

**Approved Minutes**  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE  
Thursday, March 5, 2020, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM  
Waterbury Vocational Rehabilitation, Room Cherry C  
HC 2 South 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

**Meeting called by:**

Sherrie Brunelle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**Members Present:**

- Helena Kehne
- Kristen Carpentier (via Skype)
- Marlena Hughes
- Patricia Wehman (via Skype)
- Sherrie Brunelle (via Skype)

**Members Absent:**

- Deborah Tucker Boyce

**SRC Liaison:**

- James Smith

**SRC Coordinator:**

- Kate Larose

**Interpreters:**

None

**Speakers or Presenters:**

None

**Guests:**

None

**1) Introductions** (Sherrie Brunelle)

**Discussion:**

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves.

**Conclusions:**

Thanks to everyone!

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

## **2) Approval of Agenda (Sherrie Brunelle)**

### **Discussion:**

Sherrie asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Marlena moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

### **Conclusions:**

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

### **Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

## **3) Open for Public Comment (Sherrie Brunelle)**

### **Discussion:**

No one from the public was present.

### **Conclusions:**

n/a

### **Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

## **4) Vote: Chair (Sherrie Brunelle)**

### **Discussion:**

Sherrie asked for nominations or self-nominations from the floor. Marlena nominated Sherrie. Helena seconded. Sherrie twice more requested nominations. Hearing none, and an Australian ballot not being necessary, voting was made by a voice vote. Sherrie asked all those in favor of electing Sherrie Brunelle as Chair of the P&P Committee to say Aye. All those not in favor to say No. Hearing none, Sherrie Brunelle was elected as Chair. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

### **Conclusions:**

Sherrie Brunelle was elected chair

### **Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

## **5) Approval of Minutes for November 7, 2019 (Sherrie Brunelle)**

### **Discussion:**

Sherrie asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the November 7, 2019 minutes. A requested edit was made to change Suzanne's last name from Leavitt to Zambcnik. Helena moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

**Conclusions:**

November 7, 2019 minutes were approved.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

Upload approved minutes to the SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 3/11/2020

**6) Review of Priorities for Policy Review (Sherrie Brunelle)****Discussion:**

Sherrie provided an overview of the two page "Policies and Procedures Chapter Review Schedule" noting where we have been as a committee and what we are currently working on. Post-Secondary Education (PSE) was noted as a high priority chapter. James shared that under WIOA performance measures changes from counting the number of people finding jobs and wages, to much more long term and qualitative measures including measurable skill gains and credentials. As a result, VR's practices have changed. The Post-Secondary Education chapter was written prior to WIOA so it will need to reflect these changes, especially for credentialing programs. James has been tasked to have a draft of this by May and to form a small work group of VR counselors. Sherrie will also be part of this, and other members to also be part of this process. Marlena shared that the current movement is to build up strengths and move towards those in employment search. She wonders how much identification and building up of strengths is taken into consideration. Sherrie shared that there are some skills such as soft skills that are not currently considered skill attainment by the Department of Labor and Rehabilitation Services Administration. James shared the example of someone with autism not being able to participate in PSE because the campus is overwhelming. As a result, there are additional supports such as College Steps that VR is now providing to help close the opportunity gap. The Linking Learning to Careers project has included contracted courses for students with disabilities to take place at CCV. There are about 4,000 students on 504s and IEPs yet only 80 of these students are currently accessing the dual enrollment option. Kristen shared that progressive employment experiences help to provide self-assessments and feedback for consumers. James shared that the governor wants to double the level of apprenticeships in the state. Sherrie added that there is a growing need for careers such as electricians. Marlena asked what types of and how much support someone who is referred to an internship program typically accesses. James shared this might include transportation, assistive technology, and accessing the job coach. Sherrie shared that some of these supports, modifications, and accommodations (such as a note-taker, audio books, other assistive technology) may be available under 504 or the Americans with Disabilities Act and should be identified through the assessment process. Marlena shared that she recently attended a TBI conference and the importance of individual motivation is a key factor to success so finding this and helping make it possible to people is important.

Sherrie reminded the committee that the Self-Employment chapter has not been revised since 2009 and many things need to change. James shared that current guidelines provide \$1,500 for part-time self-employment plans and \$2,500 for a plan leading to self-sufficiency. Consumers are not required to have capital beyond VR funds which seems unrealistic. The hope is for the VR contribution amount to be higher, with more buy-in from the consumer from other sources of funding. It was shared that business plans are outside of the expected scope of expertise area of VR counselors. To address this, two potential changes could be contracting with a consultant with expertise in this arena and/or having a central review process. James suggested having a two-tiered IPE which Sherrie said is not feasible given current RSA regulations. Sherrie mentioned that oftentimes additional supports come from the Microbusiness Development Programs through community action agencies but that business counselors assess business plans, not consumers. Marlana said that it's important to have structure but not to discourage innovation. Sherrie said that it is hard to get a business up and running with that low of capital threshold and that including proper assessment of skills, business planning, and necessary levels of funding moving forward would be good changes.

### **Conclusions:**

Committee members interested in participating in the Post-Secondary Education task force in May should contact James. Helena and Patti are interested in participating on the April self-employment meeting.

### **Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- May agenda to include report out of PSE and self-employment working group progress, **Kate Larose**, 4/15/2020
- Schedule April working group on self-employment, **James Smith**, 3/11/2020
- Share VR/MBDP working guidelines with committee members, **Kate Larose**, 3/11/2020

## **7) Chapter 312: Transportation (Group)**

### **Discussion:**

James shared that one thing to be emphasized is that transportation needs to be clearly linked to an employment goal and they are looking at tightening up language related to that. This may also include guidelines to encourage education, such as needing transportation to participate in a credentialing program. Sherrie asked James to share some of the current challenges with transportation related expenses. He shared that 10 years it wasn't uncommon for consumers to approach VR for new snow tires or a car repair, and that even designated agencies and community action agencies might refer consumers to VR for these types of expenses. Often in these cases when people would present at VR and ask why they were applying they would cite wanting new tires rather than an employment goal and often they would disengage shortly after the purchase was made. As a result, VR has evolved their process to start with

assessment and employment plans before considering expenses such as transportation. He shared that because this chapter hasn't been updated in awhile it currently does not reflect this nuance. He also shared that car repair is another concern as it is needed in order to get to work but that, if someone has an older car in need of repairs, it is unsustainable expense as after the initial repair it will continue to need repairs on an ongoing basis. He mentioned that VR used to work with car coaches through community action agencies to help assess the real cost of car ownership but that the program no longer exists. Sherrie asked James what level priority this chapter should be considered. James shared that this is a medium level priority. Helena shared her experience with public transportation options with providers like GMATA. She asked what services exist for people who live in more rural areas and shared that through her workplace experience she continually sees that transportation is one of the most pressing barriers for people seeking training and employment. James shared that fixed route transit is not a great fit for many consumers and highlighted the Governor's Transportation Summit and some of the recommendations that came out of the event including micro transportation and on-demand options. He shared that there is a pilot about to start in Montpelier. James shared that VR purchases and adapts one or two vans a year which can run \$60k-\$100k. Many VR agencies will not provide for this expense, but Vermont continues to do so as a paraplegic or quadriplegic cannot travel around Vermont without one and it would be impossible to afford this expense even if they were earning well above the median income. This is a way of leveling the playing field as most Vermonters can acquire transportation for \$15k whereas a person using a chair cannot. Sherrie said that Vermont Center for Independent Living is a good resource for people looking for modified transportation and accessibility options and there is also a national website which is helpful and also includes used vehicle options. At the annual retreat in October car repairs, funding for traveling, and lack of a car coach were all identified as needing to be considered in the updates.

### **Conclusions:**

Determine highest priority needs for this chapter.

### **Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Have follow-up conversation to determine highest priority needs transportation chapter, **Sherrie Brunelle and James Smith**, 4/2/2020

## **8) Chapter 303: Maintenance (Group)**

### **Discussion:**

Sherrie asked James to provide an overview on this chapter. James shared that it never ceases to amaze people what VR might be able to pay for. He shared the example of a youth with a low-income background looking for a first-time job in need of interview clothes, which can be covered as it is clearly linked to an employment plan. Marlena shared that she was happy to see both extreme medical risk and mental health services included in the chapter. James shared that further tightening language to reflect that expenses need to be tied to the employment plan is needed. He shared an example of a homeless youth in need

of first month's rent to obtain housing so that they can then engage in employment related to their plan. Another example would be paying for rent during the duration of an unpaid training program and he would like the chapter to reflect examples such as these. In short, maintenance expenses should be temporary money to help someone get to a different place. Sherrie suggested that we look at some of the language from the case work practices chapter which would be relevant here. Kristen echoed the examples that James shared. Marlena shared that maintenance expenses are important for people transitioning out of facility and back into community and is critical for helping people to meet the goals of their employment plans. Sherrie wondered about other resources that could help with some of these expenses such as field service offices or community action agencies. Kristen said that in Rutland they do refer people out to other agencies for things like winter wear. She said that they do not often find that consumers are seeking maintenance items unrelated to employment.

**Conclusions:**

The committee decided that this is a medium priority chapter.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Share Nat Piper's contact info with Helena Kehne for follow-up, **James Smith**, 3/13/2020

**9) Other Business** (Sherrie Brunelle)

**Discussion:**

A. Grant Updates

The Kessler Foundation grant program will start enrollment on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Kristen is leading the team in Rutland. VR recently found that only 15% of SSI/SSDI consumers ever worked themselves off benefits and they wanted to see if they could increase this with specialized services in Rutland and Burlington, especially given that this means many of these consumers are continuing to live in poverty. They are excited about what this opportunity will mean for consumers. The intent is to enroll 200 total consumers (100 at each site).

B. Agenda Setting – May 7, 2020

- PSE working update
- Self-employment update
- Chapter 313: Audiology Services and Hearing Aids

**Conclusions:**

See above.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Present proposed agenda, **Kate Larose**, 4/16/2020

**10) Adjournment** (Sherrie Brunelle)

**Discussion:**

Sherrie asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Helena moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

**Conclusions:**

Motion to adjourn approved at 11:42am.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 3/11/2020
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 3/11/2020
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 5/7/2020
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 5/12/2020