

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2006

The quarterly meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on November 20, 2006, at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville, Virginia.

Members Present: Chester Avery, Daniel DeBoer (Vice Chair), Kenneth Holloway, Marianne Moore, Dana Nelson, Hiawatha Nicely (Chair), Jim Rothrock (conference call), Philip Sieck, Samuel Simon (conference call), Cherie Takemoto, Roy Ward, Florence Watt

Members Absent: Karen Baugh, William Hall, Michael Organ

Others Present: Doug James, Northern Virginia Regional Director; Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst; John Phelps, Field Rehabilitative Services Director; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Ernie Steidle, Chief Operations Officer; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support.

Call to Order: Council Chairperson Hiawatha Nicely called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Roy Ward, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2006 meeting.

Matters of Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Chairperson's Report:

Mr. Nicely asked that the members select the dates and locations for the 2007 SRC meetings. A motion was made by Roy Ward, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the following SRC meeting dates for 2007:

January 22, 2007 – Richmond

March 12, 2007 – Norfolk in conjunction with the Virginia Transition Forum 2007 to be held at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott

May 14, 2007 – Northern Virginia

August 13, 2007 – Richmond

November TBA – Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center

It was suggested that if a retreat is held in November, it should be held on a weekday rather than a weekend and not during the week of Thanksgiving.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Rothrock stated that the First Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards Breakfast that was held on October 24, 2006, in commemoration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. DRS and Dominion Resources, Inc. co-hosted the Awards Breakfast at Virginia Crossings Resort in Glen Allen, Virginia. The statewide event was the culmination of a series of local events held by DRS throughout the Commonwealth to honor individuals and organizations in public, private, and non-profit sectors that have helped further DRS' mission to empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and full inclusion into society. Sam Simon and Florence Watt represented the SRC at the event. Commissioner Rothrock thanked William Hall, SRC member and a Vice President with Dominion Resources, for his support with the event and expressed his appreciation to Kelly Wolf and Aileen Colorado, DRS Marketing, in organizing the event. Those recognized at the event will be featured in the 2006 SRC Annual Report.

SRC members are invited to attend the Wright Scholars Seminar on December 8, 2006, at 1:30 p.m. at the DRS Central Office. The seminar honors the rehabilitation counseling students supported through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) training grant and focuses on emerging strategies to acknowledge the long-term value of the rehabilitation process for participants. Dr. David Dean, Director of the Bureau of Disability Economics Research at the University of Richmond, will present the results of his recent longitudinal analyses of the employment and earnings of a selected cohort of DRS vocational rehabilitation (VR) program clients.

The Commissioner congratulated the Field Rehabilitative Services Program for their strong performance in Federal Fiscal Year 2006. There was a significant increase in the number of Employment Plans developed and in the number of successful employment outcomes. DRS is currently advertising for a full-time classified Director at WWRC. Interviews will take place during the next month. DRS had advertised for a position to lead and coordinate DRS' transition services programs. However, given the current tight fiscal situation, the Commissioner has decided to suspend the hiring of this position at this time.

The Commissioner is focusing on employment of people with disabilities and is considering a budget amendment to support "state use" contracts for services and goods provided by Employment Service Organizations to State Agencies which would create more employment opportunities for Virginia's most significantly disabled population. In addition, the Disability Commission has tasked DRS to look at the manner in which the agency works with the Disability Services Boards and develop outcome measures for the Centers for Independent Living. The Disability Commission has a "sunset clause" of July 1, 2007, but Delegate McQuigg, Chair of the Commission, is committed to the continuation of the Commission.

The Governor will announce his budget on December 15, 2006 and the SRC members discussed how best to communicate to the Governor budget amendments that will enhance services to Virginians with disabilities. A motion was made by Roy Ward,

seconded, and passed by unanimous vote that a letter be sent on behalf of the SRC under the Chair's signature to the Governor in support of \$2 million in basic VR funding; \$350,000 to support contracts for goods/services provided by the Employment Services Organizations to State agencies; \$750,000 to reinvest in the Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund for grants to the Disability Services Boards; \$3-\$6 million for a Brain Injury Medicaid Waiver; \$500,000 to bring Centers for Independent Living to the \$250,000 base and create two satellites in Blacksburg and Petersburg; and assorted efforts to increase other waiver slots. It was suggested that budget proposals and proposed legislation be discussed at the August meeting next year so there will be time for comments.

Council Roundtable

Virginia Workforce Council: Mr. Nicely reported that the Virginia Workforce Council is now under the leadership of Daniel G. LeBlanc, Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce Development. The Council has reviewed the workforce development strategic plan which will be submitted to the Governor by December 5. Some members of the General Assembly are discussing the possible consolidation of workforce development agencies under one "umbrella", but the concept has numerous challenges and is only in the discussion stage. Efforts continue to physically co-locate workforce development agencies into One-Stop Centers. John Phelps stated that DRS is currently collaborating on co-locations for DRS offices in Norfolk, Danville, and Charlottesville.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Mr. Sieck was unable to attend the SILC planning retreat, but information regarding the Independent Living State Plan goals and public hearings can be accessed from the website at www.vasilc.org.

Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) Advisory Council: Mr. Avery reported that the Council is focusing on recycling centers across the Commonwealth to provide persons with disabilities, free of charge, adaptive equipment. \$631,000 in federal funds will be used to establish a network of assistive technology recycling centers. The next VATS Advisory Council meeting will be held on December 6 at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Council Chapel.

Department of Education (DOE): Ms. Moore reported that she and Beth Somers from DRS provided a presentation at the RSA National Employment Conference on the Commonwealth's Transition Forum. Assistant Secretary John Hager was in attendance and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services is going to provide additional support for the development of transition conferences in other states. The State Special Education Advisory Committee was presented with transition information at their last meeting. WWRC and Erica Lovelace of DRS made presentations at the meeting regarding services to youth in transition. Additionally, there was a presentation about a dual enrollment program in Lynchburg, college events at James Madison University, and two capacity building projects in the Shenandoah Valley offered through Staunton City Schools and the Shenandoah Valley Regional Program. The Virginia Team for Youth composed of representatives from DRS, DOE, Department of Juvenile

Justice, Department of Correctional Education, and Department of Social Services is collaborating with individuals in localities across Virginia to network on youth in transition issues.

Committee Reports and Working Lunch

Internal Affairs:

A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adopt the SRC Bylaws with the addition that a proxy needed to be received by the Chair in writing five days prior to the meeting and would count towards a quorum. The name of the IDEA advisory body was corrected. A motion was made, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that any amendment made at one meeting will not be voted on until the next meeting so there will ample time for review.

Mary Lutkenhaus provided information on the status of vocational rehabilitation consumers appeals for Federal Fiscal Year 2006. During the year, there was one mediation request, which resolved the consumer's issue. There were five requests for hearings: three were resolved by field staff, one hearing was conducted - decision favored the agency and was upheld in administrative review, and one hearing is pending.

The Order of Selection continues, with Category IV still closed. This category consists of individuals with no serious functional limitations. There are currently 194 individuals on the waiting list.

Barbara Burkett, Vocational Rehabilitation Lead Analyst, and Kurt Sprenger, WWRC Lead Analyst, provided information on potential changes to the VR and WWRC consumer satisfaction processes. For VR, Barbara is leading a workgroup to develop a mechanism to provide more immediate feedback to VR counselors on consumer satisfaction. At WWRC, a workgroup is looking at modifications to the consumer satisfaction survey instrument and other ways to get satisfaction information regarding particular service areas.

Dr. Steidle gave a budget update as of September 30, 2006, which is the first for the federal fiscal year. So far, 26% of the budget has been spent. Dr. Steidle was asked about the expenditures for vocational rehabilitation consumers. The expenditure level was higher for this quarter as compared to the same quarter in previous years, DRS is closing watching the expenditure levels to ensure that there are sufficient funds for the entire fiscal year.

External Affairs:

The first State Plan public hearing is scheduled for December 11 in Fairfax. This hearing will be held in conjunction with the Fairfax Disability Services Board. The remaining public hearings will be held in March, 2007 and DRS is working with other Disability Services Boards to co-sponsor these hearings.

Ms. Rakestraw reviewed the proposed design and content of the 2006 SRC Annual Report. Entitled "Opening Doors" the report will highlight those recognized at the First Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards Breakfast. The SRC accomplishments for 2006 were reviewed and the members will be sent a final copy for comment.

Mr. Avery requested that at the January 2007 meeting, the Committee review the status of the SRC membership, particularly those members whose terms will end on September 30, 2007.

New Business

Working with Clients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Doug James gave a report on recommendations for LEP resource development, recruitment, training, and access to the DRS offices and services. He stated that Nuria Rodriguez-Padro, a bi-lingual vocational rehabilitation counselor in Northern Virginia, worked on a special assignment to develop these recommendations. The goals of the LEP project were to begin developing additional services, to include interpreter services and LEP resources; to identify groups that could be called on for assistance in the future; to recommend recruitment strategies for potential candidates for counseling and other disability jobs who are bi-lingual, and to develop a program to share with Northern Virginia staff about cultural sensitivities that need to be developed to better serve this population.

Field Services End of Year Report

John Phelps reported that during the 2006 Federal Fiscal Year, which ended September 30, 2006, there were 7,100 new Employment plans initiated – which is an increase of 1,000 over the previous year. There were approximately 3,900 successful employment closures, which is an increase of 300 over last year. He stated the Governor's Office has challenged DRS to have 4,300 Status 26 (successful) closures by 2009. He feels that DRS' new "Roadmap for Success" is making a difference in the positive outcomes.

A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded and passed unanimously that the SRC create a Chairperson's Award to annually recognize DRS employees for innovative and remarkable performance. He suggested that Elizabeth Smith and Barbara Tyson be the first recipients of the award. Mr. Nicely will check with Commissioner Rothrock on this and report back at the January meeting.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm. The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday, January 22, 2007, at the DRS Headquarters in Richmond.