**State Rehabilitation Council, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (D.V.R.) Minutes**

**Date & Time:** April 27th 2020, 1pm – 3pm

**Location:** Department Of Labor, 45 Commerce Dr., Augusta Maine, Francis Perkins Room

**Attendance Key: P = Present, E = Absent (Excused), A = Absent (Unexcused), TEL = Telephone**

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| **Council Members[[1]](#footnote-1)** | | | | | |
| **P** | Cheryl Peabody, *Chair* | **P** | Mary Adley |  |  |
| **P** | Jodie Hall | **E** | Suzanne Primiano\* |  |  |
| **P** | Emilie Montgomery | **P** | Wes Uhlman\* |  |  |
| **P** | Josh Howe |  |  |  |  |
| **P** | Libby Stone-Sterling\* |  |  |  |  |
| **p** | Darcy Gentle |  |  |  |  |
| **E** | Kelly Osborn |  |  |  |  |

**Guests:** Patty Ngara, Geoff Reid, Sitara Shaik, Samantha Fenderson, Margaret Haberman

**Recorder:** Branden Densmore **Next Meeting:** May 18th 2020 **Minutes Approved: YES**

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| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **Introductions** | D.V.R meeting was called to order at 1:11 pm. Members and guests were welcomed. Introductions were given. | NA | NA |
| **Guest Speaker #1** | *Geoff Reid* – from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services – gave a presentation about Workforce Opportunities, Referrals, and Knowledge W.O.R.K. Services, an online portal that allows clients to apply for 3 Vocational Services online: 1. V.R.[[2]](#footnote-2), 2. Adult Education, and 3. Career Center. The system is operational, but is still being perfected. | NA | NA |
| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **Guest Speaker #2** | *Sitara Shaik* – a V.R. Councilor – gave an update regarding the Maine Educational Center For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing summer program, dedicated to providing improved educational outcomes for post-secondary deaf and hard of hearing students.  Maine has formed a committee to plan this project, including Disability Rights Maine, Department Of Education, V.R., and Maine Behavioral Health.  In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee has been recently focused on providing services for clients remotely. One idea is to provide visual resources for students having to do with transition, technology, and other student needs across the State. This remote focus is new, but they are trying to have students share about their summer work experiences, virtual job shadowing, and soft skills workshops. The committee is also looking at sharing what other States have already developed.  They are working to make sure working students are aware of resources, and that they be prepared for transitional goals. | Invite back in fall to provide an update on Sitara’s project. | Cheryl Peabody |
| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **Director’s Report** | ***COVID-19 Update***: Meetings are being held every Thursday from 2-230 with various V.R. stakeholders to share information.  V.R. is host a webinar on May 5th (from 3-5) for families of the Maine Parent Federation to share information about some key summer opportunities, both community and virtual experiences. It was noted that given current conditions, V.R. needs to be ready for both options. For instance, V.R. is planning on doing a virtual Step Up program for students on the autism spectrum, virtual job shadow, and virtual career exploration workshop.  A lot of energy has gone into understanding “high risk” working clients, making sure they get the information needed on how to stay safe during the pandemic.  The governor will be making a statement soon about her “stay at home order” which will effect V.R. activities over the next few months.  ***Staffing Update***: A new intern has been recruited from the University Of Maine through the Maine State Government summer internship program to help with summer V.R. programming. | NONE | NONE |
| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **Director’s Report** | Virtually all V.R. staff have now transitioned into telework. V.R. has been flexible with hours, and there have been many staff trainings being held remotely. This has been complex and challenging for a variety of reasons, but V.R. staff has done well adapting to the changes. | NONE | NONE |
| **Guest Speaker #3** | *Samantha Fenderson* (V.R. Assistant Director) discussed work being done in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.  V.R. councilors have been making use of the *Virtual Job Shadow* website which contains many videos, assessments, and tools, helping clients find their passion and career aptitudes. Along with this, another resource being utilized are “flex lessons” with a *Career Exploration Workshop* online – lessons are conducted by V.R. counselors online, both one-on-one and in groups. 12 clients completed the workshop statewide, and provided positive reviews. These workshops will be offered regularly, and bugs are being worked out for smoother operation.  V.R. counselors have started a “Job Club” using Zoom once per week. The topics are comprehensive, and V.R. is thinking about expanding these clubs regionally. | NONE | NONE |
| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **How V.R. Helped Someone** | *Wes Uhlman* told the council about a 30 year old Clubhouse Member who landed the job of her dreams.  This individual had some earlier work experiences that were negative. However, she was ready to try again. With the help of V.R. and Clubhouse she got a landscaping job, and it was noted that she was a hard worker who paid attention to detail. This was a good job, but was not her passion.  It was discovered that this client loved baking, a self-taught skill. The client ended up landing a job as a baker, and now she is following her dream, living her passion. | NA | NA |
| **Acceptance Of Minutes** | The acceptance of previous V.R. minutes was discussed, but it was determined that there were not enough voting members to proceed.  The acceptance of previous V.R. minutes was ***tabled for the next meeting.*** | Create a new D.V.R. minutes template, type out April draft, and send to Cheryl before May 18th.  Send April minutes to council members for review before May 18th meeting. | Branden Densmore  Cheryl Peabody |
| **Other Business** | The council discussed sending a letter to the Department Of Education requesting fiscal flexibilities for spending V.R. dollars in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. | Look at the letter template to see what does (does not) apply by the end of today. | Libby Stone-Sterling |
| **Topic** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| **Other Business** | While there was no formal vote, there was a consensus that the letter needed to be sent. | Prepare the letter for sending, and contact council members for feedback by May 1st.  Provide feedback.  Notify council when letter is sent. | Cheryl Peabody  Any Member  Cheryl Peabody |
| **Announcements** | Honorariums are being offered to members not otherwise compensated for attendance.  The next D.V.R. meeting will be held on May 18th via Zoom. | Contact Cheryl to receive Honorarium. | Any Member Not Compensated |
| **Public Comments** | Time was given for public comments but none were given. | NONE | NONE |
| **Adjournment** | The meeting was adjourned at 3pm. | NA | NA |

1. The \* symbol indicates an Ex Officio non-voting member [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Vocational Rehabilitation [↑](#footnote-ref-2)