Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Rehabilitation Council

Minutes

September 16, 2019

Welcome & Introductions: Cheryl Peabody (Chair), SILC rep; Mary Adley, DOE; Dan Vigue, Goodwill NNE; Jodie Hall, MPF; Suzanne Primiano, Regional Manager for DVR; Chris Higgins, Walgreen’s; Libby Stone-Sterling, Director of DVR; Darcy Gentle, 121 VR Program Director.

Public: Joyce Gilbert, Peer Support Specialist; Peaches Bass, BES; Jay Blood, Maine Clubhouse Coalition.

Acceptance of minutes from August: The recorder stopped recording at the end of the meeting. No attempt was made to accept the minutes as it was hoped we could piece together the end of the meeting.

How VR Helped Someone: Suzanne Primiano: Consumer applied for services in 2015. She had significant physical and mental health issues and was in a state of crisis at that point. DVR had difficulties engaging her in the VR process. DVR ended up closing case in 2015. She came back to DVR in 2016. She had previously worked as a nurse. She had a significant back injury. Her counselor worked with her to try to utilize her experience as a nurse. DVR worked with her to get her license back. She is working as a nurse for an agency going into individual’s homes to do assessments which gives her a lot of flexibility to stand when she needs to or sit when she needs to sit. She works out of her home. DVR did an occupational assessment and set up a work station that is ergonomically correct and suits her needs. She is now working as a nurse and making $34/hour.

Director’s Report:

LEAP Life Enrichment Advancing People: Libby spoke about an explosion that had happened at an agency called LEAP in Farmington. DVR has some mutual clients with them. No clients were at the non-profit agency. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) reached out and spoke with Brenda Drummond, Director of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, to ensue all staff and clients were okay. The new RSA Commissioner, Mark Schultz, was on the call from RSA.

Former DVR Director, Betsy Hopkins, will be returning to State service at DHHS, Developmental Services and Brain Injury.

The PEQA (Performance Evaluation and Quality Assurance) conference was held in Portland this year. PEQA is a data information conference for VR. The new RSA Commissioner, Mark Schultz, was in attendance.

Next year Vocational Rehabilitation turns 100!!

Vacancies: Working to fill vacancies. Recently hired 3 Rehabilitation Counselor I positions; one will split time between Bangor and Machias; the other two were hired as part of the work-based learning program.

Reallotment: DVR requested reallotment this year in the amount of $350,000 and did receive it. It is Federal grant dollars that are left over from the previous year. You do have to have State match monies in order to be able to get reallotment. The money has to be spent in a certain amount of time.

Client Assistance Program (CAP): CARES, Inc, did not pursue an extension for the CAP. Working on a three month contract for CAP services to start October 1 as a temporary measure. They are looking at someone who has experience in this area. They will also be preparing a Request for Information (RFI) to see what agencies have an interest in CAP services. The RFI will give the legal qualifications of the CAP provider and agencies interested would say why they are qualified. This information will help the Governor designate the contract to an agency. Maine was grandfathered into an old method of awarding the CAP contract. An award was given after a Request For Proposal (RFP) went out and a RFP team would award the contract. In the law and in most states, the Governor designates/awards the contract. Maine will move to this model. Also changing is the pathway of funding. In Maine, the money would pass through DVR to the CAP provider. Now the money will go directly to the CAP provider.

~~Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR):~~ The fall conference is going to be held in Jacksonville, Florida at the end of October. Maine has been asked to present on the Apprenticeship Program which will be done by Peter, Diplock, Assistant Director, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE): The next conference is in October in Virginia. Samantha Fenderson, Assistant Director, DVR will be attending.

Staff training: Recently had new counselor training for about two weeks. DVR is planning on doing some supervisor training throughout the fall. Peter Diplock and Samantha Fenderson are doing some cross-agency training on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Staff will be doing some training.

Thursday, September 19, will be having a Celebration of Deaf Culture and people working in that field at the Hall of Flags.

RSA Monitoring and Review: Still have not heard fiscal findings. As time goes on, it will be harder to look at data the way RSA would like. Program findings were around number of days from application to eligibility and number of days from eligibility to Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). DVR has been working on those.

CRP Contracts: Working on contracts with Goodwill NNE and Maine Medical Center. This will be gradual process and will vary from client to client depending on client’s needs and location.

Election of Officers: At our meeting during the annual training, we will be electing officers. That is the chair, vice-chair and treasurer. Dan Vigue agreed to be the nominating committee. Any nominations of officers should go to Dan. Dan’s email is: dan.vigue@goodwillnne.org.

DVR Consumer Handbook: DVR has a consumer handbook on their website. The guide for a client to review and understand the VR process. A group is reviewing it and making changes so it is easier to follow. It is in the final stages and should be available soon.

Annual Training Update: The facility is Walgreen’s at 600 Roundwood Drive in Scarborough. Chris will put up sidewalk signs and arrows in the center so we know which door to go in for the training. The dates are Tuesday, October 22, and Wednesday, October 23. An agenda for the training will go out soon.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey: The SRC sends out a consumer satisfaction survey to VR clients in order to get feddback on VR services. This year we sent out 400 surveys and received 80 back. This is about the number we usually get back. Part of the reason the SRC does the survey is because we are tasked to provide recommendations/input for the State Plan that VR does. The surveys, along with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) allows the SRC to do this. The CSNA is a more detailed survey done by an outside agency and is done every three years. The responses showed a large amount of DVR clients have hearing impairments. One of the reason there is a high number of clients with hearing loss is because Maine’s population is older and along with age comes hearing loss. The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (DD,HH,LD) works under DVR and the VRC’s primary caseload is with VR clients with hearing loss. Just because a person is of retirement age doesn’t mean they want to retire so as long as they want to work, VR is available. Maine passed a new law about insurance companies covering hearing aids. It will be interesting to see how this effects DVR and their wait list in Category 3. Some of the results of the survey the SRC did were discussed and there are a lot of factors that may affect how a consumer answers the survey questions. They may not understand the question; they may be a youth in high school; they might misread the question; they may fear that their answers will not be anonymous; their disability may impact their understanding of the questions. Before the next round of surveys, a small group will go over the survey questions and reword things so that we can get the information we are looking for in the responses.

Adjournment 2:28pm