

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2009

A meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on March 16, 2009 at the Sheraton Waterside in Norfolk, Virginia.

Members Present: Karen Baugh, Charles Benagh (by phone), Sandra Cook, Daniel DeBoer, Donna Kay Graff, Kenneth Holloway, Kathleen Maybee, Shannon McManus-Jones, Robin Metcalf, James Rothrock, Samuel Simon, Cherie Takemoto, Florence Watt

Members Absent: Matthew Deans, Charles Downs, Sarah Liddle, Marianne Moore, Gregory Coleman, Stephanie Colorado

Others Present: Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support; Barbara Burkett, Ph.D., Lead Analyst; Cat Clough & Bernadette Mayhall, Interpreters; Pete Takemoto, guest

Call to Order and Introductions of Members: Council Chairperson Cherie Takemoto called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Takemoto announced that she had received a written request from Chuck Benagh to participate by teleconference because of a medical condition/disability that prevented his attendance.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Shannon McManus-Jones, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2009 meeting as amended.

Matters of Public Comment: No comments from the public

Chairperson's Report

- Ms. Takemoto and Matthew Deans will represent the SRC at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Spring Conference on April 19-22, 2009 in Bethesda, Maryland.
- Ms. Takemoto requested that members send their suggestions for SRC priorities so that the Internal Affairs Committee can consider them as suggested SRC recommendations to the State Plan. She asked that they submit suggestions with their reimbursement requests to be sent to Barbara Tyson. Ms. Tyson will forward to appropriate staff. In addition, she asked members to think of ways to let the general public know what DRS has to offer and how to make DRS services more understandable to persons with disabilities who may benefit from their services.
- Members were encouraged to attend the Vocational Rehabilitation Public Comment Forum to be held from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on March 16, 2009 at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott.

A motion was made by Sandra Cook for Cherie Takemoto to write a letter on behalf of the SRC supporting the President's initiative on health care improvements for persons with disabilities. The motion was seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

Commissioner's Report

- During the 2009 General Assembly, Senator Colgan introduced SB 1314 which would have increased incentives for state and local governments to utilize services provided by Employment Services Organizations (ESOs). While the bill did not pass this year, the Commissioner expects the initiative to come up again next year. The General Assembly passed a bill renaming the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. The new name is the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.
- The Commissioner shared with the Council members information on the federal Stimulus Package and ideas on how money received by DRS may be utilized. Cherie Takemoto asked what Order of Selection categories DRS will open and Liz Smith replied that by law DRS must first serve clients in Priority Category 1 (most significantly disabled). The Commissioner will offer SRC members the opportunity to serve on the Request for Proposals scoring panel for monies to go to ESOs to provide jobs for vocational rehabilitation clients. Commissioner Rothrock will send an update to the Council members next week on plans to utilize the Stimulus funds.
- Commissioner Rothrock offered to have Larry Roberts, DRS Self Employment Coordinator, attend a future SRC meeting to share his role working with DRS consumers in their self employment ventures.

Council Roundtable

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): No report.

Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) Advisory Council: Sam Simon attended the VATS meeting in Richmond on March 10, 2009. Kathy Hayfield has been hired as the new VATS Manager and under her leadership and with the addition of some new members, there seems to be a lot of energy and direction for this Council.

One initiative is to reorganize and publicize the Virginia Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Network (VATNet) exchange program. In 2006, VATS received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, to develop a Model Assistive Technology (AT) reuse program across Virginia for persons who do not have the means to purchase AT. VATNet contracts with local community organizations to establish used AT collection and distribution sites across the Commonwealth. Through its partnerships, VATNet has helped improve the quality of life of Virginians with disabilities by collecting and distributing gently used AT devices to those who would not otherwise have access to it. Currently, VATS and its community partners successfully operate fourteen reuse centers across the Commonwealth.

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC): Ms. Takemoto provided a handout on six new Webcasts on transition services sponsored by PEATC. For additional information, go to www.peatc.org. She also distributed a handout on the results of a survey of parents of transition-age youth with disabilities conducted by PEATC.

Department of Education (DOE): No report.

Other Members – Shannon McManus-Jones reported that the Virginia Research and Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University has a website www.going-to-college.org which is a resource for teens with disabilities. This information was included in the 2009 Transition Packets.

Committee Reports & Working Lunch

Internal Affairs Committee

John Phelps, FRS Director, presented the FRS Performance Report as of February, 2009. The economic situation and closing the final Priority Category under Order of Selection is having an impact on production with a 15.8% decrease in number of Employment Plans developed and a 23.6% decline in successful case closures. In addition, there was a 17.4% increase in the number of open cases because of the large number of new clients accepted prior to the closing of the final Priority Category. However, average hourly earnings and the competitive employment rate remain strong. At the request of Sam Simon, an historical analysis of the competitive employment rate will be done to assess any rationale for the increase over the years.

Cherie Takemoto stated that, due to the economic situation, the Community Services Board in Fairfax County is ceasing the expenditures of funds for follow along and she is concerned about the impact this will have on DRS clients. Commissioner Rothrock suggested that this might be due to a reduction in local funds. However, he stated that DRS cannot accept applicants for whom extended employment is appropriate unless non-VR funds are available for extended employment. DRS will continue to use LTESS funds for extended employment and may be able to utilize additional funds allocated by the General Assembly for LTESS.

Donna Kay Graff said that deaf and hard of hearing consumers have difficulty with counselor explanations regarding serious functional limitations (SFL) during eligibility, which may result in the failure to identify all SFLs and impediments to employment of the client. She suggested DRS make a DVD, to be given to counselors, explaining each SFL and how it might be an impediment to employment for deaf, hard of hearing, and American Sign Language consumers. The DVD should use simple language and use an interpreter for the deaf. Cherie Takemoto suggested the DVD could be posted to U-Tube like the WWRC videos.

Cherie Takemoto stated that people with disabilities do not know about DRS services, unless they are already in a “pipeline” referral source to DRS. Karen Baugh commented that DRS accepts referrals from all sources and that anyone may contact DRS to refer another person for services.

The Committee began reviewing the SRC Recommendations State Plan Attachment. All members should send their comments to Karen Baugh by April 30. Comments should be based on member knowledge of issues, review of the Consumer Satisfaction Report, the Triennial Needs Assessment report, comments from public hearings, and a review of the Goals and Priorities State Plan Attachment.

External Affairs Committee

The Committee took the majority of its allotted time to discuss possible methods of reaching out to constituents. One particular concern is that parents of youth with disabilities do not think they are getting the information they need to assist their children in transitioning from school to work. The Committee wants to investigate this issue and suggest methods of helping parents become more informed about services available to youth with disabilities. The Committee plans to invite Erica Lovelace and Shannon McManus-Jones to discuss how individual school systems should be working.

It is expected that the Committee will be able to identify gaps in the service system and recommend remedies for addressing these gaps.

The Committee will spend time during the next meeting discussing the SRC mission and vision statements.

Sam Simon is interested in taking a bigger part in the public hearing process and will investigate some strategies to improve attendance at public hearings.

New Business

None

Old Business and Working Lunch

A motion was made, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to amend the SRC By-Laws to create an Executive Committee.

Dr. Burkett reviewed the Executive Summary of the Triennial Needs Assessment report, which included the methodology agreed to by the SRC, information on the literature search, DRS service trends for 2005-2008, and the results of the stakeholder and transition providers, parents and clients surveys. Members will receive a final copy of the Needs Assessment report and were asked to review it for further discussion at the May meeting.

Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on May 11, 2009 at the Department of Rehabilitative Services Central Office. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.