

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
Director's Report
October 4, 2018

Budget: We are solidly on track financially closing out FFY '18 and going into SFY '19. We should have carryover of federal grant funds going into FFY '19. I won't have the final numbers until the first week in November. We need to be cautious about sustaining our stable revenue situation. Ticket revenue continues to be very good. We have formed a development committee to identify and pursue funding opportunities in the public and private sectors. We are also developing strategies to increase our ticket revenue.

Personnel: I am very pleased to share that we have hired Donna Curtin as the new Field Services Manager. She started work on 9/17. Donna has a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and has been doing rehabilitation work since 1995. She worked as a VR Transition Counselor in the Barre office from 1999 – 2004. Donna left to become a private rehab counselor and two years later joined VRS Disability Management. She and her partners built VRS into the largest organization in New England serving injured workers with coverage in MA, NH, RI, CT and NY. Donna brings her knowledge of VR and rehabilitation work along with her experience in personnel management, new program development, public relations and the operation of a large and successful company. I am confident she will become a valued member of the VR team. Part of Donna's orientation and training plan will include field visits to all the offices. Join me in welcoming her to VocRehab.

We have hired Nichole Jolly to replace Kathryn Housewright and Jim Gallagher to replace David Leonard. We believe both are great hires. Jim has tremendous potential and brings a great skill set with him including videography. We'll be doing some team building later in the year as we have had very significant turnover in Central Office.

College Steps:

VR/VT Dept. of Labor Partnership: It's a new day in the working relationship with VDOL. We are talking seriously about co-location in Rutland, Middlebury and beyond. We are currently co-located in Bennington and it works very well for VR and VDOL staff and our mutual customers. VDOL partnered with us, CCV, and VT Technical College to apply for an expansion grant for the VT Apprenticeship Program and we were awarded the grant. There is a major planning meeting coming up in October. We are proposing to use CWS Business

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Account Managers to outreach and engage employers to be apprenticeship sites. We see apprenticeships as an excellent vehicle to learn while you earn and to reach higher wage jobs. They fit right into our Careers Initiative.

Jobs for Independence: JFI will officially come to an end on 12/31. However, thanks to the great work of ESD and VR staff, the SNAP Employment and Training Program will be greatly expanded to all eligible Vermonters beginning 10/1. The EAP and VABIR staff will be scaled back but continue to provide services across the state. The numbers of referrals will likely be scaled back as well to make it manageable. The success of the JFI program really drove the SNAP E&T expansion.

Youth Advisory Council: As some SRC members already know, we brought organizations who serve youth with disabilities and their families together to create a Youth Advisory Council. We put the word out and had about 25 youth express interest. We held an orientation meeting on 10/9 and about 18 youth attended. The meeting went extremely well with lots of participation and ongoing interest in becoming members. We plan to host 4 meetings a year and take the summer off. It is a one-year commitment for members which can be extended for up to 3 years. We hope to get their best thinking on how to improve transition services for youth with disabilities and to provide them leadership skills for the future.

VR Case Review Tool and Process: Staff have developed a case review tool in AWARE. The tool includes compliance questions and questions about quality of the work. A brief pilot was conducted, and feedback collected. We are going statewide with the case review tool. We think it will provide comprehensive information on how staff are using AWARE, compliance with law and regulation, and the quality of the casework being done. James will be reviewing the tool with the Performance Review Committee.

Short Term Focused Rehabilitation Counseling: Feedback from our last Pulse Team meeting got me thinking about how to support consumers to move forward towards a career. I consulted with Steve Dickens who manages our EAP program about short-term focused counseling models. He recommended we look at Problem Solving Therapy or PST. I invited 6 or 7 of our strongest counselors to a meeting with Steve and one of his EAP counselors who is trained in PST. She

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presented an overview of the model and there was a lot of discussion. We are going to look at a possible pilot, training options and involve VABIR as next steps. We are focused on serving people who are engaged and moving forward. We must be providing support so that people are successful, and this might be a way to enhance our consumer supports.

Boat is on shore – let Fall begin. Halloween is around the corner.
Diane