**DVR-SRC Minutes**

**October 15, 2018**

**Present:** Cheryl Peabody, SILC REP; Scott Hebert, Hanger Clinic; Mary Adley, DOE; Dan Vigue, Goodwill Industries; Chris Higgins, Walgreens; Libby Stone-Sterling, Director of DVR; Samantha Fenderson, Assistant Director of DVR; Joel McQuade; Joshua Howe, Acting Director of SWB; Kathy Despres, CAP Advocate; Suzanne Primiano, DVR Regional Director for Central Maine; Darcy Gentle, 121 VR Program Director; Ann Long, MPF; Riley Albair, DRM

**Members of the Public Present**: Wes Uhlman, DVR Counselor

**Absent:** J. Richardson Collins, Advocate; Veronica Swain, DVR-SRC Admin Assistant; Nicole Achey, UMF

**Acceptance of Minutes:** No corrections**.** Minutes are accepted as distributed.

**Election of Officers:** Sue Primiano announced the officer positions that are open for election: Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer. Sue announced the nominees. Chris Higgins accepted his nomination for DVR-SRC Treasurer. Council voted to elect Chris as Treasurer. Kathy Despres accepted her nomination for DVR-SRC Vice Chair. Council voted to elect Kathy as Vice Chair. Cheryl Peabody accepted her nomination for DVR-SRC Chair. Council voted to elect Cheryl as Chair.

**Director’s Report:**

**Staffing and Office Location Update**: Sue Primiano has been promoted to Regional Director for Central Maine. DVR has received approval from the Governor’s office to fill Sue’s previous casework supervisor position. DVR is also in the process of filling two casework supervisor positions in Bangor. One of those positions was originally for the Rockland Office, but was moved to the Bangor Office due to the need for service. Two casework supervisors from the Augusta Office will take over the Rockland Office. The Rockland Office currently has three VR counselors. Interviews for the two Bangor casework supervisor positions will start this week, Oct 15th through the 19th. Both casework supervisors will be housed in the Bangor Office; one will be supervising the Machias area and the other will be supervising the Bangor area. DVR has moved the Brunswick Office from under Portland to under Lewiston. The office has been moved onto the old Brunswick Naval Base; they will be holding an open house and job fair on Tuesday, October 16th. DVR has also moved offices from Skowhegan to the Goodwill Hinkley Campus.

**Supervisory Training:** Samantha briefly presented on DVR’s new supervisory training. The training is conducted along two track lines, depending on whether the position is filled by someone outside or inside the VR system. DVR is working with HR to look at a hybrid program that includes internal training from regional directors, casework supervisors, and training from Libby and Sam in regards to leadership in VR. HR is coordinating some specific training around leadership in State government.

**New Counselor Training**: DVR just finished two weeks of new counselor training. Fifteen counselors attended, a larger number than usual. In response to questioning from Darcy Gentle, Samantha noted that the presentation did mention the 121 VR Program, but not in great detail. Darcy volunteered to speak on behalf of the 121 VR Program at future trainings DVR provides.

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month**: October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. DVR has repurposed Disability Mentoring Day as Career Exploration Day. It is aimed at exposing young people to businesses. This week (Oct. 15th through the 19th), a group of students from area schools will attend an event at Bates College. On the week of Oct. 22nd through the 26th, another group of students will attend an event at TD Bank’s operation center. Multiple business outreach activities are currently occurring around the state and DVR has received much interest from employers. DVR is working closely with Career Center partners around some business outreach activities and is conducting other activities alone. DVR is also sending out an employer newsletter on a regular basis.

**RFP**: DVR is continuing to move forward with the RFP process. It is not yet out. Initially, it was thought the RFP would be out to the public by the end of Summer 2018. It is still moving forward, though slower than originally hoped.

**Staff** **Changes in RSA**: DVR has been notified that all the State Technical Assistance teams at RSA have been reassigned; there will be new people assigned to work with DVR. James (inaudible) will continue to be the state liaison for DVR. DVR is in the middle of the Corrective Action Plan, and is yet to receive RSA feedback in regard to the fiscal corrective action; this might change with the new team. There is a new individual who will be working with DVR on the fiscal piece. DVR is excited about the change. The individual previously working with DVR on the fiscal item was moved to another team and will not supervise the team working with DVR. DVR, the Bureau lead team, the DBVI team, and SIQA (Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance) meet every week and have invited the new Technical Assistance Team to call in during a meeting in December.

**Transition Work-Based Learning Grant**: Sam and Liz Nitzel, the TWBL grant manager, will be in D.C. next week for a conference about the grant. The five states who have received the grant will do a joint presentation describing the grant projects at the conference. Samantha may give a small presentation for the SRC on what she learns at the conference. Liz Nitzel may come in to talk about it as well. The TWBL grant spans five years; DVR is entering the third year. Last year DVR started five new Jobs for Maine Grads programs in the Bangor area; those partnerships are continuing to grow. DVR just finished up with Summer Work Experience and is putting together a newsletter about it. DVR will continue to enroll students this year in TWBL grant programs in the Augusta and Bangor area, but will not enroll students during the following two years, which will consist of follow-up and evaluation. Libby noted that ideally the evaluation will lead to the expansion of the grant programs and the programs will become standard practice. The grant was for nine million dollars, but DVR designed the programs with sustainability in mind, so they could carry on when the grant expires. If they were to move forward after the grant expires, the programs would fall under the 15% of the VR budget designated for pre-employment transition services. One potential issue regarding the grant: the grant specifies that each young person must complete two work experiences, but some young people are hired after the first work experience and therefore do not complete two. DVR wants to make sure they will not be penalized for this. Libby will not be attending the D.C. conference because she will be attending the Division on Career Involvement and Transition Conference in Cedar Rapids.

**Rules**: Libby noted that the rules have been posted and people have had time to view them. The 30 day period for comments ends on November 9th. The current rules can be found next to the draft rules on the website. SRC members can comment on any of the rules, not only on the rules that were changed. The rules are not final yet, there may be more changes made as a result of continuing feedback. DVR tried to do a fairly close alignment with DBVI’s rule change to ensure similar language whenever possible. Some feedback from RSA is reflected in the rule changes; DVR did not accept everything that RSA said. RSA feedback was not prescriptive. DVR also asked their AAG to look over the rules again and ensure there are no issues.

**Corrective Action Plan**: Under the Corrective Action Plan, DVR has had to meet certain standards for time from application to eligibility, and time from eligibility determination to plan. DVR is meeting the standard for both across the state. Sam and Libby conducted statewide training around the standards to ensure DVR can continue to meet them.

**Case Count and Expenditures**: Libby noted that based on the trends and resources DVR has, DVR is doing well fiscally. Right now, DVR has a number of high expense cases. DVR is also spending a significant amount on work experience, a relatively new large expense. DVR is regularly meeting with fiscal people and always keeping an eye on the budget.

**Total Successful Closures**: The number of total successful closures for 2018 is currently 731. DVR had a closure goal of 1,000, but it was not assumed DVR would meet that goal, due partly to the fact that category three remains closed. Total Successful Closures is now a less important data point than it was in the past. Due to WIOA’s Common Measures, DVR is looking at cases differently. Common Measures take into account skill gains and earnings. The focus has shifted from case closure to helping people both prepare for exploration and advance in careers. Focus is on the client and their needs rather than on the successful closure. DVR will start to receive credit for VR consumers moving ahead in their academic preparation and skill certification. DVR has always done this work but previously did not receive credit for it. DVR has done some initial training for its leaders and managers around the shift under Common Measures; DVR leaders are being oriented on what this shift in priorities will look like. Following the orientation of leadership, DVR will be rolling that change out to staff. The Common Measures will also present a change for CRPs. One difficulty in WIOA’s Common Measures is that some of the data points keep changing. SIQA director Chris Robinson is working on making sure the case management system can collect all of these data elements and report out on them with the new calendar in real time. DVR used to only report out on closed cases; DVR is now reporting out on open cases as well. Chris is also helping with some of the VR training around Common Measures.

**Applications**: DVR is down in applications this year. This is due to both the economy and to potential applicants being aware that category three is closed. Application numbers are staying at a reasonable level. SRC members should think about what data points they would like to see broken out so that information can be given to Deana Blanchard.

No further questions for Libby.

**Council adjourns for a ten-minute break**

Cheryl announced that Mike will be coming in shortly to try and solve the troubles with the Wi-Fi. Kathy noted that J. Richardson Collins is attempting to call in to the meeting, but is apparently unable to connect.

**Work Plan**: The Work Plan was distributed among SRC members. The current SRC groups are the Annual Meeting Activity Committee, the Section 121 Grant Collaboration Committee, the Executive Committee, the Policy Rules and Legislative Committee, Membership Committee, the State Plan/ Annual Retreat Committee, the Communication Committee, Business Committee, Employment Promotion Collaborative Committee, and Five Council Collaborative Committee. Kathy noted that the SRC can get rid of any of these groups that they deem unnecessary. Kathy then listed the tasks the SRC is required to carry out: Consumer Satisfaction, Annual Report, State Plan, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, Administration of the State Plan, Comprehensive Statewide Youth Assessment, Order of Selection, Record of Service, Informed Choice, and Fair Hearing. Kathy explained that the current committees the SRC has are not necessarily required, but that the latter tasks she listed must be completed by the SRC. Kathy noted that the focus of the Work Plan document may need reprioritization, as the required tasks take up a very tiny area at the end of the document whereas the less vital list of current committees comes first and takes up more space. The SRC agrees to divide up the task list into two groups and split themselves into two corresponding groups to work on the tasks throughout the year.

*Mike enters, converses with Cheryl about the technical problems while SRC discussion continues.*

Prior to the formation of groups, Kathy goes through the list of required tasks and explains each one. The SRC must review, analyze, and advise on all the listed tasks.

* State Plan: The SRC is mandated to provide input on the State Plan. The State Plan is a four-year plan; a new plan will be out in 2020. The SRC is also supposed to review, analyze, and advise on the administration of the State Plan throughout the year. DVR does not have to take the recommendations provided by the SRC.
* Order of Selection: Individuals who apply to VR services are put into a category based on functional limitations (either 1, 2, or 3). The SRC is supposed to review those categories every year and provide feedback. The SRC is not currently doing this, but is mandated to do so by federal regulations.
* Fair Hearing: If the State has a case that goes to fair hearing, the SRC is supposed to review and de-identify the fair hearing document. There has not been a fair hearing for a long time. Kathy noted that currently the SRC is not asking for an official report to put in their state annual report to illustrate that they requested fair hearing documents, regardless of whether or not there were any fair hearings. The SRC should be doing that, but currently is not.
* Record of Service: DSU in consultation with the SRC must determine the type of documentation that the State unit must maintain for each applicant or eligible individual.
* Informed Choice: The SRC must develop and implement written policy and procedures that enable an applicant or an eligible individual to exercise informed choice throughout the VR process.
* Consumer Satisfaction: The SRC must review data related to consumer satisfaction, and analyze and advise based on that data. Data can be collected from public forums, CAP, DVR, the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, or market decision information. The annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey is sent to a random selection of 400 VR cases that have been closed in the past year. The SRC can use DVR data, as well as conduct their own data collections. Libby noted that DVR is only collecting every three years now, and would appreciate it if the SRC could provide more real-time data. Data can be obtained as the SRC sees fit.
* Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment: The assessment shall be conducted every three years, and shall describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities and their particular rehabilitation service needs. Libby noted that DVR did their market decisions-based survey this year and used results of that survey towards the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The SRC should review that data and offer feedback on it.
* Record of Service: The SRC must determine the type of documentation that the State must maintain for each applicant or eligible individual.
* Informed Choice: The DSU in consultation with the SRC must develop and implement written policies and procedures that enable an applicant or eligible individual to exercise informed choice throughout the VR process.

After Kathy described these mandated tasks with occasional assistance from Libby, the Council briefly discussed the current previously listed DVR-SRC committees. Council members noted that the Employment Promotion Collaborative Committee and Five Council Collaborative Committee are no longer active. The Employment Promotion Collaborativeused to be a relatively small group for mental health employment promotion that had representation from one of the Clubhouses and VR. The Five Council Collaborative consisted of representation from the DVR-SRC, DBVI-SRC, SILC, DDHHLD- SRC, and the Commission on Disability.Josh noted that the Committee for the Employment of People with Disabilities is an open group that could coordinate initiatives in place of the Five Councils. Josh also noted that, from a statewide perspective, he would like to ensure that a disability voice gets integrated into the general labor conversation.

The Council jointly split up the mandated tasks into two groups. Each Council member then assigned themselves to one of the two groups based on preference and experience. Riley noted that the Executive Committee can pull some examples of tasks from years past in order to illustrate what must be accomplished by the subcommittees. The Council decided that subcommittee meetings shall be held on the same day as the DVR-SRC meeting. Subcommittees will meet prior to the full SRC meeting. Cheryl will ensure that the meeting room is reserved for a longer period of time, possibly from 11:30am to 3:00pm. Riley will distribute the copies of the lists of the two groups over email to SRC members, or else will email Cheryl the lists and Cheryl will distribute them.

**Honorarium**: The honorarium is $50, available for those not otherwise compensated for attending SRC meetings. Send requests to **Chigggins@yahoo.com**.

**Meeting Reminders**: The SRC has two more business meetings this year, on November 19th and December 17th. At the December meeting, the dates for next year meetings will be distributed.

**Announcements**: Josh announced that Job Corps is looking for 18- to 24-year-old students. They offer job training for most young adults free of charge. Two locations: Limestone and Bangor. Ask Josh if you have any questions.

**Meeting adjourned**

**Next Meeting: November 19th**