

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Minutes
September 6, 2002 – Pittsburg

State Rehabilitation Council members present: Ron Pasmore, Sharon Kearse, Sanford Alexander, Marvin Kuehn, Pat Terick, Debra Wheaton, Dale Barnum, Cindy Jackson, Suzanne Evans.

Guests present: Barbara Alexander.

Staff present: Dianne Hemphill, Hope Rosen.

Review and approval of previous minutes from June 7, 2002: There was one suggested change in the review of the public forum., to add “in Dodge City” to the concerns expressed that the GED process is not accessible. The minutes were accepted with the change.

Additions to agenda: Discussion of Public Forum added, substituted for public comments. Short update on blind services added to agenda.

Comments regarding the public forum:

People’s comments were appreciated since it is uncertain sometimes when you work with people and ask for their input that you get their perspective.

One recurring theme is having more prior information about options, which evolved into a discussion on self-advocacy, and consumers assuming more of a role in their own Vocational Rehabilitation; along with the idea of more public awareness of where to go and what is available. There was a question of why the local elected officials are not invited to the Forum, especially in years of tight budgets, since it would be good information for legislators to know how state funds are being spent. It was felt that inviting the legislators was a good suggestion but there was some question of whether or not the legislators would attend. There was discussion of possibly extending a special invitation to the legislators to the Public Forum, and include everyone who has an interest in that area office.

Cindy said that representatives in the Parsons area would make every effort to attend, when they are not in session. It was noted there were a lot of representatives of area VR staff and counselors present. One person not currently a client will be applying for services, and another individual who had applied at one time will be followed up, and was given contact names and phone numbers. The two individuals have contact numbers of other resources. It was appreciative that they were willing to openly discuss their situations.

Transportation has come up consistently as part of the comments. One comment that has been brought up before was about transportation and acquiring vehicles, caps on allowable amounts for acquiring vehicles and repair of vehicles, and acquiring law enforcement or state vehicles that come up for sale, in order to help clients with their transportation issues.

Pat said that transportation was brought up in Garden City and in urban areas as well. Maybe we

need to look at the aspect of going to the Department of Transportation (DOT) and making it a concern there, and wondered if there were other initiatives outside of SRS.

Dale said that one problem is that DOT will tell you they are funding general public transportation, but whatever agency gets those funds don't have service to individuals other than their clients as a priority. We need to figure out how to make those community transportation vehicles not agency-specific transportation. By law they have to be available to anyone, by practice it is difficult to have them available to anyone else, and agencies find it almost impossible to make them available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week.

Ron said that the City of Wichita has federal grant received from the DOT, which funds rides and subsidizes rides to jobs for people who are dependent on transportation for that job. This is not limited to people with disabilities but anyone who meets certain income guidelines, and this is paid for by a grant with a matching portion from a provider.

Sanford agreed and said that so many things are partially available in bits and pieces, broken down due to territorial boundaries. An impetus out of government offices is needed, to pull departments together and give them responsibility to work out a uniform plan across territorial boundaries. The problem is all across Kansas and if transportation is seen as an issue, the Council may need to go on record taking a position.

Cindy reported that one individual at the Forum had changed locations and had lost his position as result of not being able to get transportation to his job. In Parsons rural transportation is limited to people with disabilities or the elderly, and a large number of people depend on the transportation to get to their jobs. They service MR/DD, any type of disability, elderly, all vehicles are accessible, well maintained and they can transport more individuals in wheelchairs now. Transportation service exists for individuals in SE KS for medical trips, with advance notice, based out of Fort Scott.

Ron said everyone has same problem, but not same issues. He said that if he could get out of the transportation business he would run. As an agency they use quarter of a million a year. All would prefer not to be doing it, but if we don't do it, it's not going to get done for that group. If we could get an effort going to get agencies to work together; but the bottom line is that there is not enough money for mass transportation.

Sanford said although there is not enough dollars we're not getting enough use out of the money we have. Bottom line: the universal common factor is that transportation for people with disabilities is a blocking factor and we need to make an effort to solve that problem. Ron said that Wichita decided to get together and meet, did some inquiry at state level, and were told that they view it as a local planning issue, i.e., they expect each locality to do their own planning with their funds.

Pat suggested a statewide conference on transportation. There are six cities within the state of KS who receive urban transit monies. The rest of the state gets rural monies, and there are different rules how the dollars are matched. There are a lot of issues involved. It was suggested

that transportation is not just a disability issue, it is an employment issue since there are a number of employees who can't get to their jobs.

The state car issue would need to come from the Governor or the Department of Administration. The cars at state surplus are priced so high no one will buy them, and they won't give you any idea of what shape they are in. Law enforcement vehicles will be tougher. Ron said that they have bought used Federal vehicles for their agency at a good cost. Marvin suggested as part of the annual report, an interim report that addresses mass transportation needs.

Diane said there was one person at their table who didn't totally understand the system, and found it difficult to absorb all the information. May have applied during the time of waiting list. Remind field counselors what all those things mean if we have to re-institute waiting list, give other resources to folks who may not meet criteria.

Ron: suggested that it would be helpful for the Council to have detail copy of the notes of the public forums, not the raw information but the final product--forum minutes. Marvin suggested it would be helpful to research trends over a 10 year period, a summary of what takes place and what has been discussed over and over again.

Sharon asked about special consideration for state jobs. Dale said there is veterans preference but not for disabilities. The agencies are mindful of EEO, and all the groups in KS are represented as much as possible in the various agencies. SRS has good record for employing people with disabilities. If we tried to do something like veterans preference, it would be a steep climb. Sanford reported that since last SRC mtg, there have been several more Supreme court decisions on ADA, and the climate for ADA on soft ground right now. None of the cases have been "good" cases. Need to research the type of cases that have come before the supreme court. Ron said that the majority of supreme court cases are current employees who have a grievance with their employer, and who may not fall within the aspect of what ADA really is. Sanford said that bad law is being interpreted in a way that is bad for disability.

Cindy said there are persons who have gone through VR services for training, have all the supports, and are not hired by those same agencies, and wanted to know why. Dale said that qualifications give you the right to be interviewed, but not to be hired. There is a process not only of qualifications, but being interviewed, having people skills, and common sense. Competition has increased and there are many very skilled and experienced people looking for jobs,

Dale said that he wants the SRC to understand when RS moved to a combined case load in 2000, 7.7% of successful rehabilitations were blind. Last year, 9% of successful rehabilitations were blind, and we hope that RS is providing services to more individuals. His other concern: the last thing we want in this climate is a free-standing agency. RS has been fortunate to be a little fish in a big pond. RS was able to maintain service dollars while cuts were being made in other programs. Missouri is a free standing agency, and in Missouri the blind agency is losing 26 employees to cuts. Nebraska is also in a terrible bind.

Report from Dale Barnum:

Council membership: the last word from Governor's office, is to get your names in now; the Governor wants to complete appointments. We are currently working with several different groups/agencies and producing some young people who would be good members of the council. Dale requested names from Council members to complete the council membership. He has received no recommendations for membership so far. Wanted to add representatives from Workforce Investment Act and youth first, will be getting names from those. We need business representatives also, as well as consumers, and providers. There are 6 positions open. The current council roster has been reviewed, needs to be updated.

RSA Review: the regional representative reviewed cases and policies in August.. At the exit conference they said there would be no negative findings on Kansas Review, but there will be some suggestions for improvement.

Garden City: Has a new counselor, plan has been completed to ensure services to the area are met. Dale is not satisfied with level of service in rural areas. A formal corrective action plan is completed and corrective action to be finished by the end of November.

KCDHH: Several changes in KCDHH, effective July 1 job duties have been changed to reflect increased responsibility to RS. These changes are due to last years federal review. Bonnie Goben is the new state coordinator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, replacing Sharon Nigro, due to increased population and caseloads in the KC area. KCDHH is doing a lot of referral work and coordination to both consumers and counselors.

Ticket to Work: Is still on track, the Work Group to finalize report in the next couple of weeks to implement the KS program. Will meet with prospective employment networks within next 30 days, at 3 locations: Wichita, Topeka, Great Bend, to see what the interest is. Proceeding with plans to be ready Nov. 1 and SS is saying "late fall."

Budget: Secretary Schalansky is holding a statewide stakeholders meeting October 3. There will be phone hookup in each area office and there may be additional hookups around state. Calls are usually in morning around 9 or 10; Dale will notify as soon as specifics are known. Things are covered for this year; but SRS allocation for this FY has been reduced. RS has not lost any money in client service dollars, and will try to maintain that stand. Adjustments in this FY will affect service delivery to clients. All area offices are in a bind for salary and other dollars. There will be an effect on whether or not area offices will be able to rehire counselors who resign, and affect travel ability and replacement of equipment. No layoffs have occurred yet, and we don't foresee any for a few months if at all. Dale meets next month with counselor representatives, and area chiefs, to discuss options for RS operations and service delivery.

Dale presented the budget report to council members. He discussed FY 2004 budget issues (last page of 8/28/02 draft). If census revenue estimated for Nov is more than 100 million; we are in trouble. Depending on what happens in Nov, we can expect a new allotment from governor with further reductions to be made. The fact is as these reductions are taken during this FY, it affects our base, and our base budget is what the legislature starts working with. The base has been reduced this FY, and probably will be reduced again. The report reflects changes in 03 budget. All of the increases reflected in the report were used to bring the base back to 0. Items following

the 3rd paragraph have to be made to state FY 04 budget to keep us afloat. It has nothing to do with enhancements or cost of living. Summary for SRS: as we began the year, we have \$40 million less than 02, with the first allotment reduced by 6 million, and can expect another \$10 million reduction. We can expect 2nd allotment as much as \$12 million, and possibly a reduced resource kick-in. There are about 108 million less than what we had in 02 to match federal dollars agency-wide. We are losing somewhere in area of \$200 million in all funds from what we had in FY 02.

To date we have not had a reduction in service dollars. We expect to continue our maintenance of effort, we do not feel that we will be able to fully match the federal dollars. We need to determine what we have to do, what services we have to deliver, what services can we stop delivering, and what will cost be of not delivering those services. The alternative if we don't do something--do we get a letter from RSA or a fine from RSA. What adjustments do we need to make relating to expectations from consumers, our staff and the public..

Meeting with area chiefs is not a closed meeting, but sometimes things are discussed that cannot be discussed in public. The Council may have different ideas than Chiefs have as counselors' ideas.

Ron asked about feasibility to consider vendorizing. Dale said if we pull dollars to vendorizing, the money would come out of case service dollars. He said pressure on case service dollars is going to increase.

To clarify: we have to spend the same number of dollars as we did last year for maintenance of effort. There may be a question of whether we can maintain the salary dollars, and not reduce the service dollars. There will be fewer counselors to do the work, but they have been pushed as far as we can. RS is beginning to talk to special ed coops about whether or not we can provide them with a grant for part of a transition counselor salary but who will operate under VR rules. There has to be maintenance of effort: if you don't maintain effort, it will cost more money. Our matching dollars are higher than other programs, but the argument is going to become less effective.

Ron said there is still some federal legislation to increase matching rate for medicaid for some states by 1%. Pat said that we need to make sure that we don't erode/lose what we've gained foothold in what we're doing at present.

Dale: asked for input on what processes do we need to examine. Need to fine tune processes that duplicate effort. The talk is to reduce number of local offices to cover the state. The Garden City office presented a plan and the Governor said to apply state wide. Look at how RS will deliver client services with area offices reduced, at how to get out and talk to the clients, where to try to meet. They probably won't meet in city and county buildings due to cost in rents. It has been suggested to talk with the public service organizations for space to meet. Dale requested comments and input from members.

Ron suggested when clients can't find services in their community they will move to areas that have services and Dale agreed they will continue to see that. Sanford said that one of the ad hoc

members of council is ILC with no representative for 2 yrs, and asked where IL service and funding dovetail with rehabilitation services and where are they in picture at this point in working with a solution. Dale said IL has the same budget problems. All state and county agencies and school districts have budget problems.

There was a recommendation that SILCK attend the council meetings. This has been discussed at prior council meeting. Cindy Jackson will speak to Shannon at the next SILCK board meeting, and Sanford will make a followup phone call if needed.

Report from Blind Services: Dianne Hemphill said there have been 250 closures, up 40% from prior year. Case loads have gone up significantly, with 1109 cases. There are referrals from non traditional counselors. They provide training to field counselors, focus on employment, provide employment seminars, bring information to clients and employers. A Benefits specialist presented an open house for Transition last spring. There is focus on the older blind in the community with 3 day workshops. KSBVI served over 315 individuals in the community with fundamentals on how to survive. KSBVI has applied for expansion grant. Michael's concerns will be addressed; a counselor for the deaf-blind could be rehired. That concern will be increasing.

Personnel changes: Eva Johnson hired, Tim Lyons has been promoted to work more with analysis and work on fiscal issues and budget. One concern to impact – outreach to clients who have assistive technology needs. Joe Perez has been very ill and is to have a bone marrow transplant. They are trying to figure out how to serve those who have an opportunity to be employed, those who are employed, and those in training, with assistive technology (AT) trouble shooting. His wife has initiated an AT support group meeting once a month, and they have a diabetic and health support group to meet once a month.

The dormitory is about 1/3 completed, and anticipate delays in actual ability to move in. The date that was given was mid-October and suspect that will not happen, and it may possibly be December. There have been delays due to the elevator, and a delay in obtaining fire sprinkler equipment. They started fall session this week, those new to the program will get 1-2 weeks of orientation before being placed with returning clients. Persons who were working with blind/vision impaired to go through time with blindfold training. Training with blindfolds has been very successful. The program is performance based and has measurable components. October 1-4 is upcoming employer seminar. They have invited successfully employed blind persons. The focus is to submit first-hand experiences to clients, to help individuals realize their potential for employment, since many blind persons do not realize their potential.

Date of DSB advisory meeting July 27. Carolyn Perez initiated an AT users group. It will be very productive for other areas to establish their own. A web site has been set up with information on AT. There are presentations of different types, using Jaws. The group is basically having presentations and opportunities for individuals to be able to try out different types of AT, and meet 2nd Tuesday of every month 6:30-8:30 pm. The group has many very positive aspects. At the last advisory committee, emphasis was placed on measurable outcomes in different areas of training. 5- point system evaluative process. As a result/need and discussion at meeting, subcommittees were developed: vocational assessment, assistive technology,

orientation/mobility, independent living skills, and KanSail area. Vice-Chair is Jim White from OP area, and Chairman is Dick Edlund, from KC area. There was a lot of emphasis on evaluation of curriculum. There is supposed to be finalization on recommendation by the time next advisory committee meets, Nov 23.

Sanford mentioned that a blind rehabilitation center in Waco, developed a system which helps make it possible to objectively measure skill improvement level, with a rating schedule for each activity as to the client's ability to perform activities independently, with some assistance or a lot of assistance, not appropriate or applicable, or can't do it at all. The system evaluates what clients are able to do pre and post-rehabilitation. It gives a better idea of what they can do, and places emphasis on performance.

The Vocational Assessment subcommittee is comprised of members of advisory committee. Cindy Jackson is on that subcommittee.

Policy Issues:

Dale reported on time line guidelines for working with cases, and said that we need best practice guidelines. The Federal Government requires a 60 day time line from application to eligibility, and allows the states to set other guidelines beyond that. The suggestion from RSA review is to say that four months for the process is too long. We will be looking at setting standard time guidelines from the time of referral to first contact by counselor, from eligibility to plan completion, and frequency of contact during restoration services and during different phases of rehabilitation, so consumers will know what to expect. Will balance with input from field. Time from eligibility to plan development will be an issue and that needs to be reduced. Currently the time guideline from eligibility to plan development is 4 months, but often the limit is pushed. There are no current guidelines on frequency of contact.

Ron suggested that we might start with some baseline measures, and that it was important to build in exceptions, due to variables brought out by factors such as things which were outside staff control. Dale said that there should be entries in the case file to explain variations from standard. Sanford said that he would like to see more definition in components that might have time elements built into the intermediate steps, and since no two cases look alike, and a definition of what is a reasonable average. Many factors affect cases and the time required for different phases of a case such as evaluation and plan development. It makes a lot of difference the quicker you can get the ball rolling. It's critical to instill a sense of urgency in what we do. Some clients drop off along the way or seek other services due to delays in processing time.

Dale suggested to bring some time lines back to the Council. The same topic will be discussed next week with the field advisory group.

Dale also said that revisions for guidelines for Order of Selection were approved by RSA in July and should be approved by SRS Leadership in September. Category one has been expanded to include more applicants. Category two and three have been significantly reduced in scope. This change will get a better mix. There is no way to make it through the FY without a waiting list, and VR will probably institute a waiting list sooner than later. VR will try to begin a rolling waiting list, to keep everybody moving, so clients will know how soon they can begin the

process. Should be getting some numbers in in the next few weeks so decisions can be made. There will be no warning when the waiting list is instituted, due to problems in other states when notice was given. Will try to be as fair as we can to the consumer, but we will have to manage money this year.

Annual Report:

Ron stated that in the past the annual report has been done in December. The Council needs to decide whether to make the report to the outgoing governor or to the incoming governor. There was discussion what the stance of council would be and how soon to start dealing with that. It was suggested to have a subcommittee comprised of Sanford Alexander, Pat Terick, and Ron Pasmore. The subcommittee will meet via conference call together with Peg and work up a draft. Ron felt that we needed to get Forum notes together to work up a report, to aid with annual report.

2003 meeting Schedule:

Dates and locations for 2003 meetings were discussed. Ideas on locations were Leavenworth, Emporia, Colby, Salina, and Dodge City. Pat Terick suggested Topeka for March 6-7 due to the legislative sessions. Cindy noted that the ADA meeting were being held in Kansas City in June, and suggested Leavenworth for the June meeting. The Council agreed on the following dates for the 2003 meetings:

March 6/7	Topeka
June 5/6	Leavenworth
September 11/12	Colby
December 4/5	Emporia

Brochure Project: Deferred

Miscellaneous:

RS Policy manual will be out in the next 30 days, and will be on line.

Cindy Jackson mentioned the Youth Leadership Forum meeting to be held at Washburn University in June of next year. Many young people are going to be coming to workforce. There is emphasis on transition , and support from schools. The YLF is a positive experience, and informs the young folks what their opportunities are and what they can do.

Next meeting:

Public Forum 7 to 9 p.m., December 5, Manhattan.

State Rehabilitation Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., December 6, Manhattan.

Minutes submitted by Hope Rosen. Minutes are considered draft until approved by the Council.