



State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

November 18, 2015

1:00 PM - 3:15PM

BRS Central Office

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

SRC Members: Tom Boudreau; Ellen Econs, Chair; Jan Hasenjager; Patrick Melfi; Gary Prushko; James Quick; Joe Wendover; & Kristen Winkle, Secretary

Non-Voting Members: David Doukas, BRS Director & Warren Stamp, VR Counselor

BRS Staff: Evelyn Oliver Knight

Excused: Marisel DeCordova Vice-Chair; David Morgana, Jr.; Gary Robinson; Bruce Stovall; Miriam Torres-Thorburn; Kate Travis, Business Committee Chair;

Guests/ Volunteers: Andrea Richardson, PATH

Absent:

Introductions: Ellen Econs welcomed everyone and introductions were completed. Evelyn Oliver Knight introduced and welcomed VR Director David Doukas; refreshments were served to celebrate his new position. He spoke about his position and prior work with BRS with Amy Porter. He also stated Amy is now the Commissioner of DORS and she has offered to be available when needed.

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Minutes: Ellen Econs asked everyone to review the minutes from September 16, 2015. Minutes were reviewed, committee members accepted the minutes.

Budget: Jim Quick: There were three budgets to review:

1. end of the year for fiscal year (FY) 2015 (The November 11 report showed that the SRC expended 76.6% of the budget (\$18,652.04);
2. proposed budget for FY 2016 shows an allotment of \$25,000); and
3. the November budget for expenditures since the start of FY 2016 showed that 13.6% of the budget had been spent (\$3,400.99 for Out of State Travel).

Reviewed the new budget, motion made to pass the budget.

SRC Leadership – Ellen Econs, Chairperson: She announced that she has accepted a position with BRS and it would be a conflict for her to continue with SRC. Her resignation would be effective at the end of the meeting.

Ellen reviewed the notes of the NCSRC & CSAVR conferences in Seattle, WA provided by Marisel DeCordova. Council State Administrator's said that we must embrace PETS and help create new partnership opportunities and it is a priority. National Employment Team presented there about working with people with disabilities and how disabilities could bring innovation. WIOA was brought up, we have to forge two partnerships, be creative and follow WIOA. Summer Program Pilot model, we already do this in Connecticut, expanded Summer Youth Program. We are going to offer services throughout the whole year. A lot of states aren't where we are with this, David Doukas reviewed. Also, the Ticket Program Manager is Maximus alone.

It was determined that the CRP's are an important role for the SRC. Evelyn Oliver Knight consistently says that we are the voice of consumers who are not at the table. CRP may bring up an issue with services and that would be a good use of discussion. Ellen Econs is happy about how recruitment is going lately for SRC. Evelyn Oliver Knight reported that it's important to refer individuals that would qualify to be on the SRC and some of the states aren't where we are for the SRC. Reviewed the State Budget Plan, SRC participation is clear by what was accomplished. Public Meetings, we didn't have any in 2015, due to WIOA, but will be scheduled soon. Some SRC recommendations were continued or modified. Some consumers are still confused about arrival at BRS. It was suggested that pictures of

offices/parking lots or a virtual tour could be posted on the BRS Website to help individuals have a level of comfort when going into the offices. Jim Quick mentioned during this meeting that maybe the BRS Counselor could tell the consumer where to go when they arrived at BRS. It was noted that staff at BRS goes through a lot of training. Reality check is needed with consumers obtaining services, when they are waiting for a call back for services is important, as well as knowing the expectations from the consumers and staff. SRC could be aware of what is going on with the training. Business committee will continue to work with employers and programs. They would like to have a BRS brochure to hand out. David Doukas suggested that previous recommendation of improving signage should remain a SRC recommendation. It helps when discussing signage with buildings that are being considered for offices. A motion was passed to include this language.

SRC Update: David Doukas: During the Annual Meeting it was discussed that WIOA is moving forward. There will be rules and regulations for it and multiple interpretations of how the law reads. We have been reaching out to schools, 15% of Federal Grant has to be allocated. There is so much invested in the students before they graduate, BRS Counselors will work with them when they become adults. Some states in the country won't be able to afford to do this and case loads will be decreased. States are now mandated to serve students 16 – 21 years old. The fear is when they graduate, VR programs may not have the funds to serve them as adults. There has to be a balance for capacity. This is troublesome to the agencies serving the blind population because they don't have enough youth to match 15% of their budget; they serve an older population. The issue is spending the 15 % on exactly what is planned for WIOA. Tom Boudreau noted that Connecticut is in a good place for the Bureau of Special Ed and has a good working relationship with BRS. They have employees split between departments to address the upcoming work with WIOA. Dealing with Pre-Employment Services WIOA is #1 on the list at this point. We have to spend 15 % of the funds for WIOA. Ten out of 70 Counselors have been re-assigned to work with students in the schools. Nine out of the 10 were voluntary re-assignments, one was not voluntary. WIOA will provide job and work readiness training, job exploration, job shadowing, work with the schools. This will create more infrastructures for us. BRS has gone under contract with a professional communication firm to assist with communicating effectively with the schools. Some schools communicate well with BRS, others schools don't understand why BRS should come in to the schools when the schools already offer vocational services. WIOA has provided a preliminary plan for it to begin February 1st, 2016.

There is a question about IEPs, last year and in regards to intakes with BRS 1,000 of them were of the transition age. Tom Boudreau brought up the student success plan. It's important to talk about career, college, skills, so they are already in this stage so it isn't overwhelming. Young adults could drop out of school, obtain employment, fall through the cracks or work with another program to assist them with vocational services. There are questions regarding the plans for WIOA. Also, there is a lot of caution and providers are presenting with anxiety about it. The Adult Counselors will be assisting with the transition of the YA Counselors with young adults in the schools. Tom Boudreau talked about a Parent Bill of Rights being developed. They are involved in the dual customer, it is important to them to build an infrastructure for our employers. BRS will enhance the student's vocational education in school and work with them to find meaningful employment. This will be done through individual counseling (vocational, independent living, transportation) and in group settings. There has been a request to have providers to have exposure to assistive technology. Warren Stamp commented that pre-employment and training services counselors started two weeks ago, they have a map but, there are no rules. He said that in Danbury, they have a good relationship with the schools, but WIOA is a challenge, standards and indicators will change.

David Doukas said the thresholds are unknown. David mentioned that communication is difficult across the organization about this, a lot of the information shared today hasn't been shared other places. He is going to work on communication, to update the field. CSAVR was a major hurdle. In regards to resources, there were no budget cuts to vocational rehab from the government/democrats. There were other small cuts that will take place; he is concerned about this happening again. Evelyn Oliver Knight, Ellen Econs and Tom Boudreau mentioned that the SRC can assist with advocating in regards to helping with this situation. Warren Stamp asked Tom Boudreau, "How does education view WIOA." He said that they are in the same boat as BRS with WIOA. There are multiple elements that make it complicated.

New BRS office opened in Middletown, they moved out of DSS to 442 Smith Street. Hartford office will move to the BESB building second week of December, out of the Main St. office in Hartford. New Haven will have a new location at 370 James Street, where DSS is now but on the other side of the building. Dave was happy about this building location for BRS.

SRC Update: Evelyn Oliver Knight: She gave Ellen Econs a Certificate of Appreciation for her work on the SRC. SRC Annual report is due December 2015. She will be sending out the draft reports and she will need comments returned for the drafts quickly. The CT Achievement through Technology Conference is 4/1/16, for those who may want to attend. In the packet are the dates of upcoming SRC meetings. Election of officers was completed. Tom Boudreau agreed to run as Vice Chair. Election results: Marisel DeCordova – Chair; Tom Boudreau – Vice Chair; Kristen Winkle – Secretary; and Gary Prushko – Treasures. Evelyn brought up that SRC committee chairs will be reviewed in January. Committees can meet other times, then just before the SRC Meeting. She will serve on Board of Directors for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils. Mileage sheets (s) were collected. Evelyn is going to give Tom Boudreau the contact name for the BESB SRC.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey, James Quick: there is a draft, we haven't heard back from CCSU. Evelyn Oliver Knight made some changes to the report. SRC Members received a copy of the draft today in the folder. We will get electronic copies when it is done and discuss it as a group. If there are any changes let Evelyn Oliver Knight know by next week. Jim said that if a meeting needs to occur for this it can happen. We are looking for new members. He will remain on as a volunteer, Evelyn Oliver Knight pointed out that he can remain a member of the SRC until the position is filled.

Business Committee, Kate Travis: Sent in the report for the Business Committee. Evelyn Oliver Knight will follow up about it.

Inter Council Nominations: Miriam Torres-Thorburn: she sent the report to Evelyn Oliver Knight but, she wasn't able to retrieve it. Patrick Melfi interviewed Andrea Richardson and the motion passed that she will be recommended for appointment to the SRC by the Governor.

Legislation, Policy & Planning Committee, Marisel DeCordova Vice-Chair: Not present. She will submit report for the SRC annual report when she is back from vacation.

Comments/Questions:

Kristen Winkle asked how to contact Job Development Leadership Network: Ellen Econs will forward her the information. Also, she brought up if anyone has been able to be in contact with Amazon: Evelyn Oliver Knight will ask Mark Henry from BRS and follow up. No one at the meeting has had any interactions with Amazon.

Consumer Issues: N/A

Next Meeting Wednesday, 1/13/15, 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM, Webinar (TBD)

Meeting was closed at 3:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen L. Winkle – SRC Secretary