

NORTH DAKOTA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
QUARTERLY MEETING
JOB SERVICE ND
April 16, 2019

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Tina Bay, Kirsten Dvorak, Joseph Hall, Becki Hoff, Uma Hoffmann, Bruce Klootwyk, Teresa Larsen, Marshall Longie, Kevin McDonough, Bruce Murry, Gillian Plenty Chief, Jason Sutheimer, Robyn Throlson, Trevor Vannett, Jodi Webb

Members Absent: Shannon Cook, Matthew McCleary

Others Present: Tara Buck Elk, Barbara Burghart, Aimee Volk

Trevor Vannett called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of October 9-10, 2018 minutes.

Action: A motion was made by Bruce Murry to accept the minutes with one correction. Teresa Larsen was present on both October 9th and 10th. Seconded by Kevin McDonough. Motion carried by unanimous decision.

Job Growth and Resources – Uma Hoffmann

Uma is the HR manager at Motor Coach Industries (MCI). MCI is providing more accessibility with their products. Uma discussed the history of MCI, current initiatives and innovation moving forward. She also shared information on their major product lines.

MCI employs more than 2,400 employees in Canada and the US. They recently sold and are now a part of NFI Group. They are a publicly traded company worth 2.4 billion dollars.

They have several major product lines including the J Coach (mid-range tour and charter, spin off of the E coach), D Coach, E Coach (high-end tour and charter, assembled entirely in Winnipeg), and prison coaches. They are the only North American manufacturer of prison coaches. The newest product, the D45 CRT LE Coach is a 45-foot coach. It is a commuter rapid transit and has a revolutionary design for a person in wheelchair. The person doesn't have to ride up on a lift. People are able to roll into the vestibule. This is a milestone with a new coach. A new coach hadn't been redesigned in over 30 years. It provides more independence and a more respectful experience. The coach is customizable to include different numbers of spots for people using wheelchairs.

The Pembina, ND facility is over 278,000 square feet. The Pembina location employs over 300 employees who travel from a one-hour radius. MCI has increased from 243 employees in January 2018 to 310 employees in April 2019.

MCI employs people with disabilities. They have several employees with hearing disabilities and have made accommodations. Employing people with other disabilities in the plant may be an issue due to the difficulty of accessibility for someone utilizing a wheelchair. There are also specific job requirements for assembly which require moving around in small spaces. The commute may also be a barrier as the Pembina location is somewhat remote. This may be a reason why they haven't had many applications from people with disabilities.

Announcement – Aimee Volk

Barbara Burghart will be the new SRC liaison from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Aimee Volk will be stepping down due to a change in job duties. Tara Buck Elk will be responsible for minutes at each meeting.

Transition – Deb Unruh and Emily Hess

Deb Unruh, Dickinson Public School transition coordinator and Emily Hess, VR counselor collaborated to teach a class together. They discussed items such as available resources, assessment, career paths, job applications, cover letters, resumé, interview skills, and the importance of follow-up after submitting an application or receiving an interview. The curriculum they used discussed job resources, hard and paper skills, and soft skills. They encouraged student participation through participation points, role playing, and brought in other partners like domestic violence.

They assisted each student to complete a master application. This way students have all the information readily available for completing multiple job applications. They also critiqued resumé and discussed what to put on a resumé for people with limited work experience. They created thumb drives with a resumé, reference sheet, and master application for each student.

Bruce Murry made a recommendation to have documents on google docs rather than a thumb drive. Jason recommended reaching out to the local Southwest Area Human Resources Association (SAHRA). It is an organization of about 75 HR members from the Dickinson community. Jason Sutteimer shared the website for the ND Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM): www.ndshrm.com Barb will send the link to all SRC members.

Positive evaluation and feedback were received from students. Feedback prompted Emily and Deb to reach out to the Dakota Center for Independent Living to teach about budgeting, managing money, etc.

They also have a Summer Work Experience program (SWEPT) which starts over the summer. It includes workshops, job shadows, and work experience. It allows both of them to stay in contact over the summer.

Business Services Report – Pete Rubke

Pete is a business services specialist in the Bismarck and Dickinson regions. As a BSS he serves two groups, North Dakotans with permanent injuries, illness, or impairments and North Dakotan businesses.

He offers services such as workplace diversity and disability etiquette, soft skills development, interviewing skills, speaking, time management, strategy, transferable skills, job searches and networking based upon job goal set by the client and counselor.

He also provides rapid response services for retention. It's a goal to retain good people and avoid costs of rehire and training. Other services are provided such as ergonomics, assistive technology, restorative services, etc.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is an incentive for hiring individuals in certain target groups. On-the-Job training (OJT) is a structured learning experience designed to reimburse employers for the cost of training individuals in the skills needed to fill available positions. Each agreement can be individualized to fit a variety of business needs.

Employer Engagement - Pete encourages counselors to meet local business people. They toured Baker Boy in Dickinson. Pete uses digital media methods for engagement with businesses. He is piloting a site called Alignable. He is allowed ten free connections per month. He promotes activities, events, and awareness through Alignable and LinkedIn. There is a new business services newsletter to send to employer contacts.

Pete provided his artistic ability to draw people into his booth at the Workforce conference.

Public Comment

None.

April 17, 2019

Members Present: Tina Bay, Shannon Cook, Joseph Hall, Bruce Klootwyk, Teresa Larsen, Marshall Longie, Kevin McDonough, Bruce Murry, Jason Sutheimer, Robyn Throlson, Trevor Vannett, Jodi Webb

Members Absent: Kirsten Dvorak, Gillian Plenty Chief, Becki Hoff, Uma Hoffmann, Matthew McCleary

Others Present: Tara Buck Elk, Barbara Burghart, Aimee Volk

Trevor Vannett called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. A quorum was present.

Appeals Report – Robyn Throlson

This past year there has been one appeal.

DVR Regional Updates – Devils Lake – Alicia Halle

Devils Lake serves six counties in northeastern North Dakota (Ramsey, Benson, Towner, Cavalier, Rolette, and Eddy) and two tribal programs (Turtle Mountain and Spirit Lake).

A new regional administrator started on February 1, 2019. The staff includes one rehabilitation counselor, one vision rehabilitation specialist, one support staff, and the regional administrator. One counselor will sit for the CRC exam in October.

Devils Lake will be co-locating with Job Service at the end of May and will begin seeing clients on June 3, 2019.

Devils Lake serves five schools in Ramsey county, five schools in Benson county, one in Eddy county, two in Cavalier county, one in Towner county, and five in Rolette county. There is currently one Pre-ETS contract covering one school in Rolette county and they are working on getting another Pre-ETS contract by the 2019-2020 school year. Devils Lake has completed just over 284 Pre-ETS hours.

The current goals were assigned when the region had two full-time counselors. Goals for applications, eligibilities, and successful closures are on track. It is expected that the service goals will be met as well. However, due to the staffing situation and focusing on clients, they had been unable to spend much time on Pre-ETS or employer contacts and may not meet those goals. The VRS has 51 current clients and has taken 15 new evaluations. In December/January the VRS region expanded. The VRS is on track for presentation and new evaluation goals for the year. Additional changes not requiring 110 time have allowed the VRS more time with follow-up on current cases, which has been beneficial.

Devils Lake shares a business services specialist with the Grand Forks VR office and is exploring options to increase job shadowing for transition students in the summer and in doing regular placements for job ready consumers.

The unemployment rate for February 2019 was 3.9% in Ramsey county, 8.5% in Rolette county, 3.1% Towner county, 3.5% in Cavalier county, 5.3% in Benson county, and 6.6% in Eddy county.

Shopko closed in Rolla this month, Leever's South closed in Devils Lake in March, and Kmart closed in Devils Lake in April 2018.

Devils Lake has completed at least ten ergonomic assessments for staff, clients, and employers.

DVR Regional Updates – Grand Forks – David Kvasager

There are four counties (Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina, and Walsh) in this region. Recently added the counties of Griggs, Steele, and Traill for vision rehabilitation specialist coverage.

Current numbers for FFY19 (October 1, 2018 through April 17, 2019):

- Applications – 213/300 (71% of Goal)
- Plans – 165/210 (79% of Goal)
- Rehabilitated – 71/98 (72% of Goal)
- OB – 23/30 (77% of Goal)

The average caseload size is 68 for a VR counselor and 91 for the vision rehabilitation specialist. One senior vocational rehabilitation counselor resigned effective May 2018, another retired effective September 2018, and a vocational rehabilitation counselor transferred to Grand Forks from the Devils Lake region. One counselor will be taking the CRC exam in July.

Currently, there is one counselor who has nearly all of the transition cases. There are three contracts to provide pre-employment transition services. There are contracts for the Grand Forks schools (16 students), Upper Valley – Larimore (four students), and Griggs, Steele, and Traill counties (four students).

Grand Forks is in the process of co-locating with Job Service. The move is scheduled for May 30-31, 2019 with a goal to be open for business on June 3, 2019.

Division Updates – Robyn Throlson

VR had a request for a new FTE discussed in legislative session. The FTE is for the DDS unit and it will hopefully be approved. The position is 100% federally funded. The purpose of this new position is to work with the cooperative investigation unit. This role is strongly encouraged by the social security administration. They are targeting ND at this time to have one DDS staff analyst who works with two law enforcement personnel through the attorney general's office. They will look at possible fraud committed through

Social Security disability. The Social Security staff member would be a current examiner who would be promoted. This person will need program knowledge to share with law enforcement personnel. The understanding is that the Social Security examiner would be familiar with red flags and things that could potentially be fraud and are worth exploring.

As the regional administrators reported, the local VR offices in Grand Forks and Devils Lake will be moving to the Job Service buildings. They plan to be open for business on June 3rd to see clients. These are the only moves at this time.

Six individuals applied for and received approval for the voluntary separation incentive program (VSIP). Five of whom have left. The sixth is the regional administrator in Williston and she is done on April 30, 2019. As of today, we are fully staffed. The only vacancy is the regional administrator in Williston. We are currently waiting for permission to fill the position so we may start the recruitment process.

Vision rehabilitation specialists (VRS) are covering expanded areas. The Dickinson VRS resigned and VR “gave up” the FTE. To ensure coverage, the boundaries were changed. Aimee Volk took over supervision of the remaining vision specialists. The boundaries may need to be revamped, as the Bismarck VRS has too many clients to serve. We have been looking at getting program income to help alleviate costs of OB.

Federal Monitoring Review – 2009 was the last time we were monitored. We were selected for off-site monitoring which started in April. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has three focus areas: Pre-ETS, General Overview, and Fiscal. There may be subsequent calls to address areas that weren’t covered in the first calls.

The state office has been reviewing policies, internal controls, etc. Current work includes the framework for internal control to link all policies under.

Three policies reviewed today relate to areas RSA is monitoring. RSA has been focusing on prior approval. Aggregate prior approval for services was submitted so there would be no wait time for client services.

HB 1406: VR was not involved in the creation of this bill, however it named VR as responsible to determine whether or not an individual qualifies for the tax credit. VR will draft a template letter and must track how many individuals have been certified for the tax credit.

Committee Chair Reports

Membership/Public Relations Committee – Joseph Hall, Chair

A special meeting was held in December. There are four vacancies on the council.

Three applications were discussed:

- Renee Speidel-Wetzsteon was chosen to replace Deb Jendro
- Terry Peterson was chosen to replace Darcy Severson

Becki Hoff has chosen to not resubmit an application. Shannon Cook needs to resubmit her application if she would like to continue on the council. Jason Sutheimer has resubmitted his application.

We plan to reach out to Pizza Ranch for a possible business member. Gillian is going to reach out to Ben Wolf Necklace. Hopefully we can fill the open positions before July. Kirsten Dvorak is off June 19. There is a concern that we will be under 51% for the self-disclosed disabilities. We have 58% right now, but may be as low as 50%.

Aimee emailed providers to see if anyone would be interested in a position on the SRC. There were no responses except the three applications which were reviewed, however none of them have a self-disclosed disability.

The council still needs to fill a community provider and two business and industry positions.

Planning and Evaluation Committee – Teresa Larsen, Chair

The committee met twice on April 16, 2019. There were three policies to be reviewed. They include Internal Control Framework, Prior Written Approval Requests and Customized Employment (CE).

Internal Control Framework – is the outline for a robust internal control policy. The expanded policy will be presented in pieces to the council. The committee met and is recommending approval for the framework for the forthcoming policies.

Action: A motion was made by Teresa Larsen to accept the Internal Control Framework as written. Seconded by Bruce Murry. Motion carried by unanimous decision.

Prior Written Approval Requests – Federal requirements state there must be prior approval for purchases over \$5,000. The committee met and is recommending approval.

Action: A motion was made by Teresa Larsen to accept the Prior Written Approval Requests policy as written. Seconded by Bruce Murry. Motion carried by unanimous decision.

Customized Employment (CE) – Planning and evaluation committee met and is recommending approval with one change. On page four it states; *The VR counselor should establish that the individual will be able to access extended services funding before CE and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) begin.* On page one it states, *A VR counselor must document a reasonable expectation that extended services are, or will become, available to the individual prior to initiating planned services.* The language on page four should be changed to match the language used on page one.

Action: A motion was made by Bruce Murry to accept the policy as amended. Seconded by Joseph Hall. Motion carried by unanimous decision.

Resource Committee – Jason Sutheimer, Chair

The committee discussed ways to encourage participation and have fun at work. One idea included puzzle pieces for successful closures. Staff could add a piece when there is a successful closure. Another idea was using coloring books with numbers. Staff may enjoy it when they can physically see the goal as it is completed. The committee will work to create it and get it out to offices.

Employment Committee – Bruce Murry, Chair

The committee will judge the employer awards in late summer so they are chosen in time for the October awards. They would like to coordinate a meeting in October with VR.

HB 1406 was passed. It is relating to an income tax credit for the employment of individuals with developmental disability or severe mental illness. It amends and reenacts section 57-38-01.16 of the North Dakota Century Code.

Tribal Updates

Marshall Longie has been the director of Spirit Lake VR for over 15 years. They applied for a grant for another five years, and are optimistic they will get it. Their numbers are highest they have been. They are required to have 100 people served for the grant, and they have 150 people. There have been 54 total successful closures. They have a goal of 15 youth, and there are currently 27. Of these youth, a goal of 15 would be in college, currently there are 24 in college. They met their goals for the grant six months into the grant. They are currently asking consumers to write letters to support the grant. A consultant was hired to write the grant and is half done. It should be submitted ahead of schedule.

The tribal casino and Sioux Manufacturing are big employers on the reservation. Wal-Mart in Devils Lake and also a strip mall has been good sources of employment as well. There are several new restaurants in town. Many have found success in employment as cooks.

Next meeting July 16-17, 2019 in the Job Service ND building.

A motion was made by Joseph Hall to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Jason Sutheimer. Meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.