

**Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**  
**Full Council Meeting Minutes**  
August 13, 2020

**Members Present**

Dan Martinez, Chair  
Scott Lindbloom  
Dave Cheesman  
Jill Pleasant  
John Gutierrez  
Melissa Wojtak  
Paula Seanez  
Judith Castro  
Carol Carr  
Adam Robson  
Twyla Bowman  
Kristen Mackey

**Members Absent**

Kathy McDonald  
Danita Applewhite  
Ana Nunez

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Mathew Nevarez

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Dan Martinez, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

**Approval of May 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Scott Lindbloom moved to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2020 SRC Full Council meeting. John Gutierrez seconded the motion. The council approved the meeting minutes by unanimous voice vote.

**SRC Chairperson's Report**

Dan Martinez stated that he had officially retired from Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) after 29 years and would be performing most of his activities from home. Dan Martinez stated that individuals with disabilities would face many challenges in the upcoming years due to the effects of the pandemic. Mr. Martinez stated that for many years, approximately 70% of individuals with disabilities remained unemployed. He noted that many Americans would struggle to obtain employment and the economy

would struggle, which created more challenges for individuals with disabilities. Dan Martinez stated the disability community would need to work harder to ensure that individuals with disabilities had employment opportunities. Dan Martinez stated that business would change, and more individuals would likely work from home permanently even after the pandemic, which would eliminate barriers for individuals with disabilities. Dan Martinez stated the disability community needed to be aware of the changes and be able to support individuals with disabilities. Dan Martinez stated that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had and would continue to face challenges due to funding. He noted that cities and states would face extreme deficits and the disability community would need to work hard to advocate for inclusion. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the Statewide Independent Living Center (SILC) could partner with behavioral health to assist individuals in obtaining employment. Dan Martinez stated the challenge was in sharing funding and moving those funds as needed. Twyla Bowman stated that she was in the process of obtaining Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on her own and preparing to reenter the workforce. Dan Martinez stated the importance of empowering individuals with disabilities to be proactive and not wait for others to assist them.

### **RSA Administrator's Report**

Kristen Mackey stated that VR continued to offer remote services to clients. Ms. Mackey stated that prior to the pandemic, RSA has assessed the equipment needs of staff to ensure they could be mobile as possible. She noted that RSA had procured 200 laptops, which were being disbursed to staff. She added that RSA was also working to ensure that staff working from home had laptops and phones to continue to perform their work duties. Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to provide flexibility to providers to provide remote services as appropriate. She noted that RSA was also remaining flexible regarding case closures and was not closing cases due to a lack of contact or participation. Kristen Mackey stated there was a large state campaign, Return Stronger, which was in coordination with the Arizona Commerce Authority, the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Economic Security (DES)/ARIZONA@WORK. Kristen Mackey stated campaign aimed to prepare the workforce of individuals with disabilities for the available employment opportunities. She stated the campaign also aimed to prepare employers to consider employing individuals with disabilities.

Kristen Mackey stated the 2021 Federal budget included a slight increase in funding, and she did not anticipate a large impact to the VR budget. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA had until the end of September to fully expend the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) funds and was at about 97%. Kristen Mackey stated the impact of students not returning to schools had greatly impacted RSA's ability to expend the funds. She noted that a Pre-ETS contract was out for bid, although she anticipated that different counties and areas would have different needs. Kristen Mackey stated the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), which included blind operators that provided vending services and food services to city and state buildings, had been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had assisted the operators with short term payments and to access to unemployment insurance and various loans and grants. She noted that VR funds would need to be shifted to the BEP program to support the program. Kristen Mackey stated it was too soon for RSA to know how the state budget would be affected. Kristen Mackey stated there was significant effort to assist BEP operators, and the last Cares Act provided funds to the Centers for Independent Living

(CIL)s to support individuals in Independent Living Centers. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had loaned 15 staff members to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) department to help code, research and review the incoming claims. Scott Lindbloom inquired regarding who an individual would contact questions regarding unemployment insurance claims. Kristen Mackey stated that each office had a point of contact to answer those initial calls. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether an individual that applied for unemployment insurance would receive \$600 a month or \$600 a week. Kristen Mackey stated that would depend upon how they filed and how much they earned previously. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether individuals could falsify the information included in their unemployment insurance claims to receive funds. Kristen Mackey stated that would be fraud, and the department was working hard to ensure that individuals did not receive funds from fraudulent claims. John Gutierrez inquired whether counselors were assisting with the UI claims. Kristen Mackey stated that Rehabilitation Technicians were assisting with the UI claims. John Gutierrez inquired regarding the number of BEP staff that were affected by the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated there were approximately 200-250 blind operators and staff and most were not able to work. She noted that only Fort Huachuca remained open and was able to provide services. John Gutierrez stated that clients continued to receive notices that their cases were being closed due to lack of contact. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA leadership would discuss that issue and would review whether cases were closed due to a lack of contact for a significant amount of time prior to COVID 19 or whether they were recent cases. Kristen Mackey stated that she would appreciate any further information that Mr. Gutierrez could provide about that.

Kristen Mackey stated the Federal monitoring visit in 2018 included 4 findings. Ms. Mackey stated RSA finalized the state education agreement shortly after the monitoring visit, which resolved that finding. Kristen Mackey stated RSA demonstrated 2 consecutive quarters of 95% or better in determining eligibility in 60 days, which resolved that finding as well. Kristen Mackey stated RSA would continue to report the IPE timeliness quarterly and the standard was 90% for 2 consecutive quarters, and RSA was at approximately 70-80%. She noted the IPE timeliness rate was affected from removing individuals off the Order of Selection (OOS) wait list and from the pandemic. John Gutierrez stated that many Transition age clients were placed in entry level positions that were customer service related, although their IPEs did not include customer service as a vocational goal. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had not obtained technical assistance regarding that, although the agency would continue to monitor it. Kristen Mackey stated prior approval documentation was under review at the Federal level, and once RSA received more information, the agency could take action to resolve that finding. Ms. Mackey stated the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan was approved at the state level. She noted that she and Brandi Coffland were the subject matter experts to review the local plans and to ensure the plans included information on how the local workforce development areas would enhance services to individuals with disabilities. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was a partner of ARIZONA@WORK and all RSA staff's emails would include that consistent branding as well as marketing materials. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the workforce programs could assist individuals in Navajo County, where individuals would be laid off. Kristen Mackey stated workforce staff were county or state staff, although state staff provided rapid response to individuals that were losing their jobs or being furloughed.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA set a goal of achieving 2,105 job placements and placed

2,124 individuals. She noted the agency set the goal of increasing the number of exits with employment to 1,738 and almost met that goal by 1,580. Ms. Mackey stated the number of VR referrals had dropped by about 14% and the number of VR applications had dropped by about 12%. Kristen Mackey stated RSA increased the average wage by about 5% and the closures without employment had dropped by about 12%.

Mathew Nevarez stated in 2019, there were 74 Fair Hearings and there were currently 34 for the current year, in which most of the Fair Hearings were for the same client. Mr. Nevarez stated RSA had taken measures to prevent that client from making so many requests without going through the initial requests. Mathew Nevarez stated the pandemic might have affected the numbers, as well as increased staff engagement with clients going through the appeal process. Mr. Nevarez stated there were 41 mediations the prior year, and there were 28 currently. Mathew Nevarez stated supervisors were able to review counselor's decisions in informal reviews. He noted there were 80 the year prior, and about 45 currently. He noted the numbers overall had decreased from the previous year and showed positive results. Dan Martinez stated the importance of building relationships with clients. John Gutierrez inquired regarding the new email block for RSA staff. Kristen Mackey stated the email stated: ARIZONA@WORK, a proud partner of ARIZONA@WORK, followed by the individual's name, DES and RSA. John Gutierrez inquired when a client would go through ARIZONA@WORK. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was part of ARIZONA@WORK and was an employment agency. She noted that the Yuma office was co-located with Title 1B and Title 3 providers and were able to work together to identify who could provide the right services. Judith Castro stated that a Yuma staff member was also co-located at the One Stop and a counselor was also co-located at the youth center. She noted the Yuma office worked closely with ARIZONA@WORK and utilized them as a comparable benefit, which helped to build that relationship. John Gutierrez stated that a client had applied for VR services and was directed to a One Stop center. Kristen Mackey stated that typically an individual would go to a local One Stop and would be directed to VR. Judith Castro stated some staff in the One Stops did not know how to provide services to individuals with disabilities, so Yuma staff members would offer trainings on how VR could work with the One Stops. Scott Lindbloom inquired whether the One Stop centers assisted with veterans also. Kristen Mackey stated VR did have a strong partnership with the VA in Phoenix, and those services could be improved in Show Low as well.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA distributed Client Satisfaction Surveys to 368 open clients, in which 86 were in status 10 (eligible), 254 were in status 10 (in plan), 39 were in status 20 (ready for employment), and 32 were in status 22 (placed in employment). Kristen Mackey stated the majority of respondents were from Maricopa County. Kristen Mackey stated 136 individuals with closed cases were surveyed, in which 47 were in status 26 (closed with employment) and 89 were in status 28 (closed without employment). She noted the majority of respondents were in Maricopa County. Ms. Mackey stated 34 open clients and 3 closed clients gave their contact information to provide additional information, although Lindsey Powers was only able to contact 7 individuals. Kristen Mackey stated that some of the comments included dissatisfaction with having a case transferred several times, not being able to contact the counselor, and that the job search had slowed due to the pandemic. Kristen Mackey stated that 60% and above would agree strongly in both open and closed cases. She noted that RSA was using the results to continue to work on providing great customer service to clients. Dan Martinez

inquired regarding the status of the National RSA Strategic Planning. Kristen Mackey stated the group had developed a series of metrics to attempt to define what metrics should be used to evaluate how the program is running. Ms. Mackey stated the measures were provided to the Federal monitoring group, which would include the additional metrics. She noted there would be a shift from only measuring compliance metrics and would begin to monitor the quality of service provision. She noted that once those metrics could be revealed, she would share that information. Twyla Bowman inquired whether RSA had statistics regarding why individuals did not obtain employment and whether they did not due to the client or due to the employer not wanting to hire individuals with disabilities. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had statistics on individuals that left the program. She noted there was also a statistic of Other, which did not specify the reason. Ms. Mackey stated RSA would not typically have data related to employer hiring.

## **Committee Reports**

### ***Employment and Community Partnerships Committee***

Carol Carr stated the Employment and Community Partnerships Committee was in the final stages of finalizing the Arizona Employer Toolkit. Ms. Carr stated that once the toolkit was completed, it would be distributed for public review and then to RSA for appropriate formatting.

### ***Membership Committee***

Dan Martinez stated the SRC would hold officer elections during the next SRC Full Council meeting. Mr. Martinez stated that he would be looking for members to volunteer to hold a Membership Committee meeting to develop a slate of candidates for the SRC Chair and Vice Chair. Dan Martinez stated that it would be good for the SRC to have new leadership to move the council forward.

## **Membership Organization Updates**

### ***SILC***

Scott Lindbloom stated that Shawnique Cotton was the new Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Chair. Scott Lindbloom stated SILC would receive funding on October 1<sup>st</sup> and would hold a Board meeting. Kristen Mackey stated Executive Director, Sarah Kader would be resigning at the end of the month. Dan Martinez stated the SRC would like to extend an invitation for the SRC Chair to attend the next SRC Full Council meeting to provide an update.

### ***Client Assistance Program***

John Gutierrez stated the number of intakes were down due to COVID.

## **AzTAP**

Jill Pleasant stated Clayton Guffey had been promoted to the AzTAP Program Director. Ms. Pleasant stated staff continued to serve individuals remotely, although individuals could pick up large devices if needed. Jill Pleasant stated the Institute for Human Development Virtual Mini Conference was held July 20-21, and noted that despite a short registration time, the conference received great attendance. Jill Pleasant stated there was a small registration fee for attending the conference, and participants were eligible to receive CEUs. Ms. Pleasant stated the conference next summer would likely be virtual as well. Jill Pleasant stated students would begin returning to classes online or in the classrooms and NAU was requiring all employees to whether they were remote or on campus to perform daily COVID checks. She noted all IHD services continued to operate remotely.

## **Committee Member Updates**

David Cheesman stated staff continued to work remotely and would go to the office periodically to obtain the mail and to ensure that services continued. Mr. Cheesman stated that all staff received their work phones, and all office phones had been forwarded to the work phones. Mr. Cheesman stated his office saw a decrease in referrals, although they had increased slightly. He noted that staff continued to hold weekly huddle meetings and had a lot of opportunities for training. David Cheesman stated staff continued to learn how to use technology in order to perform work duties. David Cheesman stated the office would obtain access to Zoom, which would allow staff to engage with clients and schools. John Gutierrez stated that he always heard good things about David Cheesman and Judith Castro's office and staff.

Adam Robson stated that like VR, the Arizona Healthcare Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) had been allowing virtual employment services for the Medicaid members. Mr. Robson stated the budget for FY2021 was executed and in effect with regard to the Interagency Service Agreement between AHCCCS and VR, which served members determined SMI.

## **Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on November 5, 2020 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

## **Announcements**

Scott Lindbloom stated he had been appointed as the Vice Chair of the Behavioral Health Planning Council. Mr. Lindbloom stated he would be working with the Nebraska to be a partner with AZ SILC.

Twyla Bowman stated she had undergone brain surgeries related to brain functioning and she agreed that mental illnesses were perceived differently compared to physical disabilities.

Dan Martinez stated the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE)

would be held virtually on November 13<sup>th</sup> and he was on the planning committee for that event.

Judith Castro stated the SAAVI Services for the Blind center in Yuma would be closing, and she was unsure how that would affect client services in Yuma.

### **Public Comment**

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

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Scott Lindbloom motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jill Pleasant seconded the motion. The meeting stood adjourned at 2:48 pm.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Scorecard – July 26, 2020 – August 1, 2020**

The total number of individuals in VR program was 12,070

The average number of days from eligibility was 29 days

The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 96.7%

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 77 days

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 93.5%

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 \$16.05

The number of job placements was 51

The number of clients closed with employment was 20

The average days to obtain employment was 771

The average days from referral to application was 51

The average days from job-ready to placement was 62

The average cost of closure with placement was \$5,666.84

The average cost of closure without placement was \$13,326.10