**SRC-DVR Minutes**

**February 25, 2019**

**Present**: Kathy Despres, CAP Advocate; Libby Stone-Sterling, DVR Director; Dan Vigue, Goodwill Industries; Josh Howe, SWB; Sue Primiano, DVR Regional Manager; Mary Adley, DOE; Chris Higgins, Walgreens; Scott Hebert, Hanger Clinic

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

**Members of the Public Present**: Emilie Montgomery, DRM; Peach Bass, Bureau of Employment Services

**Absent**: Cheryl Peabody, SILC Rep.; Veronica Swain, SRC Admin. Assistant; Wes Uhlman, VRC

**Welcome & Introductions**: SRC members and interested parties introduced themselves. Emilie Montgomery from Disability Rights Maine (DRM) will be applying to replace Riley, who has termed off the SRC. J. Richardson Collins has also termed off the SRC, while Ann Long has retired from her seat.

Libby notified the council that Commissioner Fortman will not be attending today’s meeting due to an unexpected legislative meeting. SRC members decided to ask Commissioner Fortman to come to the next SRC meeting in March.

**Acceptance of** **Minutes**: SRC members voted on accepting the minutes from the SRCs emergency meeting on January 15th and the SRC-DVR meeting on January 28th, before realizing that a quorum could not be reached. This voting is nullified as the SRC cannot vote on matters without meeting a quorum.

**Director’s Report**:

**Staffing Updates**: Libby announced that a number of DVR positions have been posted, with more to come during the following week. DVR has three RC2 positions currently in the interviewing process. Two Transition Work-Based Learning (TWBL) Grant positions, one RC1 position, and one RC2 position will be posted this week. Some positions in southern Maine are closing today, and other positions in southern Maine have already closed. The consultant position closed last week and DVR will be interviewing for this position soon. Positions are not being delayed in the same way they were during the last Governor’s administration. Under the new Governor’s administration, DVR does not need to go through the Governor’s Office for approval, they instead go through the Commissioner’s Office for approval. DVR also hopes to regain some positions that were cut during the last Governor’s administration.

**Monitoring Report**: DVR has been in communication with RSA, but have not heard anything more on the corrective actions. RSA will be at DVR April 1st and 2nd to do monitoring for the TWBL grant. The project officers from RSA who will be doing monitoring on the TWBL grant have not been involved in any DVR monitoring in the past and are not on the main RSA team that works with DVR; they will not be able to answer questions around corrective action.

**Training**: Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) will be conducting DVR training on March 28th and 29th. WINTAC will be helping DVR understand what Common Performance Measures mean for working with core partners and DVR staff. Joan Dolan and others from Bureau of Employment Services (BES) will be working with DVR those two days around possibly setting up an apprenticeship pilot. New counselor training will begin March 25th, organized by Sam Fenderson. DVR is also currently doing conflict resolution staff training across the state. DVR is working on supervisor training and on motivational interviewing training for DVR staff. DVR did motivational interviewing training around eight years ago, and need a system put in place to making sure that staff are continuing to use it as a model.

**CSAVR** - Spring training/conference will be held in Bethesda at the beginning of April. From SRC-DVR, Kathy will be attending; Cheryl will be attending to represent SRC-DBVI. Leadership training will be held this year in place of new director’s training. DVR and DBVI are waiting for direction from the Commissioner around setting up Capitol Hill visits. Approval to travel has been granted to both Libby and Brenda Drummond from DBVI.

**Consumer Handbook**: Sam Fenderson is working on updating the DVR Consumer Handbook. The Handbook was last updated roughly five or six years ago. DVR is looking for people to help Sam with updates. Historically, SRC-DVR had a large role in the Consumer Handbook; Kathy noted that the SRC should have a voice in the update. Libby stated that this is Sam’s wish as well.

**RFP**: Libby updated the SRC on the Request for Proposal (RFP) concerning Community Rehab Providers (CRPs), noting that it is going through the evaluation process. Proposals were received on schedule; they are now being reviewed. No specific timeline for finishing the process. The RFP will not be out by March 1st.

**App. to Eligibility/Eligibility to IPE**: DVR is doing well meeting the 60-day standard for application to eligibility, although numbers went up for the central region due to three vacancies. This is likely to be a short term effect. DVR is staying under the 90-day standard for eligibility to Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) statewide.

**Case Count & Expenditures**: This report will be changing shortly when the Common Performance Measures are implemented. Currently, 274 clients are successfully closed in employment, with another 419 who are employed. DVR is looking closely at spending in the North; 95% of the North’s budget has been spent. Libby noted the various reasons behind this: 1.) some caseloads were moved under the North, but the budget itself was not changed; 2.) there has been a demand for van modifications in the North; 3.) the TWBL grant is in the North and there are some costs associated with that; and 4.) there are more staff in the North than there used to be. Libby noted that VR funds will continue to fund the North even if they’ve gone over their proposed budget. Libby explained that DVR projects the budget every month and looks ahead to their forecasted costs. Libby believes expenditure data in the new form of presentation will be more user friendly; if SRC members have any feedback around the overall budget data presentation, they should let Libby know. Kathy asked if Libby is concerned that DVR has spent around 57% of their budget at this point in the year. Libby answered that, based on the data DVR is seeing on a monthly basis, she is not concerned.

Peaches asked if the lack of public transportation in the North is contributing to the need for van modifications. Libby noted that transportation is a huge problem DVR clients face statewide.

**New Applications by Month**: In January, DVR had 324 new applications. This is similar to January application rates over the last five years.

**Order of Selection and CRP Data**: Josh asked Libby what data DVR looks at to determine if Order of Selection needs to be implemented. Josh noted that, anecdotally, CRPs are not taking on clients, and asked if this is reflected in any data. Libby noted that DVR would not base Order of Selection on CRP services at this time. Kathy explained that her SRC subcommittee met this morning and discussed Order of Selection recommendations in relation to the delay of CRP services. The subcommittee is looking for data around CRPs and the RFP, and want to examine the the data used to make the decision to put out an RFP in order to follow that data. The subcommittee also wants to know what data DVR looks at to determine the implementation of Order of Selection. Libby noted that DVR looks at both staffing and budget data to determine if an Order of Selection needs to be implemented. If DVR does not have the human resources or funds to provide services to the entire population it serves, DVR will implement Order of Selection. DVR hopes to get out of Category Three Order of Selection at some point in the future. Libby noted that there is nothing in the data currently that would cause DVR to implement another Order of Selection. In response to the subcommittee’s request for data that led to the RFP decision, Libby noted that DVR has shared much historical data related to CRPs. Libby also explained that there are services provided through CRPs that can be provided by DVR staff, such as job development. Kathy asked how DVR is calculating whether the services the consumer needs are being met with CRPs, wondering if DVR is tracking CRP staffing. Dan noted that Goodwill Industries is fully staffed, and explained that whether employment specialists are taking referrals or new clients is difficult to track with data because it changes day-to-day. Mary asked what data DVR uses to determine impact on clients. Libby noted that part of that information comes from CRP quarterly meetings. Chris Robinson, Director of Systems Improvement Quality Assurance, receives notice from CRPs when they either shrink or expand their coverage area. DVR is monitoring this all the time. DVR is also looking at what the outcomes are. The data previously shared by DVR relating to CRP services showed the number of clients served, the services received, the outcomes related to those services, and cost. DVR has been watching these data points for years.

Chris asked if DVR had anyway of forcing CRP vendors to hire more staff. Libby explained that currently DVR has only unencumbered contracts with CRPs, meaning that no money is attached to these contracts. CRPs sign agreements and agree to the standards in the contract, but DVR has made no commitment to CRPs to say that DVR will give any agencies an assurance of funds from referrals. No dollar figure or client figure is provided to CRPs. Libby noted that part of the challenge of having unencumbered contracts is that it is difficult for CRPs to plan. Mary asked if there is a way to track the time frame for CRP referral acceptance and processing. Libby answered in the affirmative, but noted that this data can only be accessed by looking at individual client cases. Libby also noted that the Progressive Employment pilot in Southern Maine has been studying times from CRP referral to actual CRP service in relation to outcomes. They’re still conducting this research, but they report that the shorter the time between client referral and engagement, the better the outcome.

**Membership**: Four current SRC members have expired and need to reapply. SRC-DVR currently has two open seats for CRPs out of three seats total; three open seats for advocacy groups out of three seats total; two open seats for business/industry/labor out of four seats total; and one open seat for a former or active recipient of VR services. Maine Parent Federation holds a required seat; they are actively looking for a replacement for Ann. Chris explained that his subcommittee is discussing potential ways of reaching out for new membership. They plan to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and to attendees of the Workforce Practitioner’s quarterly meeting. Scott will work on meeting invitation cards to hand out SRC meeting dates and location. Scott will also work on an exit survey for people who attend a meeting and consider joining in order to provide information about what the SRC could possibly do differently to attract new members. Scott asked for a list of former members representing businesses who worked with clients from VR. The subcommittee would like to contact them to see if they could assist the SRC by attending a Chamber of Commerce meeting to speak of their positive experiences with VR. Libby noted that either Liz Nitzel or Darcy Brockman in southern Maine would be a good contact for identifying businesses for potential outreach. The subcommittee would also like an updated member list with the right dates of term appointment/expiration. Kathy explained that Boards and Commissions and Secretary of State possess different lists. Chris asked if any member would look over the orientation packet and make sure it is up to date; Kathy promised that she and Jenn Ardito will look it over.

**DVR & SRC Communication/State Plan**: Kathy explained that some SRC members feel there was a lack of conversation around the RFP between DVR and the SRC, while DVR feels that conversation did happen regarding that issue. Kathy noted that DVR’s perceptions on the issue differ from the perspective of some SRC members. Josh noted that he believes the expectations about what the communication should have entailed were different. He explained that conversations did occur, but there were different expectations around what those conversations occasion. Kathy stated that she does not feel like there is a free flow of information between DVR and the SRC. Libby explained that she is always willing to provide more information to the SRC on specific topics; DVR’s goal is to share information with the SRC. Dan stated that some people feel that, prior to the RFP, there should have been more conversation around improving VR/CRP services. Chris asked how the SRC can find out what information they should be asking DVR for. Kathy raised the issue of the State Plan, noting that in her experience the SRC is given only a short amount of time to review it. Kathy believes it would be more helpful if the SRC was a part of the entire process. Libby noted that she does not disagree, but reminds Kathy that the last two rounds of State planning have been unusual due to WIOA and mix-ups around due dates.

Kathy reiterated that she believes there is a communication problem between the SRC and DVR which came to a head with the RFP. Libby stated that she needs more understanding around what that means specifically. Libby posed the question of what good communication would look like to the SRC. Libby also noted that she would like to make sure DVR and the SRC are hearing more from the people DVR is serving. Mary stated that, based on some of the conversations she’s been involved in, some members have felt inadequate in their role on the SRC in terms of informing, analyzing, and advising because they do not possess enough background information to do so effectively. Mary explained that if members have an understanding of what DVR looks at for data on a regular basis, then the SRC could have a better understanding of what data is relevant to them. Scott noted that it might be helpful for the SRC to pick one or two issues per month to discuss at their meetings. Kathy suggested that the SRC should pick a few of the goals from VR’s portion of the State Plan to look at each meeting. Libby noted that if the SRC informs her of what topics they want to hear more about, she will provide the SRC with the right contacts and information.

VR’s portion of the State Plan could be used by the SRC as a guide for asking questions around various issues. The published State Plan is online; Kathy will break VR’s portion of the State Plan down to a readable format for the SRC to look at. Kathy will send information out by next Thursday to be reviewed during the next SRC meeting. Chris requested that the SRC commit to adding a spot on the agenda each meeting to allow SRC members to request specific information for Libby to share at the next meeting. Kathy will ask Cheryl to carve out a significant amount of time on the agenda to talking about the State Plan at the next meeting.

Kathy announced she will take a motion to adjourn; Scott motioned, Chris seconded.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:59pm.**