

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
June 2, 2006
Seward County Community College, Liberal**

Present: Members: Barbara Crooks (Chair), Mike Donnelly, Morris Taylor, Tami Schwindt, Christine Owens, Josie Torrez
Absent: David Rosenthal, Julia Fonseca, Wendy Blaauw, Anita Trainer
Staff: Peg Spencer, Dianne Hemphill, Betsy Thompson, Shari Campbell, Connie Daggett (Recorder)

Welcome & Introductions

Chairperson Barbara Crooks, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Motion made, seconded, and carried to accept the State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Minutes of March 3.

Public Comment

None.

Additions to the Agenda

None.

Discussion of the Public and Employer Forums

Mike complimented Shari on a job well done. There was good attendance at both and good comments. Chris commented on the fact that Shari has a huge area and problems noted with regard to transportation and closing of offices.

It was obvious that Mel Westerman worked hard in this area, which makes a difference. The Chamber's regularly scheduled meeting coincided with the Employer Forum, helping to make for the good turnout. The Chamber's goal is to educate everyone as to what is available in the community. Shari gave credit to Mel in his work with the Chamber.

Mike inquired whether legislators are invited to which Peg stated they are sent an individual letter inviting them to the Public Forum, and would be invited to the Employer Forum if they were a part of the Chamber's guest list. Barbara inquired whether the counselors receive any feedback from employers following the forum. Peg listed the example of a positive relationship between SRS and a local hotel, with SRS using their facility more for their staff, which has developed good will in that community.

Betsy asked if Council members find the forums worthwhile. Chris commented on statements made at her table this morning and things they were learning at the forum. Josie stated we did not have employer forums when she first came on the Council, and she has found them to be very informative and felt anything educational to the public is

worthwhile. Barbara added that she has found the employer forums to be a good addition and comments made at the tables to be very informative. Morris felt attendance has been very good.

Barbara commented on the one gentlemen in the DVD who has been to a public forum in Leavenworth. His job dispels the myth that people with disabilities only have low paying jobs.

Barbara commented on the two gentlemen at the public forum and their successes with VR. She inquired whether employers could come to the public forum and hear these stories from consumers. Chris commented on the assistive technology problems and Josie mentioned Kat-Co and consumers getting loans from them, whether that would be possible. Peg commented on the State Purchasing guidelines and it not being geared toward purchasing items for clients. Betsy stated she would see what she could do about the issue at her level. Streamlining of paperwork requirements were mentioned and general problems with state contracts. Shari reviewed the slow process the consumer experienced with Purchasing, starting in September and him acquiring the equipment in April. It was a learning experience in terms of staying on top of time lines and consistent calls to SRS Purchasing.

Report on Rehabilitation Services Operations and Activities in the West Region - Shari Campbell, Program Administrator

Shari stated she has been the Program Administrator for the West Region since November 2003, with 46 counties. Shari felt she had a good group of staff working with her. She has been able to add a Rehab Manager, Don Crouse, since our last meeting in Hays. They continue to have support from the regional director with VR working with the other programs, particularly child care and cash assistance.

They have not had problems filling positions, and consider what the region needs in the interviewing process. Shari reviewed some of her counselor's individual strengths in helping to make the program successful. She and Don work with staff to make sure they get the training the need. Over the years she has hired 7-8 counselors, and only one has left due to medical problems.

They have increased the number of applications. Caseloads have increased in some areas. She does not think they were going to make their rehabilitation goal in the region, but will continue improving. They will be about 35 short of the 200 expected, but felt priority is customer service instead of closing cases.

She has a counselor in Goodland who has to be on medical leave for about three months following surgery so Shari will help cover that caseload.

Shair said she likes her job and enjoys doing what she does!

Barbara inquired about the size of caseloads, thinking with over 80, it would be difficult to keep on top of things, but it was noted that there are counselors who have 100+ on their caseloads. Shari stated one change that has helped is being able to have support

staff assigned to counselors to help relieve them of various duties. Morris noted the care taken in matching counselors filters down to consumer satisfaction. Josie felt 95% of the people would rather be independent and have a job, than be dependent on the system.

Mike asked what Shari felt was the biggest barrier to not having a high number of 26's and Shari felt it would be new staff and job placement vendor problems. The more limitations a person has, the harder it is to place them, but they try to get the consumer the skills to be able to compete in the job market.

Shari reported on the pilot project in the West Region with wireless access. Two counselors, Elaine Graham and Stacy Stump, are currently using it. If they go to schools or access sites to meet with clients, they can access everything that they could if they were at their desk, and just as fast. This saves time and money, as well as improving customer services.

Shari thanked the SRC for coming to southwest Kansas and stated it means a lot to the staff for people to come here from the Topeka area.

Council Discussion - Barbara Crooks

Barbara and Julia met previous to today's meeting and listed the following items they wished to have discussed today.

- **Council purpose** - - frustration with not knowing about reappointments for Council members. Would like to feel more valued in several ways. Peg handed out Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act regarding composition of the State Rehabilitation Council, including a summary of the functions of the Council. When the Council has been willing to have sub-committees that do work between meetings, much of the business moved forward at a quicker pace. The types of issues that have been dealt with in sub-committees were listed: issues of service delivery, membership, state plans, policy considerations specific to services to the blind, customer satisfaction, future of VR and SRC, meeting periodically with the Field Advisory Council. Barbara inquired whether we hear from VR counselors as to what their needs are and what SRC needs to do to help them.
- **VR specialists** - transition of high school students into the adult world, whether work or college, etc. - are we sure those needs are being met? Barbara relayed some of her experiences working on the State Transition Council for six years and how she was appointed to the State Rehab Council as a result. Peg noted that since 2000, with staffing levels SRS has, budget, shrinkage, FTEs, challenges faced in SRS have moved away from caseloads where people have distinct areas of speciality. People may have a speciality and carry that on to other areas. We have 83 filled positions now, where we have had 120 counselors in the past, but those types of reductions are not unique to Rehab Services. We hope to start working with people 18 months or three semesters before they leave school. Reauthorization laws may change the way some of those things are done. Barbara noted how they start with 12 year olds in Manhattan. Peg stated FY08 budget proposals included a concept related to transition, but there are many

needs and limited funds.

- **Membership** - Peg relayed information she had received on reappointments to the State Rehabilitation Council. She noted that the Governor's office expects a rather detailed questionnaire to be filled out. Peg had been corresponding with one of the Governor's assistants and was given the following information: Appointments that have been approved: Morris Taylor, Mike Donnelly, Josie Torrez, Wendy Blaauw, Barbara Crooks, Tami Schwindt and Anita Trainer. Julia had informed RS that she did not want to be reappointed, but then changed her mind so are working on clarifying that issue. Some additional individuals that were approved were mentioned, but others were not, mainly due to the fact that they did not complete the required paperwork on time. No letters have been received from the Governor's Office as yet. Peg added that they have pending phone calls and follow-up letters to 17 people to recruit to fill various aspects of the Council membership. It was hoped the new people would be able to attend the meeting in Wichita and doing training, as in the past for SRC members, was mentioned. Peg asked Council members to help recruit potential nominees for the Council on an ongoing basis.

- **Feedback from public forum at the agency level**

Peg stated she periodically reviews past Minutes to see if issues mentioned are being dealt with. Issues are relayed to field staff so they can think about it also. Counselor training information goes to Central Office training staff. SRC has taken issues and written letters and she pointed out the issue of transportation and letters being written to the Governor. The issue of the application being too long was reviewed and the form was streamlined. Shari commented that customer service is discussed in their weekly team meetings and returning phone calls timely will be on the agenda. Peg stated the issue of staff not returning phone calls is a fairly recent problem which may be due to reduction in staff and larger caseloads. She has been teaching a segment of the New Counselor Training and spends time about the overall process of timeliness. Betsy stated that with reduced resources, we are looking at teams to give better customer service and maybe look at someone other than a counselor who can return some of the phone calls.

Updates from the Interim State Director – Betsy Thompson

- **Director Position:** they want to get the right person for the position and following stakeholder input, the position was reopened for applications, closing the last of May. Interviews will be held in June and will try to give stakeholders more advance notice for interviews. Barbara Crooks commented she was pleasantly surprised when, from their input, the process was stopped and started again.
- **Future of VR:** There was discussion at the last State Director's Meeting that with reauthorization there might be some discussion on the future of VR.
- **Legislative session** was good for SRS.

- Order of Selection: 1200 people were removed May 16 with about 130 on the list now. If all goes well, should have a rolling waiting list some time next fall. After July 1, we anticipate that the remaining people on Category 1 will be off, as well as category 2, with a 30-day waiting list.
- Payment for Performance: posted outcomes are on the website with focus groups in each region to get feedback; providers in each region have been asked to participate.

Update from Julia Fonseca, Liaison with the Services for the Blind Advisory Committee

Julia is the liaison and whether her position on the Advisory Committee should be a voting member or not was asked. There was considerable discussion about the pros and cons, and Mike felt he needed more information before making a decision. Why the issue has come up was discussed. In Julia's absence, Peg read an e-mail from her:

1. At the Advisory Committee meeting of March 11, 2006, the mandatory blindfold training practice introduced at the RCBVI in September was opposed by 8 of the 9 members.
2. The Advisory Committee feels its input is being ignored and requested that ways be explored to change this which included returning Kansas to a dual reporting state which would change the Advisory nature of the committee to mandatory.
3. In both the vote for vice chair and discussion of support for Dianne Hemphill's NFB style training program, it was clear that the only vote from the blind community supporting this was from the NFBK, demonstrating that the "split" in the blindness community as no where near down the middle.

Chris commented on customer choice and under the Rehab Act, being informed of choices. Dianne explained how the program operates and what they have to offer. If a person doesn't like that model, they have the option to go elsewhere. Counselors should have the option to send someone out of state. Peg stated as a matter of policy, if out-of-state services are being considered, the counselor does an analysis of consumer needs comparing in-state and out-of-state based on a person's rehab needs, including their choice and an analysis of where their needs can be met. If they can be met in state, the person can still go out of state, and pay the difference for the services.

Chris asked who determines whether it meets the person's needs, whether the person should have blindfold training or not. Peg stated that should be between the counselor and the consumer, approved at the PA/Manager level.

There were questions asked if the counselors know their options, and if the consumers know they will be blindfolded.

Dianne relayed how she and Dale explored training options before going in this direction and employment outcomes were best under the SDL model. Opinions were expressed whether having the blindfold training helped a person become employable or

not. It was clear that this subject needed to be put on a future meeting's agenda to discuss it more in-depth. Mike felt we needed to know what the SRC's role is in this discussion. Peg read a section of the SRC functions where it is an advisory role only, to give input on different perspectives.

The decision of the SRC was to discuss it when Julia could be in attendance. Barbara will write the Committee chairperson and Dianne and ask that one person who supports the traditional model and one who supports the SDL model attend the next SRC meeting. Those designated people should be asked to provide the SRC members a five (5) page summary a month ahead of time, to then be discussed at the meeting. At the meeting, each side would be given 15 minutes to present their view, followed by time for SRC questions and discussion, totaling one hour. Mike stated that after the presentations, if we do not agree as a Council, he felt we should not take a position. Others recalled instances where when the Council did not agree, it did not take a formal position.

Update from Peg Spencer

- Peg reviewed the general assistance program implementing a presumptive disability process. As a result we anticipate increased referrals to VR. She reviewed the process used to determine how many people this may involve. EES is doing an analysis to see how many people this might be. That estimate is still fluctuating but initial numbers were 440. If this does occur, we could expect a delay in implementing the rolling waiting list.
- Meeting have been held with the Board of Regents regarding a Memo of Understanding between institutions of higher education regarding who will pay for auxiliary services for rehab people attending their institution. We feel it is the school's responsibility. An example was given if someone needs an interpreter for school activity, that is the school's responsibility. But if accommodations like wheelchairs are needed, we provide that. The Board of Regents negotiators are pushing a cost sharing approach where VR would share a percentage of the cost for education functions. In the absence of an MOU, these issues are negotiated individually, with a wide range of arrangements. She asked what the SRC's perspective was on what VR's share should be.

Chris stated the ADA talked about programs being accessible so she thought the college should provide an interpreter and VR provide the computer or wheelchair. Josie felt since the schools have the bigger budget, they should pay for it. Mike felt anything that was a reasonable accommodation should be the responsibility of the educational institution. Philosophically, it was felt VR was on the right track. Peg stated she may ask if one of the SRC members might like to be on the negotiating team.

- Federal Review: had a very positive review with only two areas where we need to make a plan, that being to improve presumptive eligibility of people receiving SSI and SSDI, and time lines to determine eligibility. They are working on this with new forms and methods for reminders.

- Anita Trainer was not able to attend today's meeting because her mother was ill, but wanted to share with the Council that this would have been her last meeting as she got the job in New Orleans, starting in August.

Update from Dianne Hemphill

- They received the food service contract with Ft. Riley, which BEP has been pursuing for over 11 years. Mike asked what the kick-back would be to the agency and Dianne stated about \$25,000 the first year, keeping in mind all start-up costs.
- The Center was unable to hold the VIEWS program this summer as individuals did not get paperwork completed in time, so hope to do it next year.
- Participation at RCBVI this year has been very comparable over last year with 56 at the end of May. They have two individuals from Missouri coming to the Center and have a new contract with Oklahoma, which does not appear to support intensive skills training for the blind very often, and have no Center in their state.
- Update on the demonstration project in the Kansas City area where the person would go under sleep shade training prior to going into the field: went through first round of interviews but did not find the right person, so the position has been reopened.

Round Robin Reports from SRC Members

Josie Torrez:

- They had a good legislative session
- They will be having a campaign election grass roots training, teaching consumers how to ask the correct questions during campaign forums around the state.
- Their state-wide forum will be in September in Topeka.

Christine Owens:

- July 14 will be their 5th Assistive Tech Resource Fair in Hutchinson, with over 20 vendors.

Tami Schwindt:

- Sibling Spotlight Project is being held this year.
- Families Together will be celebrating their 25th year next year.

Morris Taylor:

- They will be moving into a new building at the end of July which will be a one-stop shop with all services under one roof, making it easier for transportation problems.
- They will be hosting the SILCK meeting in December.
- They are six months into their new grant and are currently full staffed. They have 50 new clients in attendance, with 75 active clients right now. They closed 18

- after six months; 11 people in placements; 16 in tech schools; 3 in self-employment placements; 4 in work adjustment or OJT plans.
- 80% of all clients are also working with State VR.
- They are doing a lot of holistic and violence prevention work.

Mike Donnelly

- 38 clients have used CAP since October 1, with no formal hearings, which is up from a couple of years ago; they have had good success with most people.
- He brought CAP brochures for anyone wanting one.
- They will be doing some new hiring, looking for people with good investigative skills.

Barbara Crooks

- They are in the middle of the Big Red One returning home, and are experiencing a housing boom, reopening a previously closed school anticipating increased enrollments.
- With some students with severe disabilities moving up to the high school, they anticipated having to use Barbara's classroom due to accommodations, however, they found a better location with them going to the 9th grade center, so she will stay in her current classroom.

Next meeting will be September 7-8, 2006 in Wichita, with two public forums, one from 4-6 pm., and the second from 7-9 p.m. A conference room at Old Town has been reserved where the hotel will also be, with a parking garage adjacent.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.