

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2008

A meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on November 18, 2008 at the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present: Karen Baugh, Charles Benagh (by phone), Sandra Cook, Daniel DeBoer, Matthew Deans, Donna Kay Graff, Sarah Liddle, Kathleen Maybee, Marianne Moore, James Rothrock, Samuel Simon, Cherie Takemoto, Florence Watt, Robin Metcalf

Members Absent: Kenneth Holloway

Others Present: John Phelps, Field Rehabilitative Services Director; Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Rick Sizemore, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Director; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support; Ernie Steidle, Chief Operating Officer; Hiawatha Nicely, Award Recipient & Presenter; James Silcox, Guest; Cat Clough & Elaine Hernandez, Interpreters

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

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Danny DeBoer, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2008 meeting as distributed.

Matters of Public Comment: James Silcox, a DRS client with the Fairfax Office, provided public comment that he is having trouble with employers providing him the accommodations he feels are necessary to obtain employment. He states that DRS has provided him with letters for test-taking accommodations; however, many private, state, and federal entities are not willing to acknowledge the request.

Ms. Takemoto thanked Mr. Silcox for providing public comment and referred him to Commissioner Rothrock who will provide him with a letter updating him and the State Rehabilitation Council on the status of his concern.

Chairperson's Report

- Prior to the full Council meeting, Hiawatha Nicely, former SRC member, was photographed as the recipient of the 2008 SRC Chairperson's Recognition Award. A group picture of the SRC also was taken for the 2009 SRC Annual Report.
- Chairperson Takemoto provided a brief update on the SRC Retreat held on November 17, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza in Richmond. During the retreat Sam Simon drafted a Vision Statement, "*Virginia – Where all people with disabilities have the opportunity to be trained and employed in jobs that pay enough to provide economic and social independence.*" She thanked Sam Simon, Danny

DeBoer, and Matthew Deans for their work on the planning committee for the retreat. The facilitators from Virginia Commonwealth University will follow up with the members on what was discussed during the retreat. Ms. Takemoto suggested that the SRC utilize time at the end of the meeting to further discuss how the SRC can best operate to have a meaningful impact on services to Virginians with disabilities.

- Ms. Takemoto appointed Karen Baugh as the 2009 Chair of the Internal Affairs Committee and Danny DeBoer as the 2009 Chair of the External Affairs Committee.
- Ms. Takemoto shared with the SRC the proposed meeting dates for the next calendar year. A motion was made by Florence Watt, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to accept the 2009 meeting dates. The following meetings will be held at the DRS Headquarters in Richmond unless otherwise posted:
 - January 26
 - March 16
 - May 11
 - August 10
 - November 16-17 (with Retreat)
- Ms. Takemoto stated that she found the E-Rehab SRC Training Series, sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to be very helpful. She encouraged SRC members to review these modules, which may be accessed at <http://www.erehab.org/SRC/>.

Commissioner's Report

- In commemoration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, there were employer recognition events throughout the State. DRS and Dominion Resources, Inc. co-hosted the 2nd Annual Disability Employment Champions Awards. This year's business award recipients included: Boddie-Noell Enterprises, Northrop Grumman Newport News, Hyatt Hotel (in partnership with Hands On Educational Services), Fluor Corporation, and Kroger of Lexington. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University received the state agency award, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys received the Employment Service Organization Partnership Award, Comcast Cable received the Community Champion Award, and Dr. Audie Gaddis received the Self-Employment Champion Award.
- The past two years, DRS has hosted a Joint Council Leadership Summit to bring together the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of DRS' boards and councils to discuss common areas of interest and possible collaboration. Due to the budget situation, DRS did not hold a summit this fall, but will look into the feasibility of holding one in the spring.
- The Commissioner acknowledged the excellent presentation given by Karen Jackson, Vice President, Broadband Programs, Center for Innovation Technology, at the SRC retreat and thanked Sam Simon for inviting Ms. Jackson. The Commissioner will follow up with Ms. Jackson on her offer to establish a webpage on the CIT website on telework and assistive technology for people with

disabilities. The Commissioner handed out information on the NewWell Fund (formerly the Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority) as a resource for low-interest loans for people with disabilities looking to establish a telework business. He also stated that through a research grant, Virginia Commonwealth University, is establishing a “Smart House” at WWRC which will be an incubator to help individuals with disabilities learn to live more independently.

- The Commissioner reported on the status of the budget reductions. For State Fiscal Year 2009, DRS received a 15% budget reduction. While department efficiency measures contributed to some of the reduction, the department’s vocational rehabilitation program received a \$422,810 reduction in case service funds; this is the remainder of the \$500,000 in case service funds appropriated by the 2004 General Assembly. In addition, there is a \$1.2 million reduction in long-term support funding (LTESS and EES) utilized by the Employment Service Organizations to support the employment of people with significant disabilities. There were no reductions to the department’s Community Based Services programs (brain injury, Centers for Independent Living, Personal Assistance Services, etc.) which are primarily State funded. The Governor will announce the budget reductions for Fiscal Year 2010 in December.

Following a discussion on the funding mechanisms for the vocational rehabilitation program, a motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to have Cherie Takemoto, as Chair of the SRC, send a letter to Governor Kaine expressing concern about the budget reductions to DRS employment programs, asking the Governor to reinstate the reductions, and asking him to ensure that programs serving Virginians with disabilities do not receive any further budget reductions.

- The Commissioner briefed the SRC on the history and current status of DRS’ Order of Selection. As of August 31, 2008, there were 996 individuals on the vocational rehabilitation waiting list. The budget reduction exacerbated an already difficult fiscal situation facing the vocational rehabilitation program. Therefore, numerous cost containment measures have occurred. One of these was to close the final order of selection Priority Category (most significantly disabled) effective November 15, 2008. This means that all new clients determined eligible for the VR program will be placed on a waiting list until there are sufficient fiscal resources to open a category. The Commissioner apologized for not being able to consult with the SRC members before closing the final category, but action needed to occur as soon as possible to help alleviate the budget situation. Mr. Simon stated that he hoped in the future the SRC could be notified prior to these types of actions occurring.

Council Roundtable

Workforce: Hiawatha Nicely, Virginia Workforce Council member and former SRC member, reported that the current Chairman of the Virginia Workforce Council is Dr. Robert P. Leber, Director, Education and Workforce Development, Northrop Grumman

Corporation – Newport News Sector. He encouraged members to go to the Workforce website at www.workforce.virginia.gov to obtain additional information on their progress and initiatives and commented on the status of the development of One-Stop Centers in Virginia. He commended Dr. Joseph Ashley, DRS Assistant Commissioner for Grants and Special Programs, for his assistance and attendance at the Virginia Workforce Council meetings and his continuous efforts to represent individuals with disabilities and DRS’ interests. Mr. Nicely suggested that SRC members should be engaged in the activities of the local Workforce Investment Boards as a means to provide education and advocacy for work programs for people with disabilities.

Due to time constraints, all other Roundtable Reports will be submitted in writing for SRC member review.

Committee Reports

Internal Affairs Committee

Karen Baugh, Chair, reported that at the August 11, 2008 meeting, the Committee was briefed on the results of the internal audit of the VR consumer satisfaction system. A recommendation from the audit was that the SRC and DRS enter into an official agreement for DRS to administer the survey for the SRC and the Committee reviewed the draft agreement. A motion was made by Danny DeBoer, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the *Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council* as drafted.

Due to time constraints, Ms. Baugh will provide the remainder of the Committee report in writing to the SRC.

External Affairs Committee

In the absence of Ken Holloway, Danny DeBoer served as Committee Chair. Due to time constraints, Mr. DeBoer will provide the Committee report in writing to the SRC.

Unfinished Business

Rick Sizemore reported that Governor Kaine and members of his Cabinet visited WWRC on November 13, 2008, as part of their eleventh Cabinet Community Day. The visit afforded WWRC students and staff an opportunity to talk directly with the Governor and members of his Cabinet. Staff shared information about the Center’s current “*Blueprint for Direction*” that details the Center’s daily operations and how they are connected to the Virginia’s performance management system. Mr. Sizemore distributed copies of the *WWRC Annual Report* and the *Blue Print for Direction*.

New Business

Ms. Takemoto requested that Dr. Ashley provide the SRC members with information

regarding the new Ticket to Work regulations at the January 26, 2009 meeting.

The SRC continued its discussion on ways that the Council may be more effective. Shortly, the Legislative Budget Hearings will be announced and the SRC members could speak at these hearings on the importance of DRS programs. Ms. Takemoto stated that the SRC needs to develop a blueprint for its future activities and initiatives. A committee was formed consisting of Danny DeBoer, Florence Watt, Karen Baugh, Matthew Deans, and Cherie Takemoto to discuss: (1) how the SRC could intensify its efforts regarding outreach and advocacy; and (2) the SRC's operating structure.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on January 26, 2008, at the DRS Headquarters in Richmond.

The following Committee and Roundtable reports were submitted in writing after meeting:

Department of Education: The Virginia Department of Education in partnership with America's Promise Alliance held a statewide summit, *Learning, Working, And Living: Keeping Promises to our Youth*, where dropout prevention was discussed by state and national leaders. Approximately 500 people participated in the day-long meeting. The VDOE has completed data collections for the February 1, 2009 SPP/APR submission to OSEP. Public comments on the proposed changes to the Standards of Accreditation have been completed. Some of the proposed changes are the additions of Advanced and Standard Technical Diplomas, the Graduation Completion Index, and Academic Career Plans for all students beginning in Grade 7. The proposed Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities are now sitting with the State's Executive Branch. Submitted by Marianne Moore

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center: PEATC is asking the parents of transition-aged students with disabilities to complete a brief survey. Please share with others in your networks. It is also posted in the "News and Headlines" section of our web page www.peatc.org.

Attention parents of transition aged students with disabilities!

We'd like to know about your experiences in transition planning. The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) is conducting an online needs assessment to help us improve our services. If you are the parent of a student with a disability between the ages of 14-26 we want to hear from you. While PEATC works to support Virginia's families, we encourage input from across the map. Feel free to share this message.

<https://survey.vcu.edu/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=ZA6AAC>

The survey will remain active until January 14, 2009. For more information, please contact PEATC by phone at 703-923-0010 or email at Burzio@peatc.org. Submitted by Cherie Takemoto

Statewide Independent Living Council: The SILC held its quarterly meeting October 16, 2008 in Richmond. The process for developing the next federally-mandated three year State Plan for Independent Living has begun. A timeline and work assignments were developed by the SILC with the due date to RSA of September 2009. A brochure is being developed by members of the SILC to assist in educating stakeholders, other state agencies, and the general public about the Council's state and federal-mandated responsibilities and overall focus. A draft letter requesting modification of the teleconferencing aspects of FOIA was presented to the SILC for discussion. After review, the SILC requested that the draft further clarify the need for FOIA guidelines to be more flexible due to the nature of the Council members. The SILC requested the draft be revised by SILC staff and the SILC representative to the SRC with the assistance of the SRC staff. The issue will be discussed further at the January SILC meeting. Submitted by Sarah Liddle

Internal Affairs Committee: Karen Baugh, Committee Chair, opened the Internal Affairs Committee meeting at 9:10 a.m. All members were present. John Phelps, Field Rehabilitation Services Director, reviewed the FRS Division Performance Measures Report (handout). In the performance measure categories served YTD the PY 08 goal was exceeded by 332 and successful cases closed rehabilitated exceeded by 200 but down 66 from PY 07. This is great with three categories closed and serving the Most Significantly Disabled. The category MSD/Priority 1 was closed effective 11/15/08. When asked if the target for number of cases closed as rehabilitated would be lowered due to all categories being closed under Order of Selection, Mr. Phelps responded that counselors are still serving approximately 18,000 clients and all counselors are being asked to develop a list of clients who will most likely have a successful case closure, and based on that estimate it appears that the agency will meet it's target. Mable Fleming, Senior Analyst, asked the Committee to vote on adoption of the 2007 vocational rehabilitation consumer satisfaction survey results report, which was presented at the last meeting in draft form. The Committee voted to adopt the report "as is." As follow-up to the August meeting, in which the Committee was, advised that an Internal Audit recommended the Council and DRS enter into an official agreement for DRS to administer the customer satisfaction survey for the Council, Mrs. Fleming presented the draft agreement and the Committee voted to adopt the agreement "as is." Erica Lovelace, Education Services Manager, announced that John Phelps has shifted her focus to higher education and the two central office staff in her unit will continue to focus on Transition Services. In helping counselors correctly apply maximum allowances to funding education in trade schools and college, the agency has saved \$50,000. She also presented a proposed change to the maximum allowances policy. Currently, the maximum allowances are set at the cost of attending the community college and Virginia public universities, but there is an exception that sets the maximum allowance for Gallaudet University and NTID of Rochester University at the full out-of-state student cost. Because federal Higher Education regulation requires colleges to count merit aid

(scholarships not based on financial need) as a client resource but federal Vocational Rehabilitation regulation prohibits DRS from counting merit aid as a resource, the unintended consequence of such high DRS allowances for Gallaudet and NTID is that DRS funds are "replacing" merit aid and the client is getting to "pocket" the merit aid - being paid to go to school. She proposes to eliminate the exception. In developing the proposed change, Ms. Lovelace met with the Gallaudet financial aid officer and the DRS Regional Counselors for the Deaf, who fully support the change. Matthew Deans, DRS intern and SRC member, has participated in policy discussions and is comparing current and proposed funding levels for clients at Gallaudet and NTID to ensure the combination of DRS funds and financial aid are sufficient so as to not deny the education needed for employment. The Committee unanimously supported the proposed policy change. As follow-up to the August meeting, Barbara Burkett, Ph.D., Lead Analyst, presented information on the time cases have spent on the Order of Selection waiting list (handout). In addition to the chart showing distribution by region, she noted that the percentage of cases on the waiting list is higher than statistically expected in Northern Virginia and lower than expected in Southwest. Committee members pointed out that it does not cost the client anything to go on the waiting list, and asked what was being done to encourage it. Ms. Baugh, Counselor and SRC member, explained counselors are encouraging clients to agree to wait so they may be served in the order they apply once the category is opened. Mr. Phelps added that field staff is indicating clients in Northern Virginia are waiting for training services and have limited alternatives to DRS while clients in Southwest are requesting medically-related services and are not willing to wait and may be finding other resources. Ms. Baugh was unanimously reappointed as Chair of the Internal Affairs Committee. Submitted by Karen Baugh

External Affairs Committee: Danny DeBoer, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Barbara Burkett reported that data collection was almost complete for the triennial needs assessment. She has had good access to various consumer groups. She has had over 500 responses, which is excellent. A follow-up email blast will be sent to transition forum attendees. This request for responses has gone to our partner groups—Centers for Independent Living, Brain Injury, etc. It has also gone to directors of One-Stops. The report will be written in December. We have received 10 nominations from around the state for the Employee Leadership Award. The council may select up to 5. Committee members are to review the nominees for discussion at our next meeting. At that time, we will recommend our selections to the full council. Presentation of the awards will be made at the council's March meeting. Aileen Colorado reported on the progress of our SRC Annual Report and distributed a preliminary layout for the report. The suggested title is *Making a Difference/Changing Lives*. Content will cover the Transition Forum and the Disability Awards Luncheon and award recipients. Other content suggestions made included speaking to the return on investment for employers hiring people with disabilities, examples of people making a difference and changing lives. There was discussion regarding outreach to our constituents and consumer satisfaction. This will be an ongoing discussion for the committee. The committee also discussed how we should be communicating the importance of funding VR to our legislators, particularly in this poor economic environment. We must formulate an

outreach plan for all our constituents. We adjourned with still much to discuss.
Submitted by Danny DeBoer