**DVR-SRC Minutes**

**April 22, 2019**

**Present**: Cheryl Peabody, SILC Rep; Dan Vigue, Goodwill Workforce Services; Kathy Despres, CAP Advocate; Joshua Howe, SWB Director; Chris Higgins, Walgreens; Scott Hebert, Hanger Clinic; Sue Primiano, DVR Regional Manager; Libby Stone-Sterling, DVR Director

**On Phone**: Darcy Gentle, VR 121 Program Director

**Members of Public Present**: Veronica Swain, SRC Administrative Assistant

**Members of Public on Phone**: Jodie Hall, MPF

**Absent**: Mary Adley, DOE; Wes Uhlman, DVR VRC

**Welcome & Introductions**

**Announcement:** Cheryl notified the council that Libby will be late due to another meeting.

**Acceptance of Minutes:** Minutes from February meeting are accepted as distributed. March’s meeting minutes correction: WINTAC stands for Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, not Workplace Innovation Technical Assistance Center. The minutes from March are accepted as corrected.

**How VR Helped Someone**: Sue speaks about “Jim,” a man with a background in technology work. His previous job was extremely demanding and stressful. Jim experienced a lot of anxiety around meeting work demands and ended up in a psychiatric institution. He lost his job, house, and marriage. Jim moved back in with his elderly parents and found that he enjoyed helping them meet their medical needs and interacting with their doctors. He became interested in exploring work within the medical field and completed a CRP class and caregiver course. Jim completed a career exploration workshop and did job shadowing in the medical field. He decided to go back to school to become a phlebotomist. He’s is currently finishing up his education in phlebotomy, and is on the path toward a new career. Jobs are very abundant in the field, and Jim will have a job as soon as he finishes school.

**Committee Work**:

**Consumer Satisfaction Survey**: Chris noted that the consumer satisfaction survey will be printed off soon. The committee did not make any real changes to the survey sent out in the past. Unknown who currently has the key to the SRC mailbox. Jenn Ardito’s name was originally on the SRC mailbox, and may still be. Once she receives the key, Veronica will check the mailbox after the questionnaires are sent out.

**Fair Hearing**: Committee also met with Eric Dibner to speak about fair hearing. The report is submitted at the end of October. The SRC has the responsibility to review fair hearing. The committee also talked about orientation. According to information presented at the NCSRC, the new guidebook and orientation should be out soon. Someone from the NCSRC may present at the annual meeting.

**Membership**: Chris has submitted all the application he’s received so far. Sue, Scott, Darcy, and Wes still need to send Chris their applications. As a new applicant, Wes will need to send a form along with his application explaining why he should be chosen to sit on the council. All applicants should fill out the forms electronically and send them to Chris. Cheryl will get in touch with Boards and Commissions regarding maintaining an up-to-date list of council members and vacancies. Josh noted that the State Workforce Board (SWB) is being told that Boards and Commissions should be finished filling seats that require legislative confirmation by the end of May, and therefore able to begin filling council and board seats that do not require legislative confirmation.

Kathy announced that there is no new information to share from her committee. They previously tried to schedule a meeting but had trouble with attendance. Kathy believes that what her committee is attempting is daunting for a volunteer group.

**New Business**:

**Executive Director Discussion**: Kathy raised the idea of the SRC hiring a paid executive director to help manage the workload and direct the council; noting that the State Independent Living Council (SILC) did so and have improved because of this hire. Kathy believes the SRC could get more work done if they had a director. The executive director is not a voting position. The chair of the council would direct the executive director. Many SRCs around the country have such a position. SILC’s paid staff-person works twenty-two hours a week and is paid $21.00 an hour. Josh distinguished between an executive director role and a project manager role, asking which role the SRC would prefer. Josh also noted that SRC-DVR and SRC-DBVI do much of the same work, and asked how the SRCs can leverage that overlap. The Maine Parent Federation (MPF), the Client Assistant Program (CAP), SILC, SWB, and the VR 121 Program are each represented on both councils. Possibly the SRC-DVR and SRC-DBVI meeting could be convened simultaneously, or the SRCs could have independent meetings on the same day. Perhaps an executive director could be shared between SRC-DVR and SRC-DBVI. Scott raised the idea of hiring a past SRC member to fill the position. Sue raised the idea of having a council with paid staff present to the SRC about their experience. Josh noted that the ability to have paid staff is different in different states and depends on allotment. Libby would need to approve the executive director or project manager position. The SRC needs to ensure that DVR will benefit from any potential funds spent on SRC staff. The council discussed possible benefits for DVR if SRC was able to be more productive. The SRC could help to review more DVR policies and procedures. Hours spent by the SRC on reworking policies to be approved by DVR are staff hours DVR wouldn’t have to spend. The SRC could possibly fund half the wages of an executive director or project manager using their existing budget. The SRC should hear presenters from councils who have had positive outcomes from hiring paid staff, and from those who have had negative outcomes. Kathy will gather information on this with help from Cheryl, and present it at the next SRC meeting. The new fiscal year starts on October 1, 2019. Chris noted that the SRC should make sure they use their allotted budget; they have failed to do for the past few years. If the SRC fails to use their entire allotted budget consistently, DVR may decrease the SRC budget.

**Annual Training Dates**: Chris announced that a Walgreens facility in Scarborough is unavailable on Mondays, but can be available if the SRC is willing to conduct their annual training on other days. The space is handicapped accessible and will be free of charge. If SRC members are in agreement with changing the annual training dates, Chris will contact them to reserve the space. The potential dates are October 22nd and 23rd. The address is 600 Roundwood Drive, Scarborough, ME.

*Libby Stone-Sterling enters.*

**Director’s Report**:

**Goal One of VR’s Portion of the State Plan**: Cheryl emailed all members the State Plan prior to the meeting. The goals will change on the next State Plan under WIOA’s common performance measures. SRC members should consider which objectives they may want to see DVR meet in the future. Goal one of VR’s portion of the State Plan is to obtain 1,000 successful closures in federal fiscal years 2018 and 2019. Libby noted that due to WIOA’s focus on serving youth clients and on advancing careers, DVR outcomes regarding successful closures will likely change.

**Objective One**: The first objective for DVR listed under goal one of the State Plan is reducing early exiters from 42% to 35% during federal fiscal year (FFY) 2018. Strategies to accomplish the first objective:

1. Collect andanalyze the data. DVR has consistently provided the early exiter trend report to SRC. DVR also collects data for a report done by Dina Blanchard that shows why individuals are early exiters. DVR can share this with SRC if members are interested. DVR has asked the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) to update that report; it started before WIOA and pre-employment transition services.

2: DVR provides staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement. Work-based learning, connecting with businesses, and other proven techniques that help clients to stay engaged.

**Objective Two**: The second objective for DVR listed under goal one of the State Plan is to provide access to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities. 14 to 21 involved in school/training program. Strategies to accomplish the second objective:

1. DVR will engage in Phase II of “Progressive Employment” pilot initiative to increase work experience activities for 200 youth and young adult clients in the Lewiston and Portland. Research evaluation of that project is being done; it is having a positive impact on the retention of clients. Libby will share this initial report with the SRC. Report is based on 500 activities.

2. DVR will continue to engage in a pilot with AlphaOne (Maine’s Center for

Independent Living) to provide services to at least 100 students in two high schools that will increase their self–determination skills and independent living. AlphaOne is working in six schools. Peer mentoring is focused on building self-determination skills, leadership skills, and disability disclosure skills. DVR has exceeded the goal of serving 100 students in two high schools. DVR wants to go statewide with peer mentoring and would like assistance with this process from community partners to help with that.

3. DVR will explore partnerships with Career and Technical Education

regional schools and Adult Education as a means to deliver Pre-ETS services. DVR wants to have continuance with these partnerships around Pre-ETS.

4. DVR will increase summer youth work experience opportunities for Pre-ETS eligible clients. In 2018, DVR had roughly 250 kids participate in summer work experience, and are on track to have at least the same amount this summer. Partnering with AlphaOne and CRPs.

5. DVR will explore opportunities to partner with the Maine Department of Health and Human Resources – Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to blend and braid funding to deliver Pre-ETS services for jointly served youth. Libby noted that DVR started on this process well, but faltered due to turnover at OCFS. DVR needs to further develop this partnership going forward. DVR will continue to ask for OCFS for funds to deliver Pre-ETS services for jointly served youth this year. DVR has foster care liaisons assigned across the state.

6. DVR will continue to work closely with WIOA partners to develop a service

pathway for youth. Libby noted that this strategy has taken longer than originally planned, but DVR is moving forward with this. This strategy will be accomplished through DVR working with WINTAC and other partners.

7. DVR will ensure that, beginning in FFY 2018, all youth clients will have at least one paid work experience before exiting high school. This idea came out of Employment First. This strategy does not require that DVR must provide the paid work experience, but DVR does need to focus on making sure the paid work experience has been provided.

**Objective Three** : The third objective for DVR listed under goal one of the State Plan is to increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers. The single strategy listed under this objective is for DVR to provide joint training opportunities for Community Rehab Providers (CRPs) on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities. One of the ways DVR does this is through their contract with Syntiro. Provides web training and in-person training that go on throughout the year. DVR pays for Syntiro in conjunction with DHHS. Dan noted that Syntiro is very responsive and flexible. Libby noted that the SRC has been provided with the data related to CRP outcomes. DVR has not seen a large spike in employment closures for those receiving CRP services. Dan asked what the impact of other programs available is in steering people away from VR; or if the choice of different programs that provide similar services impacts the number of people coming to VR. Libby noted that DVR and other services want to ensure they are not duplicating services.

**Objective Four**: The third objective for DVR listed under goal one of the State Plan is to, through lessons learned from the Progressive Employment pilot, expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and workforce system partners’. Strategies to accomplish the fourth objective:

1. DVR will continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network. This has been renamed “Disability:IN”. The Maine Chapter has moved away from the Chamber of Commerce to the Retail Association of Maine. A business-to-business piece is in development.

2. DVR will partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network.

3. DVR will take a lead role with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners and others in the workforce development system to grow and diversify Maine’s workforce through targeted outreach to employers, reinforcing the message that “We need every Mainer.” DVR is collecting data related to employment engagement and providing some of this data to Maine Job Link run by the Career Center. DVR has a large spreadsheet of businesses DVR is engaged with across the state and can share this with SRC if members would like.

Libby noted that the next VR State Plan will likely have some objectives related to successful employment closure, but there will be changes from the last State Plan. Some objectives will be removed and others may be reworded. SRC should share with DVR their ideas of what they believe DVR should focus on. Overall measurements that VR is being measured on are changing due to common performance measures; the next set of goals will be tied to these measurement changes. Libby is unsure exactly when the next set of guides are going to come out relevant to the state plan dates. If there are topics the SRC wants to know more about or ideas about strategies that aren’t reflected in prior State Plan, they should share these with DVR. Libby noted that minutes from SRC meetings could become part of what DVR is drafting for State Plan development. Part of SRC input can be after the plan is developed, but also through its development during the monthly meetings. DVR lost 3 rehab consultants over the last budget cycle due to cuts DVR was asked to make during the previous Governor’s administration. DVR is requesting to regain one of these positions; it could be around state plan work.

Josh noted that Bruce Wagner from FAME is helping develop a ten-year state economic plan, and asked how to bring DVR into other conversations happening across the workforce spectrum. He also noted that collaboration between programs not only involves including VR in larger discussions but also involves having the larger network of programs take responsibility for accessibility and the entire population. What measurements would indicate that the system is doing well, across programs? Josh also spoke about training expenditure rates as compared to completion of training rates and asked how progress could be measured outside of expenditure rates.

Scott asked if Libby could share the data on the reasons for early exiters with the SRC; Libby will send Cheryl the early exiter report that came out in 2015 for distribution. DVR aims to update this report to reflect more recent numbers.

**CSAVR**: Kathy noted that she believes that speakers at the NCSRC spoke definitively about future dates for the State Plan. Kathy will locate her notes on these dates.

**Honorarium**: Members eligible for honorariums should fill out a reimbursement form and send it to Chris.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:04 pm**

**Next Meeting May 20, 2019**