State Rehabilitation Council

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Minutes

November 2019

Council Members Present: Cheryl Peabody (Chair), SILC; Libby Stone-Sterling, DVR Director; Dan Vigue, Goodwill NNE; Sue Primiano, Regional Director DVR; Mary Adley, DOE.

Public Present: Kelly Osborn, Goodwill NNE; Emilie Montgomery, Disability Rights Maine Advocate.

Council Members on Phone: Darcy Gentle, 121 VR Program Director.

Public on Phone: Jodie Hall, Maine Parent Federation.

Excused Absence: Chris Higgins, Walgreen’s; Jay Blood, High Hopes Clubhouse; Joyce Gilbert, Capitol Clubhouse.

Election of Officers: There was not a quorum. We did discuss some concerns about elections that will help everyone understand what the concerns are so if anyone has questions at the December meeting, we can answer them and proceed with Elections of Officers. This will also allow us to have documented what we do discuss. Cheryl is in her second term as Chair with an unusual situation. She took over for Jay Richardson-Collins in the summer of 2018 because Jay had to step away. So Cheryl has not served two full terms. The SRC-DVR bylaws say a person cannot hold an officer position for more than two consecutive terms. Kelly did speak up and said that in the Rehabilitation Act says that if you take over for someone, that time is not counted so Cheryl would be eligible to serve another term. The Rehab Act would trump the SRC’s bylaws. Dan Vigue will be stepping away from the SRC so Kelly Osborn has applied for a seat on the Council. A concern over having Kelly elected to an officer position is that the SRC spoke out against the Request for Proposal (RFP) process in January. Goodwill NNE was awarded the Employment Services contract for Regions 2 and 3. So to have an employee of the organization that was awarded contracts may perceived as a conflict of interest; it could appear a financial conflict or a personal influence conflict. Obviously, if Goodwill NNE was going to somehow gain something, whether it be a financial gain or program gain from a SRC vote, Kelly would recuse herself. If Kelly were elected to an officer position, it has to be clear that it was not as a result of the contract or the DVR “pulled strings” to get her in such a role. Cheryl will reach out to Maine Medical Center VR Services to ask them to come and participate in SRC meetings. We don’t want them to say, hay, Goodwill has an employee in an officer position, why weren’t we given that opportunity?

Kelly was given the opportunity to give a bio. Kelly has been at Goodwill for five years; for the first four years, she was Executive Director of Workforce Services. Prior to this, Kelly worked for seven years as the Program Director for the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program (121 VR Program). Kelly also teaches how to provide VR services through a RSA grant that the State of Washington has. Kelly has vast experience with VR, as well as a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP). She understands there may be times where she will need to abstain from voting on issues the SRC may be working on at any given time. Kelly has served on both State Rehabilitation Councils.

Membership:

The conversation turned to the SRC being out of compliance in terms of percentage of Council members having a disability. We have two individuals who have been attending Council meetings that we have asked to complete the application packet to be an official Council member. It was suggested that the SRC come up with some sort of way to reach out to VR clients and others interested in becoming a Council member. The SRC did make up cards about the SRC to hand out to potential members and did distribute them to current Council members a few months ago. Jodie Hall asked if the SRC has thought of somehow doing videoconferencing. This may help people with disabilities who have mobility and/or transportation issue to join the Council. Dan Vigue said, as a result of the contract with DVR, Goodwill is making sure staff know and understand the SRC so they may pass information on to their clients.

Acceptance of Minutes: The SRC did not vote on the minutes from August at the September meeting because the recording of the August meeting stopped before the Council adjourned. The administrative assistant was not present at that meeting so she did not have notes to cover the period of time that was lost. Cheryl went back to the recording and her notes but had nothing written down for the time period. It was noted that we only had about ten minutes left of the meeting when the recording stopped. There were no other corrections to the minutes so the minutes were accepted as distributed. Next, the September minutes. The only correction was that of an acronym. The minutes had “PEQUA” when the acronym is ”PEQA”. The September minutes were accepted as corrected.

Financial Report: The SRC’s previous administrative assistant did not bill all of her time during the last fiscal year but the treasurer, Chris Higgins, added this into the end of year report. This needs to be taken out and reflected in the FFY2020 reports. It was only for $53.51. The SRC’s budget for FFY2019 was approximately 26,000 and at the end of the year, we had $12,000. There were no questions about the end of year report.

How VR Helped Someone – Sue Primiano: Client has a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a result of an automobile accident, as well as some mental health issues. DVR sent client for a neuropsychological evaluation to help identify what the client was experiencing and to develop some compensatory strategies to help deal with behaviors. The client had trouble maintaining employment, relationships and her home. Through counseling, a case manager, job development and job coaching, the client has been working part-time as a janitor and has stable housing. The case manager has been able to help the client with available resources in the community. Part of the instability was understanding what the TBI affects were and what mental health issues were taking place; sometimes TBI issues get misdiagnosed as mental health issues. DVR anticipates they will be able to close her case in the near future.

Director’s Report:

Libby was able to attend the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conference in October. Mark Schultz, the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) commissioner, was in attendance. Due to a vacancy, Commissioner Schultz is also Acting Director of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

Prior Approval: Prior approval was an interpretation of the Federal law. DVR was having to get prior approval on a lot of things that were necessary in order for them to do their jobs. Some of the things that needed prior approval have been rescinded.

Pre-Employment Services (PreETS): The interpretation of what constitutes Pre-ETS has changed as VR agencies provide services to that population. Now that states are providing services, some states are really struggling to spend 15% on Pre-ETS without negatively impacting adult clients.

Rethink VR: How can RSA provide more technical assistance to states. RSA will look at rules and regulations to see if there is overreach. RSA is going to be looking to see if people who should be getting services are getting services. The data given at the conference shows that, nationally, about 50% of services are transition services. This poses a problem to Maine VR as Maine is an older state and VR needs to ensure these clients are getting services too. The question is what is the future of VR services?

Client Assistant Program (CAP): CARES, Inc decided not to extend their contract for the CAP. Since October 1, Pam Waite has been handling the CAP. Pam is a former assistant attorney general and has a short-term contract to administer the program. Until now, DVR has contracted with an agency (CARES, Inc) to administer the program. To remove any perceived conflict of interest, it was decided that the Governor will now be in charge of awarding the CAP contract. The Request for Information (RFI) regarding the CAP closed October 31. This was information the Governor was looking for in order to help her make a decision on who will administer the CAP. There will be a new avenue for funding. Instead of having money funneled through the State, the funding will go directly to the new administrator of the CAP.

State Plan: DVR was told the VR part of the Unified and Combined State Plan will remain the same. Work on the State Plan will start soon. The State Plan will be due by March 30. Cheryl reminded Council members that the SRC has input on the Plan goals. The SRC can use the Consumer Satisfaction Survey results that just came in, along with information from the last Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, to help guide their comments on the State Plan.

Employment Service contracts: Goodwill contracts are in place for regions two and three and referrals are starting to be made. The Maine Medical Center contract for region one is with the Division of Procurement and hope to have everything in place for December 1st. DVR has worked with CRPs to ensure clients are getting services while the new contracts are getting set up. Some of the CRPs will still be working with clients providing long-term supports through DHHS. Hopefully, as the new model of Employment Service settles in, there will be more time spent on providing the service and less time on figuring out who will provide the service.

DVR will be launching training for a new website called WORK Services. It’s a joint website that will bring together Bureau of Employment Services, DVR, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Adult Education. Depending on how individuals answer questions, it will direct them to the services they want. If they want to apply for VR services, they will be able to fill out an application from the website. The users will be able to give consent to have reports done by one agency go to another right on the website.

Vacancies: Northern Maine Regional Manager position has not been filled yet, though they have interviewed for the position. DVR will interview for a Rehabilitation Consultant on December 6. DVR has two new VRCs, one of whom has worked for DVR in the past. Other positions around the State have been filled.

DVR had meetings with Disability Rights Maine to share information. DVR also met with DHHS to share information that will help clients.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) will be having its two day staff training in June of 2020. Recent staff training has included motivation interviewing, personality disorder training and supervisor training.

The Financial Literacy Tool DVR worked on with Maine Medical got published on the National Clearinghouse for Rehabilitation Training Material (NCRTM). Some video training was also posted around the work DVR has done with the Work-Based Learning grant.

Regarding the data that Libby sent out, Cheryl noted that at four months into the Program Year, a lot of money has been committed. She asked if that was worrisome. Libby noted that these reports will change soon as DVR starts to report on common performance measures. Some of the information in the reports sent out are not as helpful as they used to be. It is also important to note that DVR has entered into large contracts with Goodwill and Maine Medical Center but soon there will be a reduction in VRC’s caseload budgets. There won’t be as much money running through the AWARE case management system because if will be in the contracts with Goodwill and Maine Medical Center.

SRC Work plan: This was tabled until December.

National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC): Cheryl reminded everyone that the NCSRC will be hosting a national call on December 11 beginning at 2:30 EST. She did send out a message about the call but will send out a reminder as the date approaches. Libby met Sherry Taylor, who is the NCSRC Treasurer, who said she was sorry that Kathy Despres will no longer be a part of the SRC.

Announcements:

Darcy Gentle reported that the 121 VR Program was awarded funding through a five year grant. Darcy is working with the State to provide diversity training. This is for staff and providers. Cheryl would like the SRC to get diversity training too.

Mary Adley reported she is hoping to fill the vacancy on her team at DOE. She has four viable candidates.

Emilie Montgomery reported that DRM recently filled a vacancy in the Rockland office. The Caribou advocate position remains vacant. If you know of someone who may be interested in the Caribou position, please email Emilie at: emontgomery@drme.org.

Kelly reported that Goodwill is hosting Bridges Out of Poverty training on December 5th and 6th.

Cheryl reminded members that there is a honorarium for those who are not otherwise compensated for being at a SRC meeting. Stipend and mileage requests should go to Chris Higgins at: chigggins@yahoo.com.

The dates for SRC meetings in 2020 are on the agenda. The next meeting is December 16th.

Meeting was adjourned.