey stated that anything over \$5000 required prior approval and was per each individual. She noted the additional challenge of technology becoming outdated quickly and identifying a location to store the equipment. Adam Robson inquired whether RSA could pay for marketing materials or TV commercials for VR services. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was unable to create TV commercials, although the agency could distribute informational material. Lisa Livesay inquired whether former clients would benefit from additional services due to barriers to employment from the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated that anyone could return to VR, and staff could consider sending letters to closed clients. Ceci Hartke stated that she received calls from families regarding VR, and she would be willing to disseminate information regarding the program. Kristen Mackey agreed and stated RSA had worked with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to develop flow charts or graphs that would help individuals to understand the next steps in the VR process. Lisa Livesay inquired whether RSA had considered breaking down the client satisfaction survey data by region and identify whether there were challenges specific to certain areas. Kristen Mackey stated the surveys were anonymous and RSA tried not to ask too many questions, although the agency could consider asking for county information.

Council Recruitment and Membership Discussion

Adam Robson stated he developed a draft SRC recruitment document and inquired whether council members had reviewed the document. Paula Seanez suggested the document clarify that potential council members were recommended to the Office of Boards and Commissions, although all members were appointed by the Governor. Lisa Livesay agreed and suggested that information be included under the "What is Your Commitment" section. Kristen Mackey stated the DES Public Information Officer could make any necessary changes to the document and ensure that it was accessible. Ms. Mackey added that the RSA logo would need to be removed, although the ARIZONA@WORK information could remain. Linda Fischer suggested that all materials be created in plain language or at a 6th grade reading level to be understandable to most individuals. Paula Seanez suggested the "What is Your Commitment" section be organized sequentially to indicate the steps to becoming a council member. Adam Robson stated that once the document had been finalized, council members could share

it with anyone that would be interested in joining the council. Dave Cheesman stated council members could also share additional information such as VR brochures. Scott Lindbloom stated the challenge in recruiting potential members that could serve as business representatives due to their work schedules. He noted that many individuals were not familiar with VR and inquired whether RSA could develop marketing materials. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was unable to market the VR program, although the agency could develop information materials such as the SRC recruitment document. Ms. Mackey noted the council historically struggled to recruit members due to the time commitments of the council. Dave Cheesman stated he knew of an individual in the business field and a CRP that might be interested in participating on the council. Linda Fischer stated that council members could distribute recruitment documents at upcoming events as well.

Adam Robson stated the council had a vacancy in the representative of Parent Training and Information Center. Ceci Hartke stated that she had recently submitted her application to Boards and Commissions, and she would fill that position. Adam Robson stated his understanding that Dave Cheesman and Judith Castro's terms would be ending soon. Dave Cheesman stated he would be applying for reappointment. Lindsey Powers stated she would inquire regarding Ms. Castro's membership term. Adam Robson stated the council also needed some representatives of Business and Labor and a current or former VR client.

Committee Discussion

Adam Robson stated any council member was welcome to participate on the Employment and Community Partnerships and Program Review Committees and/or to be the Chair. Scott Lindbloom stated he would be the Chair of Employment and Community Partnerships Committee if no one else was interested. Adam Robson stated that Ceci Hartke was welcome to participate on one of the committees while she waited for her application to go through. Ceci Hartke stated that she would be interested in serving on the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee. Mr. Lindbloom inquired whether the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee could discuss the ADA and employment. Adam Robson stated the committee could discuss potential activities. Linda Fischer suggested the SRC focus on activities that would be under the purview of the council. Adam Robson agreed and inquired whether the council had any suggestions for the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee. Scott Lindbloom stated the committee could work with businesses to increase employment skills for individuals. Adam Robson agreed that was important, although individuals would likely obtain those services through vendors of VR. Judith Castro stated that RSA staff currently worked with vendors and ARIZONA@WORK staff to provide those services to clients. Scott Lindbloom noted that individuals in rural areas did not have access to as many services. Linda Fischer noted the role of the SRC was to ensure that services were being provided but were not responsible for providing those services. Paula Seanez suggested the committees revisit Section 105, which outlined the duties and activities of the SRC, such as reviewing the State Plan, evaluate the effectiveness of the VR program, and identify appropriate goals. Adam Robson agreed and stated the committees could brainstorm regarding different activities. Kristen Mackey noted the committees could decide which activities were appropriate and could shift as needed to accomplish the council's goals. Lisa Livesay stated that the committees could also work on any activities that would assist VR and their goals as well.

Department of Education Updates

Lisa Livesay stated the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) continued to support families and students with returning to school and to ensure that resources were transparent while honoring local control. Ms. Livesay stated there were several events that stakeholders and staff would be welcome to attend. Lisa Livesay stated the ADE website had resources related to COVID and compliance. She noted the ADE was also working with other organizations such as Mercy Care to support Transition age youth in mental and behavioral health issues. Lisa Livesay stated the ADE would be holding the virtual IDEA Conference from September 13-15 with over 70 sessions and would be appropriate for anyone involved in special education. She noted the conference would be \$100 for the entire conference, and scholarships were available for individuals as well. Lisa Livesay stated the ADE would also be providing training in the Fall, such as the Transition Tuesday, which would offer information regarding Transition services and would be appropriate for educators or anyone supporting youth. Ms. Livesay the ADE would also offer a module series and would explore Best Practices surrounding Transition age youth and services, which would be great for educators and/or VR staff. Lisa Livesay stated that she would welcome any suggestions from the council or would answer any questions related to Transition age youth.

Membership Organization Updates

SILC

Scott Lindbloom stated that David Carey had recently applied for council membership as a representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Kristen Mackey stated that SILC had been reviewing the State Plan for Independent Living. Ms. Mackey noted the Community Living received a no-cost grant that could potentially go to the Centers for Independent Living (CIL)s.

American Indian VR Projects

Paula Seanez stated that several grants would end on September 30th, and they were waiting for a response from RSA regarding those funds. Paula Seanez stated that tribes were able to request to carry over funding for one year for a specific task included in the grant. Ms. Seanez stated most tribes were open, although some tribes might go to partial closures due to the increase in COVID cases. Paula Seanez stated there were currently 4 staff vacancies and they would be recruiting to fill those vacancies.

AzTAP

Jill Pleasant stated the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP)/Institute for Human Development (IHD) Conference was held virtually July 7-9th. Jill Pleasant stated the overall attendance was down somewhat, although the sessions were well attended. Ms. Pleasant stated IHD appreciated the support from RSA for offering CRCs and the ADE for sponsorship. Jill Pleasant stated that IHD was in the process of planning for the next event and whether it would be virtual or a hybrid event. Jill Pleasant stated IHD was in the 6th year of the Arizona Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical

Assistance Center and had provided training to 86 tribes across the US. She noted that IHD had also applied for a Transition grant, to develop a Transition portal so that students would go to one place to obtain systematic information.

Client Assistance Program

Linda Fischer stated she was still in the process of taking over John Gutierrez's cases and she appreciated everyone's patience as CAP worked through that process. Adam Robson stated that John Gutierrez was great to work with and he was thankful to have had him on the SRC. Ms. Fischer stated that John Gutierrez enjoyed working on the SRC and was thankful for the council members.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

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

Announcements

Adam Robson announced that DDD had put out some policy changes regarding employment and were still open for public comment until August 27th.

Scott Lindbloom stated he would be partnering with the Arizona Center for Disability Law to provide ADA training for anyone that was interested.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

Scott Lindbloom motioned to adjourn the meeting. Adam Robson seconded the motion. The meeting stood adjourned at 3:25 pm.

Vocational Rehabilitation Scorecard – April 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021

The total number of individuals in VR program was 766

The total number of Veterans in VR Program was 24

The total number of individuals in OOS was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 2 was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 3 was 0

The total number of VR applications were 41

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 34.2

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 14

The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 94.1%

The number of new plans written was 208

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 107.2

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 70.5

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 81%

The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.00

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$12.00

The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.32

The average days from job-ready to placement was 81

The number of clients placed was 14

The number of clients closed successful was 13