

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
December 8, 2006
8:30-11:30 a.m.
Ottawa Comfort Inn Lobby**

Present: Members: Barbara Crooks (Chair), Julia Fonseca, Josie Torrez, Morris Taylor, David Rosenthal, Christine Owens, Anita Trainer, Wendy Blaauw
Staff: Mike Donnelly, Peg Spencer, Dianne Hemphill, Jerry Leonard, Connie Daggett (Recorder)

Due to problems with the Celebration Hall at last night's Stakeholder Meeting, the Council meeting was moved to the lobby of the Comfort Inn.

Since everyone knew each other, Barbara dispensed with the introduction and asked for approval of the previous minutes as e-mailed to everyone, which was done.

Additions to the Agenda

As a follow-up from the past meeting, several items for further discussion will be a part of Mike's report today.

Public Comment - none.

Discussion of the Stakeholder Meeting

Christine felt Mike's PowerPoint presentation was very well done and informative. Good discussion followed with consumers, stakeholders and staff present. Discussion ensued about things that worked well and positive comments made about counselors. Mike's presentation was very easy to understand. It was felt the vocational assessment process needs to be explained better to SRC members, which Peg explained today.

Report from Jerry Leonard, Program Administrator from the KC Metro Region

Jerry stated the Kansas City Metro Area covers six counties: Franklin, Douglas, Leavenworth, Johnson, Miami and Wyandotte. They are diverse with both rural and urban areas. They have about 40 RS staff, with 24 of those being counselors who carry caseloads as well as support staff. He has a manager in the Lawrence area who supervises people in Ottawa; the KC office supervisor has Kansas City and Leavenworth; ten counselors in the Overland Park area are supervised by a manager. Jerry supervises the Managers, as well as CDC staff.

He was interested last night in the positive comments made by consumers about counselors. He was surprised about concerns expressed about the evaluation piece expressed by Josie, and said he didn't feel that was the experience in his region. Barbara commented she didn't recall this issue coming up before in Public Forums. Peg suggested a vocational assessment demonstration for SRC members, having Mike Ahlers attend a future meeting and members thought this was a good idea.

David expressed concerns about the educational process, preparing consumers for work once out of school. Wendy and Barbara relayed their experience in working with the school systems and monitoring that occurs. Jerry elaborated on how the transition process works in the KC Metro area.

Jerry continued with explaining the level of experience his staff have where one-third might have a year or less, so with 24 staff, that can have a huge impact on production. More than one-third have 7-20 years of experience however.

They hope to reach their rehab goal in 2007; they have been able to meet performance goals in the past with 513 rehabs expected, achieving 519. Jerry was asked to define what a "rehab" is: a plan is developed, someone has received services, and they are employed for a period of at least 90 days before their case is closed.

Council members mentioned that customer service has been a recurring issue. Jerry read their customer service standards/vision, which is posted in all office areas.

Jerry elaborated on their special demonstration position, where the person received six months of sleep shades training at RCBVI and is now in the field doing outreach.

Jerry relayed strengths and concerns for his area:

Strengths: a number of experienced staff, positive working relationship with their regional staff which is critical in getting additional staff. Rehab goals have increased and been met; have a good relationship with community partners, but need to continue to work on that.

Concerns: staff turnover. Qualification requirements have changed for counselors effective October 1 and that may affect recruiting. Peg explained the past counselor qualifications, compared to what the new RSA standards are.

Questions of Jerry: Christine asked when someone retires or leaves a position vacant in the region, what happens to that money? She was concerned that monies targeted for VR, were not spent on VR. Jerry, Peg and Mike explained the budget process and how it affects all ISD programs: CFS, EES, CSE and RS. Downsizing has been a major issue, with Peg explaining at one time SRS had over 10,000 employees and that number is closer to 6,000 now. Reductions have been across the board, not just in SRS, and explained a REST time study which is underway in order to see at any given time, what employees are working on.

David asked if Jerry had statistics to show what type of disability consumers had that are being served, by region, but these were not available today. Peg will bring this information to a future meeting.

Updates from the State Director – Michael Donnelly

- We are in a monitoring year. RSA will be doing it from a distance however and he had the first phone call from them as a way of introduction. SRC met the liaisons in August. RSA wants to come and meet with SRC, but it is unclear when that will be.
- Vacancies are being experienced everywhere. The Program Administrator for the SE region retired this month. New qualification requirements may have a significant impact in trying to fill counselor positions. More retirements are expected as a result.
- Order of Selection: Category 1 is open; Category 2 has 321 waiting as of November 1; Category 3 has 263 waiting; 500 applications are received monthly. Category 2 will not be open unless monies are available; Category 3 is closed for now. Anita shared an experience of a relative she has encouraged to become

involved with VR and the Ticket to Work program, and subsequent help he received. Ticket to Work was explained and how someone gets referred to that program through Social Security Administration.

- Stakeholder's Meeting Follow-Up: persons who were in Category 2 frustrated with wait; transportation is an issue everywhere; communication issues; ideas of mentoring programs; transition; lack of outreach with minority groups and businesses; lack of staff.
- KanSAIL program update: next week a Focus Group will meet in Topeka to discuss how we might redesign the program to better meet the needs of older blind in the state. About \$330,000 is budgeted annually for the program. Staff are centrally located and reasons for this were relayed. Trying to stay within the budget has caused problems, and this is seen as a good time to brainstorm on new ideas for redesigning.
- Re-emphasis on choice at RCBVI: RS is currently preparing information that would go to every counselor and consumer as to what is available here and elsewhere so consumer can make a choice.
- Employer forums: Mike felt the concept was good, but the results were not positive. Putting on an employer forum is expensive and he is looking at better ways to have contact with employers. The cost in Ottawa would have been around \$2,000 and it seems if you aren't able to correlate it with the local Chamber's regular breakfast meetings, it is not well attended. Wendy suggested contacting the Department of Commerce or the State Chamber, partnering with them to make better contacts. Jerry relayed his experience in the KC area with the Workforce Investment Board contacts. Barbara mentioned past experiences in Manhattan with luncheons, but most attendees were service providers, not businesses. Jerry added that they have 36 placement providers within their region and they make a lot of contacts.
- It is planned to have the March SRC meeting on Friday for training, but Mike felt it would be better to have it in Topeka due to availability of locations, instead of Johnson County. Mike will discuss this further with Barbara and communicate with RCEP. There will probably not be a stakeholder meeting prior to that meeting since Mike will have just concluded with statewide meetings in February.
- This will be Connie's last meeting as recorder as she is finally going to "retire" and pursue other interests. She stated she has enjoyed her tenure and working with everyone these past years.
- Julia asked with Stacie Martin leaving Central Office, if there was any reassurance that her position will be filled. Mike expressed a desire to be able to do so soon.

Report from Barbara Crooks Regarding Special Meeting Held Yesterday

Barbara reported on the special meeting held yesterday with SRC members prior to the

stakeholder meeting. She felt a lot was accomplished. She shared information she had received at the San Francisco conference. Time was spent completing a survey which brought up questions about training and a list of specifics on that. They are going to talk with Dave Roberts to do training in March. The agenda would be for the members to receive a history of VR and an opportunity to ask questions. They have decided as a Council to be more active within VR. After listening to people in San Francisco, they feel they can be more involved.

A desire by the members to be more aware of what is involved in completing an assessment was shared and Mike suggested different aspects of the VR process be explained at each quarterly meeting, along with a booklet to describe the process for each member.

Anita felt state-wide, regional offices need to be encouraged to help recruit people for the Council from consumers who have successfully completed the program, employers, contractors, etc. Mike stated he would work on this issue.

Role of Council Liaison with the Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired Advisory Committee

Mike and Barbara had a conference call with Sanford Alexander who is chairperson of the Advisory Committee, and they relayed the outcome of that call. Julia has been the past liaison, but resigned that position. Her experience in that capacity was shared and there was discussion as to whether SRC wanted to have a representative from the Advisory Committee be a part of SRC as a non-voting member, be a regular agenda item, and discussed how communication would go back and forth.

Various opinions were voiced, pros and cons to having a representative attend each other's meetings, or whether meeting minutes couldn't just be shared.

Round Robin Report from SRC Members & Dianne Hemphill

Julie:

- Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy is going all over the state doing presentations on disability projects. Education staff are requesting presentations for entire schools, not just the disabled.
- Youth Leadership Forum application deadline is December 15; they have only ten signed up so far. It will be held June 12-16 at Washburn University.

Christine:

- On December 20, the state plan for SILCK will be discussed at the Hutchinson forums.
- January 18 they are having an Open House from 2-4 pm, celebrating their 10th anniversary.

David:

- Kansas Relay Center contract expired April 30 and a new provider will take over.
- He relayed experiences he has had while traveling around the state, doing presentations for Kansas Relay Center.

Wendy:

- Everyone is aware of the resignation of the Education Commissioner.
- Special Education has a new director.
- They passed their OSHA visit.
- State Transition Summit will be March 13-14 in Wichita.

Josie:

- SILCK is getting ready for legislative session, beginning January 8. Examples of priorities for this year are funding, waiting list, TANIF, child care, and policy changes.

Anita:

- She is enjoying working full time
- She is actively interviewing for another position and explained a couple of jobs she is seeking.

Morris:

- It is the end of the first year on their new grant.
- They expanded services to all of Northeast Kansas for all Native Americans instead of just Shawnee and Jackson Counties.
- They had 79 new clients this year; they expected 39 successful closures and accomplished 44.
- They are doing month-to-month funding in order to limit their spending.
- They have 25 new referrals into the new funding year so far.
- They hired a new counselor today after having a vacancy for three months.
- The program is going well and they are very busy.

Barbara:

- They have 1708 students in their high school. They may lose some when the large percentage of troops gets deployed to Iraq. If the family is not housed on base, they may return to family.
- Barbara was selected to be on the State Transition Council again, which she is very excited about.
- Barbara thanked Mike for allowing her to go to the conference in San Francisco and is excited about the direction the Council is going and the upcoming training.

Dianne Hemphill:

- They have two new positions they will be interviewing for - an Assistive Technology Instructor, and a Home Economics Instructor for Techniques of Daily Living.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Minutes recorded by Connie Daggett.