

**Montana State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Disability Determination Services conference room**  
**2500 Prospect Avenue in Helena**  
**March 28 & 29, 2019**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Members present:** Monique Casbeer, Tiffany Costa, Barbara Davis, Chanda Hermanson-Dudley, Coreen Faulkner, Kathy Hampton, Brook Hodge, Michele Letendre, Denise May, Kathy Meier, and Susan Nielson

**Members absent:** Wayne Dagel, Andy Kemp, Barbara Kriskovich, and Frank Podobnik

**Staff and guests:** Shannon Lewis, Mike Hermanson, Sheri Vukasin, Barbara Schiedermayer, Tammy Hogan, Dennis Nyland, Beverly Berg, Christy Sofianek, Anna Gibbs, and Shawn Tulloch

**Welcome and Introductions:** Council Chair Tiffany Costa called the meeting to order. Introductions were made around the tables.

**November Meeting Minutes:** Motion made to approve the minutes unanimously.

**Public Comments:** Kathy Hampton of Disability Rights Montana shared with the Council about the possibility of having Cheryl Bates-Harris (from National Disability Rights Network) to train SRC on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. She is planning to fly to Montana give a training to Disability Rights Montana the day before. Would SCR be willing to allow her to train the Council and pay half of her travel expenses (lodging & per diem)? The total cost is \$984.00 – this cost can split in half – VRBS can pay \$492 and the Disability Rights can pay the other half. Cheryl would train the Council for five hours on what are the responsibilities of a Rehabilitation Council and what the Council needs to look for, how to function, etc. She does this kind of trainings nationwide. The Council approved this and agreed on the date.

**MT State Workforce Innovation Board, Shannon Lewis and Mike Hermanson:** Shannon Lewis talked about what is happening with SWIB and Department of Labor. They are coordinating services across Required Partners, VR, Title 1 Dislocated workers, Youth, and Adult Education. They are also working on implementing policies. They are in the midst of state planning process. Mike Hermanson is hired to write up how we are working and integrating with all the programs statewide. There are a few challenges such as how to coordinate business engagement. They are hoping to coordinate all the programs together in a State Plan (in the past, State Plans showed different programs alone.). Jane Weber, City Commissioner, will do the Disability Employment panel at the next SWIB in June. There will be two people from Vermont's Way to Work, Tom Osborn of NCIL, Jennifer Kobza (SWIB Board member), and Celina Cline. They will discuss what does employment looks like for Montana folks, how does it all fit together, etc. The Vermont people were pivotal in their state for moving out of all sheltered/segregated work, so they will share their experience with policy, governor, legislature, stakeholders, etc. They are busy with RFP's. They are contracted with Dislocated Worker (one statewide), Adult (one per MACO district, 12 in state) and Youth (one per MACO district 12 in state). Shannon asked if anyone on the Council is interested in scoring these RFP's, please contact Shannon. It will take about 30 hours. Chanda thinks it would be good for a VR staff to be a reviewer.

**Budget Updates, Sheri Vukasin:** Sheri reported that we are projecting an underspend on the Federal Grant. What we don't have in Federal Funds, we do not have to match, but what we leave on table federally is gone from us. A Council member asked what does this mean in terms of hiring more staff and what does this mean for OOS waiting list? Chanda says we have done about 102 cases off the waiting list. We will also start developing some methods to commit

to a minimal number per month to remove cases off the waiting list. On top of Match we have a MOE (Maintenance of Effort) requirement. When we were heading into 2018, we were supposed to match the 2016 spending which is 4.5 million more than we have. So, we did not maintain the MOE, thus we are expecting a Notification of Penalty. We will have a chance to ask for a waiver from the feds, but we need to behave as if we will not get this Waiver of Penalty of \$4.5 million. That will reduce our 2020 grant to about \$6 million. We are exploring one-time investments instead of ongoing ones. Once the state goes through that penalty, it will "reset." That means a year from now we will be back to business as usual.

***Federal/State updates and Field Services Updates, Chanda Hermanson-Dudley:*** Chanda reported that we are in the middle of Rehabilitation Services Administration Monitoring (started a month ago). RSA will be reaching out to Kathy Hampton and Tiffany Costa. RSA Monitoring is focusing on the following topics: WIOA Joint Efforts, Financial, Pre-ETS, and Performance. We've had three out of four calls. We've also sent three boxes worth of paper. We are planning on RSA team (four or five of them) to visit us and review 40 cases (20 specifically on Measurable Skill Gains). They will be here at the end of April to beginning of May. We are going to be in corrective action over some areas such as data like missing pay stubs, dates and codes not matching, etc. Another barrier is the lack of case management system (a new one would cost \$3-4 million; last year we got a \$250,000 quote from Micropact to add Pre-ETS to MACS). No support from RSA to get a new case management system. We are looking forward to getting some great goals, clearer direction, and good timing.

Legislature Update: Today is executive action. For Montana Telecommunication Access Program (MTAP) in DETD during this legislative session, we are watching closely. MTAP provides relay service and distribute equipment such as accessible phones. MTAP has the Special Revenue (they get 10 cents of all phone bills). We have been purposely building this revenue because FCC is currently paying the CapTel minutes for interstate calls and we have been told that someday the State will take over that duty. Legislative Committee move \$2.7 million from MTAP fund to Mental Health and another \$800,000 to EE (which would restore EE to what it used to be but one-time fund pose a problem for managing a long-term service). That leaves about \$775,000 left in MTAP fund.

In March 2017, Sheila Hogan put hiring freeze on all jobs in DPHHS. The hiring freeze eventually lifted in DPHHS, but DET kept the freeze. The Legislative Fiscal Division, based on a snapshot of July 2018, decided that of the 400 vacancies that was open for more than a year, 100 of those are being cut which means eliminating 15 FTE from DET (all VR positions). That list included Division Administrator, Business Services Specialist, support staff, Program Support and Operations Bureau Chief, Budget Analyst, VRT in GF, 5-6 counselors and 5-6 support staff. That bill went to House Appropriations; we had strong advocates show up and seven DETD positions got saved. The House Floor got passed. Few days ago was in House Finance and Claims; today executive action was taken and we are currently trying to save eight positions. After this it will go to Senate Floor. If we lose eight positions, we will have to re-organize again. The next time we meet, there may be some changes that will have an impact on DETD. The Pre-ETS position (Bureau Chief and staff) is put on hold for now.

We have a new Program Support and Operations Bureau Chief, Anna Gibbs. It was last filled by Peggy Williams three years ago. Anna is responsible for managing the business/data stuff and many other activities. Chanda requested feedbacks from the Council on what they would like for Anna to do for SRC as this is now her responsibility, along with delegating Shawn to do tasks she's done previously. Council asked for Program Support and Operations Bureau Chief's job description. Another requested any suggestions to send to Cheryl Bates-Harris for the upcoming training in May.

There will be an annual All-Staff training conference on September 25-27 in Lewistown. Any agenda item suggestions, please forward to Chanda. One Council member suggested a panel of all the core partners. Case of the Year will be presented during this conference. Chanda asked the Council if they would be interested in reviewing the cases either as a council or as a committee. It was agreed that Planning and Review Committee will review and choose a couple and share with the Council for a final vote.

OOS Movement: there are 102 invites but about 50 of them do not have IPE (hard to that after waiting three years). We will update the list of IPEs and figure out the monthly amount we can handle.

**Quality Assurance Team, Barbara Schiedermayer:** Barbara has been working on a couple things: recruiting quality candidates, training staff (becoming state employees, helping the counselors getting the degrees, providing refresher training for group/individuals), creating/updating evaluation tools (case review tools, performance evaluation tool) and creating materials (rack cards on different services in VRBS). The supervisors, counselors, administrative positions have been filled. Seven staff are in graduate school and two passed CRC and will graduate in May.

**MT Special Education Advisory Panel, Tammy Hogan:** Tammy talked what is involved in this Panel. The membership consists of parents of children with disabilities up to age 26, individuals with disabilities, teachers, representatives of person in higher education, homeless youth, administrators of program with disabilities, private schools & public charter schools, vocational or business, juvenile or correctional facility, children on welfare or foster care, and Disability Rights Montana. The function of the Panel is to advise on the unmet needs in education of children with disabilities, comment on rules, advise on reporting date, correctional action, policy coordination and prove to state education consult with providing of free public education. The Panel also provides annual orientation. There is annual CSPD stakeholder meeting to discuss priorities and future goals. The Panel submits annual performance report. Tammy mentioned about the interagency agreements (contracts and so forth) – with the WIOA, VR is required to change the MOU with Department of Education.

**MT Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors, Dennis Nyland:** Dennis shared with the Council on what is MT Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors which has been established since 1975. The mission is to provide independent oversight and critique treatment by intense behavioral center and Montana public mental health sites. They are to ensure that all with developmental disabilities (DD) or mental health treatment to participate fully in the community. In other words, all individuals are to live in the communities and not be institutionalized. The Board is made up of six members with skills/knowledge/education relative to treatment of adults with severe mental illness; with skills/knowledge/education relative to treatment of children with serious emotional disturbance; welfare of adults with DD; primary or secondary consumer mental health services; primary or secondary consumer mental health services; primary or secondary consumer of DD. The Executive Director has been vacant since July. We have Craig Fitch who is an attorney in Warm Springs and Luwaana Johnson who is the paralegal working for the clients in Warm Springs. Dennis talked about MCA 53.20 (DD status) and 53.21 (mental health). Dennis also talked about the functions which include conducting site inspections of any facilities receiving state money and receiving incident reports of abuse or neglect.

### **Reports from the Committees:**

#### **Education and Membership:** Denise May

Team: Chair Barbara K., Michele, Denise, and Beverly. Denise reported that the committee discussed the need to fill the following representative spots: Business, Industry, & Labor, Native American VR project, Parent Training and Information Center, and SWIB. They also talked about plan to reach out people in different areas. They also discussed the importance of maintaining the Orientation training for the new members. There used to be online training that Peggy would bring to the Council but that is no longer available and is probably outdated due to WIOA. That kind of resource used to be available on National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils website. Shawn will keep checking that website (currently there is no President on the Board). Kathy H. says that we can record Cheryl Bates-Harris during the May training – that can be another resource for the Council. All SRC members have a binder to review their duties. Tiffany asked the Committee to look at the Bylaws and Constitution on the duties/limited terms for Chair and Vice Chair. These officers are voted in the fall every year.

#### **Planning and Review:** Barbara Davis

Team: Chair Barbara D., Kathy M., Anna, Andy, and Shawn. Barbara reported that the committee talked about the Governor's Report. Anna will look into the tribal part of it. The Governor's Report is due by November for

the Council's final vote. The committee plans to review the case of the year stories and narrow them down to 3 to 4 cases. Then the Council will vote on one of those four. Chanda will get the stories to Shawn and then pass them on to the committee. The committee also discussed the State Plan and we had questions of what our role is in that.

***Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment:*** Bill Harant

Team: Chair Bill, Monique, Sue, and Coreen. Bill reported that the committee discussed simplifying the survey (use more Yes/No answers). In SILC, the survey was tested through the group with cognitive disabilities and the feedbacks from that group says that it is too long. It is estimated that 25% are returned which is better than SILC (12%). Survey Monkey can be used but not really a good return back. Hard copy is also another option; clients choose one or the other. A question was asked about the federal requirement on the survey. It is part of the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment. Survey is required but there is no specific guidance on how the survey is done.

***Policy, Procedure & Personnel Development:*** Brook Hodge

Team: Chair Brook, Kathy H., Tiffany, and Chanda. Brook shared that the staff is excited to see the hiring happening. Chanda already reported on the positions. The committee is watching the legislature closely to see what is going to happen with the eliminated positions. The stand-alone Pre-ETS Bureau along other things are up in the air until the Session is over. We have five VRBS teams: Youth Services (Tammy Hogan), Quality Assurance (Barbara Schiedermayer), Business Services (Celina Cline), Policy (Chanda Hermanson-Dudley and Lacey Conzelman), and lastly, Assistive Technology (Beverly Berg). We also have Life Support Team led by Marian Zuelke. Chanda started a supervisor mentoring program statewide. Mark Mahnke who has been working with ASPIRE will be returning to VRBS. There will be an All-Staff training conference in the fall – that will boost the morale. As the caseloads go down, the counselors are adjusting to a different pace – there is more time for one on one with client and the counselors have to change the thinking/planning part while working with clients. 102 clients on the waiting list have been invited back and 45 IPEs are written. People on the waiting list – waited 2.5 years – it takes a while to get the IPEs written up.

***Blind & Low Vision Services update, Beverly Berg:*** Beverly reported about the staff. Due to the hiring freeze, all staff is helping the general VR cases. Sheri Devlin is doing all the Pre-ETS cases at MSDB; once the students graduate, she moves them to individual counselors. Beverly will submit the 70B report; she feels it will be accurate number next year. Beverly talked about I Can Connect program. This is through FCC for providing communications for people who are deafblind. Perkins needed to find people who could meet with applicants and do outreach to the DeafBlind people. BLVS does this as they already have clients through VR or Older Blind program. BLVS get reimbursed for that and the money goes into Older Blind budget to give it a boost (about \$2,000-\$3,000). Business Enterprise Program is set up federally after WWI to help the vets get employment (also known as Randolph Shepherd). This program started in the 60's, stopped in the 80's, then re-started in the late 90's. Beverly talked about the different places where the vending machines have been located. Right now, there are vending machines in Missoula, Helena, and Billings. Must have a minimum of 10 machine or more to break even. A good route will have 20-40 machines. A non-profit, Montana Business Enterprises program handle this for the state. The contract was renewed two years ago.

***Learning is For Everyone (LIFE), Christy Sofianek:*** Christy shared with the Council three models: academic, campus engagement, and career development. There are eight high school graduates with intellectual disability desiring to go to college. They take classes based on their interests; some take classes for credit and others audit. Big part of the success is to provide peer partner support. Peers are traditional students who can go to class with them or work on assignment with them. It depends on the students and what they need. Campus engagement is the social part of college life – going to games, feeding ducks, etc. Career development is setting up internship to match their learning and gaining work experience in different field such as agriculture or child care. The students would earn the certificates and graduate with everyone else at the Commencement Ceremonies. LIFE would like to reestablish partnerships with VRBS for the project search for employment. MSU is committed to this program; the cost of this program is same as going to MSU. There

is a small fee of \$1,000. There is support from DD, private pay, some financial aid, and VR. Link: <https://thinkcollege.net/programs/msu-life-scholars>.

**Wrap-up:**

- The committees will plan to meet between now and May to give updates at the next Council meeting. Be sure to contact Shawn for the Skype link.
- There will be five hours of training from Cheryl Bates-Harris on May 23<sup>rd</sup> which leaves three hours the next day.
  - The Council wants the usual staff reports (Budget, Federal/State updates, Field Service update, Program Support & Operations update) and the committees reports.
  - No Windmill training this time.
- Tiffany prefers an all-day meeting with SILC, so let's see if that can be arranged later this year.

Monique Casbeer moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m.; Michele Letendre seconded. Motion carried unanimously.