

Montana State Rehabilitation Council
Virtual Meeting
October 6 & 7, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Barbara Davis (Tuesday), Chanda Hermanson (Tuesday), Kathy Hampton, Renea Keough, Eliza Kragh, Michele Letendre, Dr. Tom Manthey (Wednesday), Denise May, Kathy Meier, Cheri Reed-Anderson, Marcy Roberts, Emma Rooney, Tom Sullivan, and Sandy Taylor.

Members absent: Monique Casbeer, Scott Eychner, Dale Kimmet, and Marvin Weatherwax, Sr.

Staff and guests: Beverly Berg, Lacey Conzelman, Doug Demmel of Tyler Technologies, Anna Gibbs, Bill Harant, Brook Hodge, Shawn Tulloch, CART transcriber, and two sign language interpreters.

Welcome and Introduction: Council Chair, Michele Letendre, called the meeting to order. Shawn Tulloch reminded the Council of ground rules for the virtual meeting. Introductions were made.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair: Marcy Roberts as the Chair and Kathy Meier as the Vice Chair.

August Meeting Minutes: Motion made to approve the August 13 & 14, 2020 Meeting Minutes unanimously.

Announcements: There will be a VR100 virtual Celebration at the Capitol. Link was provided. The Council will have a group picture taken over Zoom for the 2020 Governor's Report.

Public Comments: n/a

Budget Report, Anna Gibbs, Bureau Chief of Program Support & Operations: Anna reported on the grant award for FFY19 and FFY20. For the FFY19 (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019), the Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services FFY 2019 grant award was \$10,260,220. This resulted in a Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) set aside of \$1,539,033 which leaves \$8,721,187 for General VR. The State Share is \$2,776,752. That brings to total of \$13,036,972, which was fully expended. For the FFY20 (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020), the VRBS grant award was \$9,281,550. This results in a Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) set aside of \$1,392,232 which leaves \$7,889,318 for

General VR. The State Share is \$2,512,033. That brings the total of \$11,793,584. However, the program expended \$4,763,774 (\$1,257,545 from Federal grant funds, \$2,552,799 from State general fund, \$953,430 set aside for Pre-ETS). That means \$7,070,574 (\$6,631,772 of the VR grant and \$438,802 of Pre-ETS set-aside) will be carry forward to FFY21. At this time, we do not yet know what the FFY2021 award amount will be, even though the FFY 2021 began on October 1, 2020 because we have not received the award letter yet. We are eagerly awaiting this award letter to solidify our program planning. The goal of the program is to carry forward approximately \$7 million from the FFY21 award into the FFY22 award, when we are expecting a large Maintenance of Effort penalty. For the remainder of FFY20, the projected Personnel Services costs are \$3,167,547, Operating Expenses are \$1,430,272, and Client Benefit costs are \$2,472,755. The VRBS program receives program income for reimbursement of VRBS services provided to clients who are SSI and SSDI recipients under the Ticket to Work program. The Ticket to Work reimbursements we collected in State Fiscal Year 2020 from 7-1-19 to 6-1-20 were \$1,245,362 and for State Fiscal Year 2021 are \$377,999.

Program Support & Operations Update, Anna Gibbs, Bureau Chief of Program Support & Operations: Anna reviewed the Program Year 2019 Quarter Four summary. There were 1,531 participants who have a written IPE and were receiving services. The highest age recipients were the age range of 25-44 (441 participants). Another breakdown is those receiving career services (job search assistance, on-the-job support or on-the-job training) and training services (occupational/vocational training, 4-year college/university or graduate university training) – 834 in career services and 327 in training services. 818 males were receiving services and 713 females were receiving services. The highest enrollees were 154 in Department of Labor's Adult Workforce programs and the next highest was 143 in the Adult Education program. The highest number for the barrier in employment was 1,531 individuals due to having a disability and the second highest was 732 individuals due to low income. About 52% of the participants were enrolled in a recognized training program such as high school, college or occupational training. Then the next item Anna reviewed was the Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) which can mean finishing a semester or completing a vocational training. Total participants who earned MSGs was 88 and total MSGs earned was 96. 2,051 was the number of students with disabilities and 1,394 was reported for receiving Pre-ETS services. There was about 20% in each of the five Pre-ETS services being provided. Most common type of exit after eligibility but from Order of Selection was at 389 (this means people were on a waiting list and they exited from the waiting list). 29 individuals exited the program for competitive and integrated employment.

Federal/State Update; Chanda Hermanson, DETD Administrator: Chanda reported that there is a possibility of moving the Ticket to Work program from Social Security Administration to Department of Labor. Ticket to Work is for the individuals receiving Social Security disability benefits. These individuals can assign their Ticket to Work to an Employment Network (EN) - any supporting services like VR, Job Service, etc. - to help them get employment. Once registered as EN, that service program will be reimbursed after investing time and money in helping the individual get employed. At this time, this is a Request for Information regarding the move to Department of Labor and it is open for public comments.

A new fiscal year has started last week on October 1st and we are waiting for the Congress to reach a decision regarding the grant amount awarded to VRBS. We are watching our spending closely especially the Pre-ETS. We won't know what is the 15% for Pre-ETS until we get the full grant.

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation typically host in-person conferences twice a year. This time, the organization is hosting a virtual conference on Nov. 9 – 13. Up to five SRC members can attend. Shawn will send out conference agenda to the Council members. More info about CSAVR can be found on their website (<https://www.csavr.org/>). Chanda talked a bit about co-chairing the Youth Services Committee for CSAVR. There was a survey sent out to all states asking about their partnership with Independent Living (IL). About 60% of the VR programs are not partnering with the state's IL. Montana has been maintaining the partnership with SILC as well as with Office of Public Instruction (OPI). This Council has Barbara Davis in the SILC representation and Dale Kimmet in the OPI representation.

In the spring of 2019, RSA representatives did the monitoring of the VRBS program and sent their report to DETD. The Central Office is writing a draft of responses to the report. Once it is finalized, the Council will be able to see it.

Legislative Session is three months away and the team is working on the presentation. There will be a new Governor and administration. Chanda is waiting to see what is expected of us.

VR100 Celebration has been a big project for us. Tanya Gertz has been working on this. She went to the State Library and found state plans, data, and brochures from 1920s. Many success stories – all of these will be on display in the Rotunda today. A fun fact: 100 years ago, Vocational

Rehabilitation had served 128 men and 2 women. A Zoom link for the VR100 Celebration is shared with the Council.

A question was asked about the Maintenance of Effort – the penalty will be finished on October 1, 2022. A question was asked about what is the percentage of VR counselors having a disability and do they work with clients with similar disability? At this time and with the new staff turnover, we don't know the exact percentage. All VR counselors serve a general caseload. We have at least one assigned in each office to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Shawn Tulloch works with them). We also have staff serving Blind and Low Vision. Beyond these two types of disabilities, it is a general caseload of all disabilities.

Blind & Low Vision Services update; Beverly Berg, BLVS Administrator: BLVS was fully staffed until Madeline Burke, support staff in Butte, retired after 30 years with the State. Her position is being advertised. In the meantime, a temp will be hired until the position is filled. 38 individuals have been invited off the wait list for BLVS. The counselors are almost done with the benefits counseling training. With the older Blind program, we provided services to 417 individuals which is higher than the last year. With the Business Enterprise program, we continued with three vendors and continued to look for new vendors. We will train them so that when vendors retire, the new ones will be ready. Our instructional staff have been working with clients remotely or over the phone. Beverly wants to inform the Council that MonTECH and Rural Dynamics received additional grant money for the loan program. If you know anyone in need of assistance to purchase assistive technology, they can contact MonTECH or Rural Dynamics. The interest rates vary on the amounts, but some are at 0% interest. Final news, Beverly is retiring at the end of the year (after submitting the Older Blind program and Shepherd program reports). As soon as her position is re-written, it will be posted.

Field Services update; Brook Hodge, Bureau Chief of Field Services: Brook gave update on the hiring new staff: we have 22 new counselors statewide. Sarah Seltzer replaced Barb Schiedermayer as the VRBS trainer and started yesterday. We have invited nearly 1200 individuals off the Priority One waitlist and just over 500 IPEs have been developed since last year October. There are 131 active IPEs. The busiest VR field office is in Missoula with caseloads ranging from 75 to 95; average caseload across the state is about 60. Field office staff continue to participate in monthly meetings. Each counselor is required to serve at least one team (Assistive Technology, Business Services, Customized Employment, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Policy and Procedure, Pre-ETS, Quality Services, and Self-Employment). The Council members are welcome to join one of the teams. The VRBS training

webinar is every third Thursday of the month from 10:30 to noon – this month will focus on Developmental Disability Program Overview and Updates with Lindsey Carter. Brook talked about Virtual Job Shadowing program which allows counselors to review different jobs with clients (both youth and adults). It is a great opportunity for the clients to identify their interests in employment, what education is needed for different jobs, and they can watch interviews on videos.

2020 Governor's Report; Lacey Conzelman, VRBS Program Manager: Lacey reviewed the 2020 Governor's Report. On the front page shows the numbers of individuals being served in the programs (VRBS, IL, etc.). The number of individuals being served by Pre-ETS is added. The successful exits from the VR program for 2020 is added. A group picture of the Council members will be added. Tiffany Costa wrote the letter (Message from the State Rehabilitation Council). The next part is the success stories – one in each category: VRBS, BLVS, Pre-ETS, and Tribal VR. Each story has a disability type, community partners involved, employment goal achieved, services provided, and length of time in program. There is a picture of the individual accompany with the story. A Survey Monkey link will be sent out to the Council members to vote on a Case of the Year story. The list of recommendations and achievements was reviewed. This is a draft; once the edits are done, it will be sent to the Council members for their approval. Then it will be sent to Jon Ebelt, the Public Relations officer for DPHHS, for a review.

Reports from Committees:

- Education and Membership (Denise May)
 - We are tasked with three duties: recruit new members, plan orientation for new members, and review Bylaws/Constitution.
 - There are three vacancies for Business, Industry, and Labor and one vacancy for Disability Advocate. We will continue to work on recruiting new members.
 - We are still in compliance with 50% of Council members having a disability.
- Planning & Review (Barbara Davis)
 - We discussed and reviewed the Governor's Report. The format for submitting a case story was created for ease of reading several case stories. Lacey will start sending out a request of success stories to the VRBS counselors soon. She will also request for a photo release.
- Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment (Bill Harant)
 - We discussed about wanting to see what the old surveys look like and to compare with the new ones. We also would like to know numbers of surveys returned and see the past history. We

want to make sure the surveys are accessible to those with variety of disabilities. Another thought is to have a disability advocacy or a third party to do the survey over the phone. A question was asked about using social media for the survey. Lacey reminded the Council that Center for Inclusive Education is working on the survey for youth.

- Policy, Procedure, & Personnel Development (Brook Hodge)
 - Chanda had sent out the most recent policies and procedures that are published for the staff. Brook recently reviewed the Measurable Skills Gains procedure with the staff – to show them how to document the education and training progress that the clients are making. This is reported to RSA quarterly.

Virtual Fall 2020 Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation Conference: The conference will be on November 9-13 from 11 am to 2 or 3 pm (MST). There is enough fund for up to five SRC members to attend. Kathy Hampton and Sandy Taylor expressed interest to attend. Shawn will send agenda to the Council members; contact her if interested by October 16th. Beverly mentioned another conference, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) is available for the Council to attend – this virtual conference will be the second week in December.

Discussion on the VRBS and IL Town Hall meeting; Lacey Conzelman and Bill Harant: The Town Hall meeting is arranged for Tuesday, Nov. 10th from 2-4:30 p.m. They met with Jon Ebelt on how to do the Town Hall virtually. The purpose of the Town Hall is to gather information and feedbacks on Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living programs. Individuals share what they thought of the programs and what they think can improve the programs. Questions can be asked but will not be answered at the time. After the Town Hall, all the information and answers to the questions are put into a report that will be posted for all to see. State Rehabilitation Council is a part of this collaboration with the staff. The chair of SRC will be there. In the past, Skype would be set up in the VRBS field offices. But due to COVID restrictions, it will be virtual. Flyer about the Town Hall and Zoom info will be distributed.

Employer of the Year Award; this was briefly discussed and to be discussed at the next SRC meeting.

IL's draft list of legislative priorities; Bill Harant: He shared the 2021 MTCIL Legislative Priorities:

- Accessible Parking bill
- Service Dog Abuse bill
- Housing Bridge bill

- Graduation Age bill
- Disability Integrated Employment Program/State Agencies
- Prohibit Sub-Minimum Wage
- Crossbow Hunting bill
- HJ 50 bills
 - Notification Requirement
 - Legislative Intent
 - Spent Down Changes
 - Rulemaking Requirements
- Disability History in Schools
- NFB Newsline Funding
- Budget
- HJ 3 bills

There will be a Legislative Day on January 14th (potato bar) and a Rally Day on March 10th at the Capitol Building during the legislative sessions. SRC members are welcome to attend. Bill mentioned that legislative updates can be found through Montana CIL network.

Wrap-Up:

- 2021 SRC meeting dates in Helena (pending COVID restrictions):
 - February 25 & 26; May 14; August 5 & 6; November 4 & 5
 - Joint meeting with SILC: May 13
- Any agenda items for February 25 & 26, 2021?
 - Virtual Job Shadow (maybe a demo)
 - Employer of the Year award (this is different from MAR's award)
 - Panel of the VRBS teams (start with Pre-ETS, Business Services, Self-Employment, and Quality Assurance)
 - Legislative Session update (Chanda)
 - Discussion on Consumer Satisfaction survey
- Montana Association of Rehabilitation conference has been re-scheduled to April 2021. It will take place in Whitefish.