

**State Rehabilitation Council Meeting
September 8, 2006
Wichita Hotel at Oldtown**

Present: Members: Barbara Crooks (Chair), Julia Fonseca, Josie Torrez, Morris Taylor, Tami Schwindt, Christine Owens, Anita Trainer, Wendy Blaauw, Michael Donnelly
Staff: Peg Spencer, Dianne Hemphill, Connie Daggett (Recorder)
Guests: Sanford & Barbara Alexander, Steve Stambaugh, Mike Byington, Michael Goren, Susan Stanzel, Donna Wood, Scott Erickson, Thomas Page

Welcome & Introductions

Chairperson Barbara Crooks, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Motion made, seconded, and carried to accept the State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Minutes of June 2. Peg asked if it was necessary to provide paper/special media copies of the Minutes at the meetings since they have been previously e-mailed to every member and all agreed this practice could be discontinued.

Additions to the Agenda

Christine asked to have added discussion on how VR money is distributed when it goes to the regional offices. When a counselor retires, what happens to that money? Mike suggested this be on a future agenda so he could be better prepared to answer those questions. This will be added to the December meeting agenda.

Public Comment

Josie Torrez read a letter as a representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILCK) on the State Rehabilitation Council. She discussed two issues of importance to the customers VR serves: (1) Structured Discovery model at the Blind Services of VR, and (2) employment for all persons with a disability.

When a blind or visually impaired person inquires of the services offered through VR, they are told the Structured Discovery model is the only model available in Kansas. SILCK believes in the independent living philosophy where choice must be given to persons with disabilities. They feel all options must be given to the person so they can make the informed decision as to what works best for them.

SILCK also believes that VR must look at all areas of employment for persons with disabilities accessing VR services, including Tele-Work and Entrepreneurship. These two options are available along with Working Healthy. Many of the VR counselors need to think "outside the box" to help their customers get and keep a job. Choice and quality services need to be offered to enhance the customer's quality of life.

SILCK believes we should all work together to help people with disabilities get a job they feel comfortable with and rely less on the state so they can become more independent *of* the system instead of *on* the system.

Discussion of the Public Forum

There were two forums to accommodate transportation issues in Wichita: 4-6 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. However, apparently the 4-6 p.m. time was also not convenient. When asked what time would be best, moving it up an hour to 3-5 p.m. was suggested by consumers last night as transportation stops at 6 p.m. Peg stated the forum has been held from 3-5 p.m. in the past, and we were criticized as people had trouble leaving jobs early. Barbara stated she counted 43 people at the 4 p.m. session. She felt we had good discussion with interesting consumers. The 7-9 p.m. forum was not as well attended, but had good input from consumers as well.

Other comments made by Council members included never having seen such a large crowd; thought consumer comments were intense at the second session; quality was high and very meaningful; the father and son just starting the process was highlighted; good turnout; Peg stated in the past there might be 100 people from the Wichita area, then went through a spell with very few; in the second session were specific client issues that needed to be looked into which Peg will do when she gets back to the office.

Updates from the State Director – Mike Donnelly

Mike commented he is still getting adjusted to his new position. VR has an opportunity to look at things in a fresh way, and moving us more forward than we already are. He started August 14 and since then has had a visit from RSA. He relayed how that went and the fact that some of the Council members were involved with a meeting with them. It was felt this Council can be helpful in many ways. RSA gave feedback that the Council needs some focus in getting members appointed that had energy to do Council type of work. RSA also discussed the Memorandum of Understanding with Institutions of Higher Education and who pays for auxiliary services. The Department of Education has been looking at this issue for quite some time and are resistant to having something in writing. We do not want our consumers to be treated different from other students. The State Plan needs some modifications. There are some issues around staff qualifications which is being negotiated. Our Plan has been approved conditionally until those issues are addressed. RSA has a new system for monitoring and we are scheduled for next year. They also did some data analyses. Mike stated it was an interesting experience for him.

He had a meeting on the first day with Central Office Management staff to address Order of Selection. A new process has been implemented by which category 1 is managed. It is open and will remain open. Category 2 and 3 will remain closed. He explained the difference between the three categories. Category 1 includes those with more severe disabilities so will remain open. They looked at the average time it takes to do the eligibility process, which was too long, with only 44 days of that sitting on the waiting list. Counselors will now take the application, determine eligibility, and start the development of the IPE with the date that will be printed on the IPE that says 60 days from the date of application you can expect services to begin, if everything else is in place. Consumer will know that up front. He pointed out this depends on whether projections are correct. That should help the consumer with not having to sit on the waiting list, not knowing what is going on. This eliminates having 300+ people taken off all at once. What happens during eligibility determination was explained. He stated one thing that could change all of this however is the State's new process of doing

presumptive determination for people who have applied for GA and Medicaid. They could have as many as 400+ a month, but we take close to 300 applications now a month. Presumptive determination process has slowly started.

We are looking for a new Program Administrator for the Wichita region; the person in that position retired and it is now being advertised.

Mike asked members of the Council if any of them had received reappointment letters from the Governor's Office. Morris and Josie thought they did. However, Morris commented that he and Josie are also on another Advisory Board, so that may have been the letter they received. Mike stated according to the Governor's Office, no reappointments have been made, so he asked that Morris and Josie fax him what they received. Anita stated in the minutes from the Liberal Council meeting, she was listed as being reappointed. Peg clarified that this was a misinterpretation on her part from information she received from the Governor's Office. Discussion continued on the application process and what information Mike needs from each member. Peg and Mike will work with gathering all the information to resubmit with a current letter of interest and resume. He asked for assistance from this Council in identifying people that are interested in being on the Council, representing diversity as well as geographic locations.

Role of Council Liaison with Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired Advisory Committee - Sanford Alexander

Sanford gave a history of SRC and KSBVI Advisory Committee, and a way to get information back and forth between the two bodies in an organized fashion. Julia Fonseca has been in that position, but recently resigned from it. Since then the role of the liaison has been discussed. Josie inquired if we still needed someone in that role to which Sanford felt it was necessary as issues are discussed here that will be in the annual report that might impact the Advisory Committee. Appointments to the Council however are statutory by the Governor's Office. Mike pointed out the pros of them attending both meetings and providing communication. But the challenge being rather they are a voting member and there being confusion as to who they represent. Christine felt they were just a communication link, taking information back and forth. Julia stated she felt a conflict of interest with topics that came up and she not being sure what her position was. Barbara suggested Sanford, Mike and her talk via conference call with suggestions just made at this meeting, which Peg will set up. This will be on the agenda for the December meeting.

KanSAIL budget questions - Christine Owens

Chris relayed concerns that there is no KanSAIL representative in the western part of the state covering 52 counties, only two Rehab Teachers. The budget was not cut, so she wondered how the money was spent. She asked about having it out for bid so others could get the grant. A Memo from Mitch Cooper, Central Office fiscal officer, was distributed giving background on events leading to recent changes in the KanSAIL program. Mike gave an overview of the memo, explaining what led to the plan to terminate some services contracted by KanSAIL and shifting of key staff members

between RCBVI and KanSAIL. Dianne stated the program now has 3½ instructors and a Director position. Grant monies are also used for workshops and outreach, equipment that is purchased for individuals, covering the entire program functions that includes magnifiers, hearing aid types of products, independent living items to help them around their home, canes, they have loaned over 180 CCTVs to persons served by the program. Carolyn Perez in Topeka travels to western Kansas and has excellent assistive technology experience. Josie asked why the person couldn't live in the western Kansas area. It was explained the fear that if the position would become vacant, it could be used for another program, so having it located in Topeka allowed more control over the position. Whether to have it contracted out is an option but Dianne stated the Advisory Committee in the past made it very clear they wanted it provided through Services for the Blind to which Christine commented she was a part of the Committee making that decision.

Barbara relayed a personal experience with a family member having macular degeneration and how it changed the person's life. She is in favor of getting services for these people, to have a quality of life. You tend to get more involved as you personally experience this type of situation. She asked about more emphasis being placed on having specialized counselors.

Dianne explained some of the budget constraints, where Kansas is 5th leading in the country of older population losing their vision, but are near the end of the allotment in receiving money. She felt everyone needed to advocate for more funding.

Mike explained budget issues with regard to refilling vacant positions and shrinkage. Josie felt there should be two full time people to cover the western counties and Chris suggested moving some KanSAIL staff from the east and northeast to the west. Barbara commented that having only a director and 3½ other people is not near adequate for the entire state, but didn't know how to fix that. After further discussion it was decided to put this issue on the next meeting's agenda and between now and then, looking at various options suggested today.

Structured Discovery Learning Model presentation - Susan Stanzel

Susan was allowed a 15 minute presentation on the SDL model. She explained how she is a past client of the state, and just came back for additional help because of losing more vision. She referred to her paper submitted earlier detailing her position on the SDL model. Kansas has a 70%-80% unemployment rate amongst visually impaired individuals. Other states who use SDL are higher in wage earning. She stated acceptance of blindness is #1. They need to learn things differently and strive to learn new skills. In SDL, skills and acceptance of blindness are taught at the same time. One of the tools to do this is the use of sleep shades. Under SDL you learn to do things as a totally blind person. Your sighted techniques are an addition. You need to adjust to every lighting situation. The group setting is important because you see the person who is already doing a skill and this encourages the rest to have high expectations. We need self-confidence. There are philosophy classes in SDL that teach you how to deal with the public. CCTVs will be taught at the end of a person's stay, or whenever they want during their stay in their off time. She relayed comments made by a client in a recent visit she

made to the dorm. She expressed the desire to not be treated medically, but as a whole adult person. Susan asked that this new learning method be given a chance as there have been complaints through the years of the old method. (Time expired)

Traditional Model presentation - Sanford Alexander

Sanford gave some history of other organizations' views which he has represented. He wanted to reflect on some elements that came up last night. The traditional program at KSBVI employed for many years is based on a person's entire need. Categorizing it as the traditional model as it is then a rigid model. An individual who is taught under blindfold is placed in an unsecured environment. Consideration of several basic facts need to be looked at. Veterans Affairs experiences were relayed. The Program has adjusted to the person's needs. The VA is still refining its program with 63 out of 437 actively employed. This is a high unemployment rate, but the average age is 79. The program needs to be made for the individual situation. Persons will call on their remaining vision naturally. You need to use the person's remaining vision to maximize it. Appropriate blindfold training may be employed during this process, but there are a number of ways to approach this. Example of how this could be done was relayed and does not create an uncomfortable setting for the client. Three veterans experiences were relayed. He stated Rehab Services' statistics for following this model were flawed, being only estimates. The SDL theory was adopted by the NFB in the 1980's. it has been shown to have serious flaws. The U.S. Dept. Of Veteran Affairs examined and rejected their philosophy. (Time expired)

Council Member Discussion of Instructional Models and Implications for RCBVI

Morris clarified with Sanford how many of the veterans were over 60 years of age: 45-50, and how many of those were employed: 30-35.

Anita commented on the numbers listed for blind unemployed, but other disability categories may be as high, such as mental illness.

Susan was asked what the qualifications were to be a part of the SDL program: you have to be blind. Our program attempts to handle people of all disabilities.

Tami asked Dianne what level of blindness you have to have to be a part of their program. Dianne stated you do not have to be legally blind, but they do not take anyone who can have corrective surgery. Someone being there is by choice. They want to regain independence. Can qualify for services when they are 20/70 in vision acuity.

Josie asked how a person gets recommended to the Blind Center. Mike stated through the VR counselor, because Rehab Services is paying for it. Tami asked if they took youth, and Dianne stated it is a program for adults. Youth are looked at in the last 18 months of leaving high school.

Morris commented on the complaints that have come from people who have some sight and resist blindfold process. Do you try to maintain their remaining vision or are both

offered? Dianne stated they are changing their approach to having the person use their vision more effectively in order to become employed as an outcome. She listed an example of a person trying to alphabetize and taking too much time to accomplish the task. Employers would not put up with the lack of competitiveness. If you can't use only the vision you have, then we are not preparing them for work. You pick what is best for you.

Christine relayed an incident of someone she knew who refuses to take off her sleep shades when out in the community, as that was the method she was taught.

Barbara stated this is an advisory Council to Mike and there are three possible ways we can go: (1) advise on one method or the other; (2) get more information; or (3) take no action. She relayed her thoughts: in an IEP meeting, it's all about choice and interest. Another issue is we do not have specialists any more, so counselors are to be knowledgeable about all services. Are counselors trained enough in this area to help their clients? There are counselors who don't know what a screen reader is, they don't know a lot about other blindness issues. Of the people we serve in Kansas, she asked what percentage were blind: 8%-9%, which is small, but an important population. She felt we needed to be concerned with getting counselors trained enough to give clients information.

Anita commented on the consumer last night who said she went to the Center but did not have a vocational goal in mind and pressure put on her as a result. Peg explained that Title I dollars fund the Blind Center, which helps people become employed. So people need to have a vocational goal. Anita questioned with the sleep shade model, there may be people who have suffered traumatic blindness, or PTSD. To put sleep shades on them may be a triggering act and not conducive to their mental health. Dianne stated for someone to come to the Center, they have to have a doctor's statement saying they feel the person can go through the program. Barbara asked if someone has been cleared to attend, do they know they are going to be trained with sleep shades. Can they still go through the program if they feel they cannot do it? Dianne stated they talk with the person about other options or training programs. Josie asked if the doctor who refers the person to the Center knows sleep shades are going to be used to which Dianne stated the client has a description of the program but didn't know if the doctor was aware of it.

Mike stated the issue seems to be sleep shades itself. What are the other components of this that are being used? What is the rest of the curriculum that is being used? What skills specifically are not developed if you don't have the sleep shade component? Dianne stated this is a most controversial adult learning theory. They have developed a curriculum using orientation mobility and those with dogs to refresh their skills. Braille proficiency is taught. Every piece of the curriculum is individualized techniques of daily living, cooking, cleaning, organizing, ironing, and doing it in a timely manner; keyboarding and computer skills.

Susan added that in Iowa, to be a rehab counselor you are put under sleep shades. Barbara added her personal preference is there needs to be some training for all counselors in this area and asked for a recommendation from this Council. She thought

it all came back to choice and there was a disagreement on the Council as to which way to recommend. She clarified that she would not make a recommendation that one is better than the other. But she thought she would want a choice if she went for services. Following various other comments, everyone agreed with Wendy's comment that services should be based on individual need and informed choice, the model should be available that best meets the individual's needs and goals; counselors should be trained to help support and facilitate informed choice. Informed choice was defined as a consumer meeting with a counselor, or someone, who can give the client an unbiased view of the available options, and discuss with the consumer what they would be comfortable with. The Council moved, seconded and all approved that recommendation.

Barbara thanked Sanford and Susan for all their efforts they have put into this issue.

Report on Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired Advisory Committee - Sanford Alexander

Sanford stated in forming the agenda for the last meeting, which lasted only three hours, many of the issues discussed that day were the same as those discussed today. All present, with the exception of one, agreed on not using the SDL model. There was discussion that the Advisory Committee has not had a lot of support from the administration and steps to alleviate that were discussed. One way would be to return Kansas to a dual reporting state. He commented one area of concern was taken care of by Betsy Thompson when she was the interim director, and that was reappointments to the Advisory Committee were established with staggering terms. The liaison issue was also discussed.

Policy Update About Economic Need - Peg Spencer

Peg brought the Committee up to date since this issue was last discussed. Several working group meetings have transpired, looking at a different formula that would be fairer for the consumer. How economic need was implemented was looked at. Consistency seemed to be a big issue. She described the newest formula plan, taking into account other expenses a client may have. In formulating a policy, the goal was to create more of a living policy, using 150% of the poverty level. Another goal was that our computer system be updated to facilitate consistency to better track consumer share of the cost. The group came up with a different concept, which Peg explained.

Peg explained the process for getting a new policy in place: within Rehab Services, several groups give input. We work with staff to get their ideas and have a Field Advisory Committee to discuss policy issues, as well as Program Administrators. Once we have the best recommended policy, it gets posted on the SRS internal website for 30 days for additional comment to make sure it doesn't impact other programs. You respond to comments and make revisions based on those comments. The Director presents a Memo to the Deputy Secretary, and if she agrees, she takes it to ISD Management team for approval, and then to be implemented. From posting point to being approved takes approximately six weeks.

Jose would like to see 200% of the poverty level as a stating point, feeling it is more fair

for the consumers. Anita stated from the first time this issue was brought to the Council, she is impressed with the work groups progress on the issue.

Round Robin Reports from SRC Members

Josie Torrez

- SILCK Big Tent Coalition is sponsoring a Statewide Office Candidates Forum September 21 from 7-9 p.m. at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Emerald Ball Room featuring candidates for the office of Governor, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner and Secretary of State.

Christine Owens

- Working Healthy received a waiver through the state plan to provide services to people on a waiver so they can go to work. CNS approved it and hope to have it going by March so they can keep their PAs.

Morris Taylor

- Their office is being moved into the new medical and social services building on the reservation. They will be hosting SILCK Board Meeting in December in the new place.
- They ran out of client service dollars mid-July because they had 60 new clients by then, but they had 40 successful rehabs during that six month period. They need monthly tracking of dollars spent and dollars committed, so hope to do a better job in the future. Rehab Services helped them out tremendously. New grant starts October 1.

Tami Schwindt

- They had their second annual Family Enrichment Seminar for Spanish people in Garden City.
- They have a new grant for foster care.
- They have been doing a lot of advocating on the seclusion and restraint issue.

Dianne Hemphill

- They had their first out-of-state client from Missouri this month. The same counselor has another client coming to the Center soon.
- Annual employment seminar will be held September 26-27.
- Training of the counselors is an on-going challenge and concern. Rehab Center offers quarterly training, but still need to reach others. Will be offering an additional training day on September 28.
- They had success in hiring a VR counselor for the Secretary's demonstration project; she started her 6-month training at the Center before moving to the KC Metro area.

Wendy Blaauw

- They have a new Director of Special Education.
- They have their OCEP verification next week.
- The DD council employment seminar will be held November 16-17.

Anita Trainer

- She has been working part-time for a Wichita company since 2002 and started full time the middle of August.
- She continues to be on Working Health.
- She has an interview September 22 for a new job (Self-Help Network) for which she will be studying.

Julia Fonseca

- They had their 6th Annual YLF; while it was exciting, they had only 16 delegates.
- She is still doing presentations all over the state on disability issues.
- Their office continues to get their structure together as a new organization.

Barbara Crooks

- The housing industry in Manhattan and Junction City areas has increased considerably with the Big Red One returning. They have increased their senior class by 40 students. Some old schools may need to be reopened.
- They have a problem with getting para educators. Peg commented the Dept. of Commerce has a new initiative and she will get the information to Barbara on this.
- She is chairman of an attendance review committee which has big issues.

Barbara stated the Council has discussed having an additional prior to the next meeting, but location has not been determined as yet.

Anita stated if anyone knew of consumers who were fearful of the application process to apply for Council membership she would be happy to assist them and discuss her experience.

Barbara congratulated Mike on his new position and thanked Connie and Peg for their assistance to the Council as well.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Next meeting will be December 7-8 in Ottawa