

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**  
**QUARTERLY MEETING**  
**PRAIRIE HILLS PLAZA**  
April 24-25, 2014

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Pat Anderson	Scott Burlingame	Christy Coughlin
Russ Cusack (Day 2)	Tim Davenport	Harley Engelman
Rod Gillund	Vickay Gross	Kevin McDonough
Darren Moos	Sherry Shirek	Kelly Smeltzer
Teri Wilder	Sheri Wilson	

**Members Absent**

Russ Cusack (Day 1)	Deborah Jendro	Marshall Longie
Jillian Schaible		

**State Office Staff**

Lynn Derman	Robyn Throlson	Cheryl Wescott
Patty Wanner		

**Thursday, April 24, 2014**

Chairman Scott Burlingame called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

**Agenda**

**Action: A motion was made by Harley Engelman and seconded by Vickay Gross to accept the agenda. Motion carried.**

**Approval of January Minutes**

**Action: A motion was made by Harley Engelman and seconded by Kelly Smeltzer to accept the SRC quarterly minutes from its last meeting on January 10, 2014. Motion carried.**

**Vice Chair**

Chairman Scott Burlingame called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair.

**Action: A motion was made by Tim Davenport and seconded by Rodney Gillund to approve the nomination of Harley Engelman and Sherry Shirek for the position of Vice Chair. Motion carried.**

Harley Engelman and Sherry Shirek addressed the Council and shared why they want serve as Vice Chair.

### **Review of Bylaws Article VIII - Elections**

Chairman Scott Burlingame appointed a subcommittee consisting of the current committee chairs (Pat Anderson, Harley Engelman, and Vickay Gross) and the newly elected Vice Chair. The subcommittee was asked to review Bylaws Article VIII - Elections and provide a written report of recommendations for change at the next meeting.

### **Policy Priorities – 2015 Legislative Session**

The SRC's role and the difference between lobbying and educating on specific issues were discussed. Individuals can lobby on their own behalf but not on behalf of the SRC. Members can only educate on behalf of the SRC.

Chairman Scott facilitated a discussion of issues regarding employment that are important to Council members. Issues discussed include:

- Developing a strong employment initiative and setting target numbers for hiring individuals with disabilities within the state level, as is being done on the federal side.
- Look at barriers VR is experiencing; utilize data to look at better employment outcomes
- Address a gap in services for the blind; need more training and rehabilitation to be job ready

### **Region 8 - Kari Shea, Regional Administrator from Dickinson**

- Region 8 serves 8 counties (Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope, and Stark)
- Currently have 4 positions made up of the regional administrator, 1 counselor, 1 vision rehabilitation specialist, and 1 support staff. Have 2 vacant positions and no plans to fill in the near future.
- VR office was relocated and downsized by 1,000 sq. ft.
- The Dickinson community is changing rapidly. The traffic has increased, they can't find service workers, and they are losing long term citizens.
- VR has implemented a new case management system and a new time and attendance management system.
- The staff is dedicated, hardworking, and great team players.
- Client numbers are starting to increase as population is growing.
- VR is working more with employers and getting more referrals.

### **Region 2 - Peter Yung, Regional Administrator from Minot**

- Region 2 serves 7 counties (Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, and Ward)
- 12 positions made up of 1 regional administrator, 7 counselors; 1 business service specialist; 1 rehabilitation technician; 1 support staff; 1 vision rehabilitation specialist (covering 2 regions).

- Many challenging similarities with Region 8 in Dickinson.
- Experiencing high turnover and difficulty recruiting counselors due to cost of living increasing and more opportunities available.
- Seeing gradual increase in case load numbers; serving over 350 individuals; over one third are high school age transition students.
- With collaboration with other agencies, VR helped roll out “Launch My Life” ([www.launchmylifend.com](http://www.launchmylifend.com)), an online resource to help young people with disabilities plan for their transition from high school to work or college and training.
- More jobs than people; most jobs are oil field and customer service related.
- Challenges – maintaining a high quality service without burning out remaining staff.
- VR is working on adding a larger conference room in the main lobby area; current conference room is too small and file room is bursting; relocating files to current conference room

### **Appeals Report – Cheryl Wescott**

Individuals who disagree with a decision made by VR have an appeals process to follow. Cheryl Wescott provided an overview of the options for appealing decisions made by the VR agency. Options include informal resolution through the counselor, administrator or field chief, contacting the Client Assistance Program, requesting mediation through their counselor or the Client Assistance Program, or requesting a fair hearing. Cheryl provided a report of the number and nature of appeals received for FFY 2013. Two appeals were resolved after an administrative review was completed by the Field Chief and a third appeal was withdrawn before the hearing.

Discussion was held regarding why the number of reports is low and some potential reasons why.

### **Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Claim – Patty Wanner**

Patty Wanner provided information on the completion of the Non-Employee Travel Reimbursement Claim (SFN 10230).

The council broke into committee group meetings and recessed for the day.

### **Friday, April 25, 2014**

#### **AWARE Update – Robyn Throlson**

AWARE is VR’s new case management system that went live on March 3, 2014. It is a commercial off-the-shelf product which was adapted to North Dakota. The project was completed on time and under its \$2.5 million budget. The system allows for one central location for all client plans, case notes, etc. Implementation has been going extremely well.

### **Order of Selection (OOS) – Russ Cusack**

As of February 4, 2014, VR is serving all individuals without a wait list and is working to get the message out that individuals are being served again. VR had been on order of selection since March 2012.

The State Plan is being worked on and will be submitted to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). In the State Plan, VR must indicate whether they will maintain order of selection status. Russ indicated he does not believe VR will have a wait list, but as a precautionary measure would like VR to remain on order of selection with all categories open. This is a conservative approach and provides the SRC and DVR with a tool to use throughout the next Federal Year. VR will do everything to avoid a future wait list.

Discussion was held and members support leaving the order of selection structure in place. If financial issues arise, VR will have the ability to move quickly to meet the challenges.

Chairman Scott Burlingame requested trend information be presented at the next SRC meeting. (Breakdown of priority categories for who is being served, new applications, etc.).

**Action: A motion was made by Harley Engelman and seconded by Darren Moos for DVR to maintain the Order of Selection structure within the State Plan. Motion carried.**

### **National Update – Rodney Gillund and Russ Cusack**

Rodney Gillund and Russ Cusack provided an overview from their attendance at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Spring Conference in Bethesda, Maryland in April. Information shared focused on Senate Bill 1356 which reauthorizes the Rehabilitation Act.

### **Budget 101 & Update – Lynn Derman**

Lynn Derman provided an overview of the Vocational Rehabilitation funding sources including a breakdown of the federal and the non-federal portions, match requirements, and an explanation of maintenance of effort. Lynn also provided a handout of program expenditures as of 3/31/2014. North Dakota is a minimal allotment state based on the size of our population.

### **Travel and Expense Policy – Patty Wanner**

**Action: A motion was made by Rodney Gillund and seconded by Darren Moos to accept the SRC Travel and Expense Policy as amended to add a notice of exception for hardships. Motion carried.**

### **Business Award Nomination/Selection – Patty Wanner**

Chairman Scott Burlingame appointed a subcommittee consisting of Harley Engelman, Rodney Gillund, Teri Wilder, and himself. The subcommittee will be responsible for reviewing the nominations and selecting the annual regional and statewide business award winners. SRC members will present the awards in the regions and at the fall VR training conference in October 2014. Patty Wanner will be the liaison to this subcommittee.

### **Planning/Evaluation Committee – Pat Anderson, Chair**

The committee reviewed the community comments from the Public Forums held in Bismarck and Devils Lake and the proposed goals for the State Plan. The committee recommended edits that did not change the intent of the strategy. The four goals were read to the full council.

Goal 1: Target to meet Federal Standard 1 – increased employment outcomes from the previous year. NDVR will meet at least two of the three prime indicators.

Goal 2: Enhance VR service delivery to youth.

Goal 3: Ensure VR service is available for consumers who are blind and/or experience significant visual loss.

Goal 4: Provide leadership that promotes competitive integrated employment as the first choice of those individuals who are of working age.

**Action: A motion was made by Pat Anderson and seconded by Rodney Gillund to accept the goals as recommended. Motion carried.**

Due to time constraints, the remaining committee agenda items were tabled until the next meeting.

### **Resource Committee – Harley Engelman, Chair**

Vocational Rehabilitation is facing challenges with significant turnover rate of 25-26%. VR has 7 vision rehabilitation specialists and 41 counselors. Factors that might be affecting turnover include wages, environment, etc. Turnover rate is not necessarily limited to the western part of state, it is being felt statewide.

Another challenge is maintaining the ongoing training needs of counselors. 25% of the individuals coming to VR need to pick-up classes to meet requirements of the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). RSA offers some grants to cover scholarships, but it is on a competitive basis, so there is no guarantee. DVR may be responsible to cover funding for all of the training costs.

The Committee feels the SRC needs to gain an understanding of what is fueling the turnover rate. They are planning to gather information via a survey of VR staff to gather more input from staff in the field. From the results, they will look at options and strategies in order to offer advice to DVR.

Tim Davenport requested DVR to provide the following information to the council:

- Summary of actual training costs, funding, education, etc.
- What does it cost the agency to train a new counselor?

The information will be provided at a future meeting.

### **Membership/Public Relations Committee – Vickay Gross, Chair**

The PR/Membership Committee of the SRC meets every 4 to 6 week. The following updates were provided by Vickay Gross, Chair.

The recruitment protocol for SRC positions was sent out to the SRC members.

**Action: A motion was made by Vickay Gross and seconded by Rodney Gillund to accept the recruitment protocol as recommended. Motion carried.**

The Committee developed standard reference questions. The Committee has reviewed references and is making recommendations on four outstanding applications for the SRC. The only position still vacant is the Community Rehab Provider position. Once the Community Rehab Provider is appointed, the SRC will be fully functioning and fully constituted. This committee, based on reference provided, recommended Darcy Severson for the Community Rehab Provider position on the SRC.

**Action: A motion was made by Vickay Gross and seconded by Darren Moos to accept the recommendation of Darcy Severson for the Community Rehab Provider position on the SRC. One member abstained from voting, none opposed. Motion carried.**

The PR/Membership committee has been working with new members of the council on completion of the SRC training modules. All members are being encouraged to complete the modules. Vickay Gross volunteered to keep copies of the certificates of completion by members.

The draft document providing an overview of SRC will be sent out and we will vote to accept it at the next quarterly meeting.

Patty Wanner agreed to work with Chairman Scott Burlingame to draft a press release for new members for 2013 and 2014.

### **Future Meeting Suggestions**

Chairman Scott asked for suggestions for future meetings. The following items were noted: Legislative updates regarding the Governor's recommendations, budget updates, finalize SRC talking points from Memberships/PR Committee, information on satisfaction surveys from Planning and Evaluation Committee, overview/demo of Launch My Life web site.

**Voting**

Sherry Shirek requested her name be withdrawn from the running for Vice Chair.

**Action: A motion was made by Tim Davenport and seconded by Rodney Gillund to cast a unanimous voice ballot for Harley Engelman. Motion carried.**

Chairman Scott Burlingame is working with Russ Cusack on a plan to address the Tribal 121 representation on the Council.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 24-25, 2014.

Meeting adjourned.