

**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
State Rehabilitation Full Council**

**Meeting Minutes February 9, 2010
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

Department of Labor and Training ~ 1151 Pontiac Avenue ~ Cranston, RI 02920

Present from Council: Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Stephen Brunero, Rocco Bruno, Wheeler Clemons, Domenic DiOrio, Dr. Judith Drew, Jeanne Giroux, Margaret Hoye, Anne LeClerc, Sandy Lupovitz, Jeffrey Machado, Lucille Massimino, Vincent Rossi, Catherine Sansonetti, Juan Troncoso

Present from the VR Agency: Linda Deschenes, Kathleen Grygiel, Ronald Racine

1. Call to Order - Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. Introductions of membership and guests followed. Quorum was not met.

2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda - Move Nomination report up to before ORS report.

3. Approval of Minutes - The minutes from the November 10, 2009 were unanimously approved.

4. Chair's Report - Kate McCarthy-Barnett

Attended a meeting with Steve Brunero and identified the following areas for further review and discussion as we move forward.

- Fiscal Climate - The fiscal climate continues to be a concern. Therefore, it is important that the Council continues to discuss and identify strategies as we move forward. Make sure we have enough time at our meetings for ORS to provide updates on the fiscal details. More details in Steve's report.
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment - As ORS continues to develop strategies and receives data from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment we will get updates; today Linda Deschenes is providing the Council with an update. These updates will give us a better sense of how well ORS is doing in the community and give us more details about the type of work ORS is doing relating to the assessment.
- ORS/SRC Annual Report - This year's report is going to be out in the near future and we want feedback. And moving forward keeping in mind the fiscal climate, we may do a limited printing and do electronic distribution to try and save some money.
- Strategy for Expanding Speaker Program - This will be developed through timetables and further coordinating the Guest Speakers Program with ORS. Suggestion to have ORS personnel come in to give more detailed insight into the Agency's workings; this will help us demonstrate further support for the programs while giving individuals at ORS a chance to come and showcase some of the work they are doing. It will strengthen our link with the Agency and help us have a good understanding of the work that is being done at ORS especially as we deal with this difficult fiscal climate. This will be an addition to the existing Nominations and Leadership Development program, which brings in outside individuals to talk about community issues. More details in Lucille's report.
- Formulating components of SRC Council Meetings - We want to recognize how busy everyone is and thus we will continue to set aside a standard time at our meetings for the sub-committees to quorum, report and then come up with some feedback.

5. Presenting Paul Harden's nomination for membership on the Council - Domenic DiOrio

The committee interviewed Paul Harden on February 3, 2010 at Charlesgate Health Care Facility. Laurie DiOrio, Lucille Massimino, Rocco Bruno and Domenic DiOrio were in attendance.

After the normal introduction of each member, a brief history of SRC was given and each member and Mr. Harden were afforded the opportunity for questions and answers. Mr. Harden ably presented himself by sharing his current and active involvement in the development of new employment opportunities at Quonset and new training programs being considered at CCRI addressing the new employment needs of the marketplace. He

verbally described his long employment history at the Economic Development Corporation. Paul's significant contribution to the business and industry in the State and to the employment needs of the statewide community were obvious to the Committee members.

Margaret Hoyer was not present but she and I had a phone conversation to discuss the credentials of Paul and his possible contributions to the Council. Margaret added her support to the rest of the members to place Paul Harden's name for consideration of membership on the Council.

- Due to a lack of a quorum we will introduce his name at the next Council meeting for appointment.

6. ORS Director's Report - Stephen Brunero

Welcomed Kate McCarthy-Barnett as the new chair. Since our last meeting on November 10, 2009 the fiscal climate has affected everything; an illustration of the difficult fiscal times is evident here today, we are no longer allowed to have refreshments at meetings. We apologize for this and we will try to make other arrangements for the next meeting. The economy is not good as is evident with Rhode Island's twelve point nine (12.9%) percent unemployment rate, the third highest in the country, the budget deficit was over two hundred (200) million this year and a projected four hundred and twenty seven (427) million next year. The revenue is not coming in and it is making it difficult for State government to function. There have been cutbacks across the board for State agencies and although ORS has been somewhat exempt of the last few years, it has caught up to us this year and we have had to impose several cutbacks on a number of programs.

Federal Level

[The Rehabilitation Services Administration](#) (RSA) and the [Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) (CSAVR) published a report called, Back to the Future VR Budget.

Highlights of the Back to the Future VR Budget Program:

- The White House has proposed a budget that consolidates several programs in the Rehabilitation Act into Title I, merges the Independent Living Center Funding and State IL Grants into one State Grant and creates three new programs. The President's FY 2011 overall budget proposes spending three point eight four (3.84) trillion, terminates or consolidates a host of programs in every federal department and includes a jobs creation proposal.
 - For Vocational Rehabilitation, the economy has produced an unexpected and very negative side effect. There is no Title I State Grant COLA for FY 2011 because economic data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on November 18, 2009, show a decrease (-0.2 percent) in the annual change in the CPIU.
 - In addition, all of the nearly fifty seven (57) million currently appropriated for Supported Employment, Projects With Industry, Migrant & Seasonal Farm workers program, and in-service training, are rolled into the Title I State Grant Program, and the Administration proposes modifying the Title I formula so that agencies receive the same amount under the proposed consolidated Title I program as they did under the current funding arrangement.
- The loss to Rhode Island may be as significant as a quarter of a million dollars.

The Administration also proposed funding for three (3) new programs.

1. Twenty five (25) million to fund a new Supported Employment Extended Services for Youth with Significant Disabilities program to assist States in expanding supported employment opportunities for youth with significant disabilities as they transition from school to the workforce. The limited availability of resources for extended services is a major barrier to increasing supported employment opportunities for youth with significant disabilities transitioning from secondary education to employment who require ongoing support in order to work in the competitive labor market. Under this new program, State and local agencies would be required to work together to develop and implement innovative methods of expanding the availability of extended supported employment services for youth with significant disabilities.
2. Six point five (6.5) million for a new National Activities to Improve Rehabilitation Services program that would replace Demonstration and Training programs and consolidate the resources used to support technical

assistance and projects designed to improve program performance and the delivery of vocational rehabilitation and independent living services under the Evaluation and Program Improvement programs.

3. Thirty (30) million for a proposed Workforce Innovation Fund combined with thirty (30) million requested under Adult Education National Leadership Activities to support a partnership with the Department of Labor to develop innovative strategies for improving the delivery of services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities participating in programs authorized by the Workforce Investment Act.

Chart of the proposed funding for RSA's programs: [Proposed FY 2011 RSA Budget](#)

State Level

Meeting with Kate and the Executive Leadership of the Council we discussed these cutbacks and our premise is to maintain the integrity of the programs we provide to clients. We have talked about Order of Selection and waiting lists and the fact that most states now are on a more restrictive Order of Selection and have a six (6) month waiting list or longer, we do not want to do this.

Capital Budget Projects

- The project for the blind vendor stands was in the middle of renovations at the Aime Forand Building in Cranston. We had approval to go forward with that project but we lost seventy five (75) thousand in capital project money due to budgetary cutbacks, which threaten the completion of the BEP stand at the Forand Bldg.

Innovation and Expansion Activities

- The Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council (RISILC) has been cut from one hundred and thirty six (136) thousand a year to seventy five (75) thousand per year.
- Rhode Island College Sherlock Program contract under I & E is about twenty six (26) thousand a year. This contract funding will be eliminated.
- **The SRC budget** for Nancy Baker's contract was about nineteen (19) thousand last year and we hope we can maintain it as is.
- The fiscal projections are that we will most likely run out of money during the 3rd or 4th quarter this year if the current spending continues. We are looking at all programs to see where money can be saved.
- Community Rehabilitation Programs Meeting - Yesterday we had a large educational meeting with thirty seven (37) community rehabilitation programs that participated. Back in December a moratorium was initiated when we found out the funding situation was critical. At that time we stopped paying Job Development, Job Placement, and Job Retention activities. This meeting was to discuss looking at the structure and revised fee structures for those activities.
- 21 Steps - We have instituted 21 Steps that are used to modify our existing procedures, oversight, and training, which will get us back to basics. The main focus of the 21 Steps has been to identify high utilization and high expense service codes that the Field Supervisor will have to sign off on the use of those services.
- Purchasing - With the economic climate the way it is everything at Purchasing is being scrutinized at a stringent level we have never seen before. We cannot purchase everyday office items without request forms; we need these forms for many things that we previously did not, even including things that are one hundred percent (100%) Federally funded. Critical Expense Requests have been held for months, we had several authorizations dating back to June under the ARRA that did not get paid until three (3) weeks ago because of State Purchasing. For years Vocational Rehabilitation has had delegated authority under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to provide services but State Purchasing has decided that we should not have this authority at this time. We do thousands of authorizations a year, and Purchasing wanted us to do a purchase order for every single time we need to provide a service instead of the regular batch system and this has pretty much brought us to a standstill. All of this slows down the mechanisms we have established and creates additional work and time to get things done.
- Personnel - Hiring freeze going back to this summer we have not been able to hire anyone. We had three (3) postings for Counselors in July; we interviewed and selected candidates but never hired them because of the freeze. We have lost our second of two (2) Rehabilitation Teachers, Aletha Dickerson to a promotion to go

work at the Department of Elderly Affairs so we are currently unable to provide that service our clients in their homes. Our personnel positions need to be one hundred (100%) percent funded from now on instead of seventy five (75%) percent.

Looking forward we are still optimistic and still have dedicated and great staff. We continue to pass the Standards and Performance Indicators and hope to again this year. We still provide a good product even though our intake numbers are increasing dramatically; new applications are up thirty five (35%) percent. Cost of doing business has increased. Some of the highest ticket items, college tuition increased in authorizations of over eight hundred (800) thousand dollars from the previous year, increase in non-degree training over one (1) million dollars from last year, Job Placement and Vocational Evaluations also show large increases. These four (4) items created over two point seven (2.7) million dollars in increases in just over one year, which is approximately twenty five (25%) percent of our entire budget

7. Guest Speaker Program - ORS Updates on Strategic Planning / QI Activities - Linda Deschenes

State Plan:

RSA has scheduled a Webinar for 2/17/10 on the content and submittal of the 2011 State Plan. Sounds like there will be a focus on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Attachment 4.11(a). RSA recently developed a C.N.A. Guidance Tool that will provide ORS and all VR agencies with a framework going forward for C.N.A.

Process: 2011 State Plan Revised Time Line

Comprehensive Needs Assessment:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that ORS, in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council, complete a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (C.N.A.) at three-year increments. The C.N.A. is intended to identify the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those in need of Supported Employment, minorities with significant disabilities, underserved individuals, and individuals with disabilities served by other components of the workforce development network. In addition, the C.N.A. is intended to identify the need to develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's).

Information for the 2010 C.N.A. incorporates information from several diverse sources, which include:

- 2008 Community Rehabilitation Survey
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- 2009 GCD Public Forums
- 2009 Annual Personnel Training Needs Assessment
- 2008 Employer Survey
- 2009 Strategic Planning Session

MIS, RSA911, RI DLT Employment Bulletin Data, RI S1820 and American Community Survey

Draft of the 2010 Comprehensive Needs Assessment is in the process of being reviewed and edited. The next C.N.A. will be due in 2013.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys:

In 2009, ORS developed a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan that included obtaining satisfaction information from customers on an ongoing basis. The SRC State Plan and Quality Improvement Committee assisted with the design of Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Satisfaction surveys are sent quarterly to Customers whose cases were closed successfully employed (status 26) and to customers whose cases were closed unsuccessfully (status 28) post receipt of services.

During the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters of FFY 2009, 582 Customer Satisfaction Surveys were sent to customers who had been closed successfully during the fiscal year. The return rate was 17% or 99 surveys.

During the same time period, 248 surveys were sent to customers who had received services from ORS and whose case was closed unsuccessfully with a completion rate of 12.91% or 32 surveys.

Areas for program consideration:

- Ensure accuracy of mailing address in MIS at the time of case closure.

Status 26 Customer Satisfaction Survey

- Increase customer understanding of self-sufficiency, ORS role and their role in becoming more financially independent;
- Increase customer awareness and linkages to support services to assist with job retention;
- Educate customers on progressive learning, training resources and on-the-job training to enable job keeping and/or advancement; and
- Improve dissemination of information regarding post employment services.

Status 28 Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Improve information dissemination regarding benefits and work;
- Ensure and educate customers on assistive technology assessments and obtaining of resources if applicable;
- Improve dissemination of information to customers regarding the purpose of vocational rehabilitation services;
- Develop a better understanding of what prevents customers from moving forward toward employment once engaged with services; and
- Educate customers and provide information regarding ability to re-apply when ready to seek employment.

Vendor Satisfaction Surveys:

- Training and Job Development Program for Spanish speaking individuals;
- Job Developers

Quantitative Case Reviews:

The first review held in 12/09 involved randomly picking 2 cases from each case load = 77 cases being reviewed. The goal is to conduct the reviews on a quarterly basis.

Qualitative Case Reviews:

The Field Supervisors and Kat Grygiel are working on the process for this.

8. Sub-committee Reports

Transportation – Judith Drew

- We had a consortium meeting in November with about thirty (30) different agencies and non-profits attending. We reached out to groups that had transportation issues and were already involved with transporting consumers. We examined the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and the opportunities between these points as well as the trends to make progress.
- There was uniform agreement that we have a lot of transportation available and ongoing but it is not being well utilized; not getting a lot back from the large amount of dollars being spent.
- There was a high level of commitment to go further into figuring out how we can better utilize the facets already there to work together in developing a Statewide unified hub system that would supplement the existing public transportation and integrate the private and public in systems and funding.

Nominations and Leadership Development - Lucille Massimino

- Guest Speakers Program suggestions for the next meeting. We thought someone from the Hospitality Industry, which would have employment opportunities including entry level, a Rep. from the Chamber of Commerce, a Rep. from Lifespan since they are such a huge employer in Rhode Island, and someone from RIPAC regarding the RI Medical Marijuana Act.
- Nominations Outreach - We will resubmit Paul Harden's name at the next meeting for appointment. We are working on outreach for Spanish Advertisement to minority community in Latino newspapers and radio.

ORS does have a marketing committee in-house to connect with the minority populations. Suggest that someone from the Nominations and Leadership Development come to one of the marketing committee meetings, and invite someone from the Marketing committee to come to one of the SRC meetings.

- Co-chairs Domenic DiOrio and Lucille Massimino need to make arrangements with Steve Brunero to attend one of the upcoming marketing meetings.

Employment - Sandy Lupovitz

- Various committees and agencies in the State need to coordinate at a much higher level.

- Work that needs to be done with the enforcement agencies.
- Involvement of more business people in what we want to accomplish in terms of employment.

Good response with a full house for the upcoming event. The Road to Compliance is a panel discussion on interviewing, offering employment, and establishing personnel policies with special emphasis on people with disabilities. It is offered by the Rhode Island Business Leadership Network, in cooperation with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the Department of Human Services, the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the State Rehabilitation Council, and the Rhodes to Independence Advisory Board. Kathy Gips of the New England ADA Center; Robert Sanders the area Director of the EEOC, and Michael Evora the Director of the RI Commission on Human Rights will be panelists. We will see how this goes, if this starts a movement to bring people closer together then we should continue on that track.

- Suggested that a meeting be set up with Sandy Lupovitz and others from employment committee and Monica Dzialo after the Road to Compliance meeting. Kat Grygiel said she would set up a meeting.
- Invite Lauren Slocum, President/CEO of Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce to meet with us. She has been involved with the SRC in the past.

State Plan & Quality Assurance and Policy - Kate McCarthy-Barnett

We set up our schedule and timeline to move forward with the State Plan, and date for the public hearing is May 27, 2010.

9. Public Comments - There were none.

10. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker

Nancy L. Baker, Staff
State Rehabilitation Council

The next full-Council meeting is Tuesday, March 9, 2010