

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting  
September 8, 2005  
Sternberg Museum, Hays**

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

**Welcome & Introductions**

Chairperson Barbara Crooks called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves to Shari. Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed with one typo change noted in misspelling Julia's name. Motion made, seconded, and carried to accept the State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Minutes of June as corrected.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Additions to the Agenda**

Julia asked to have the membership process added.

**Discussion of the Employer and Public Forum**

Barbara commented on the large turnout at the forums. Morris was impressed with the community involvement and felt this was a good reflection on Shari's management. Peg asked about Dee Smoll being a good candidate for the Council as she was seen as very pro-active and Council members agreed. Julia felt the consumers were not intimidated and were very vocal. Barbara commented on the positive comments made by the group and was surprised because of how far west Hays is.

Barbara asked about the process with the information that is shared at the Forums, specifically with a problem or complaint specific to a person. Dale stated we consider whether it is an isolated case, or overall. Is it a need we are not filling; a need we can't fill? Policy problem? What type of concern is it? Is it something a counselor can change? We spend time talking about how to work on it. The concerns are ultimately kept on file. Each consumer has specific issues and we encourage them to talk with their counselor and resolve it locally. In counselor training, we discuss problems we hear at the forums. We look at ways to free up counselors' time in order to spend more time with consumers. Julia noted the comments made about how difficult it is to get the word out about VR.

Council members felt the DVD shown at the employer forum was better this time, although there are still problems hearing and understanding the first consumer. Peg commented in re-editing the video we may not have this particular consumer tell her story, but rather be told by the narrator. We hope to have the newer version by the December meeting. A new sound system was expected this week, but did not arrive.

Shari was commended on the good job she did facilitating the forum. The use of e-mail between VR and employers was mentioned and Shari stated they do a lot of this with contractors and

employers. As she travels the 46 counties she covers, she is always checking her e-mail wherever she goes.

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

Shari stated she started as a VR counselor in Liberal in 1991 with education as her background. In 1999 she moved to Hutchinson and got into management. She worked there as a VR Chief for four years and had an opportunity to come back to Garden City. Southwest Kansas is her home and felt this was an opportunity she couldn't pass up. A year ago she inherited an additional 19 counties, having 46 at this time. She gave the county/town boundaries she covers in the western part of the State.

She said Garden City has a population of 40,000 and Wallace County, which is the smallest, has 20 VR clients. They have open cases in all 46 counties. They have 10 VR counselors, with Hays being the only community that has two, but also have over 200 participants in the program. They have two Rehab Teachers: Bob Dey in Garden City, and Mike Schmidt in Hays, as well as two evaluators in the area. She explained how the clerical staff was divided up. They are in the process of interviewing for a Rehab Manager in the area, which will assist Shari with her responsibilities.

Counselors in the area have as little as two months to as much as over 17 years of experience. They have had problems in recruiting in this region, but with the latest advertisements, they had as few as five and as many as 15 applicants. Their two newest counselors are Lisa Reed in Hays and Stacey Stump in Garden City. They have struggled in western Kansas with vacancies and not being able to hire and the community gives up on you in terms of a resource, so they are making re-building efforts and working hard to improve customer services. They have a group of VR employees that believe in that and the philosophy that everyone can work with the right training and technology. The caseload in Pratt is now between 80-90 as opposed to 40 in the past. If you have the right person in the right place, with the right attitude, positive things happen. She also credited her Regional Director, Robena Ferrell, with being very supportive and allowing Shari to fill vacancies.

Statistics Shari shared:

- in June 2003 they had 399 new applications  
in June 2004 they had 477 new applications  
in June 2005 they had 697 new applications
- IPE went from 252 in 2004 to 438 in 2005
- They took more applications in the West region than South Central, Southeast or Wichita regions.
- The ten counselors have written more plans than SC, SE or Wichita regions.

Barbara felt Shari was amazing and that she would be great to work for. She thanked her for last night's Public Forum, and this morning's Employer Forum.

### **Updates from the State Director – Dale Barnum**

- Dale thanked Shari and her staff for a job well done.

- On August 2, Secretary Daniels and Deputy Secretary Shively spent the morning at the Rehab Center for the Blind. As a result, they no longer felt that having RCB be self-sufficient was a reasonable request and the Secretary would be talking with the Governor to make sure RCB has enough funding to operate, whether through State General Funds or within the SRS budget. We will still have to prove ourselves on a regular basis and to do that, are making changes in the program. We have to have the best possible outcomes to do business there. Not all changes were popular with staff and consumer groups, but continue to be on-going.
- Kansas has been selected by the National Governor's Association to improve outcomes for transitioning of youth. Several Council members are on the team. We will be planning together for 14-30 year olds to receive post-secondary education and keep competitive employment.
- Reauthorization of the Rehab Act: we hope to have Congressional activity by the end of the year.
- A rolling waiting list is anticipated around November. To meet budget and the demand of consumers coming in, we need to slow the process down somewhat. We will have to close category 2 and 3, but category 1 makes up 80% of our caseload now. We can refer categories 2 and 3 elsewhere for services. A 45-60 day rolling waiting list is expected so consumers will probably not see much change. We will continue to take their applications. Expenditures go up and RS received 1½% increase in federal grant monies. However, nationally there was a 3½% increase.
- Hurricane Relief: we have had staff involved in planning for the aftermath. Very few of the 7,000-10,000 expected evacuees have arrived a yet. There was discussion of rules and regulations being suspended in order to take care of those affected. Presumed eligibility is being waived for CSS and VR has no duration of residency. People still have to meet VR eligibility guidelines, but there is some flexibility with the fact that no medical records will be available. If the person had an open case in an affected State, that will be ignored and they will start anew here. Some food stamp requirements are being waived. We probably won't see any people in VR for a while as their first priorities are food, clothing and housing, not employment. Rehab Services was asked to submit information about the dorm at the Blind Center and number of beds available there in case it needs to be turned into a medical facility.
- Staff support to the Council: Dale will be discussing this with the Executive Committee and there will be information on this at the December meeting.
- Ticket to Work: we have, at the end of August, 1023 tickets confirmed to Rehab Services; 72 tickets were with other employment networks. It was noted the Ticket to Work program started in November 2002.
- Economic Need: Rehab Services is considering a policy change. The Rehab Act and Federal Regulations allow the states to decide whether they want to apply economic need to service income. Income currently doesn't play a part in VR, but you can ask the participant to contribute according to their ability to do so. Peg explained how it currently works and said they are surveying other states to see what they do. Dale added that if we do away with Economic Need, the waiting list could conceivably start sooner and consumers could be denied service sooner. As we spend more money, we have to react sooner. Peg asked the Council for their ideas. After much discussion, the Council

generally felt the client should not have to pay. Dale stated we would get the data finalized and discuss it with the Program Administrators this month, and will e-mail Council members as to what the decision was.

## **Round Robin Reports from Council Members**

### Tami Schwindt:

- Their Regional Coordinator was let go and her area to cover is now larger. She let all staff go, with the option to reapply. As a result, she has all new staff.
- They are doing a Family Enrichment Weekend (FEW) for Spanish speaking people.

### Morris Taylor:

- Their 5-year grant is in the final month and don't know if it will be renewed.
- Things are going well on the reservation.
- They will have over 33 people in status 26, so are having a good working relationship with VR.

### Wendy Blaauw:

- They don't have a Commissioner yet.
- Tuesday of this coming week they are having a stakeholders meeting for input on the State Performance Plan.
- She attended the Transition Conference this year in Washington, D.C. They will be changing the conference to a summit format, bringing work teams in to look at issues.

### Anita Trainer:

- She is still working with an employment service in order to find a full time job.
- She had an opportunity to write a grant for the Head Start Program and received excellent feedback on it.

### Barbara Crooks:

- Manhattan has a new superintendent, formerly from Hutchinson, who is very good.
- Manhattan is expecting an influx due to the Big Red 1 returning. They have hired some more teachers.
- They are not sure how many families they will get as a result of the hurricane.
- The local Council is doing Disability Mentoring Day.
- They will be having a college fair in November and will have a transition fair as a part of that.
- In the spring they will have a Sexual Issues Night for parents of kids with severe disabilities.

### Julia Fonseca:

- They just completed their 5<sup>th</sup> Youth Leadership Forum in June with about 26 delegates. They will be having a reunion in January which could bring 150 teenagers to the city of Salina.
- October 1 is the Youth Employment Academy.

## **Membership Process**

Barbara asked for a current list of members, along with their terms of expiration. Peg stated we do not get the term information as it comes from the Governor's office to the Council member when they receive their letter of appointment. Appointments can be renewed if you have not served a full six years. Dale asked that current members whose terms are to expire, e-mail him if they are interested in being reappointed.

Barbara also asked about having a letter drafted to Rocky Nichols as they haven't seen anyone from DRC attend the meetings since they took over. They are specifically mentioned as one of the members.

Julia asked what role the Council plays in bringing in new members? What is the application process? Peg felt the Council played the primary role in identifying people who they think would be good candidates. We require a resume and there is a 6-8 page form from the Governor's Office to be completed. Each Governor has handled the appointment process differently. Barbara said she has two people in mind and she will ask them to submit resumes. Peg reviewed the different areas Council members must represent such as business and industry, consumers, advocacy organizations, etc.

To help alleviate responsibilities placed upon Peg in assisting the Council, she has considered having various members of her unit take on certain aspects, such as logistics and coordination of where the Council meetings are held, personnel and interviewing in terms of appointments, sending out mass mailings, etc.

Anita asked Shari if there would be anyone from her top-10 list she shared at the Employer Forum that might be interested in being a Council member.

## **Update on Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired – Dianne Hemphill**

- The self-sufficiency issue has been their biggest obstacle.
- This fall they had 28 clients come through the Center.
- Another successful Youth Transition Program was held this summer.
- The Coordinator of the Older Blind Program retired and Dianne has received permission to fill this position.
- Their annual Employment Seminar will be held September 27-29.
- A couple of staff will be retiring soon.
- Dorm staff are being made a part of training teams.
- They had a contract with Ft. Riley for the food service with BEP but it did not come through, so the bid process has to be reintroduced.

## **Announcements**

- Julia gave an update from the Kansas Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired Meeting of which she is liaison. Dianne brought in consultants from Iowa to discuss a method of training that will be implemented called "Structured Discovery".

## **Future Meetings**

We have six regions now and we need to think of towns where we have a strong Chamber of Commerce because of having the Employer Forums. Dale felt we needed to go to the Wichita and Kansas City Metro areas for two of the meetings. No definite decision was made today.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Connie Daggett, Recorder

**Next meeting is December 1-2 in Pittsburg**