



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



Minutes for January 20, 2010

NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center  
33 Coventry Street  
Hartford, CT

**Attendance** –

**Present:** Laraine Bronski, Sharon Denson, Michele Fontaine, Heidi Forest, Sandy Inzinga, Mary Pierson Keating, Barbara Konow, Simone Mason, and Victor Xavier

**Excused:** Roberta Hurley, Laura Micklus, James Quick

**Volunteers:** Jennifer Hannah, Sarah Harvey, Jan Hasenjager, and James Patterson,

**Absent:** NONE

**BRS Staff:** Amy Porter and Evelyn Oliver Knight

Sandy called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Sandy Welcomed new and potential members.

**Annual Election** – Evelyn passed out the ballots for our annual election of the SRC Officers. All officers were running unopposed. Evelyn asked if there were any other nominations. No one else was nominated. Sandy was re-elected as the SRC Chairperson. Laraine was elected as the SRC Vice Chairperson. Heidi was elected as the SRC Treasurer and Mary was re-elected as the SRC Secretary.

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### **Secretary's Report** – Mary

Mary presented the minutes from the November meeting. Simone moved to approve them, Michele seconded; all approved.

### **President's Report** – Sandy

Sandy has been very busy. She attended the National Coalition of the State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and the Counsel of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) in Phoenix, AZ in November.

### **Highlights of the Meeting of the NCSRC:**

Use of Committees: The members talked a lot about the structure of individual SRCs and the importance of having different committees in the Council to help achieve the SRCs goals. Our SRC is in good shape compared to other council's because, unlike most other SRCs, we have committees.

Establishing a Strategic Plan: Michigan SRC has a Strategic Plan where they clearly delineate the goals for each committee and for the overall council. Their strategic plan is like a road map. Sandy provided an example that all members could look at and suggested that we develop a similar plan. Mary volunteered to help her on the plan.

RSA: They fund the webinars that talk about the Statewide Needs Assessment and are looking for feedback from the different councils. Currently Evelyn is diligently working on our CSNA Committee which includes Sandy and Heidi.

SNA Module: suggested that we add a module that discusses the SNA.

**Modification of the RSA:** We should all be aware that there is an ongoing national debate about which federal agency will house the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA): the US Department of Education or the US Department of Labor. Budget and politics influence where RSA sits. There are pros and cons for belonging to either agency. Arguments for remaining with Education: we are a known commodity in the Education and have a developed relationship. There is a natural connection between education and identifying potential consumers of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. As the country develops new laws effecting education, BRS has a better chance of insuring that any new education law has provisions that benefit its consumers. Arguments for moving to Labor: we are one of many partners of Education. The goal of VR is work, not education.

On a local level, it doesn't really matter to CT where RSA sits because we are in the Department of Social Services (DSS). However, in other states, VR sits in a variety of places (i.e. agencies for education, labor, human services or universities). Where RSA moves on a federal level wouldn't effect where it sits on a state level. The governor decides the placement of VR services on the state level.

**CSAVR conference:** Sandy noted that it was a great time to be involved because all the states are getting new money. Many different ideas were exchanged at the meeting. The air was full of excitement. The new administration has set aside quite a bit of money for VR services. Student transition programs and client work programs were discussed as well as on the job training programs (OJT). There was more emphasis on using the benefits of OJT. In OJT, the State enters into an agreement with the employer to train a BRS consumer. The State gives the employer 50 % of the total cost to train the employee upfront and gives the remaining 50% at a later time. If the OJT isn't working out, both parties wouldn't move forward and employer would give back any funds that were not used. OJT can be used for jobs in the private or public sector. Amy noted that CT was looking to see how best to use OJT. Sandy gave the example of how a hearing impaired employee got to work because OJT paid for the interpreter.

Sandy said it was great to hear what was going on in all the different states. Amy noted that it was good to hear Sandy's perspective because she can learn what we didn't know.

NCSRC is trying to put together a resource center on the web. Mary suggested they consider looking into Second Life and will provide the council with more information.

For the first time, the Youth Leadership has sent two CD's to Sandy where one has close captioning. These are available for review by the members.

**Staff Meetings:** SRC is encouraging members go to a staff meeting. Please contact Evelyn if services are needed to attend and to get details for the meeting schedules.

### **Treasurer's Report** – Laraine

Laraine reviewed the new budget. Amy noted that we can travel if it is essential to the job. Laraine asked Amy to spend all the money. This meeting was \$250.00 at NEAT as we needed to use their computers for training.

Sandy asked about our August meeting where we talked about using the budget for different items, such as laptops. Evelyn pointed out that we need to have rational for

purchasing equipment. Amy pointed out that we may have items that are available for borrowing.

Evelyn asked us to tie the budget to our activities. For example, we are no longer printing the annual report so we can use those funds somewhere else. Having a strategic plan will help with where we spend our funds. Amy pointed out that funds we do not use stay in Connecticut and are used for client services.

### **BRS Updates** - Amy

Amy relayed the changes in BRS due to the change in staffing. She is the new acting director and apologized that she was unable to attend the past two meetings.

There has been a delay in getting the new System 7 up and running due to the change and/or lack of staffing. There are eight new staff positions ready to post. The Bureau director position was just posted as well as consultants.

BRS is pushing to get employers more involved with hiring people with disabilities. Simone asked if there were funds for entrepreneurial endeavors.

Connect-Ability and BRS will have a large employment summit conference in June. BRS is working on addressing employers queries about OJT, accommodation, adaptive equipment and making the business case for hiring someone with a disability.

Amy discussed the Connect Ability ads that were coming out. She shared with us the impact of the ad concerning a woman with Bipolar disorder and the flood of calls BRS received after the ad aired showing that BRS was reaching many people. However she noted that BRS was not quite prepared for certain questions.

### **SRC Updates** - Evelyn

**NCSRC** – The National Teleconference Meeting was held on January 19, 2010. Ideas were solicited for the NCSRC session prior to the CSAVR Spring Conference. Bobby Silverstein will make a presentation on the RSA move to Labor VS staying at Education.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) has Listening Sessions scheduled around the country to hear about successful practices and partnerships. Written

comments will be accepted. Boston is the closest opportunity to CT; date to be shared later.

Charles Sadler, RSA Program Analyst, has already had the first meeting with Lynnae Rutledge, the new RSA Commissioner and is optimistic about the future.

The Thirty-Sixth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) is seeking nominations for participants in a study group that will write a paper on The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) - State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Partnership: Working Together Works.

**Annual Report** – It was completed on time on submitted.

**Public Meeting** - Evelyn reviewed the feedback from the meetings around the state. Amy thanked the members who had attended the meetings and provided feedback. Evelyn also stressed the importance of the SRC members attending the meetings as we are the advocates for the consumers and that it is a good recruiting tool.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment** – Sandy, Heidi and Laraine along with BRS staff are on the committee to complete the CSNA. RSA sent a guide that divides the work associated with the SNA over a three year period. Because the SNA is due this year, the committee has modified the guide. Surveys and interviews are scheduled. May 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for the input. We are asking UCONN to help us conduct formal interviews with key informers such as counselors dealing on a daily basis with consumers and with the consumers themselves. The Committee is keeping to tight deadlines. The bonus of completing the CSNA is that it allows BRS to see how well it is completing its Mission.

**Website** – It is currently being revamped. SRC will have a page on the site with meeting dates, minutes and other features.

### Committee Reports

**Business Partnership Committee Report** - Michele and Simone

Michele was not able to attend as she was attending a Connect-Ability meeting. Simone suggested that the SRC members become more accessible. She suggested we attend business Expos and use some of our funds to get a big banner for a tradeshow table as well as laptops with DVD's that show what BRS does. She had contacted a company who charges between \$400-\$1000 for a banner. Sandy suggested that we get business cards. Evelyn suggested that we develop a list of events that we plan to attend prior to requesting any items.

**Consumer Satisfaction Report – Barbara Konow**

Barbara passed around on new survey format for our comments. She also consulted with UCONN who stressed the importance of having a one page survey with a lot of white space. They also suggested setting a timeframe for completing the survey. The committee is investigating methods of delivering the survey to the consumers such as by putting it online or emailing it. Mary suggested that a survey be available at the local BRS offices on a computer.

**Inter Council/Nominations –**

There are currently three candidates waiting for approval from the Governor Rell. Evelyn completed new member training for four new members (one already appointed, three pending appointment).

**Legislation, Policy & Planning – Laraine Bronski**

She attended Powerfest with Victor, Heidi and Patty Clay. The committee is looking into piggybacking onto other conferences held by other organizations so that we do not have to sponsor our own. Amy suggested that we present our case to the Governor to allow us to feed the children during our sponsored programs.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Pierson Keating, Esq. SRC Secretary