



**State Rehabilitation Council**  
to the  
**Bureau of Rehabilitation Services**



**January 25, 2012 Minutes**  
**Webinar**

*Attendance*

Present

**SRC Members:** Sharon Denson, Michele Fontaine, Jan Hasenjager, Roberta Hurley, Mary Pierson Keating, John F. Sims & Victor Xavier

**Ex-officio:** Amy Porter

**BRS Staff:** Kathy Blewett, Evelyn Oliver Knight & Arlene Lugo

**Volunteers:** Laura Micklus, Linda Mizzi, Jerry Moran & Warren Stamp

Excused

**SRC Members:** George Narvaez, Jim Quick & Janette Williams

**Volunteers:**

Absent

***\*Volunteers** – Persons interested in the SRC, but not appointed as Members are considered Volunteers. Volunteers may attend meetings and work on committees, but may not vote on any action. When new members are sought for the SRC, Volunteers can be considered for membership.*

**Bureau of Rehabilitation Services**  
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It took a few extra minutes to start the meeting to allow most participants to get connected to the Webinar via computer and telephone; we started shortly after 1:00 PM.

- ✚ Arlene shared information about the Webinar process and instructed attendees how to participate by asking questions, verbally or in writing. Several documents will be displayed via computer for discussion. Evelyn will e-mail the documents that will require SRC action.
- ✚ All attendees introduced themselves.

Mary took over to run the meeting and asked for reports from the Treasurer and Secretary.

### **Treasurer – Michele Fontaine**

- ✚ Still have a lot of money left over in budget that started October 2011 and have spent less than 1%.

### **Secretary – Roberta Hurley**

- ✚ The minutes of the November 2011 SRC meeting were approved.

### **SRC Program Update – Evelyn Oliver Knight**

- ✚ The Election of Officers was conducted electronically by SRC members. Election results:

- Chairperson – Mary Pierson Keating, Esq.
- Vice Chairperson – Victor Xavier
- Secretary – Roberta Hurley
- Treasurer – Michele Fontaine

- ✚ Evelyn reviewed a **Technical Assistance Circular (TAC)** from the **Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)** that had been discussed at the November meeting then shared a follow-up TAC to clarify that the Ex-Officio member of the SRC representing the Designated State Unit (DSU), which is BRS, must be appointed every three years by the Governor. Although this TAC has been shared with Amy, Evelyn has not had a chance to discuss it with her. Once they have talked, Evelyn will share how this process will work in CT.

- ✚ We've contracted with the UCONN Health Center to develop the **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)**, a part of the State Plan that is due every

three years and helps to shape goals and plans for future years. SRC members will have an opportunity to review aspects of the CSNA as we progress to its completion in 2013. The CSNA is an in-depth evaluation of two basic questions:

1. What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of several categories of individuals?
2. What is the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?

As we already have Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), we will assess the need to improve these services. There will be several ways over the next two years to assess these questions. One way is to survey CRPs. We discussed a draft of the survey that will be given to CRPs in June. SRC members are asked to review the draft and share feedback regarding areas of interest that may be missing from the draft. **Please respond to Evelyn via e-mail by February 8.**

✚ Evelyn shared that the **BRS Consumer Handbook** had been revised and distributed to the BRS regional and local offices. This document explains the BRS process and provides information to help consumers be successful in working with BRS to find or keep employment. It will be distributed to all who apply for services.

✚ **State Plan** – The SRC has a section in the state plan to comment on its interaction with BRS and make recommendations to the VR agency to which BRS will respond. The process is beginning and Evelyn will send items for us to review so please send your comments ASAP so she can meet deadlines. At the March SRC meeting, the SRC will review topics they may want to suggest for inclusion in this section. **The public meetings will be held in April.**

✚ **SRC Annual Report** – Sent out by E-mail, thank you for your input and helping to put it together.

✚ **Administrative Hearing Decision** – According to requirements in the State Plan, BRS needs to make results of Administrative Hearings available to the SRC. There are many steps before a consumer goes to an Administrative Hearing. It provides an opportunity for the consumer to have an impartial hearing when activity in the case does not progress as the consumer would desire or when BRS has erred. The consumer may bring counsel and an Assistant State's Attorney represents BRS. Evelyn shared a decision for a hearing held in December 2011 and it is an example

of many topics that could be addressed at a hearing. Evelyn said this is another piece of the puzzle that SRC members could use to help shape its comments in the State Plan. For example, if there are several cases regarding the same topic or continuous hearings from a particular region, the SRC may surmise there is a systemic problem that BRS needs to address. Conversely, if there are only a few hearings per year and the topics vary widely, the SRC would not have a basis to surmise a systemic problem. Either outcome would help to shape the SRC's assessment of the VR program and services. Kathy reminded the SRC that they review redacted copies of the Administrative Hearing Decision. **All information is confidential.** If you are able to glean the identity of the consumer due to the unique circumstances in the case, you are asked not to discuss it with anyone.

✚ Evelyn read a thank you note from Barbara Konow for her retirement party at the September 2011 meeting.

### **SRC Chairperson's Update – Mary Pierson Keating, Esq.**

#### ✚ **National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Teleconference Report –**

1. RSA Commissioner Lynnae Rutledge resigned leaving a big absence and it is unknown when there will be another commissioner appointed.
2. RSA will develop SRC Webinars about compositional requirements and is seeking other webinar topics.
3. RSA is seeking success stories from around the country to put in a book.
4. The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) will meet April 21-27 in Bethesda and they are developing the agenda. Mary is planning to attend.

✚ Proposed Language for the **Reauthorization of the Rehab Act** – Mary discussed the official position posted on the website of CSAVR regarding possible changes. Mary discussed a consideration that would enable/require the SRC to pay the salary of the SRC Liaison, rather than being paid by the DSU. Action to reauthorize the Rehab Act does not appear to be imminent.

✚ **Update on Accessible Taxis** – Mary talked about the accessible taxi issue and it sounded terrible when you first heard that the Department of Motor Vehicles denied

140 applications to put accessible taxis on the road, but once she read the decision, she understood more. The issue was more about sustainability once the funds were gone. She drafted a letter for the SRC to review. Metro Taxi has purchased some cabs that are accessible and has begun to use them. Metro Taxi is seeking feedback.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Business Partnership Committee – Roberta Hurley**

Mary wanted to explore what the SRC could do about the long length of time it generally takes for people to have their wheelchairs repaired because it prevents them from getting to work. Roberta and Mary talked with Arlene Lugo about available resources that could help. Jim Quick stated that the Spinal Cord Injury Association was also working on something. Arlene hosted a Webinar with them to demonstrate current resources for consumers who use wheelchairs. Roberta will initiate a meeting with Jim to share Arlene's information and move forward working with the Spinal Cord Injury Association.

Roberta mentioned that it would be nice to have Arlene come to the SRC when time is available. Arlene reminded everyone of the Tech ACT project website ([www.cttechact.com](http://www.cttechact.com)) and Get AT Stuff website ([www.getatstuff.com](http://www.getatstuff.com)). Evelyn stated it would be great to have Arlene come back to address the SRC as there have been new members since her last visit. She will work out a schedule of all the Consultants who've been requested to make a presentation to the SRC.

### **Consumer Satisfaction Committee – Jan Hasenjager**

Committee Chairperson Jim Quick had to attend the State Independent Living Council (SILC) meeting. Jan reported that someone still needs to go to the Norwich BRS Office to complete the last BRS office survey.

[The SRC has gone to all other BRS offices to assess visibility, access, and consistency of information provided to new individuals seeking VR services. The committee will compile what members have observed and share with the SRC and BRS. This is one of the resources the SRC will use to make recommendations to BRS to improve services. Members will be reimbursed for travel expenses. The person surveying the office should not be recognized by staff in Norwich.]

### **Intercouncil Nominations Committee – John Sims**

John and Victor interviewed three new individuals, Ellen Econs, Jerry Moran and Warren Stamp, for recommendation for appointment to the SRC. Upon receipt of

these names, the Governor's office will send the Governor's application which needs to be notarized and returned to the Governor's Office. We continue to hope the Governor will appoint new SRC members soon.

Evelyn reviewed the required categories of SRC members and which positions were filled, which ones were pending and which ones were vacant. Mary asked Kathy Blewett about counselors knowing about vacancies and Kathy said they do know about it but with all they have going on it is hard to remember. The SRC had previously discussed the possibility of making a poster to be displayed in each BRS office to remind counselors. Warren stated that would be a good idea to remind counselors. Evelyn also stated that she sends out an update to all the counselors after each SRC meeting.

#### **Legislation Policy and Planning Committee –**

The Committee Chair was absent and the two members of the committee are no longer on the committee. George had discussed with Evelyn a poster to hang in the BRS offices that would list Consumers' rights and describe the SRC. Evelyn shared some draft language the SRC could consider. After many members shared initial feedback, Mary requested a professional print job, and Sharon suggested developing a poster that focuses more on the SRC to recruit new members, Evelyn asked that all feedback be sent to her. The SRC would have some options to review and discuss in further detail.

#### **BRS Update – Amy Porter**

##### **Appointment, Agency Consolidation, SRC Impact –**

**The long-awaited appointment of the Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services was announced January 17, 2012.** Congratulations to Amy on being appointed Director of new Bureau of Rehabilitative Services!

Amy explained that the new **Bureau of Rehabilitative Services** will include BRS as it was (the Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Disability Determination Services) and will add the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI), the Driver Training Program for People with Disabilities, and portions of the Worker's Compensation Commission. Amy discussed that they are meeting with all key people to determine what the structure of the new bureau will be. It's fiscal independence and human resource needs are scheduled to be in place and running July 1, 2012. Amy stated they will be moving forward and she will keep us updated as things move along.

BESB also provides vocational rehabilitation services to consumers who are blind and has a SRC but programs will remain separate for now. Will most likely not merge with BESB now but will keep the agencies separate for July 1, 2012.

Amy could not identify an immediate impact on the SRC except for her availability to attend meetings, but she will try to do what she can. They have not had any discussions about filling her former position as the VR director and in her new role she has the option of backfilling her position.

Amy invited SRC members to share ideas and provide input on the new BRS.

#### **Staffing –**

Kathy Blewett updated about staffing. There are 12 positions open and have filled eight positions.

#### **Video Phones Update –**

Amy stated that 16 video phones had been set up around the state and three more are waiting to be installed. Pictures of staff using the video phones were shared. Staff who are deaf can talk to one another; consumers and counselors may call each other without the need of a sign language interpreter. If needed, interpreter assistance can also be arranged.

Mary asked Amy if the recommendations posted on the CSVAR website regarding proposed changes to the Rehab Act were submitted to a vote of all members. Amy thought the recommendations were based on the executive committee. Amy was not sure but willing to find out.

#### **Consumer Issues – None**

**Next meeting date:** March 21<sup>st</sup>, Goodwill Industries, 165 Ocean Terrace, Bridgeport, CT

Meeting adjourned about 3:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: *Roberta Hurley*