

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
September 19, 2003
Colby Comfort Inn Convention Center**

Present: Council Members: Dale Barnum, Marvin Kuehn, Sanford Alexander, Ron Pasmore, Anita Trainer, Tami Schwindt, Marie Mareda
Staff: Peg Spencer, Mike Ahlers, Dennis Ford, Connie Daggett (Recorder)

- Welcome & Introductions - Peg Spencer

Peg called the meeting to order and stated first order of business was to select a member to be temporary chairperson in the absence of the chair and vice-chair; the members selected Ron Pasmore. Everyone then introduced themselves.

- Additions to the agenda - Ron Pasmore

Sanford asked for the following additions: follow-up on the transportation letter; legislative updates; status of on-line application form. Marie Mareda was asked to give a report on Workforce Development.

- Public Comment - none
- Report from the Hays Area - Dennis Ford

Dennis stated he is the newest and youngest RS Chief, having been in this position two years as of October 1. Last year they lost a number of staff in the area, including two deaths. Mike Schmidt, who was a driver for one of the staff who passed away, took over one of the Rehab Teacher positions. They went from 21 to 15 staff. However, their rehab numbers look good. From FY02 to FY03 they had one less successful rehab; wrote 26 more plans with one less counselor; 236 were eligible in the area. They were #1 in the state with a rehab rate at 74%. Over the last two years they have been about 70%; Dennis attributed the increase to the dedicated staff.

Caseload and disability statistics: 5% of their clients are blind or visually impaired; 5% deaf or hearing impaired, 22% chronically mentally ill, with the remainder falling in different categories. Caseload size has increased from 614 for six counselors, to 628 for 5 counselors.

Their biggest struggle has been loss of clerical support and other staff having to pick up on these duties, and travel.

They will be closing 16 offices over the next three years; eight are currently targeted and they are developing access sites. Last week they moved the Larned office to the Larned State Hospital.

Many of his staff have several years of experience, which is a great strength for them. Don Crouse is the newest counselor with one year, but he worked 10 years at Larned State Hospital. Elaine Graham has 34 years of experience, is currently holding a caseload and going to school to receive her Masters. Others counselors' years of

experience were listed.

Dennis felt the Public Forum went well last night and he read excerpts from several letters written by consumers praising their counselors. These letters will be passed on to Peg as there is a system in place to make sure these get acknowledged. Sanford thanked Dennis for the numbers and thought they were very good for the population and area.

- Report from Mike Ahlers

- ▶ Site Visit Summary for Supported Employment SPMI Grantees

Mike distributed a summary of the six sites that were visited between June 3-24, 2003 and reviewed highlights of the visits. He stated they have had grants for ten years and last year it was recommended going to payment for performance. Each agency was given an additional year to transition to payment for performance with all being completed by calendar year 2005. If they follow the placement model when converted, the vendor will get paid 20% by accepting the referral, 30% when they place the client in a job, and the remaining 50% when the client's case can be closed as successfully rehabilitated. Ron asked of the 220 closures, what is the average number of people served at a time - 457.

- ▶ Payment-for-Performance Overview

The handout further explained Job Placement, Community-Based Job Tryout, and Intensive Employment Support Services and there was discussion on each.

- ▶ Innovation and Expansion Grants

Mike handed out the final performance update of the 41 grants. The grants ended June 30, 2003.

- Review & Approval of Past Minutes: motion made and seconded to approve them as distributed.

- Brainstorming content for cover letter on SFY 2003 Annual Report - Peg Spencer

The goal is for the State Rehab Council's Annual Report to go to the Governor in October. Peg asked for volunteers to draft a cover letter. Sanford volunteered, and also mentioned Pat Terick as SRC Chairman. The annual report will be used as a marketing piece to the Governor's Office to help give VR services more visibility, as well as a potential legislative tool. Peg will work on drafting the letter and submitting it to the sub-committee for final review.

- Locations and Schedule for 2004 Meetings

Peg stated next year we will attempt to have an Employer Forum, Public Forums and Council Meetings. Hutchinson did a pilot employer forum, which went over very well. It consisted of an early morning breakfast meeting with representatives from all levels: small business owners and HR people from larger businesses.

Suggestions for sites for next year were reviewed: (1) Salina; (2) Northeast Kansas, i.e. Holton, Hiawatha, Atchison - site to be determined by the RS Chief in that area; (3) Southeast Kansas - with input from the RS Chief as to location; and (4) Newton. Sanford suggested Pratt, but that office may be closed; he also suggested Kingman.

Dates for next year (2004) were set: March 4-5, June 3-4, Sept. 16-17, and December 2-3. These are all on Thursday and Friday.

- Report from State Director - Dale Barnum
 - ▶ Dale thanked Dennis and his staff for hosting the Public Forum last night.
 - ▶ Handout: a copy of the Governor's Mission, Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles was distributed.
 - ▶ Budget: last federal fiscal year we ended up not having to send any money back or spending money we didn't have. This has been a challenge since the Governor has made changes along the way. Next year we may receive an increase in our federal funding, but this would require an increase in state match.
 - ▶ There will not have to be a waiting list in Category 1 for the remainder of this year but will keep Category 2 and 3 people on a waiting list. Those individuals are probably finding services elsewhere.
 - ▶ Governor's Budget will come out in January and will see what the legislature does, whether we have a waiting list in FY05. Some salary money is more available so have been able to fill some positions in the field; 20% of counselor positions were vacant last year and hope to get it down to 12% this year.
 - ▶ Secretary's stakeholders teleconference is September 30, which is available at all SRS area offices.
 - ▶ Back-to-Basics training is going on now, as a result of corrective action plan from the last RSA review. RSA will be at Central Office next week doing this year's review.
 - ▶ Literacy Grant proposed by RSA: Dale distributed a copy of the Abstract for everyone's information. He will let the Council know its progress.
 - ▶ Appropriations: Waiting to see what the federal funding will be for rehab programs in the next federal fiscal year beginning October 1; will probably be in a continuing resolution.
 - ▶ Reauthorization of the Rehab Act: We will be part of the Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization. WIA was passed by the House. As of Wednesday, that Bill was reintroduced into the Senate so will probably not have anything by October 1. Hope to have it completed by some time next year and Dale will get information to the Council as soon as we receive anything.

- ▶ KSBVI Update:

In July, Ophthalmology residents from KU and KUMC spent a day at the Center. Dale gave an overview of how well it went and that it will probably be an annual training as a result, We may be the first agency in the nation to involve residents with this type of training.

Filling Orientation & Mobility Specialist positions has been a challenge. We have hired one individual where the employee will spend two years being trained to become specialized, receiving a majority of the training on-line through the University of Arkansas. We were fortunate to have a rehab counselor who had past experience working with the deaf to fill this position.

- ▶ Ticket to Work continues to be a challenge. We have not received a lot of Tickets at this point.

- ▶ General Assistance Program through SRS will probably be done away with because of budget cuts. So far, we haven't seen an increase in referrals. We had 277 active cases of General Assistance recipients in June, and 272 in August.

- ▶ SRC members, whose terms expire, are invited to the December meeting in Emporia to meet the new members. Those members have not been selected as yet, but recommendations will be going to the Governor in the next couple of weeks.

- Policy Updates - Peg Spencer

- ▶ Transition Services: this has been approved. It will be implemented as soon as computer changes can be made in KMIS and other support materials are finalized. We are focusing resources on 18 months, or three semesters, before a student leaves school.

- ▶ Textbook reimbursement: textbooks which we have purchased for a student and are turned back in when no longer needed, we will establish a procedure to recoup the funds..

- ▶ As part of the federal review they asked us to establish a time frame for response from third party referrals. We have streamlined a process on the computer system to respond to those referrals and will send out standardized individualized packets to those individuals to see if they are interested. We can print out the letter through this computer system. The maximum time frame will be 30 days.

- ▶ A team of counselors and chiefs revised the IPE, making language more consumer friendly. An area was inserted regarding consumer rights as well as a part on consumer responsibility. We have developed an easier way for staff to amend a plan to make it less cumbersome and hope to have it implemented by January 1.

- ▶ We are planning training to field staff as to what documentation is needed in a case file, how we do case reviews, looking at information required for eligibility determination, reviewing Rehab Act regulations to do this. If we can address this issue and have everything reflect the same overall expectations, we make more use of existing information and more use of determinations made by other agencies. We think the policy is in line with this, but there is a lot of misunderstanding, so we are looking at this problem. We hope to have recommendations on this to discuss at the December SRC Meeting.

- Discussion of Public Forum

Sanford felt even though it was less attended there was good input from those present. Marie felt the counselors could answer a multitude of questions instead of referring the person on. Ron noted the consumers saw transportation as an issue and that was indicative of the few number who came to the Forum.

- Follow-Up Issues

- ▶ Transportation Letter: letter has been sent and will be e-mailed to SRC members. The budget cycle makes it timely for the Council to send a letter. The GAO study was included with that letter.
- ▶ Legislative Issues: (1) Sanford stated they amended the Assistance Dog Law in Kansas which became effective last week. There now needs to be clarification as to who enforces animal control as he explained an incident which happened in Wichita. (2) The Commission for the Blind bill is still in the House study committee. (3) VA report on realignment of services for the next 20 years has been proposed. They are talking of closing seven hospitals, but none in Kansas.
- ▶ On-Line Application Update: It is now up and running. RS staff have given input to the designers about accessibility. They are continuing to work on a Spanish and text version and working out some of the procedural issues about when the applications are submitted, who sends them on, who retains signature pages. Whether everyone has to use the expanded version for VR services as opposed to a short form is being discussed. If you can't access the website, there is an 800# to call.

- Workforce Development Report - Marie Mareda

Marie gave a report of what is happening in Kansas, which is very different from what it has been in the past. The Lt. Governor's wish of Workforce Development (WFD) is that it is employer driven. He proposes the creation of Centers of Excellence which does away with district boundaries. If a college is the best in training for a certain field, they will get the funding while others won't. Technical colleges would then be part of the Board of Regents, so funding is an issue. Community colleges have had borders that you couldn't cross to recruit students and this would be done away with. WFD is very high in priority and the Departments of Labor and Commerce are discussing.

- Wrap-Up

Ron thanked Peg for realigning the agenda so all issues could be discussed and felt we should continue with this format.

Peg stated the next meeting is in Emporia on December 11-12. Start time was discussed. Reasons for starting at 9:30 were no longer valid, so it was decided to start at 8:30 on a regular basis and see how it works.

Dale had copies of the revised Handbook of Services if anyone wanted one; this is also available on our website.