

Approved Minutes
PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE
December 3, 2020
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
via Zoom

Meeting called by:

Nick Caputo, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Members Present:

- Gina D’Ambrosio
- Marlena Hughes
- Nick Caputo
- Rose Lucenti
- Sherrie Brunelle
- Brian Smith
- Danielle Dubois

Members Absent:

- Bill Meirs
- Robin Ingenthron

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Interpreters:

None

Speakers or Presenters:

- Ben Wimett
- Quinby McLellan
- Michael Kingsbury

Guests:

None

1) Introductions (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

2) Approval of Agenda (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

Nick asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Sherrie moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

3) Open for Public Comment (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

No one from the public was present

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

4) Approval of Minutes for October 8, 2020 (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

Nick asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the [Minutes from October 8, 2020](#). There were none. Rose moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

October 8, 2020 minutes were approved

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to the SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 12/8/2020

5) Presentation: Assistive Technology (Ben Wimett and Quinby McLellan)

Discussion:

Ben and Quinby from the Vermont Assistive Technology Program introduced themselves and answered the committee's questions below. [See overview here.](#)

- **Describe the core grant AT services**

A lot of our core services—especially during the pandemic—are responding to questions from the general public. These phone calls include information gathering about how the disability impacts the caller at home, work, and school, and we will use that information to make recommendations. This is done with both the general public as well as VR clients. This is a very collaborative, brainstorming process to see what works best for folks. We are prohibited by our federal guidelines to make written recommendations about what is going to work for non VR consumers, and we don't get into the nitty gritty of why we think it's a good fit unless someone wants to engage in a fee-for-service for that work (i.e., a school district or workman's comp arrangement). The next step in the process lends itself best to in-person services and having someone come in to one of our centers to try out technology.

- **Describe how VR AT services are similar and different from core services.**

For VR consumers we are able to take a deeper dive into their experience and provide a tailored approach that comes with a written report and implementation support, and sometimes funding support. We encourage others to join them at the try out centers (such as family members, employers, and support staff), as we find that the more input we have, the better fit the recommendations are. Additionally, we can provide ongoing technical assistance so, for example, they might call us to help walk them through something they might have forgotten. We also provide a 30 day loan program so consumers can take the device from us, try it out in their environment, and then decide if they want their VR counselor to purchase the item or if they need something additional. The loan program is also available to the general public with the caveat that this has slowed down as a result of the pandemic and associated protocols for state workers.

- **Can you share some VR AT success stories?**

One of the first VR consumers we worked with was a dental hygienist. She wanted to go back to school so that she could grow in her career in that field and we were able to get her an iPad to help with reading textbooks, software to provide definitions, and also upgrade her talk to text program. She called five years later to share that she is now a practice leader for a large dental office, and she shared how she was able to self-advocate with her employer for reasonable accommodations. Another consumer had dwarfism and we worked with her to provide training on how to talk to her school's office of disability to request needed accommodations such as dorm room location and accessibility, and we were also able to get her a very lightweight surface pro and wireless microphone so that she was able to easily pick it up and not have to worry about wires getting stuck in her wheelchair.

- **What challenges have you run into providing AT services for VR consumers?**

Demonstrations and hands on use of technology has been tricky as we are no longer able to do this in-person at our try-out centers.

Nick asked what the thoughts are about services post-pandemic. Ben shared that it will likely look like pre-pandemic services with more flexibility for virtual offerings to meet with Ben such as quick video consultations. Quinby added that being able to do these virtual consults from the consumer's environment is helpful as it reduces the chance that a consumer will get home after a conversation at the try out center only to realize that the technology discussed won't be a good fit based on factors they had overlooked or not thought about until they looked at their space again. Ben added that in-person visits they made in the past (such as visits to a consumer at home in a hospital bed) might now lend themselves better to video consults.

James asked if it is common for employers to attend these meetings. Ben shared that it has only happened three to five times in the last five years but wished it would happen more. It sets a precedent, demonstrates how supportive the employer is, and the employer is more bought in to the accommodations. Quinby added that often the accommodation serves as a universal accommodation for all employees such as replacing fluorescent lighting.

Gina asked what happens if something is cost prohibitive. Ben shared this has only happened once or twice as they try to be mindful of the whole picture as well as the range of available financial supports. In these cases they found that the identified grant sources had been depleted. They always create a plan b for these higher cost items and in these instances they had to go that route.

Marlena shared that connecting corrections with AT would be useful, and Ben shared that they would like to work more closely. They have never worked one-on-one with someone who is incarcerated but have worked with people who have recently transitioned back out into the community.

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

n/a

6) Presentation: Corrections (Michael Kingsbury)

Discussion:

Michael, a Senior Counselor based out of the Rutland VocRehab office, introduced himself and answered the committee's questions below.

How has it been to provide counseling services during COVID?

Transitioning out of the office into the home was tough. I thought for sure it

would not last two weeks. After two months of being out of the office, I realized that I needed to develop a practice of working from home. What worked well was using listening and motivational interviewing skills that can be employed via Teams and the phone, along with creating balance and structure between work and home.

James asked if Michael has found that recently released offenders need access to internet and devices. Michael shared that he found this to be the case, especially in group living situations as when he would call they would need to locate the person and bring them to the shared phone and he could tell that the background distractions of a shared living arrangement make it hard to discuss questions of a personal/sensitive nature. Sherrie asked if supervisors and staff can create opportunities for private spaces. Michael said that this has sometimes helped.

Marlena asked how this impacts the people he is serving. Michael shared that in some situations the pandemic has sped things up as it is important to cut to the chase on the phone or in Teams given the levels of fatigue that come with extended conversations. The downside is that there is reduced time for relationship building that comes naturally from being in person together in the office setting, and the lack of associated body language and non-verbal communication cues.

Sherrie asked what role VR plays in discharging someone in corrections. Michael said that John Howe is working within the facility and doing assessment and resume development prior to release. He and John will be speaking with an inmate in December so that when they are released they will have a relationship with someone in VR. This type of warm handoff ensures that people have additional resources when they enter back into the community.

Nick asked how long Michael works with people once released. He said that they like to be there for the long haul. Every case is unique but a typical situation might look like this: assist someone until job placement, continue to serve as a support while on the job especially to talk through some of the challenges and decompress (as many of the times folks are in the service/customer service industry and customers can be challenging to work with throughout the day), support the consumer through their current and long term education goals, and work with them while they might be working through substance misuse disorders. In some cases this will include weekly meetings for years. There are a lot of daily stressors and it requires helping people to focus on the positive and their future goals, hopes, and dreams, while addressing what they also need in the moment to pay the bills and get by.

What specific challenges have you experienced providing services remotely?

Housing, lack of social supports, getting access to driver's licenses and other personal identification pieces such as Social Security cards.

Can you share some success stories?

They've been able to offer virtual job shadow and a robust online assessment with high quality videos. Especially for youth offenders these are far superior to a paper and pencil test and it leads to a dialogue about career development.

Marlena asked how more inmates can get the support they need, especially emotional support, as they reenter their communities. Michael said one of the biggest success factors is being there to listen to someone and getting to the point where trust has been built so that the walls can come down and let people in who can provide support and help. Michael shared that having consumers who have gone through the process sharing their experience with others in a mentoring role would be very beneficial and a win-win for both parties. You have to be able to see a template for success in order to be able to envision it.

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

n/a

7) Other Business (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

A. Agenda Setting for February 4, 2021

Discussion:

Nick shared that the steering committee decided to take up the following topics (which were brainstormed at a previous performance review committee meeting) at a future full SRC meeting:

- Invite VR counselors to come in and share successes and challenges and the stories behind them, and experience and challenges in supporting the consumers they serve to inform us as a committee as to best practice and changes in practice given COVID
- Invite VR consumers to share their experiences of what's working well and the challenges of working with VR

James said he spoke with the VR data folks about the previous requests on chronic illness. They shared that they do not track this information in a way that the VR system can differentiate to this level.

The following items were named as possibilities for the February meeting:

- VR's marketing contract/plan
- James wondered if it would be possible to have a COVID assessment as he suspects pandemic related job loss might be disproportionate for folks with disabilities and a presentation consisting of additional data and/or observations would be useful. Rose said that VDOL has access

to this data, and said it was extremely difficult for people with disabilities to even file. Rose will follow-up with Theresa at DOL to tease out this data from their numbers. It was decided that this would be a good fit for the next PR committee meeting.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Follow up with Nick, James, and Rose in drafting the next agenda, **Kate Larose**, 1/5/2021

8) Adjournment (Nick Caputo)

Discussion:

Nick called the meeting adjourned at 11:28am

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 12/8/2020
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 12/8/2020
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 2/4/2021
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 2/9/2021