

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
June 4, 2004
Salina SRS Office**

Present: Members: Dale Barnum, Sanford Alexander, Wendy Blaauw, Barbara Crooks, Suzanne Evans, Julia Fonseca, Christine Owens, Anita Trainer, Josie Torrez, Tami Schwindt

Staff: Peg Spencer, Dianne Hemphill, Hank Harman, Mike Ahlers, Sharon Kearsse, Liz Hapgood (Recorder)

Members not in attendance: Marvin Kuehn, Maria Mareda, David Rosenthal

Peg Spencer distributed the agenda for today's meeting as well as the March Public Forum and SRC Meeting Minutes.

Welcome & Introductions

For the benefit of those who were here for the first time, everyone introduced themselves.

Minutes from the March meeting were reviewed and approved.

There were no guests, public comments, and no additional agenda items. Kerrie Bacon from the Kansas Commission on Disability Concern, who was to speak on voting legislation was not able to be there. She will present at the September meeting instead.

Public Forum Discussion

- Wendy Blaauw commented on the fact that the lady in the wheel chair who had the most negative comments last night did not bother to stay and talk to anyone about the problems she'd experienced. Peg stated that she had talked to that lady for quite a while before the forum began. She also talked to the deaf man and his mother at length after the meeting. She reminded the Council that there is always a lot more that goes on with cases behind the scenes than we can discuss as it is not appropriate for staff to talk about a specific client's case. There are many more things about both those cases that weren't presented last night that influenced how and why certain things were done. That's why she encouraged them to try to meet with us so they would understand some of the policies behind the decisions that were made in their cases.
- Sanford said that while it is difficult to air complaints in a public setting, it is also more difficult to get clients to come out to say something positive. Therefore, it was particularly notable that we had such a positive response at the meeting last night. Sanford noted the difference between last night and a lot of forums was that we had the client, counselor, and supervisor sitting at the same table talking about the team effort it took to accomplish the client's goals. At his table with Larry (client), what was very clear was that a major factor in making sure that the process kept moving was the involvement of the client himself as he was very responsive to requests for information and didn't just wait for things to happen. This cooperative team effort is not something that is unique to this area, but this was a clear example last night of how things are supposed to work which we haven't had a chance to see before. He suggested that we reflect in this year's annual report a theme underscoring active client participation.

Report on Rehabilitation Services operations and activities in the Manhattan Area - Hank Harman

- Hank welcomed the Council and thanked them for coming to Salina and presented an overview of the Manhattan Area to put it in perspective.
 - The Manhattan Area has a caseload of between 760-800 people. They are spread over 17 counties.
 - There are 5 counselors in the Salina office who cover 9 counties, one counselor in Junction City who covers all of Geary and part of Nemaha county, and 5 counselors in Manhattan who cover 8 counties.
 - During the past year they've had two counselors resign. The resignation in Salina wasn't filled. The other resignation was in Manhattan and that position was vacant for six months. It was filled with an intern who is doing an excellent job. They will have another vacancy next week in Junction City which won't be able to be filled at the present time. They will wait to fill this position to see how realignment works out.
 - They have 14 counselor positions, but four are vacant. When fiscal reports come out they are compared to having 14 counselors.
 - In Salina they have one rehabilitation manager who has the primary responsibility of managing Career Development Center staff. They also have one vocational evaluator who covers the entire 17 counties. They have one program support worker who does supportive education working with people at voc techs, colleges, and Kansas State. They have the highest clerical to counselor ratio in the state. In Manhattan they have one clerical who serves the 6 counselors in Junction City and Manhattan and the Area Director. In Salina there is just one clerical who serves all the counselors.
- Another area of importance is the transition school work.
 - There are 57 high schools and 12 special education co-ops in the 17 counties. That's the largest number of co-ops of any area in the state. Because the transition students are so spread around it makes it tough to get to the IEPs. You really can't do business over the phone if you want to get to know your kids and establish a rapport with them. Time is also needed to visit with teachers to learn about the students strengths and weaknesses. He advocates for more staff as transition can prevent a lot of difficulties down the line.
 - In the area, they have two really good Independent Living Centers, two Mental Health Centers which the department has SPMI grants with, and four CDDOs. They have fee for service for job coaching for each one of those CDDOs. They are working with Mike Ahlers to go to pay for performance for supported employment model as of January 1.
 - At Salina there is a very good assisted tech center. They're active and get out and give presentations to schools and go to a lot of farm shows. They've served approximately 10 farmers in the last year.
 - They've made improvement in the last year in their rehab rate (successful rehabs compared to closures). It went from 47% to 62%. A strong effort was made to get decisions from people who were dragging their feet.
 - **Tunans** - because of order of selection it has been closed. The problem is an aging staff. Four out of 10 of the Career Development Center staff or counselors have already reached retirement age and probably will retire in the next year or two. That will be a major retraining for them.
 - Performance indicators show that most of their overtime cases are in developing plans and getting to know the clients. 29% of their cases as of last month are in status 10 (overtime-been there for over 4 months). This is due to lack of staff. To help this situation they have a number of private agreements with job placement providers. If they can just get people into plans the problem can be alleviated.
 - Sanford Alexander asked if there had been enough time to tell how access points have started to affect services. Hank explained that access points require more travel time for staff and the clients are scattered with the counselors having to go to them. Access

points are just places to meet and don't have the equipment needed. It's not ideal, but it's the way we have to do business now. Yes, it's having some impact.

- Since there are delays, Sharon Kearsse asked what method they're using to let the consumer know that they haven't been forgotten. Hank explained that counselors get a master list each month and they use a tickler system and have action plans. With 800 cases he cannot oversee all the cases, but he relies on master lists, and focuses on overtime cases. Performance indicators show that the Manhattan Area is second low in the number of overtime cases. It was noted that all waiting lists are open. They have been letting all their referral sources know this.

Report from the State Director – Dale Barnum

1. Hank and staff were thanked for their work and coordination in hosting the Public Forum and Council meeting.
2. Literacy Grant - we continue to move toward implementation of this federal grant in Wyandotte and Johnson Counties. It appears that contracts have been finalized and staffing the project should begin by the end of June. With final approval to fill the grant funded position for the project, we would like to send Council members information so that they might help us recruit for this important position (bachelor's degree in rehab, social work, psych, education). We are looking forward to reporting on what we are doing with the project instead of how we are getting ready.
3. Later this month we will be meeting with service providers regarding the payment for performance model in the provision of services for individuals with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness. Meetings will be in Great Bend on June 29, in Wichita on June 30, and in Topeka on July 1. Council members are welcome to attend any of these meetings. We will mainly be dealing with providers for SPMI, but we also may have other providers that are interested in hearing about a payment for success model of payment. Our goal is that a vast majority of our business will be done by this method.
4. We have received the final report from the federal review from last summer. There were no major findings in the review, but some requirements to provide specific training to staff. We will get the final report scanned and out to each council member via e-mail.
5. Order of Selection - all categories are open and we expect them to remain open throughout fiscal year 2005.
6. The reason all categories are open is the result of an additional \$500,000 in state funds which will allow us to draw down \$2,000,000 in federal dollars made available in 2005. Advocates did an excellent job of educating and encouraging the legislature about the need for additional state funding. Without their hard work the funds would have been lost. The first time the legislature approved it as an unfunded mandate which the Governor vetoed. Our advocates kept working and the second time it was approved and funded. This is added case services dollars not added salary dollars. We cannot hire more staff. It will increase the pressure on the staff we do have.
7. Currently we have about 3% or 4% savings in turnover. As positions are vacated and we hire other people there's some savings because people don't start at the same salaries as the person who left. That kind of turnover in the private sector would be rather high. The state budget division and the legislature has imposed 15% - 18% on our field offices. In

order to make up that shortfall, it's not that you replace positions at a lower rate, you don't replace them at all. In the field we're running vacancies of about 15%. In our central office we're at 25%.

8. SRS is in the final stages of beginning the reorganization of field offices. Beginning on July 1, we will move from 11 management areas to 7 regions. This change will have a significant effect on staffing and organization of the VR field services. Program Chiefs will be reduced, staff positions will be reassigned to ensure equitable coverage of case loads, administrative procedures will undergo significant changes. In summary of the changes taking place, 700 access points have been established, 50 local offices will be closed (there are still eleven more to go in 2005), statewide toll free phone and fax numbers have been established, there are web based applications, and we have "universal access" (any county, any access point). VR will end up OK, but there will certainly be some upset in the process.
9. Earlier this year, the Kansas Advocacy and Protective Services (KAPS) proposed that they take over the operation of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in Kansas. Kansas is one of a very few state rehab agencies operating a CAP. We were grandfathered in because we had an existing CAP when the federal law was passed. The designation of a CAP is up to the Governor, who will consider the recommendations of the Secretary. KAPS is very specific in their statement that nothing is wrong with the current operation of the CAP program. They believe that by moving the program any perception of bias would be removed and all similar programs would be housed within one organization. The process of redesignation is very specific. We intend to begin public hearings in December or January in preparation for the Secretary's recommendation to the Governor by March 1. This would enable the Governor to make a decision by the end of March or first of April. It is critical that members of the State Rehab Council take an active part in this procedure by attending hearing, voicing opinions and concerns, and finally, by preparing formal recommendations by the Council to the Secretary and the Governor. A discussion followed regarding how best to obtain, gather, and compile information from both CAP and KAPS.
10. Staffing – We continue to experience nearly 25% of our central office positions vacant. However, the good news is that field positions are continuing to be filled. We just completed training of six new counselors and have four more counselors waiting for the next session, but we are still understaffed in the field. The staffing shortfall is not due to SRS decisions. We have been able to hire two paid interns this summer and there will be more to come. The interns are masters level that are coming out of counselor training programs and needing an internship. VR folks will be considered first. Next considerations will be given to people in closely related fields.
11. As of today there are about 500 confirmed Ticket to Work assignments, 96 pending and waiting at Maximus to be confirmed, and another 100 in the pipeline in our office out of 60,000 sent. There are 65 assigned to other employment networks in the state. Five of those employment networks have memorandums of understanding with Rehab Services. There are similar percentages in other states. There are more consumers who have tickets that we don't have yet. Counselors are working with those consumers to get those tickets assigned.

Transition - Peg Spencer

A Powerpoint presentation was given regarding transition. Peg noted that 23% of our active cases are transition cases. A handout of the screens was distributed. (Please refer to it for information.)

- In response to a question about our economic need policy, Peg explained that in Kansas we have an economic need policy that applies to most services. That means that a student and their family, if the student is not yet independent, are asked to contribute to the cost of their VR services according to their ability to do so. We look at the amount of income. A certain amount of savings can be exempt and disability related expenses can be subtracted from available income. Then there is a cost of living standard that we apply that against. That determines if the person has available resources to help contribute to the cost of VR. There are many services that are exempt from economic need such as counseling and guidance, job placement, supported employment, services at RCBVI, various assessment tools, and any auxiliary aids or services that are provided as an accommodation. Individuals who are receiving SSI or SSDI are also exempt.
- Julia Fonseca inquired how KRS can use the Kansas Youth Leadership Forum, which is open to transition age students, to better get the word out about VR services. YLF focuses on education, employment empowerment, and independent living. Peg indicated that YLF could help get the word out about VR and what's possible, so that individuals who need and want our services know about them and have an opportunity to make an informed choice whether they want to apply. We want to make sure that people who can benefit from us know about us. We might also involve the students by getting their input pertaining to the letters and information we have available. YLF may be able to help us market our services. Julia also asked if there was any way for VR counselors to make YLF a natural referral. A discussion followed on the seamless functioning of VR services. School transition coordinators and case managers need to take more responsibility in developing work plans.
- Sharon Kearsse asked how VR services could be better communicated to inmates who are ready to be released from a youth facility or prison as they are falling through the cracks. Peg explained that VR is not responsible for providing a high school education and cannot provide services for anyone who is incarcerated as technically they are not available for employment, but we could be involved as the person was planning to move back out into the community.

RSBVI Update – Dianne Hemphill

- Her update continued to focus on transition.
 - The transition youth program called VIEWS (Visually Impaired Experience in Work Success) is the program that RCBVI has been working on. It will run from June 11-19. There have been many partnerships built with this program. There are two other programs going on that coincide with VIEWS.
 - VIEWS is the first part of a summer experience that transition youth will be participating in through a collaborative partnership with the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kansas City. They will be working 8 days with 15 transition age youth who have open VR cases on a lot of pre-vocational skill building including interviewing skills. Early on in the week they will have taped interviews followed by quite a significant amount of training provided to them through SRS Human Resources. Then at the end of the week they will do a second taped interview to demonstrate the progress they've made. A lot of team building and confidence building activities including a challenge course, roller skating at night, and a skit performance will be used.
 - This also is a group that has been identified as one that has typically been slipping through the cracks. We know that we don't have a lot of transition age youth that are blind or deaf/blind on the VR caseloads. The School for the Blind has been very concerned about this particular dilemma. Even though we have a fairly sophisticated STARS program for students going on to college, we know that we need to intensify the early program for our youth.

- Several individuals and organizations will be giving their time to help with the program. Mike Ahlers will conduct the “True Colors” program with them which will be the beginning of exploring their personalities and what types of work that might evolve into for their consideration. Julia Fonseca will be one of the mentors. Kaw Valley Technical School, Topeka Civic Theater, Adventure Fitness, SRS Human Resources, rehab teachers, and members of the Advisory Committee will all be working with them to make this week a success.
- After they finish the program they will all go home to their own communities and have a paid job which has been developed by Chuck Tyrell from the School for the Blind and Chuck Hernandez from RCBVI. They have worked with each student to determine where their interests lie and have obtained a job in the community which addresses those interests.
- The School for the Blind plans to follow the progress of these students long term, do a longitudinal study, to determine what happens when new interventions are presented to them in a specialized approach and to see if this kind of program really facilitates better outcomes in employment.
- RCBVI students were able to go to the Brown vs. Board of Education in Topeka.
- Field staff requested they develop a newsletter instead of a periodic conference call. The newsletter was sent out electronically to staff and others.
- They lost the media of choice staff person in December which makes it more difficult to turn out requests for braille and large print as quickly. They now have 5 people who are trying to cover this function along with their other responsibilities. Last year it was calculated that over 56,000 pages of braille were provided to the agency. In the first 4 four months of this year over 26,000 pages of braille have been produced. Much of what they receive is more difficult than Word Perfect or Word and is fairly complicated to put into braille.
- Six months ago a new policy was instituted at the Rehab Center requiring all of their clients to use a long non-folding cane. This policy was approved by the Advisory Committee as many clients who had partial vision would fold up their cane and put it in a back pack. In order to really understand the benefits of using a cane it must be used. This change has been quite successful.
- They are continuing to re-emphasize the employment focus of the rehab training center. They are taking a very intensive look at where they are, what they do, and how they present it. There will probably be some changes focused on in the fall. For four years the center has served a similar number to what they do now, which is 70-80 persons. However, the majority of those persons were not employment focused. Now that has flipped. The majority of persons who come to them are employment focused. They are committed to continuing in that vein, and focusing on employment. They continue to work with others who are not employment focused through the rehab teacher program and older blind program.

Closing Announcements

The next meeting will be in September but the location is uncertain at this time.

There was no other business, and the meeting was adjourned.