

Draft Minutes
SRC POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 6, 2022
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Waterbury State Office Building, Ash and Zoom

Meeting called by:

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

Members Present:

- Andrea Bacchi
- Calla Papademas
- Cari Kelly
- Emily Ahtúnan
- Helena Kehne
- Kristen Carpentier, non-voting
- Laura Siegel
- Patricia Wehman
- Rocko Gieselman, non-voting
- Sherrie Brunelle

Members Absent:

- Sarah Sterling

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Guests:

- n/a

Presenters:

- n/a

Interpreters:

- n/a

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. Cari moved to approve the agenda and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote was unanimous 7-0-0

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) Approval of Minutes November 4, 2021 (Sherrie Brunelle)

Discussion:

Sherrie asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the [Minutes from November 4, 2021](#). Patti moved to approve the agenda and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote unanimous 7-0-0

Conclusions:

November 4, 2021 minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Approved minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 1/11/2022

5) Spending Guidelines (James Smith)

Discussion:

James shared with the committee that VR is proposing the spending guidelines appendix be a document separate from the policies and procedure manual moving forward. He said that, in his view, it makes sense to have the spending guidelines be a separate from a practical standpoint so that updates can easily be made.

Emily agreed, and asked who makes updates. James shared that he would do that as part of his role as Deputy Director for VocRehab.

Rocko said that a separate document makes sense and makes updates easier.

Kristin agreed and added that—as the costs of things change—having the spending guidelines separate provides for a more agile document.

Committee members voiced agreement in supporting VR's proposal to have the spending guidelines be a separate document.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- n/a

6) **Update:** Self-Employment (Group)

Discussion:

Revisions to Chapter 308 have been in progress for several years now and we are approaching the point of fine-tuning the details. James congratulated Sherrie for all the time and work she and the working group have put in to the updates and for making this chapter a priority. The big change is that VR previously had a policy that left it up to the counselor to figure out if a consumer's business plan is viable or not, which was not a good fit for the counselor.

The following overview and updates to the chapter edits were highlighted:

- Established clear differentiation between self-employment for purposes of creating supplemental income for the consumer and income leading to self-sufficiency
- Clarification of what activities do not meet the definition of self-employment
- Setting clear expectations of consumer throughout the process
- Clearly defining roles of DVR counselors, the consumer, other DVR related resources such as VABIR, job coaches, business consultants, and other professionals
- Establishing comprehensive and multifaceted assessments to determine a consumer's ability to engage in their desired self-employment

- More comprehensive analysis of the feasibility of the consumer's proposed business idea
- Establishing a team of experts to make the feasibility determinations and ultimate funding recommendation for DVR
- Increased funding for employment leading to self-sufficiency with a potential for \$10,000 in DVR funding and using a 1:1 match method of determining funding
- Making clear that DVR funding is available only as a secondary source of funding for a consumer's proposed business
- Establishing a process for granting exceptions to funding guidelines

Emily asked about the resources that exist in the state that consumers might use for small business support. She wondered if it would be possible to create a list of these resources.

Kristen shared that she loved the idea of a resource list, especially as a consumer might be planning a business outside of the VR region they were being served in.

Rocko and James shared that local counselors know their regions well and refer consumers to the local resources that exist.

Cari added that at United Way they are wanting to build a stronger relationship with the owner of the new start up space at the former [Blodgett building](#) and will keep the committee apprised if there are opportunities that might exist, especially for people with disabilities and noted that the building is fully accessible and rent is reasonable starting at \$500 a month.

Sherrie added that CAP is supportive of maintaining a resource list for VR consumers for small business supports. Sherrie said that it might be difficult for VR to create and maintain but that CAP could do this.

Emily inquired about the differences in the spending guidelines when it comes to business as supplemental income, business as sustaining income, and matching funds.

Sherrie asked if it made sense for the spending guidelines for business as supplemental income to only be set at \$1,500 if the guidelines for business for self-sufficiency becomes \$10k.

Kristen added that it's dependent on the type of business they are doing. For example, the basics of a baking business might be less expensive than getting set up for other business types.

Rocko wondered about delineating the differences between self-employment and models that require people to pay in that may not be actual self-employment but thought that, ultimately, the assessment process would help address this on a case-by-case basis.

Andrea asked if multi-level marketing companies are acceptable. Rocko said they are not.

Laura and Cari asked questions about the assessment process. Kristen shared what the process looks like in their region, which includes a deeper dive into the basics of owning and operating a business.

Rocko shared [that this](#) is one of their favorite assessments.

Sherrie asked what members need in order to feel comfortable voting on this chapter at a future meeting. Cari said her preference is to take it piece by piece instead of all at once.

Laura asked about the distinctions between self-sustaining and supplemental income. James shared the example of a consumer on SSI or SSDI who only wants to earn some supplemental income but cannot risk losing their benefits. James said that VR uses Social Security's indexed definition of substantial gainful employment. In those cases, it makes sense for VR's contribution to be less than if someone is using their business as income to be self-sustaining.

Emily, referencing Section I of Chapter 308, asked why DVR would count non taxable income (such as income reinvested in a business) as a measure of determining success as a condition of case closure. She noted that, as she understands it, SSA doesn't count that same income as countable income nor is that reinvested income taxable.

James said it would make sense to have Betsy Choquette review that part of the section from a Social Security benefit impact perspective.

Sections of the chapter and assigned committee names are included below:

- Section I: Definitions
- Section II: General Policy
- Section III: Process (**Rocko**)
- Section IV: Assessment (**Emily**)
- Section V: Business Plan (**Cari**)
- Section VI: Self-Employment for Supplemental Income (**Kristen**)
- Section VII: Self-Employment for Self-Sustaining Income (**Patti**)
- Attachments (**Rocko**) (**Cari**)

Sherrie said she had hoped this chapter would be ready for a vote at the March meeting but she is not sure that will be possible. She will check with James and the workgroup to determine a timeline for a committee vote.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Ask Betsy to review Chapter 308 edits from Social Security benefit impact perspective, **James Smith, 2/15/2022**
- Committee members to review their sections and provide feedback, **All Committee Members, 2/1/2022**
- Check with work group to see if the chapter will be ready for a vote in March or in May, **Sherrie Brunelle and James Smith, 2/15/2022**

7) Other Business (Group)

A. Agenda Setting: March 3, 2022

It was decided that the following items would be on the agenda for the March meeting:

- Review: Self-Employment
- Update: Public Comment on Chapters 201 and 202
- Review: Chapter 101 Confidentiality

Priorities for future meetings to include:

- Update: Rehab Tech Services
- Review: Chapter 312 Transportation

Sherrie said she would check with the newly elected AOE chair to see if it makes sense to have a collaborative meeting between the AOE and P&P committees about transportation, or to create an adhoc work group on transportation.

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Share minutes from last year's Assistive Technology meeting presentation with the committee, **Kate Larose, 1/11/2022**
- Check with Phil about doing a review and making edits to Chapter 312 for presentation and possibly a vote in May, **James Smith, 2/15/2022**
- Connect with AOE Chair to determine creation of an adhoc committee on transportation, **Sherrie Brunelle, 2/1/2022**

8) Vote: Chair (Sherrie Brunelle)

Sherrie asked James to assume this agenda item. James asked for nominations or self-nominations from the floor. Emily nominated Sherrie. Sherrie said she would accept the nomination but would also be supportive of others in the role and asked if Cari or Emily were interested. Cari said she had interest in the AOE chair position election later in the day. Cari nominated Emily, who declined the

nomination but noted she would be interested in the role in the future. James twice more requested nominations. Hearing none, and an Australian ballot not being necessary, voting was made by a voice vote. James asked all those in favor of re-electing Sherrie Brunelle as Chair of the Policies & Procedures Committee to say Aye. All those not in favor to say Nay. Hearing none, Sherrie was elected as Committee Chair. Vote unanimous 8-0-0.

Conclusions:

Sherrie was reelected P&P Committee chair.

9) Adjournment (Sherrie Brunelle)

Sherrie called the meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 1/11/2022
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 1/11/2022
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 3/3/2022
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 3/3/2022