

Draft Minutes
SRC POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 4, 2021
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 10:03 a.m.

Members Present:

- Calla Papademas
- Cari Kelly
- Emily Ahtúnan
- Kristen Carpentier, non-voting
- Patricia Wehman
- Rocko Gieselman, non-voting
- Sarah Sterling
- Sherrie Brunelle

Members Absent:

- Helena Kehne

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Guests:

- Andrea Bacchi

Presenters:

- 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. Sherrie asked that we table the vote warned for Appendix A to the January meeting. James asked that we include a committee overview on the agenda. Calla moved to approve the agenda and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote was unanimous 6-0-0

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 [September 2, 2021](#) (Sherrie Brunelle)

Discussion:

Sherrie asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the [Minutes from September 2, 2021](#). Patti moved to approve the agenda and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

September 2, 2021 minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Approved minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 11/9/2021

5) P&P Committee Overview (James Smith)

Discussion:

James and Sherrie provided a brief overview of [the purpose](#) of the Policies & Procedure Committee.

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- n/a

6) Chapter Revisions (James Smith)

Discussion:

A. [Chapter 201](#)

Sherrie said that she would like to change "individual" to "applicant" throughout the chapter. In paragraph 2, section b Sherrie asked that we include the language "or remotely" to "in person", and revise to read "requests a later meeting".

Calla added that the practice of sending a letter is a good practice to include. James shared that he prefers the flexibility to provide for a range of written communication be provided (including email and text).

James said that because post-COVID we will be continuing more remote meetings he wanted to check in about the "10 working days" in Section 1(B). Rocko and Kristin said though meetings will likely happen sooner, it's a good idea to provide for the maximum of 10 days.

Emily asked about including the referring agency into written communication if there is a lack of response. Rocko said that they have found this to be helpful in cases with youth and often include the school that referred. James said that though a referral has been made it does not mean that the potential applicant would qualify for services.

James shared that he hopes for flexibility in 21st Century communication practices including text and email. Cari shared that at the United Way they have found that letters are currently the most effective means of communication in terms of a response rate. Andrea said that she has concerns about communication being lost in the mail when email is an effective means of communication. Patti added that her organization found that a transition period was needed when switching from mailed to emailed correspondence, and added that the email sender name needs to be recognizable. She suggested having a period of time where communication is sent out via both mail and email, along with having options to opt-in and opt-out.

The group decided that the best approach was to allow the counselor to start with any means of communication preferred by the consumer, but that if they did not receive a response they will need to follow-up with a letter.

B. [Chapter 202](#)

Sherrie reviewed the following suggested changes:

- P. 7 (C): Delete "for more information" last line.
- P. 8 (H): Change time limit to timeframe
- P. 9 (F): Change time limit to timeframe

- P. 10 O. ¶ 2: Change "shall" to "may" line 4
- P. 15 § IV A. (1): Add "calendar" between "(60)" & "days"
- P. 19 § X A. (3): Deleted "in writing (text, email, mail) add "by mail".

Based on today's discussion Sherrie said she would ensure the language in this chapter is consistent with the changes in Chapter 201.

James shared that though the majority of referring partners are making good faith referrals, that isn't always the case as sometimes the referrals might not be for people who are interested or who are eligible for services. Sherrie and James will work on the language in this section.

C. [Appendix A: Spending Guidelines](#)

The group decided to postpone the discussion of this section until the next meeting to provide James with time to draft and share edits. James wondered if this section should be part of the policies and procedures manual or if it would be a better fit as an internal guidance document for VR staff.

Conclusions:

- **Chapter 201 Approved**

Sherrie asked if there was a motion. Cari moved to approve the chapter with the discussed revisions and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

- **Chapter 202 Approved**

Sherrie asked if there was a motion. Calla moved to approve the chapter with the discussed revisions and it was seconded. No discussion. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

- **Appendix A: Spending Guidelines**

Agenda item will be moved to January meeting.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Move forward with public comment process for revised Chapters 201 and 202, **James Smith**, 12/15/2021
- Revise Appendix A in time for vote at January meeting or draft a write up of why VR recommends it be removed from the policies and procedure manual, **James Smith**, 12/15/2021

7) Update: [Self-Employment](#) (Group)

Discussion:

James thanked Sherrie for the work she has done on this chapter including pulling together a working group. Updates will be ready to share at the January meeting.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Revise chapter in time to share updates at January meeting, **Sherrie Brunelle and James Smith**, 12/15/2021

8) Review: [Chapter 312 Transportation](#) (Group)

Discussion:

Sherrie referenced the federal WIOA definition of transportation below that was shared via email in advance of the meeting:

Definition: 34 CFR § 361.5 (c) (56)

Transportation means travel and related expenses that are necessary to enable an applicant or eligible individual to participate in vocational rehabilitation services, including expenses for training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems.

Examples 34 CFR § 361.5 (c) (56) (i)

The following are examples of expenses that would meet the definition of transportation. The examples are purely illustrative, do not address all possible circumstances, and are not intended as substitutes for individual counselor judgment.

Example 1: Travel and related expenses for a personal care attendant or aide if the services of that person are necessary to enable an applicant or eligible individual to travel to participate in any vocational rehabilitation service.

Example 2: The purchase and repair of vehicles, including vans, but not the modification of these vehicles, as a modification would be considered a rehabilitation technology service.

Example 3: Relocation expenses incurred by an eligible individual in connection with a job placement that is a significant distance from the eligible individual's current residence.

Cari provided an overview of the [Wheels for Jacquie Foundation](#), the organization created by her family to help her daughter acquire a wheelchair accessible van for Jacquie and for others needing access to accessible transportation.

James shared that VR can support the purchase or modification of a vehicle. It would have to be clearly related to the employment outcome for the consumer. VR is often contacted by individuals around the state requesting accessible

transportation but who are not interested in tying it to employment goals so they are unable to help in those cases. He shared that there are VR counselors on staff who have expertise in modified vehicles and that the VR spending guidelines pay 100% of the modification of a vehicle and contribute up to \$15k of the base cost of a purchase.

Emily shared that she has been car free for six years and the newer on-demand micro transit bus system continues to be problematic in Montpelier and that Barre is also considering adopting a similar model. It will be at least another year until it would be possible to move back to a fixed route bus system.

Cari added that where she lives the paratransit system requires three days' notice which makes it difficult for people to access and added that a fixed route bus service seems to be a better system.

Calla shared that she is unable to drive and based on the current transportation infrastructure in Vermont she is only able to live in Chittenden county because she relies on fixed route bus systems.

Rocko shared that they have found consistent themes from other VR counselors in the region. One is that providing for car repair is useful and that the costs of used cars are very high, but the current spending guidelines for repair and maintenance is too low. The other is that public transportation is useful and that individual solutions are also needed. They said it would also be useful to have more spelled out language around allowable uses for driver rehab or paying for private lessons.

Cari asked what the typical waiting period is in terms of someone being able to get modifications or services through VR. Rocko shared that in their experience what takes the longest time is having the consumer find the vehicle they want to purchase. If the person selling the car is comfortable being set up as a vendor in the State of Vermont system, then it takes about two weeks. If VR is doing a reimbursement to the consumer directly it can take a little bit longer. Cari asked if there is a waitlist for van purchases. James said that because van purchases can exceed \$100k they are only able to do so many a year. But with the current influx of federal funds the waitlist will soon be down to zero.

James shared that a number of issues continue to be challenging. He agrees that spending guidelines for purchase and repair are outdated. He is concerned that VR might become known as the place to just get a car, so whatever policy revisions that are decided upon should have a framework to ensure that referring agencies aren't making referrals solely based on car purchases. For drivers' education, schools have a responsibility to provide to students with disabilities but they often don't do this so he wants to be sure VR doesn't

become a referral source for schools to get them out of their duty to provide these services.

Sherrie asked if the VR car coach was useful in the past. Kristen said that the current policy has the counselor doing the car budgeting form. In the past the car coach was an invaluable resource as they had the needed expertise to help determine the viability of a particular purchase. James shared that VR had contracted with Capstone to provide car coach services but that there is not currently in-house expertise.

Cari said that in her family's experience they were looking at something that was coming off of a lease or had low miles. Perhaps ensuring that the policy includes a warranty or is low miles so that there will be remaining use left in the vehicle.

Kristin shared that new inspection laws might have a disproportionate impact to consumers on repair costs and taking another look at the spending guidelines would be useful. She wondered why VR cannot support CRASH/ Impaired Driver Rehabilitation Program (IDRP). James shared he will research this but suspects it is based on the inability to pay fines. Kristen said that the "adequate insurance" language could be misinterpreted so changing the language to "insurance" or "valid insurance" would be less subjective.

Emily wondered about have a section about car-share services.

Conclusions:

Sherrie and James will take the suggestions from today's meeting and think about how they might draft that into a chapter to be presented at the meeting in March.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft revisions to transportation chapter to share at March meeting, **James Smith and Sherrie Brunelle, 2/15/2022**

9) Other Business (Group)

A. Agenda Setting: January 6, 2022

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

- Vote: Election of chair (per bylaws)
- Review: Appendix A: Spending Guidelines
- Review: Self-Employment

Priorities for future meetings to include:

- Chapter 101: Confidentiality
- Update: Rehab Tech Services

- Review: Chapter 312 Transportation

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

n/a

10) 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**, 11/9/2021
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 11/9/2021
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 1/6/2022
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 1/11/2022