

State Rehabilitation Council  
Minutes  
March 7, 2003---Topeka

SRC Members Present: Dale Barnum, Debra Wheaton, Cindy Jackson (phone) Nancy Blake, Sanford Alexander, Pat Terick, Suzanne Evans, Tami Schwindt, Chris Owens, Sharon Kearse, Julia Fonseca, Wendy Blaauw, Barbara Crooks, David Rosenthal, Anita Trainer

Guests Present: Barbara Alexander

Staff Present: Peg Spencer, Hope Rosen, Betty Northup

Public comment, if any: None

Review and approval of Minutes from the December 7, 2002 meeting: Approved as distributed.

- **Discussion about key points and issues from the public forum**

There was not a big turnout of consumers or advocates from the Topeka area with one actual consumer of services and quite a few service providers. One group of service providers and advocates met; the group sat with the consumer and talked about her experiences which overall were favorable. The consumer was struggling to get a job, worked well with her counselor, but disability and education background made it difficult for her to get a job. Providers talked about good relationship with Rehabilitation Services, consumer had difficulty expressing where she had worked in the past, issues were not in place because of her disability and difficulty speaking and remembering things. It was difficult to fill in the blanks for the consumer due to confidentiality.

Sanford said the Public Forum had a great deal of information but not a good turnout in Topeka; suggested not meeting in Topeka for a couple of years due to poor turnout. It made it difficult to get input from consumer. Garden City had large turnout, as well as Hays. Some agencies really work in getting people there. Betty said they have done it both ways, each counselor charged with bringing five people but came without issues. . If anyone has an issue they come here then they go down the street to the Governor's Office. Issues here are handled timely. In Topeka people are used to going straight to Governor's Office if they have an issue. Sanford suggested it would be better to schedule in areas that would have better turnout. Smaller areas have had better turnout. Bigger cities have had smaller turnouts. Notices go out to all on active caseload as well as those cases closed in the last six months. Pat suggested bringing in employers produces good response. Betty said consumers have gotten their letters and talk with counselors, but consumers are given the option. Consider the people in larger areas, they have already greater support systems; VR is small part of support system; smaller communities have smaller support systems, VR larger part of that, and may want to look at that. May want to look at Lawrence and other smaller communities in close proximity. Transportation continues to be an issue for consumers, as well as expense for transport during evening hours. In Wichita transportation system shuts down after 5:00 P.M. In the past travel stipend offered but with poor response, as well as having afternoon forum.

Cindy's question: requested Public Forum information. Peg Noted that Summary of

December public forum has been distributed. Dale said there will be generalized notes from this meeting, not verbatim. Take notes people have done at tables, compile and give synopsis.

Pat suggested that Council meet at a good restaurant before the Forum and discuss the Forum. Peg said that they will find a place and let everyone know.

- **Update on Topeka Area: Betty Northup, RS Chief:** Run 950-1000 consumers a month. Goal 224 to put in employment within 90 days, presently have 145. OS beginning to affect, had 300 on waiting list have rolled off and have plans. Need to put them to work before 3/31. Employment outlook looking harder. \$7.57 per hour average. High \$17.00, low minimum wage. KETCH are on goal with their placement, Valeo grant is on goal for placement. Special project with Children in need of care with Capital City High School; students who don't fit in to traditional high school, high percentage special needs or in juvenile system, ran about 45 students; cutbacks can't continue program as it has been, but will continue to have counselor come out. Students will continue to get credits toward grad. If not for the project, many would not have graduated.

**Special project: customer needs ID process if you come in the door, you will be asked what your needs are. Consumers will have all their resources explained to them, community as well as SRS/VR. Consumers feel they are getting the information they need. They will have special needs met, have TTY; interpreter available; blind counselors available, accommodations such as JAWS, large print, etc. This is for Shawnee County. Keeping with integrated service, meeting with consumers from other areas as long as she has staff who can meet needs. Counselors focus on a number of areas, including workforce center, CDC, etc. Merging of community resources. Topeka VR is one of the partners at the Workforce center. Primary advantage of counselor, gets job leads for consumers; consumers learn to use tools in community, can look up jobs, learn to do resumes, etc. Partner with EES and absentee parents. Those who can't pay child support, e.g. due to a disability, are referred to VR. Counselors are assigned to every high school in Topeka, aids in Transition.**

- **Report from the State Director: Dale Barnum:**

Dale commended Betty Northup on the Topeka VR work with the Workforce Investment Act and One Stop. They are making headway with program accessibility. Dale thanked those who attended orientation and suggested to the Council that if they want a future 'briefing session' for giving information, that may be an option.

Update on Legislative Bills: HB 2197 protection of service dogs, passed in the House, now in the Senate; Wednesday went from judiciary and went to Health & Welfare; HB 2388 creates a separate agency for Blind & Visually Impaired in Kansas; did not make it out of committee in time to go to Senate; may have met a dead end; SB 242 reduces the number of CDDO's, reduces scope of organization as well. School district consolidation process being watched as well.

Budget: reductions, allotments, more reductions—SRS has less money than when the year started. Effects in 2003 FY specify reducing State funded grants. Pulled all of excess monies back to meet minimum. Excess for KanSAIL and Training will continue to

be reduced in FY 2004. Other grants reduced 5%. Can't take 3<sup>rd</sup> party dollars to make up for loss in funding. 12% shrinkage rate for all of SRS. Leave positions vacant, some areas there are layoffs which reduces caseload carrying staff. It takes a counselor to put someone to work. In addition to 12%, there is 5% workforce reduction for all of Central Office, which is a permanent reduction. Have to maintain services for the federal match, have less staff to do it. Need to continue to spend the federal money or we lose it; because of reduced number of staff & resources, need continues.

Other: GA have 24-month limit beginning 1/04, have effect on consumers because VR relied on that to provide basic needs for consumers while they are in RS. May come out of RS budget so consumer can complete their program. Have been using medicaid dollars instead of VR dollars for some consumers. Reduction in travel will affect how often counselor can see consumer.

Reduce number of local offices by 22 by first of July. In 2004, 25 or more will be closed; instead of 106, there will be 35 by end of 2004. Offices to be closed in 2003 have been identified, but no final decision for 2004 offices yet. We'll have to find somewhere to meet with consumers for those not in Area Office locality. Local area offices are trying to develop backup plan to meet with consumers. Offices to be left open will have adequate space to accommodate those staff who will move, due to mode of staff reductions past few years. Of the 35 VR offices, estimate will probably retain 32 VR offices. Some of the SRS offices that are closing had itinerant VR staff who traveled to those offices. Will need to find some way to serve those clients. State funding for CMHC and CDDOs have been reduced, some VR clients receiving those services, and affects the services that those VR clients will be receiving. Central Office, which includes KSBVI, has not and will not be re-filling vacancies. Looking at optional services first.

Order of Selection: waiting list initiated 10/1; in January began rolling persons off. 1400 in Category 1 have been cleared. Category 2 & 3 remain closed at this time, depending on money, may add a few. One of 37 states on Order of Selection; 21 of those 37 have a waiting list. Kansas did pretty well.

Ticket to Work: started mailing tickets 11/15. Skipped December. Kansas will have 65,000 tickets by September this year. Rollout stretched to a year. Two Tickets ready for assignment but have not had a good response. Haven't seen increase in numbers from Parsons State Hospital and KNI. Unlikely those individuals apply for services due to severity in impairment.

Fed legislative process continues; Workforce Investment Act, VR up for preauthorization this federal year; Federal FY 03 provided mandatory increase for RS; administrative proposal that other services consolidate under RS not approved. '04 recommendation continue to call for consolidation of grant programs, if approved RS will lose \$250M. Congress earmark more than \$11M special funding, CPRF slated to receive money. Fed 107 review: opportunity to comment on draft, should have final report back the first of April and members will receive a copy at the SRC meeting in Colby. At end of January 61% of goals were met so exceeding goals and doing a good job.

Sanford had question about Division of Labor defining disability. Dale reported OIG came out with list of measurements for disability, favors same measurements that VR has been using, not the ones that DOL has been using.

- **Report from the Liaison with the Services for the Blind Advisory Committee - Cindy Jackson**

Have not had advisory committee mtg yet, report from prior advisory meeting was given in December. If Cindy is not able to attend advisory meeting tomorrow, Sanford will present her report.

- **Staff report/consultation with the Council regarding the State Plan, etc. - Peg Spencer**

KAPS materials left on TtW for Council members. Followup information from orientation session: SFY 2002 Demographic info: Refer to Peg's handout. Question: how many special ed high school--no cert of completion--in KS either graduate HS or age out at age 21.

- **Status of federal funding: See Peg's report.** Legislation to keep an eye on. Future beyond FY 2003 is in question, according to Sanford, but Peg reported that Sheila felt 04 would be in place. Cindy said due to limits on AT assistance in KS, \$400 million from Toshiba for equipment to apply for, deadline 3/31, postmarked no later than 4/1, computers to go out in September. Kansas among the first to consider in applications.

- Peg distributed copies of Rehabilitation case status process to Council members to have as a reference for case status process.

- **Transition policies/procedures: discussion with staff and others re: organization of transition processes - Peg**

Resource issues a factor; what states in surrounding areas are doing; consumer feedback from last time categories closed in Order of Selection (some students and parents were confused by 2 tracks of service, i.e. transition and VR) having applied for transition didn't necessary mean they had applied for VR services. Discussion of a change in the paperwork process.

When in transition process can VR make the biggest difference--focus resources on a time when VR can make a difference. Shift in transition services: local education plan teams will still refer to VR, instead of refer at age 16, refer 18 mos or 3 semesters prior to student expected to leave school, apply for VR services, not a separate track; target in time period when VR to have resources involved. Depending on student, age to leave school could be different. Also trying to achieve greater level of consistency throughout state, given the resources define the level of services that we can sustain statewide and be consistent throughout the state. IEP have a transitional component at age 14. IEP students at age 16 now have option to refer to VR. Some students 16 may be too early, some parents may be unfamiliar what VR can do for the student. Would give VR more flexibility to be comprehensive in types of services they can provide to students. Would also be a good time for students to be thinking about what a vocational objective could be. Expectation of special ed students to be referred to VR? MOU between rehabilitation and education states if student could benefit from VR they would be referred. Hopefully with policy changes would clarify what transition students would be referred. Between school districts is inconsistent. Want to be sure schools recognize that students with physical disabilities not in special ed can be referred to VR for

services. Through process hoping to increase LOS for students not in special ed or let them know that VR is a resource. The focus continues to be potential employment. Anticipated implementation of policy? needs to go through SRS, coordinate with education, possibly next fall. It was felt by the council that it was a great idea. Area of concern is getting a plan developed, so the students and parents know how they are qualified, and know what they can expect. Problem finding job coaches to go out with students. Peg said no gap between ed system and VR system, but school officials are still responsible for developing education within the IEP. Counselors have a lot of responsibility/authority; there is a process of exceptions to see if trends they need to deal with. More collaboration about what's going to benefit the student. Question--will info be updated on the web site? Once policy change has been implemented, info on the transition web site, but not right now. What approaches will be used to get the info out? Wendy said when info is ready she can see that it goes on spec ed web site. Peg said is important to stakeholders to understand the policy changes.

- **Functions and responsibilities of the council:** Peg offered that there was the opportunity for subcommittees to the council.
- **Annual report:** cover letter by council chairperson, is there an overriding message that the council wants to convey; important for council people to be involved in the information that goes into the cover letter. Content: Outcomes, who we serve, statistical information, economic impact of services, case studies, comments from employers who have hired those with disabilities. There are examples in the SRC notebooks. Extension of deadline but we need to try to wrap up within next month. Peg will send out a reminder to e-mail with comments. She will also double check the time frame. Peg will take those comments and summarize. This would also be a good time to give a report to the governor, shift council's input from reactive to proactive.
- **State plan** due 4/1 every year; sections that will be submitted: update comprehensive system of personnel development--describes how counselors meet requirements, percentage and how they meet the requirements, how many that don't and where they are on their educational process to complete the standard. No policy changes in that standard. Another attachment estimate how many they expect to serve with the resources; order of selection information affects that. Attachment how to spend supported employment services funds: individual plans for employment for consumers. Attachment: progress toward meeting goals and priorities, i.e., numbers rehabilitated, how we are doing on fed standards and indicators, employment outcomes and how to meet budget indicators. An analysis description is included for anything e.g., budget reductions, that affect state's ability to meet performance indicators. Attachment: Summary of input from SRC. Peg goes through minutes, forum, writes summary from documents that have already been approved. Attachment: numbers from Order of Selection and projection of whether we will be able to serve them.
- **Legislative Update:** No additions to that reported from Dale. 2197 passed the House and went to judiciary and got switched to Health & Welfare. Reflects work past 4-5 years to get protection for assistance dogs, and what's been happening in the world at large regarding assistance dogs. Government agencies looking at practices and procedures regarding assistance animals. New guidelines being issued to help persons with disabilities who encounter difficulties when they travel.

- **Future agenda topics:** None at this time, but Peg stated agenda items can be submitted up to a week before the meeting.
- **Diane Hemphill presented KSBVI report.** March 22 will have Transition Open House, discuss summer program, go into post high school educational opportunities; also have a one-week summer program targeted for the end of August; for students getting ready to leave home. Consortium to address needs of deaf-blind across Kansas. Older blind program had successful outreach in Garden City, going to Dodge City in March.

Dorm program to go back up on Monday.

There are two Orientation & Mobility openings; it is difficult to find qualified O&M staff and may look at a contractual type of position. One position is currently vacant, and the second one who will be leaving possibly mid-April.

May 30 in Hutchinson, PILC sponsoring AT fair at Memorial Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 12:40.

An announcement will be made where to meet for dinner prior to the next meeting.