



*State Rehabilitation Council
to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services*

**SRC Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2014
Southeastern Employment Services, Old Lyme, CT**

Attendance:

SRC Members: Jim Quick, Chair; Ellen Econs, Vice-Chair; Jan Hasenjager, Treasurer; Sharon Denson; Marisel DeCordova; Michelle Fontaine; Roberta Hurley, Gary Prushko, Bruce Stovall

BRS Staff: Dr. Patricia Anderson (Department of Education), Dave Doukas, Evelyn Oliver Knight, Warren Stamp

Guests: David Morgana, Kate Travis, Kristen Winkle

Excused: Tom Boudreau, Amy Porter, Miriam Torres-Thornburn

Absent: Mary Pierson Keating; Tanisha Minnis; Larry Robinson & Victor Xavier;

The meeting opened at 1:00 pm. Everyone introduced themselves – discussions of folks leaving, new officers and positions. Evelyn will back us up and support us. Today's agenda and minutes of the September 17th meeting were approved.

Jan presented the **Budget** explaining changes were made in preparations to pay for the Consumer Survey being planned in with Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). The estimated budget for the proposed survey is \$14,875. The SRC did not spend \$17,000 from the budget last year. Depending on how expenses go, the SRC may have sufficient funds (with additional changes in line items) or may need an increase from BRS to cover the full \$14,875. Michelle made motion, Roberta 2nd – approved budget. Dave agreed to cover appropriate additional expenses as needed.

SRC Leadership Report – Jim Quick – Chairperson

The NCSRC did not meet this month.

Jan and Evelyn will give a report on the national conference.

Final Wrap Up – Jim has appreciated all of our hard work. Membership has increased.

Thank you to Evelyn for all that she does! And with our relationship with Amy Porter and Dave D. Helps to have an open discussion.

Recognizing outgoing members – Sharon Denson, Michelle Fontaine, Roberta Hurley, Mary Pearson–Keating, Victor Xavier - thank you! Roberta offered to remain as a volunteer. While she can't vote or hold office, she can assist the SRC as needed.

Evelyn also thanked the outgoing members and made “RED velvet cake” to celebrate!

BRS Updates – Dave Doukas reported for Amy.

Changes in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program are authorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), 2014. These changes will require BRS to change some of the ways we do business. Increase in outcomes for consumers.

- The BRS State Plan will now be a joint state plan with the Department of Labor – unified plan. Current standards and indicators will change stressing the importance of education. The focus will be how far did people progress in education and where did they end up working? People's earnings progression will be followed: two quarters and four quarters after getting hired. Funding for Benefits Counseling through the state, rather than BRS, can help people who are not BRS consumers.
- In a dual customer approach, BRS will work more closely with employers. BRS can be more flexible in using funds to help businesses hire people with disabilities:
- Transition services: strong emphasis on providing services to students with disabilities 16 – 21 years of age. Students in school with an active IEP – Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 may be eligible for BRS; 15% of overall budget must be reserved for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS).

Some of these changes have been happening already. We are already meeting funding requirements. Draft regulations are due in January. Before they are adopted, changes may still be made.

New legislation impacts other areas as well.

- Prioritization – people who are in jeopardy of losing jobs – this will not affect CT now as we are not in an Order of Selection (serving consumers based on the level of disability that keeps them from working.)
- Supported Employment Grant – WIOA now requires 50% of that funding to support students.
- Restrictions on using subminimum wage – as BRS does not engage jobs for subminimum wage, there should be a minimal impact on VR. However, impact could be on LEA(local education agencies)/school districts and DDS.
- Lot of work re: changes, training staff, systems of change, capture the cost of time VR counselors spent.
- Assistive Technology and Independent Living programs will report to new federal agencies.
- Recognition that VR counselors need to stay current with Labor Market.

National Standards Indicators: Measures set by RSA to evaluate the performance and productivity of VR programs. Dave reviewed handout of outcomes from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014.

Standard 1

There are six indicators in Standard 1, we must achieve a passing grade four out of six (three primary indicators).

- 1.1 Employment Outcomes: BRS must equal or exceed the number of jobseekers hired in competitive jobs from the previous year. FFY 2013 = 1,343; FFY 2014 = 1,408 **We Passed.**

Dave explained recent staffing challenges that impact these numbers: 2009 and 2003 many experienced BRS Counselors retired. Has taken four years to get there. Comment via Warren: “It takes three-five years to learn the job.” Of the current VR counselors, 65-70% of staff have worked for BRS for less than three years as VR counselors. Total caseload size is down. BRS is rebuilding caseloads.

- 1.2 Rehab Rate: Of all jobseekers who closed their case after getting services, how many closed with a competitive job. FFY 2014: 2,291 Closed; 1,408 were in competitive jobs = 61.5%. **We Passed.**
- 1.3 Competitive Employment: Percentage of jobseekers who are closed with a job and their salary equals or exceeds minimum wage. We only place jobseekers in jobs that pay minimum wage. FFY 2014 - 100% **We Passed.**
- 1.4 Significant Disability: Percentage of jobseekers who closed their case with a job and have a severe disability. (There are seven areas of functional limitations to determine eligibility for services.) We must exceed 62.4%. Of the jobseekers who closed their cases in FFY 2015, 95.5% were determined to have severe disabilities. **We Passed.**
- 1.5 Wages: The average hourly wage of BRS jobseekers closed in competitive jobs must reach 52% of the state's average wage. The state's average for FFY 2014 was \$17.87. The average for BRS consumers was \$29.96 (60%). **We Passed.**
- 1.6 Primary Source of Support: Of the jobseekers who closed with a competitive job, the difference between those who were self-supporting at application and those who were self-supporting when the case was closed. We need to exceed 53%. Of those closed, 51.6% were self-supporting at application; 90% were self-supporting at closure. The national average for FFY 2014 was 53%. BRS only achieved 39% in FFY 2014. **We failed.**

Standard 2

Minority Indicator: The “service rate” (receiving services under an employment plan) of jobseekers from a minority background compared to those from a non-minority background. We must exceed 80%. In FFY 2014, we achieved 82%. **We Passed.**

Overall, the BRS performance is healthy!!! Roberta asked about numbers of referrals. Having enough people in the system.

Dr. Patricia Anderson – State Department of Education

Dr. Anderson shared information about Transition

Not completing plans for students in transition – 15% of the budget – applies to students engage students early and often. End of the next to the last year (junior year). Cross agencies for other agencies to understand how schools work. May have to be at PPT meeting earlier – counselors have to meet them earlier so schools have been told need to come in earlier, make space.

Pre-employment transition services – Directors and transition staff, changes that are going on BRS – how do we get them work together. Corrective Action Plan – writing the Employment Plans in smaller increments of success. SYE – date of eligibility – then 90 days. Informal contract for BRS/school contact/ Sept – Nov 1st contact. Some schools would submit every student or visa-versa. With WIOA – 143 LEA’s – you have to get involved. 504 plans harder than IEP. Shorter term plans – career exploration, collaboration with the students, helping BRS understand “work in progress” BRS sometimes has resources that the school doesn’t have. Transition assessment – what is s/he not good at and then teach. Training to BRS counselors to what is in IEP so that they know what to put in EP.

Student success plan – individualized learning plan – grade 6-12, career exploration, academic, social and emotional, physical development and bring it into high school.

Overview of - 12 Core skills

Discussion of the success of the SYE programs. Wanted to know what good things you are doing so that people throughout the state could share.

SRC Update – Evelyn Oliver Knight

- Jan and Evelyn attended the NCSRC (National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils) meeting in Miami, FL. Jan also attended the CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation). She reported on the national meetings of the NCSRC and the CSAVR.
 - Items that Jan found interesting: recruiting members, go out to conferences and set up booths, put SRC Fact Sheet in packets of other events.
 - Customer satisfaction – RI? Mail in survey – golf pencil increased number of responses.
 - Telephone survey -3,000 people per year – cases that are open and cases that are closed. Anticipate 40% response. Mailings 20%.
 - Other states - Public forums – attached to meetings re: travel being so far.
 - WIOA emphasis re: business – labor does a better job with businesses because VR doesn’t do as much PR. Dave mentioned a marketing video. Evelyn will bring to the next meeting. Employment division will use. Effort will continue.
 - Business – National Employment Team – NET – what business skills are/need? Some businesses don’t trust us? Afraid to ask the questions. Businesses are confused when there are too many people
 - TAP – talent acquisition portal – for folks who have disabilities – businesses will putting in their accounts. Resource for businesses. Dave stated that

BRS is involved with NET and TAP. What role can the SRC play – writing letters of support.

- Our state – still requires master's degree for counselors
- Regulations on enhancement – in general above 24 years of age, people who are operating under wage certificates.

SRC Annual Report: need updates from committee Chairs. Information on scholarship recipient will be included. The deadline for completion is the end of the year.

- SRC Elections – Ellen Econs – Chairperson, Vice Chairperson – Marisel DeCordova, and Jim Quick – Treasurer. The Secretary position is vacant, with hopes of someone being elected at the next meeting. Tom Boudreau served two consecutive terms as secretary.

Committee Reports

- Business Partnership – Roberta Hurley – Committee members have been working on disseminating information about BRS/SRC to employers and also consumers.
- Consumer Satisfaction – Jim Quick reviewed survey information from Central Connecticut State University. The SRC voted to move forward with the proposal. Marisel moved, Sharon to 2nd.
- Intercouncil/Nominations - In Mary's absence, Jim reported we have a few candidates for new members: David Morgana, Kate Travis, Kristen Winkle (in attendance) and Joe Wendover of Walgreens. Hillary Greenberg submitted an application, but has yet to submit her resume.
- Legislation and Policy and Planning – Continue to monitor changes brought about by WIOA.

Outgoing members were recognized with certificates from BRS presented by Evelyn.

Announcement - Sharon mentioned that CTBLN is looking for an internship candidate. Training on Section 503.

Adjournment: 3:34 pm

Next meeting: January 21, 2015 – 1:00pm – 3:30pm Webinar

Minutes taken by Ellen Econs