Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Rehabilitation Council

Minutes

December 16, 2019

Present: Cheryl Peabody, SILC rep; Libby Stone-Sterling, Director DVR; Kelly Osborn, Senior Vice President of Client Services, Goodwill NNE; Jodie Hall, Maine Parent Federation; Suzanne Primiano, Regional Manager, DVR; Chris Higgins, Walgreen’s.

Member of Public Present: Peaches Bass, BES; Wes Uhlman, VRC, DVR.

Members on the Phone: Emilie Montgomery, DRME; Josh Howe, SWB.

Absent with Notice: Mary Adley; Darcy Gentle; Dan Vigue.

As we were waiting for people to arrive, Libby stated that Commissioner Fortman was meeting with Boards & Commissions. Commissioner Fortman will be following up with DOL appointments, which includes this SRC.

Acceptance of November Minutes: Everyone got the November minutes. No one offered any corrections. The November minutes were accepted as distributed.

How VR Helped Someone: The client had received services when she were in high school but her case had been closed. She self-referred to VR this past fall. She had some learning difficulties and some mental health issues. She was not sure what she wanted for employment. She had received certification in the food industry in the past. She lost her Social Security benefits and really needed to work. She was the first client from Region III that DVR referred to Goodwill Industries under the new employment service delivery model. She needed to find a job that she could walk to so she identified the area that would work. She was recently offered a job and will be working in food prep at a restaurant close to her home. Peaches reported that the BES staff often knows of jobs that are available. The work between VR and BES can help place someone in a job quickly when the need exists.

Director’s Report:

Staffing Updates: There have been a number of new staff hired. DVR has interviewed for a Rehabilitation Consultant in Central Office and will hopefully make an offer soon. Libby reported that DVR had four Rehab Consultant positions at one time. DVR hired a TWBL VRC1. The TWBL grant is in its fourth year and is currently fully staffed. The TWBL grant is a five year grant and the grant will not be renewed. When the end of the grant draws closer, there will be talk of sustainability to practices from the program. Libby suggested that the SRC have a presentation on the work that has been done. There are positions open in Bangor Portland, Lewiston and Augusta. DVR will be interviewing soon for the VRC position in Hinckley which is a very busy office representing a wide geographic area.

RSA Monitoring Review: DVR has not heard any more on this. DVR has worked diligently on the two programmatic findings, which are time from application to eligibility and time from eligibility to plan. DVR is also working on internal controls and policies surrounding some fiscal pieces.

Employment Service Contracts: Contracts are in place for Region II and III and work has started. The Region I contract has been signed. DVR has several contracts in place as they are transitioning clients from the Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) they have been working with to the new CRP in a manner that is suited to individual client needs. In Regions 4/5, DVR has worked with CRPs to see who may be able to expand and take on more Employment Specialists which is a temporary plan. DVR wants to make sure the Regions 4/5 are covered with the same level of services as in Regions I, II and III.

Client Assistance Program (CAP): The funding process has changed. In the past, DVR got the funding and subcontracted the CAP out. Now, the Governor will be choosing the CAP administrator and the funding will go directly to that agency. This is how it is done in most states. The Governor’s office did request a Request for Information (RFI) which was done and the Governor’s office now has this information. DVR will most likely need to extend Pam Waite’s contract until an agency is chosen. The CAP is a mandated seat on the SRC but Pam’s contract is limited to direct client service work due to the short duration of her contract. This is way she has not been attending SRC meetings.

Clubhouse contracts will continue. DVR will begin the work of getting those contracts in place. Wes Uhlman provides services to the Clubhouse members and the Clubhouses provide employment services to VR. Wes reported that a Clubhouse member must have a mental health diagnosis to be a member. The program is based on the psycho-social rehabilitation model. Members want to work. There are transitional employment sites locally. Clubhouse staff go to local businesses and work with them to hire Clubhouse members. Clubhouse staff provide job coaching as needed. Work experiences are usually six to nine months in duration. It is a great way to determine if the member is work-ready. Members are assigned tasks at the Clubhouse. It is a great way for them to learn life skills and job skills. If the member cannot work on a particular day, the Clubhouse staff cover the job that day so the employer always has the job covered. The Clubhouses do have social activities for their members.

WORK Services Training: It is a collaborative effort between Adult Ed, Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). This is an online project to help those who are interested in education or training. People can go on the website, answer some questions and get directed to resources that will help them. It is now available in Bangor and Machias as they work the kinks out. A person who may want to apply for VR services can do so through this program and the application will go directly to the VR case management system. It also allows the participant to sign a release online so Adult Ed, BES and BRS can share information. The SRC can have a presentation on the project if there is an interest in it.

State Plan: The VR portion of the Unified State Plan is due to RSA on March 2, 2020. The meat of the State Plan is the goals and the objectives and strategies to reach these goals. The State Plan is a four year plan with a modification done in year two. The new goals will probably not be very different than the current goals. The SRC will provide feedback on the goals, objectives and strategies, along with any area that the SRC feels will help VR clients. All questions or comments that the SRC sees are welcome.. SRC feedback does make it into the State Plan. The SRC can make comments immediately. When the DRAFT State Plan comes out, the SRC can make additional comments or ask questions. Any questions will be answered. There will be a public comment period before submission of the State Plan.

BRS training: Every other year, BRS does two day training for all staff. They are working on a theme of celebrating successes as VR turns 100 years old. The first day is open to anyone. On the first day, BRS is partnering with APSI who is celebrating their 25th anniversary in 2020. 2020 is also the 30th anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act and the 200th anniversary of Maine. The training will be in June of 2020. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Elections of Officers: There were three voting members at the meeting. However, it is unknown if anyone stepped forward and nominated anyone different for any of the three officer positions due to Dan’s absence. A suggestion was made to amend the bylaws to say that once the SRC approves an application to be sent to Boards & Commissions, the person is considered a nominee and have voting privileges. This has been done on other Councils. The length of getting applicants approved is a long standing issues. Language will be send out for the bylaw amendment and it will be voted on at the start of the next SRC meeting.

Work Plan:

Public Notices of all Council meetings. The SRC will have different people responsible for getting the dates/times posted on various website. For instance, Cheryl will have the dates/times posted on the SRC website, along with the Community Calendar. Cheryl will forward the dates to Libby who will get Jeff Reed to post them on the DVR website. A suggestion was made to try to get dates posted on the Consumer Council System of Maine. Emilie will ask if the dates can be posted on the Disability Rights Maine website. Maine Parent Federation does a quarterly newsletter. Jodie will ask to get the dates in the newsletters. Jodie thought that MPF may also be willing to post the meeting dates on their social media accounts.

Guest Speakers: Ideas that were brought up include a presentation of the Apprenticeship program; a WORK Service presentation; a presentation of the common performance measures by Chris Robinson; and a presentation on TWBL and the sustainability of the work that is being done.

How VR Helped Someone: Suzanne will continue to bring stories to the group at each meeting.

Data Review: Do people want to continue to review data at meetings or would it be acceptable to have a data committee review the data and report to the SRC at each meeting?

Frequency of meetings: Should the SRC continue to have monthly meetings or should we go to every other month with committee work between full Council meetings? It was hard to do committee work over the past year due to work schedules. It was suggested that the SRC focus on smaller mandates and have some success with that. One thought about going to every other month meetings is you need a foundation from which to work. The SRC does not have this right now. It was suggested that we build a foundation, get some positive direction and then move to every other month meetings. There needs to be commitment from members. If they are unable to participate, they can say that and perhaps, in the future, they will be able to do SRC work. If a member does need to step away, perhaps they could help with names of someone who could replace them. This has been tried with former Council members but the connection was never made. The general consensus was to continue to have monthly meetings to build a foundation and reevaluate frequency of meetings in the summer.

Fair Hearings: Eric Dibner does the Fair Hearings Report. The SRC will ask him to report on this at some point during the year.

Legislative/Policy Committee: Josh agreed to serve on this committee. This committee would focus on any policy changes, MOUs, etc. along with any relevant legislation on which the Council may provide support. Cheryl will also serve on this committee.

Outreach/Membership/Consumer Satisfaction Committee: As we were discussing this, Libby spoke up and said she felt the SRC’s priority needs to be getting consumer voice on the Council, as well as their input regarding VR services. Libby said DVR would be happy to send the word along to clients about being on the Council. Chris spoke up and said he is fine sending off membership applications and providing orientation information for new members but he has no way to recruit people with disabilities to be members of the SRC. He wonders if VR or CRPs were the best source of recruitment as they deal directly with people with disabilities. Cheryl thought she had recruited two new members from two different Clubhouses but that did not work out. Kelly offered to join Chris on this committee as she has many connections to people with disabilities.

121 VR Program Committee: Darcy is the Program Director and will continue to report on the 121 AIVR Program.

Executive Committee: This committee is responsible to write the agenda for each meeting, as well as writing and submitting the Annual Report to RSA. This committee consists of the officers and Libby in her capacity as DVR Director.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment: Libby will check to see how often DVR is doing this. It does go out to RFP.

State Plan Committee: Kelly and Cheryl will work on this committee.

Five Councils Collaborative: This committee is made up of the Chairs from the SRC-DVR, the DBVI-SRC, Maine SILC, the CD & E and the DD, HH, LD. They work together to host the Empowerment Forum. This has been difficult to get off the ground for several years. It would be nice to have the Forum and honor the 100th anniversary of VR, along with the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Client Assistance Program: A member will be in place when the agency administrating the Program is in place.

Bylaws Amendments: Kelly, Peaches and Cheryl will be on this committee.

The Work Plan speaks to what tasks each committee is to perform. Cheryl will edit the template of the Work Plan with what was discussed and get it out to Council members.

NCSRC: The NCSRC hosted a national call on December 11 that was very productive. They have decided to host another call on January 15th to continue the discussion around Consumer Satisfaction surveys and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessments.

Libby reported that DOL was not able to continue to use Zoom. There was an issue with the State contract language. DOL will have videoconferencing in place. The SRC will discuss further at the next SRC meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:03pm.

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