



State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

To work with the ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.



SRC Meeting May 20, 2024
Sherlock Center / Room 017
600 Mt Pleasant Ave, Providence, RI 02908
8:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Present Members:

Chairpersons: Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate for the [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)
Nina Fiasconaro

Regina Connor, Chair, Governor's Advisory Council for The Blind, former Assistant Administrator, ORS

Liv Lozier, Legal Advocate, [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)

Natalia Montoya, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II (ORS)

Tracey Cunningham-Martins, CEO/President [AccessPoint RI](#)

Morna Murray, Executive Director, [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)

Nicole Rico Serrano, Project Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)

Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services at [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)

Office of Rehabilitation Services: Joseph Murphy, Associate Director, Karen Davis, Administrator - Vocational Rehabilitation, John Valentine, Strategic Planning Supervisor, Laurie DiOrio, Administrator RI Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (DHS/ORS)
Sharon DiPinto, Sr. Human Services Policy & Systems Specialist

Guests: Dr. Judith Drew, Assistant Professor, Program Director Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Reh and Health Counseling, Salve Regina University,

Rena Rico, Clinician, Eleanor Slater Hospital

Jay Mollo, Sr. Manager, Global Talent Acquisition Operations, Programs and Technology [IGT](#)

1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, and SRC – Quorum met.

2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes from January 22, 2024

Motion

Christine Yankee made a motion seconded by Regina Connor and unanimously approved to accept the January 22, 2024, minutes. (Voting Members, Melissa Brusso, Regina Connor, Tracey Cunningham – Martins, Nina Fiasconaro, Liv Lozier, Natalia Montoya, Morna Murray, Nicole Rico Serrano, and Christine Yankee)

4. Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) Director's Report – Joseph Murphy

- Vacancies – for several reasons, some staff have left for other positions, this has left us shorthanded for some time. One of our strategies to try and fill vacancies is to reduce the Master's requirement for Counselors I & II. We will preferably seek people with Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling but will also look at those who have a Master's degree preferred or in related fields. We have also added five Rehab Tech positions that are contract workers. These changes may be ways to give bonuses for those applicants who do have a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling. Additionally, we want to create a career ladder for Vocational Rehabilitation

Counselor III positions. We have been working on these strategies for several years now and we have the backing of the Union, so we are hopeful for the changes, all of which are done to better serve the consumers.

- ORS' new case management system is running, and it has received mixed reviews. We are still collaborating with the vendor to make the system more compatible for things we need. The company is working to meet our needs, but it may take two more years until it is fully operational.
- The rebranding of ORS - Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire, have all done this and have seen an increase in people coming in for services. We are looking for a marketing company coming in to help us. DDS and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired are not going to be part of the rebranding. However, DHS may look at what we do and use our ideas.

5. Guest Speakers from [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#) – Morna Murray, Executive Director & Liv Lozier, Legal Advocate

- Disability Rights Rhode Island is part of the national network of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies that were created and funded by Congress in all states and all USA territories.
The Client Assistant Program is currently one of our 10 grants. Not every case is taken, but we do investigate and work with legal when needed.
 - P&As help people with disabilities protect their legal and human rights.
 - P&As have the power to investigate reports of abuse and neglect of persons with disabilities.
 - P&As provide advocacy and legal representation to persons with disabilities.DRRI Services:
 - Information and Referral
 - Advocacy for Systemic Reform
 - Individual Representation
 - Trainings on Disability-Related Legal Rights
 - Advice and Self-help Materials
 - Investigations and Monitoring
- Supported Decision-Making is an Alternative to Guardianship. Under Rhode Island's limited guardianship law, a judge may decide that a person with disabilities is unable to make some or all of his or her own decisions and appoint a guardian to make only the decisions the person is not able to make. It can be hard making decisions alone, whether or not you have a disability. These choices could be about where to live, where to work, how to spend your time during the day, how to spend your money, medicine, doctor's visits, or other things. Everyone is different. The way you get support might be right for you but wrong for someone else.
 - RI and other states passed laws that establish and respects people with disabilities to manage their own affairs. There is a symbolic weight as well as practical weight to helping Supportive Decision-Making. Supporting can be in the form of legal aid, or a family, friend, or other person who is trusted. The role of supporter encourages them to engage in empowering initiative-taking, not to make the decision for them.
***Cannot be employer, or someone otherwise legally prohibited from contact with the person.
 - RI law requires that alternatives to guardianship be considered and ruled out before petitioning for guardianship. RI guardianship law uses four (4) areas of decision-making health care, residence, finances, and relationships. Depending on capacity, the judge may appoint a guardian to make decisions in one or more areas or within the areas. Until recent years, people in the U.S. have usually used guardianship for people with disabilities.
- RI Transition APP
Who is the app for? Transition age youth, families, and teachers. It can be used on Android and IOS.

What is the purpose of the app? Helps organize the client and their team with links to resources.

How to Use the RI Transition Planning App to Prepare for your Transition IEP

- Complete the app and have information for your transition plan ready!
- Print the app report to use for your upcoming IEP meeting.
- Share this plan with your family and teachers before your meeting.
- Invite anyone to your IEP meeting who you think can help you explain what supports you need to be successful.
- Attend your IEP meeting to share your goals and what you need to reach them. Bring your plan so that you can lead your meeting!

DRRI Contact Information

Disability Rights Rhode Island

220 Toll Gate Road

Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

(401) 831-3150 Voice

(401) 274-5568 FAX

Website: <http://www.drri.org>

The Council would like to help with outreach for this app. And would like to take time at another meeting to use it. And go through the entire app. when it is ready.

6. Honoring Former SRC Members –Melissa Brusso

Former members were awarded with Certificates of honor for their service to the State Rehabilitation Council and those we serve.

- Catherine Sansonetti – Appointed to Council on May 3, 2004, Vice - R. Greene, standing for the Client Assistance Program and then was on the SRC for 20 years.
In her time on the SRC she was the Chair of State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance, Secretary of the Council, and Vice Chair of the Council
May 14, 2013, received a recognition award for serving several terms on the SRC.
May 8, 2018, received the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council Outstanding Service Award (Only given to 2 other people)
Fall of 2023 retired.
- Jane Slade -Appointed to the Council in 2009 Representing RI Department of Education (RIDE), and then was on the SRC for 15 years.
In her time on the Council Jane sat on the Transportation committee, chaired the Transition committees, and was the Co-chair of the Council.
2023 left due to work duties at RIDE.

7. SRC Chair's Report – Melissa Brusso

Vote for new members' appointments to go to the Governor.

Motion

Regina Connor made a motion seconded by Tracey Cunningham-Martins and unanimously approved to send appointments to the Governor for the following:

Dr. Judith Drew, Assistant Professor, Program Director Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Rehabilitation and Health Counseling, Salve Regina University,

Rena Rico. Clinician, Eleanor Slater Hospital

Jay Mollo, Sr. Manager, Global Talent Acquisition Operations, and Programs and Technology [IGT](#)

(Voting Members, Melissa Brusso, Regina Connor, Tracey Cunningham – Martins, Nina Fiasconaro, Liv Lozier, Natalia Montoya, Morna Murray, Nicole Rico Serrano, and Christine Yankee)

- We will be working on the recruitment of new members this year.
- We will plan a training event and for those that cannot make it in person, we will record it on zoom.
- Officers for next year. We will seek people to step into the officer positions. Right now, we believe a co-chair is needed.
- Schedule – A schedule will be done over the summer and then presented to the membership.
- The comprehensive statewide needs assessment is due at the end of the year. Our first meeting is on June 4th 3:30 pm via ZOOM. All meetings will be via ZOOM. We need everyone's involvement in this.

Melissa thanked everyone for all their hard work this year and wished folks a nice summer.

8. Correspondents – There were none.

9. Public Comments – There were none.

10. Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Motion

Regina Connor made a motion seconded by Nicole Rico Serrano and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting.

(Voting Members, Melissa Brusso, Regina Connor, Tracey Cunningham – Martins, Nina Fiasconaro, Liv Lozier, Natalia Montoya, Morna Murray, Nicole Rico Serrano, and Christine Yankee)

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Baker
Nancy Baker, Staff, RISRC