

Montana State Rehabilitation Council
August 24-25, 2022
American Conference Room
Heritage Inn, Great Falls
Meeting Minutes

SRC Members present: Celina Cline, John Gorton, Kathy Hampton, Chanda Hermanson, Lacey Keller (Zoom – Thursday), Tom Manthey, Marcy Roberts (Zoom), Emma Rooney, Jean Schroeder, and Brian Tocher.

SRC Members absent: Denise May, Carlos Ramalho, and Joleen Weatherwax.

Staff and guests: Gabrielle Broere, Wes Feist, Doug McElroy, Corinne Moore, Kendra Joyce (Zoom), Mike Manhardt (Zoom), Sheri Devlin, Marjorie Glatzmaier, Darrel Hannum, Brook Hodge, Tammy Hogan, Sarah Seltzer, Shawn Tulloch, Lacey Conzelman (Zoom), Anna Gibbs (Zoom), one CART transcriber (Zoom), and two sign language interpreters. On Wednesday: Kirsten Bloom, Kari Parsons, Tom Osborn, Sean Roy, and Shane Etwiler.

Welcome and Introduction: Emma started meeting. Shawn reminded all of the ground rules. Introductions took place with the sharing of everyone's name, role, and favorite summer memory.

April Meeting Minutes: Emma reminded everyone that the meeting minutes for the April meeting were emailed out. Jean motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Minutes were approved.

Announcements: Emma opened up time for announcements. Kathy mentioned that Ms. Tammy presented at their disability rights network conference this year (stepping in last minute, virtually). Kathy reports that she did an amazing job and expressed gratitude to Tammy for doing that.

Chanda requested that the agenda be switched so that Chanda and Anna could switch places for presenting due to Anna having a conference at the same time. Emma approve this edit to the agenda.

Committee Reports: Emma mentioned an email sent out about having committees meet prior to the meeting to make meetings more efficient. Emma asked chairs to give a brief update.

Planning and Review Committee: Marcy Roberts reported that they met the week before the meeting. Most of the time was spent on the Governors report. This was reported to be in hand by the end of December. Worked on accomplishments. Compiled how many members were appointed and who is waiting on appointment. Eight applicants were on the Governor's desk waiting approval. Bylaws were voted on during their committee meeting. Looking to update the SRC manual so that could be an accomplishment by the end of the year.

Reported on all of the following accomplishments:

- Presentation regarding disability employment Section 511

- Presentation from Cheryl Bates Harris in role of the SRC
- Choteau and Great Falls and then we listed out what entities are there
- Had a joint meeting with the Independent Living Center and created a work group with them
- Presented SRC at the start of a Town Hall Meeting

Discussed other items outside of accomplishments including a change in the photo, Governor's report rules, getting a group photo of those appointed. Also discussed was the vision, mission, and values of SRC and VR to determine and narrow in the SRC's purpose. To end Kathy mentioned that they discussed meeting more frequently perhaps monthly over the next month so they can complete the Governor's report.

Education and Membership Committee: Denise was not there so Emma gave the report. Reported that they met a few week ago and shared course contacts that they have been reaching out to. Also discussed in the meeting was the importance of diversity on the SRC so they are trying to reach out to different sectors such as Veterans, LGBTQ and other businesses to broaden the diversity and inclusion. One of which is the VA. There are still 3 positions open in the community advocacy spots. Emma also discussed finding a way to move forward with appointments due to the challenges of non-appointed members not being able to vote. Emma reported that they will continue to reach out to potential new members for the council. Emma and Denise discussed at the last meeting to break up their committee into 2 or 3 people to work towards updating the SRC manual. Emma also discussed that Governor Gianforte did speak at the State Independent Living Council meeting. She mentioned that he had good information on what to expect in the future and that it was great for him to take the time to speak.

Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Committee: Celina Cline is the chair of this committee. She reported that the main discussion the committee had was that the response rate is still low. They talked about how they could try and increase the surveys done by consumers. Possibly increasing this by offering an award. The committee also talked about CRPs being involved in the surveys once they get somebody employed. Also discussed was edits to the survey.

Policy and Procedure: There was an email sent out for this committee. Kathy facilitated the update for Brooke. Kathy talked about successful cases with VR helping clients get what they need. There will be a behavior analysis clinic opening. Talked about job openings with VR. Chanda reported that she would the new CR procedures to us all.

Discussion on survey distribution and recording took place.

NCILS and TransCen: Tom Osborn reported on adding a new bt core service to the living program. He spoke about a program serving youth who are no longer in school or dropped out of school for one reason or another to transition. Prior to the pandemic they initiated an outreach program specifically to start developing more activities for this particular group. The shutdown for the pandemic allowed them to start reaching more

kinds of training opportunities. Tom reported that they are also a social security administration partner for the in work incentives programs. Tom also reported on the fit-for-service. The independent living services are built around self-determination, self-advocacy, and self-direction. The programs will help serve individuals with a disability and in a position where that would create an occupational change, as well as for Veterans. He mentioned focusing on serving younger age groups as well their families. TransCen was one of the resources identified within the document to help support these populations. Sean Roy was brought on to start facilitating trainings and determine how to re-engage those individuals. Tom reported that they also partnered with the empowerment center to build in a family engagement component.

Sean Roy presented the organization TransCen, short for Transition Center. TransCen is a national training and consulting firm located out of Rockville, Maryland. The TransCen program works to re-engage young people and adults who are out of high school who by virtue of having a disability are struggling. Sean also talked about customized employment. It is a person-centered employment approach.

PreETS Report: Tammy Hogan reported that they provide services to students with disabilities in an educational setting. She reported how they provide services. Approximately 500 students with disabilities received services. The challenges shown in the report are that about 1000 students with disabilities aren't receiving services. The highest categories on the report were work based learning experiences and advocacy.

CNSA Report: Lacey introduced guest, Kristen Smith. VR hired a contractor to complete the statewide report. The report has to be completed every 3 years. Kristen completed the report for VR. Kristen introduced Kari Parsons, her colleague. She worked on the needs assessment in Oregon as well. Kristen reported on slide deck regarding the purpose of completing the statewide needs assessment. Kristen reported on the data gathering approach and the multiple survey instruments that were directed to gather information on appropriate understanding and interactions with the system. Also, articulating the needs and establishing and developing and proving rehabilitation providers, outreach is a part of this and then, of course, a final professional report. So again, these are what was in the RFP that we responded to and this is broad base with a purpose of the work. She also presented on how the data into a research question. She asked for feedback regarding the following questions on the report slides: What are the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities in Montana and how might these vary by geography or other characteristics? Do you guys have thoughts about specific things within this sort of broad based question that should be places for us to focus or places of interest for us? Wes stated that he would find it helpful and important for the government to be aware of the report for their own internal uses to move programs forward or conversations forward even of how referrals occurred or didn't occur. Tammy suggested an inner focus on youth in the report. Emma also mentioned having a focus on rural clients. Lacey stated that she thinks another priority would be individuals with serious mental illness. Kari ensured that the information will lead to set the context and make sure they understand the Montana landscape as they dive into the development of those qualitative protocols and the interviews.

MSG and Budget: Chanda stated that there is a new director. The director is now Charlie. She reported that the red tap initiative continues. A lot of new rules have been added to the project since SRC last met. The rules of the division were analyzed. Vocational rehab and all the other programs found that their rules are outdated. The innovation and opportunity act generated over 100 calls and procedural changes in the program. There will be something submitted to the Secretary of State and gauging their reaction. Legal staff will assist with all of this eventually. VR will be doing, providing training to all of the provider networks. Chanda shared on the workforce gap and the challenges that creates. The specialist will advocate and will pick up what they need help with. One solution to some of the hiring troubles would be an answer to the remote workforce of the state government. At this point no one is allowed to do remote work unless it is approved due to a disability. Chanda reported on building on support for individuals with mental illness. Chanda did a breakdown of grant funding, over spending, and how the grant funding is distributed.

Great Falls Chamber of Commerce: Shane Etzwiler, president of the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce presented on the projects they are working on and sharing the forecast of where the community is going. Shane was born and raised in Montana. Shane shared his stories of being the Hobby Lobby manager and catching 55 shoplifters in his first year. He spoke about how he has improved economic development within the town of Great Falls in various ways. He also spoke about strategies used by the community during and following the heat of COVID 19. Shane utilizes several different strategies including interviews, google analytics, and more to gauge the impact on the community and the community's impacts on people moving to Montana. He also touched on crime within Great Falls and how drug use affects this. Shane spoke on the overall demographic of the community including the air force base, agriculture, and other economic and business settings within Great Falls and how their work supports and enhances all settings.

August 25th, 2022- SRC Second Day

Ground Rules/Welcome/Mission Statements: Done by Shawn Tulloch and Emma Rooney

Member Moment: Wesley Feist spoke about his role with VRBS. He serves as the state board liaison. Wesley works with the state board coordinating their meetings, coordinating efforts legislatively, coordinating the state plan and state plan modifications. Wesley mentioned his efforts to diversify the board by membership, location, and who is on the board and why for reasons being to try and align with the governor's philosophy within the workforce development in four key sector areas; construction, manufacturing, and IT. Wesley then finished with a breakdown of the committees and an overview on those. Wesley stated that his favorite part of his job is connecting people and programs to opportunities.

BLVS Report: Darrel reported on what things are specifically going on in the Great Falls office and what is going on with the independent living services. Darrel expressed that they are aiming to do more outreach but can often be a lot to ask with their small staff. They recently did a week long outreach trip across the highline. They are working on having more of a network for helping clients and that is the reason behind increasing their outreach. Chanda and Darrel are working towards doing some contracting to help alleviate some of the pressures on the BLVS staff when it comes to benefits planning. The Missoula office positions are filled. Three driver positions are open in Billings. They are also looking for a startup position for a new mobility trainer.

Budget Report: Anna sent the budget report out a week before the meeting. She presented on the federal grant years and the state fiscal years. The federal fiscal year 22 grant is \$6 million. She stated that the grants must be carried forward each year. The federal award total is equaling out to be \$14.1 million. The PreETS for general voc rehab is 12 million. All of the budget information was reported as good news for the programs and the clients. Anna reported that RSA is a good partner and can provide technical assistance. See Anna's budget breakdown for more specific details.

Anna reported on the types of MSGs. She reported two examples 1. documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level and EFL for short. 2. Documented attainment of a secondary school (which is high school, diploma, or recognized equivalent). 3. Secondary, high school, or post-secondary college, transcript report card. 4. Satisfactory or better progress report for established milestones. 5. Successful passage of an industry-recognized exam. Case examples were provided. More questions on MSG's and how VR is addressing them were asked.

VRBS Report: Brook Hodge reported on a brief update. She reminded everyone that they have 9 field offices throughout the state. Each office has a general VR counselor supervisor, at least one full-time support staff, at least two full-time counselors, and all of our offices have one rehab tech except for Missoula which has two. VR currently has 52 combined staff and 3,007 open cases. Only 282 clients that are currently on the category 3 waiting list. When individuals are coming off the waitlist, caseloads are going up. The highest caseload is 144 and the lower caseloads are closer to 47. Expectations for staff is to see up to 20 clients a week. VR is providing monthly all-staff trainings. It was brought up to provide job descriptions for other jobs within VRBS. Discussion on subminimum wage took place and how to get involvement from the legislature on this. Examples of programs throughout the state were brought up and how to address this to be holistically encompassing and positive for the largest population. Pros and Cons of eliminating subminimum wage were brought up and how benefits planning could help with this on both sides. Action steps are to establish a goal behind this.

Unfinished Business and Closing: Discussed options for the next SRC meeting in November. Talked about helping out smaller communities in Montana.