

Approved Minutes
SRC STEERING COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 7, 2020
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Teleconference +1 (802) 828-7667, 225043172#

Meeting called by:

Sarah Launderville, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

Members Present:

- Nick Caputo, Chair, PR Committee (via Skype)
- Sam Liss, Chair, AOE Committee (via Skype)
- Diane Dalmasse, Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (via Skype)
- Sherrie Brunelle, Chair, P & P Committee (via Skype)
- Sarah Launderville, SRC Chair (via Skype)

Members Absent:

- Brian Smith, SRC Vice Chair

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Interpreters:

None

Speakers or Presenters:

None

Guests:

None

1) Introductions (Sarah Launderville, Chair)

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 (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. Sarah requested a state of the state from VR to inform decisions around upcoming meeting. Sam moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. Approved via vote of 3-0-1

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

3) Open for Public Comment (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

No one from the public was present.

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

4) Approval of Minutes for March 5, 2020 (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the March 5, 2020 minutes. There were none. Sam moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. Approved via vote of 3-0-1

Conclusions:

March 5, 2020 minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Approved minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 5/12/2020

5) Miscellaneous

A. State of the State of COVID (Diane)

Diane shared that VR continues to telework for the foreseeable future. The Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe order expires on May 15th, and it is anticipated that more guidance will be coming soon. She is hopeful that departments will have discretion around teleworking into the future. There have been some bumps in the road to date in the transition to home-based offices, but they have navigated through these. BAM and VABIR staff have done a great job with maintaining employer relationships with both essential businesses as well as those starting to reopen. Her sense is that, overall, morale is good. They are

learning a lot about working remotely and have found that no-show rates are down given virtual attendance options. She shared that VR is not allowed to have Zoom due to concerns from IT staff, but VABIR has Zoom and it appears to be the most effective virtual platform.

James shared that follow-up letters were recently sent to Ticket to Work holders which are required each quarter, and this time the letters included information about applying for unemployment insurance and reconnecting with benefits counselors. Typically, there is not a lot of response to these letters but there was this time. VR is also now sending out letters to consumers whose cases were marked as closed and employed with similar language given the recent unemployment rates.

Sherrie said that Vermont Legal Aid is also providing [COVID resources](#) and wondered about sharing that as a resource. Diane shared that VR partnered with Barb Prine, and Legal Aid has been a wonderful partner.

Diane shared the concern that some low-wage workers were ineligible for unemployment insurance and mentioned that [pandemic unemployment assistance](#) (PUA) may be an option. PUA is open to many more people who would have been ineligible for UI such as low wage earners and those who are self-employed. What this means is that people are eligible for PUA in the amount of roughly \$800 a week through July and it is retroactive. There is tremendous concern about supporting guardians, families, and low-wage workers to protect their eligibility for SSI and Medicaid (for example through ABLE accounts) when these funds go away and the focus is on getting the word out broadly and forming a working group.

Diane mentioned the project being done by the videographer who worked with the Spirit of the ADA Awards who captured testimonials from three different employers. The videos are almost final and—based on what she’s seen so far—are fantastic. Given that many businesses have pulled advertising, there is no more PSA space available so it is anticipated that the videos will receive considerable airtime on WCAX and WPTZ. The intent is to get the message out as the state reopens on the value of hiring people with disabilities. Sherrie suggested seeing about getting on Across the Fence and 5:30pm time slots.

Diane gave kudos to VR staff, especially James, for working on a DOL grant that came out with three-week turnaround on youth apprenticeships. A high-quality grant application was submitted on Tuesday for the four year, \$1.4 million grant which would enable VR to make apprenticeships a key piece of their work and will help people—especially young people—to earn considerable wages over time.

Sam shared that David Stapleton was recently granted \$20k by ODEP. The

intent is to get the word out on a Career Access type pilot project. The name of the project will be Transitioning to Economic Self-Sufficiency (TESS). Diane shared that VR also received \$20k based on a concept paper that lays out a systematic approach for post-secondary experiences for high school students on IEPs and 504s, a need based on data indicating that few are taking advantage of dual enrollment vouchers. This project will be a multi-faceted approach to change this and bend the curve for students with disabilities going on to PSE programs after high school.

Sarah shared that VCIL received a lot of money for COVID related direct service that will end September 2021. This includes a focus on food access, employment and returning to work, computer access for telehealth, socialization, and connecting people to employment. Diane shared they are happy to brainstorm ideas with VCIL on employment. Sarah shared that they are concerned about transition-aged youth and special education overall, especially Vermont's youngest aged students with disabilities. Diane shared that transition counselors are working hard and are prioritizing high school seniors in helping them create new plans, and that virtual job shadow programs were just launched in Brattleboro and Barre. She said that it would be good to invite Tara Howe to a future meeting to speak on this topic. Sherrie shared that Vermont Legal Aid will hold a [virtual town hall](#) on special education in the near future.

James talked about informed choice on going back to work, especially as it pertains to consumers who want to go back to work but are in high risk groups. Intermediate guidance was written up to help staff support consumers to make informed choices which refer to CDC guidelines and suggest that they speak with their primary healthcare provider. VR also takes the position that if someone is in a high-risk category and wants to go into a high-risk employment situation, that the VR counselor cannot support it meaning that paid services would not be provided around that job placement (e.g., uniforms and transportation). There is also guidance included about assessing the workplace for safety. Sherrie asked why this would not be supported given that consumer choice is a huge piece of VR services. Diane shared that it stems from concerns for human life as well as liability, and that from regional discussions with New England state counterparts it is clear that opinion on this varies greatly by state and Vermont is in the middle. James shared that VR's commitment to choice is not unconditional. He said that, for example, if there was a consumer who wanted to be a logger but has a balance issue that would make it unsafe for them to handle a chainsaw, VR would not support this as it would be irresponsible. Another example might be when a consumer might place themselves in a situation where they could be exploited. Sherrie said she understands this and just wanted to make sure it is not a substituted judgement type of issue and said that it is a delicate balance. Nick asked what impact this will have on VR if someone takes a job that is not supported- would they close the case and would it have a negative impact on success rates? Diane and

James said they likely would not accept the closure but have not had this happen yet. Sherrie asked if VR would talk to their General Counsel on this matter. Diane said they may do this.

Sarah said she has heard from so many people on peer calls recently that they are itching to get back to their jobs at grocery stores, etc. and she is wondering how to best support people to do what they want to do while ensuring there is understanding of the high level of health risk that is involved. Sam shared that on yesterday's NCIL call numerous people shared that their states' VR offices are all but closed down as they are being shifted to handle unemployment claims, and it speaks very highly to Vermont and our current leadership that this is not the case here.

B. Member recruitment materials (Kate)

Kate provided an overview of the draft recruitment materials below and committee members shared their feedback.

Sample images on the front page, or at the top of a one pager
(To be created so they can be used with reader software.)



Content on the back page, or at the bottom of a two pager
(Will be edited accordingly for hard copy and electronic versions, and to match color theme.)

What is the SRC?

Vermont's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) advocates for consumer-directed and effective vocational services and for the creation of resources and services that will result in equal opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities. The State Rehabilitation Council partners with VocRehab Vermont to find ways to improve and expand services to Vermonters with disabilities. The Council is made up of representatives from the business sector, people with disabilities, advocates, the Vermont Client Assistance Program (CAP), and community partners.

Who are we looking for?

By federal statute, the SRC is required to have at least four representatives from business, industry and labor. Members are appointed by the Governor and terms are three years in length.

What is the time commitment?

The SRC meets four times a year in Waterbury, and an annual retreat is held in October. SRC members are also expected to participate in one of three committees (Advocacy, Outreach, & Education, Performance Review, or Policies & Procedures). The meeting schedule for 2020 can be [viewed here](#).

Want to learn more?

We invite you to take a look at our most recent [annual report](#) and peruse our [website](#). Reach out to SRC Coordinator Kate Larose at 802-760-0574 or kate.larose@vermont.gov with any questions and to apply for membership.



How Recruitment Materials Will Be Used

At the last meeting we discussed recruitment. The Steering Committee named that they would like to do targeted outreach for recruitment including:

- Emailing current SRC membership to solicit names for good candidates
- Working with Martha at Vermont Family Network
- Talking to Max and Karen to recruit someone from Green Mountain Self-Advocates
- Reaching out to Hilary Melton who runs Pathways
- Approaching VCIL
- Reviewing VCDR membership to name any other organizations we want to reach out to
- Having Kate work with Tara to share with the Youth Advisory Council, and Nat to share with Business Account Managers

Questions for the Steering Committee

- Which visual style is preferred?
- What edits to wording would you like made?
- Should the "who we are looking for" be targeted to match the audience (e.g., in this example it focuses just on the business community, or list all possible membership positions?)
- What size would you like the document to be?
- Would you like the visual and wording on one page together? Or the visual on one side, wording on the other?

Which visual style is preferred?

- Sam prefers number one as he finds it more appealing to the eye, which the second option feeling too sterile.
- Nick also prefers number one, number two has too much white space.
- Sherrie thinks the first one is more attention grabbing but not sure if there should be as much text for readability and wonders if there is a way to

shorten. Suggests moving the text from the second option and putting it under the first piece.

- Diane agrees with the overall comments. She does not like the question marks on people's faces.

What edits to wording would you like made?

- Diane finds the language, "want to shape VR policies and procedures" limiting and too bureaucratic. She suggests, "Want to shape VR programs".
- Nick suggests have a blurb about looking to give back to your community or a focus on public service.
- Sherrie suggests simplifying language and using shorter sentences like "law" instead of "statute" and "look" instead of "peruse". She suggests having more bullets and offered to help.
- Sam said that "We invite you to take a look at" feels stuffy and needs to be reworked.
- Nick did not like the first sentence of what is the SRC but said the second half of that section is good.

Should the "who we are looking for" be targeted to match the audience (e.g., in this example it focuses just on the business community, or list all possible membership positions?)

- Sarah likes the tailoring to specific audiences.
- Diane said there is guidance around how to use plain language and reading levels and Suzanne Hopkins can be a resource on staff. She also suggested fleshing out time commitment (i.e., 90 minutes four times a year and virtual attendance is possible).
- Sam and Sarah said that it makes sense to start with a few options as needed with tailoring to BAMs and YAC as a starting place.

B. Draft brochure (Kate)

In response to multiple requests from SRC members, Kate shared a draft membership directory for internal use. It includes name, town of residence, email address, SRC role, and committee membership. She asked if that was the correct information to include, or if more or less information is desired. Diane thinks it looks great as is with current information provided.

Conclusions:

Kate will move forward with finalizing recruitment materials and membership directory.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Share final documents with the Steering Committee, **Kate Larose**, 6/1/2020

6) Agenda Discussion for June 4, 2020 (Group)

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Approval of Agenda

- 3) Open for Public Comment
- 4) Approval of Minutes – April 9, 2020 Full SRC
Consent Agenda – Approved Committee Minutes & Coordinator’s Report
- 6) Committee Chair Updates (5 minutes each with no written reports)
- 7) Director’s Report.
- 8) VR Regional Managers’ Updates (Bill Sugarman and Will Pendlebury)
- 9) Break
- 10) Presentations:
 - Jess DeCarolis, Dual Enrollment, Agency of Education
 - Tara Howe, Transition, VR
 - Marianne Langello, Contracted Classes, VR
- 11) Other Business
- 12) Round Table
- 13) Adjournment

Conclusions

Rework the proposed agenda above to have a focus on COVID-19. Move presentations by Jess, Tara, and Marianne to a future meeting. Reach out to those below for presentations at the June meeting:

- Benefits counselors
- Nat Piper and one or two BAMs with a focus on how the economy is opening up

Additionally, reach out to Tom Hamilton for a June presentation.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Work with James on finalizing the June SRC agenda presentations, **Kate Larose**, 5/11/2020

7) Plan out remaining presentations for 2020 *[There was not time in the meeting for this agenda item.]*

- October 1, 2020
Retreat agenda
- December 3, 2020
Steve Dickens and Marc Adams
- Benefits counselors?

Other presentations previously discussed:

- Tom Hamilton, SILC
- Youth Survey Draft

8) Other Business (Sarah Launderville)

A. Virtual Meeting Platforms

Sarah said that VCIL can host the next meeting using the Zoom platform and provide log-in access to Kate.

Conclusions:

Kate will follow up with Sarah, James, and Diane about next steps.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

See above.

9) Adjournment (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah called the meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 5/12/2020
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 5/12/2020
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 9/3/2020
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 9/8/2020