**SRC-DVR Minutes**

**August 19, 2019**

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

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

**Members of Public Present**: Jay (inaudible), High Hopes Clubhouse Member; Joyce Gilbert, Capital Clubhouse Member

**Absent**: Kathy Despres, CAP Advocate; Mary Adley, DOE; Wes Uhlman, VRC

**Welcome & Introductions**

**Acceptance of Minutes:** June minutes are accepted as distributed.

**SRC** **Budget for Fiscal Year 2020**: Chris distributes paper copies of the proposed budget to those in attendance. Darcy confirms she received a digital copy of the proposed budget. The new budget is broken down by category and illustrates for each category whether there is a change from last year’s budget. Some funds have been shifted around between categories to cover necessary costs. Salaries and stipends are separated in the proposed budget. The proposed budget reflects the SRC’s hopes to hire an executive director for assistance on a number of tasks. Libby requested the SRC provide DVR with an official job description for the executive director. The budget for accommodations has been halved in the proposed budget; this cut is based on usage over the last few years. If in the future the SRC had multiple members who required accommodations, the SRC would revisit this part of the budget. It is unsure whether the SRC sees more use of the accommodation budget in State Plan years. Cheryl announces she will accept a motion to approve the proposed FY 2020 budget; Dan motions, Chris seconds. The proposed budget is approved with no objections and no abstentions.

**How VR Helped Someone:** Sue speaks about a transition-age client who was referred to VR as a junior in high school. This client has both learning and physical disabilities. A DVR counselor worked with her to do various career assessments; the client made a goal to become a graphic designer. She applied to go to the New England School of Communications at Husson University. She has graduated from college and was hired as a graphic designer for a business in Brunswick. She’s working for them full- time and is happy with her job. DVR recently closed her case successfully.

Joyce noted that she thinks that she believes having a VR counselor come to the Clubhouse makes a huge difference for some Clubhouse members. DVR currently has a staff person in acting capacity at Capital Clubhouse and are working to fill the position.

**Director’s Report**:

**Summer Work Experience:** DVR is wrapping up another successful summer work experience program. Libby has visited different work experiences throughout the state.

**Step Up Program**: The Step Up Program is a small pilot project built on the model of DBVI’s College Prep Program. This program just finished. For the pilot, young people on the autism spectrum went to Orono and stayed on campus Monday through Friday. Participants completed a paid work experience and received social skills instruction from the Maine Autism Institute. They also took a three-credit psychology course, and received college prep instruction from the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies. Some social activities were also built into the pilot program. Most of the participants were from the Bangor area. DVR received excellent feedback from both participants and their parents.

**Youth Advisory Group**: The Youth Advisory Group recently met for their first meeting last week at Central Maine Community College. Nine young people attended. The idea for this cross-agency collaborative group centers around building youth leadership skills and bringing the voice of youth with disabilities to various groups and councils across the state. The idea for the group is based around a model from Vermont. In seeking out youth group members, DVR and DBVI emailed all their youth clients and received about 29 responses from interested clients.

**Staffing**: DVR Regional Manager in the north Laurie Mitchell has resigned; VR will be posting this position soon. DVR has made several new hires on Transition Work-Based Learning Grant, including Sidney Brown for the Augusta area. A few newer staff members are recent grads from UMF. Emily Brinck at UMF is leaving to go to the University of North Dakota. DVR continues to have a number of vacancies around the state. Kim Kerry in Bangor will be returning to VR in September. Sue noted that the central region has three counselor vacancies right now; one of these positions has been vacant since last December.

**Master’s Program in Rehab Counseling:** RSA recently put out the request for the long-term training grants (masters programs in rehab counseling). This year USM did not put in a request for the grant. Previously, USM received this funding and DVR had a number of staff take advantage of it to receive their master’s degrees at no monetary cost to themselves. Libby noted that it is unfortunate USM did not put in a request for the grant this year because it the program was a benefit DVR was able to offer to their staff.

**RSA**: Mark Schultz is the new RSA administrator. He will be in Portland in the first week of September for the Program Evaluation Quality Assurance Conference. DVR will have staff attending this conference. Mark Schultz was active on CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehab). He is from Nebraska, a progressive employment state, and is therefore oriented to a progressive employment model.

**CAP**: Libby sent out an email earlier in the day regarding changes coming to the Client Assistance Program (CAP). DVR received a notice from C.A.R.E.S, Inc. that C.A.R.E.S. will not be seeking an extension of their contract to provide CAP services. C.A.R.E.S will cease providing CAP services when their contract runs out on October 1st, 2019. DVR is federally mandated to have CAP services. Libby noted that it is likely DVR will have an agency or individual who will provide CAP services for the short term while DVR works out what they will do going forward. It is unsure if DVR will continue to put out an RFP for CAP services and select the agency themselves as they have done in the past, or if another model of selecting CAP services will be utilized. Libby noted that DVR will keep the SRC posted regarding further developments. Jenn attended this meeting in place of DVR-SRC’s regular CAP advocate Kathy Despres. Jenn emphasized that she and Kathy at C.A.R.E.S are committed ensuring that their current client cases are seen through, while making sure that any client who has as a case that remains open after October 1st will be handed over to another capable agency or individual. In response to questioning, Jenn noted that C.A.R.E.S. decided not to put in for the RFP in part due to the uncertainty of needing to reapply for the contract every four years. She also noted that C.A.R.E.S. had a reduction in their funding last year, and the level of service they want to be able to provide is difficult with the reduced level of funding. Libby explained that DVR receives a flat-level funding grant to fund CAP services. In the past, DVR was supplementing these funds with additional dollars. RSA informed DVR that it was not good practice to supplement the grant in this way, so DVR discontinued their supplementary funding. Libby also noted that Maine’s system of choosing CAP providers is unusual, and DVR is in conversation looking at other ways to choose a CAP provider going forward. DVR’s main concern right now is to get an individual or agency in place to provide CAP services after October 1st.

**Stakeholders Forum**: The third Stakeholders Forum in a series of four will be held in Augusta at 3:30 this afternoon. Karen Frasier and Peter Diplock are unable to attend today. The forum will talk about target populations, history to date, and informed choice.

**Clubhouse & CRP Contracts**: There has been sustained concern around what the RFP contracts for CRPs will mean for Clubhouses. For Clubhouses to operate and retain accreditation they are required to have a close working relationship with VR. Last week Libby had a call with Kennebec Behavioral Health; it has been determined that VR will contract separately with the Clubhouses for their services. VR is continuing to work on the CRP contracts with Goodwill and Maine Medical Center.

**Funding Opportunities**: Libby announced that DVR has had a few recent opportunities related to state-level funding. Because DBVI has been unable to spend certain funds, DVR had an opportunity to get some of those federal funding dollars that DBVI would otherwise have to return to the federal government. In return, DVR was able to pick up some pre-ETS costs. Libby noted that this can work because even though DVR and DBVI are separate agencies, there are some things RSA looks at across the agencies. Each agency is paying their own expenses, but they are working together to have their federal funds be more available for state use. Reallotment money becomes available for states to request when the funds other states are not able to use go back to the federal government and become available for redistribution across other states. Last year DVR requested and received reallotment funds in the form of $150,000. This year, due to DVR’s level of maintenance of effort or state-level match dollars, DVR originally thought they would be unable to request reallotment. However, because of DBVI’s funding, there is an ability for the state VR program to go after reallotment dollars. RSA is supportive of these methods of collaboration between DVR and DBVI. Libby noted that, with the implementation of WIOA, there are changes coming up and DVR wants to make sure they have as much money available as possible to meet population needs.